

Lalitha Kala Tarangini

Premier Quarterly Music Magazine from
Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira

Volume 2022, Issue 3

September 2022



Ranadheera Kanterava Narasara Wadiyar : 1638 - 1659



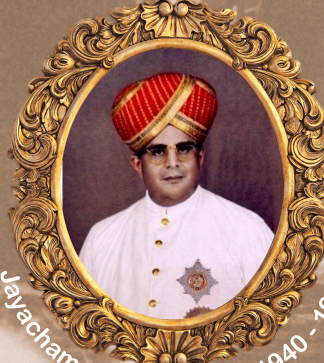
Chikka Devaraja Wadiyar : 1673 - 1704



Kanterava Narasara Wadiyar II : 1704 - 1714



Nalwadi Krishnaraja Wadiyar : 1902 - 1940



Jayachamaraja Wadiyar : 1940 - 1947



Krishnaraja Wadiyar I : 1714 - 1732



Chamaraja Wadiyar X : 1868 - 1894



Krishnaraja Wadiyar III (Mummudi) : 1799 - 1868



Krishnaraja Wadiyar II : 1734 - 1766

Karnatak Composers Patronised by Wadiyars

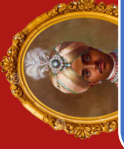
Mysore Composers during various Reigns of Wadiyar Dynasty



**Krishnaraja
Wadiyar III
(Mummudi) :**
1799 - 1868



**Chamaraja
Wadiyar X :**
1868 - 1894



**Nalwadi
Krishnaraja
Wadiyar :** 1902
- 1940



**Jayachamaraja
Wadiyar (1940
- 1947)**

Mummudi Krishnaraja Wadiyar (1794-1868)
Mysore Sadashiva Rao (1794 Approximate)
Veena Venkata Subbiah (1750 Approximate)
Shunti Venkataramanah (1780 Approximate)
Aliya Lingaraja Urs (1823 - 1874)
Basavappa Shastry (1843 - 1891)
Chinniah (1902 Approximate)
Veena Chikka Lakshminaranappa
Pedda Lakshminaranappa
Devalapurada Nanjunda

Veena Shamanna (1832 - 1908)
Veena Padmanabiah (1842 - 1900)
Veena Sheshanna (1852 - 1926)
Mysore Karigiri Rao (1853 - 1927)
Veena Subbanna (1861 - 1939)
Mysore Vasudevachar (1865 - 1961)
Bidaram Krishnappa (1866 - 1931)
Tiruppunandal Pattabhiramiah (1863 Approximate)
Sosale Ayya Shastry (1854 - 1934)
Jayarayacharya
Giribhattara Tammayya (1865 - 1920)
Nanjanagud Subba Shastry (1834 - 1906)

Veena Subramanya Iyer (1864 - 1919)
Harikesanallur Dr. L Muthaiah Bhagavata (1877 - 1945)
Veena Shivrarnamah (1886 - 1946)
Veena Venkatagiriappa (1887 - 1952)
Belakavadi Srinivasa Iyengar (1888 - 1936)
Chikka Ramarao (1891 - 1945)
Mysore T Chowdiah (1894 - 1967)
B Devendrappa (1899 - 1986)
Gotuvadyam Narayana Iyengar (1903 - 1959)
Tiruvayyar (Meesai)
Subramania Iyer
Anavatti Ramarao (1860 Approximately)

Jayachamaraja Wadiyar (1919 - 1974)
Tiger Varadachariar (1876 - 1950)
Chennakeshaviah (1895 - 1986)
Tittle Krishna Iyengar (1902 - 1997)
SN Mariyappa (1914 - 1986)
Chintanapalli Ramachandra Rao (1916 - 1985)
RN Doreswamy (1916 - 2002)
HM Vaidyalinga Bhagavata (1924 - 1999)

Chamaraja Wadiyar X was officially handed the reins of governance on 25 March 1881

Source : 'Musical Composers during Wodeyar Dynasty' by Dr. Meera Rajaram Pranesh

September 2022

Sama Veda is believed to have laid the foundation for our musical forms. Our ancient texts carry proof and references to Indian classical music and musical instruments. The Persian and Islamic invasions had an influence on the musical forms in North India but the 'Karnatak Music', the South Indian musical form remained unaffected. Karnatak Music flourished during the times of the Vijayanagar Empire when their empire reached its zenith. Purandaradasa, a disciple of Vyasatirta who was the 'Rajaguru' of king Krishnadevaraya formulated a system for teaching music centuries ago which is in practice even today.

In the 18th and 19th century, The Mysore Wadiyar dynasty who imbibed the kingdom from Vijayanagar Empire developed the art form further and the current day music owes it to them for what it is today.

We are dedicating our present edition of the magazine to the Wadiyar kings in whose court innumerable musicians and composers thrived and developed our music form. An effort is made to cover important composers (called Mysore composers) who were patronised by the Wadiyar kings. While there were numerous 'mahanubavas' during that period, It is not practical to cover every one of them. We hope to cover more composers in the future editions of LKT. The Mysore composers have been presented in chronological order.

Our last edition on Nagaswaram was appreciated by one and all, rasikas as well as senior practitioners of music. We are overwhelmed especially by the comments received from Karnataka's senior Vainika Prof. Dr. R Visweswaran. We have carried his comments in our Inbox. Our sincere thanks to one and all for their constructive comments.

Here is wishing our readers a very happy Dasara festivities.

regards,
Anand S

Contributors: Sachi R Sachidananda, Shailaja Venugopal, Dr. Nagavalli Nagaraj, Manasi Prasad.

This edition of LKT being theme based, a few of the articles have been adapted to align with the theme.

Photo Courtesy: Personal collections of BN Ramesh, Courtesy the book 'Musical Composers during Wodeyar Dynasty' by Dr. Meera Rajaram Pranesh, Paniraj, Courtesy 'The Hindu', Personal collections of H Yoganarasimham and family, Courtesy Yadugiri Yathiraja Mutt, Personal collections of D Balakrishna, Karnataka Ganakala Parishat.

Front Cover - Bird's-eye view of various Wadiyar kings contributing to the development of music in South India.

Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira (SRLKM) founded by Shri G Vedanta Iyengar in the year 1955 is rendering yeomen service in the field of music. In addition to music classes, music concerts are held all through the year. The significant festivals are Sankranti and Spring music festivals. Mandira also takes pride in conducting music awareness program, music workshops, Lecture demonstrations etc. Entry to all program conducted by the Mandira is free as the aim of the institution is to enable everyone to listen to the best of the music and to propagate Karnatic Classical Music.

"Lalitha Kala Tarangini" publication is fostered by Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira, disseminates knowledge in the area of Karnatak Classical Music and bring to light talent and excellence in this area. We believe this is just another step towards preserving and promoting this great Indian fine art.

All Rights Reserved- All articles, photographs and material appearing in this magazine whether in whole or part is copyright of Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira exclusively. No part of this magazine should be reproduced or stored in any form without prior consent. While Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira takes all the care to verify the correctness of information, it is quite possible that there could be an occasional inaccuracy in our publication.

Magazine Committee

Editor - Anand S

Senior Associates: Neela Ramgopal, KS Kalidas, C Ramakrishnan, and Rajashree Yogananda.

Printed and published by GV Krishna Prasad on behalf of Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira, CA No. 28, 9th Main Road, Near Banashankari II Stage Post office, Banashankari II Stage, Bangalore 560070, Karnataka, India.

Lalitha Kala Tarangini

Inbox

My dear Sri Krishnaprasad,

The 'Lalitha Kala Tarangini' quarterly you are sending us is excellent production, a model for meticulousness, lot of information, inspiration for youngsters in the music field and music lovers and I heartily congratulate you on your speciality in thinking and execution of your thoughts as realities for others.

I was happy to see the photo of Vidwan Karaikurichi Arunachalam on the cover of the magazine which took me back to my sweet memories. I have always been a staunch admirer of expertise in Nagaswaram and of Vid. Arunachalam as my 'ideal musician' for Nagaswaram. The beauty of the complexities of the Gamakas of Karnatak music and the beauties of our great ragas were expressed in the ideal way to express the exceptional greatness of the ragas of Karnatak music by Vidwan Arunachalam's mind, breath and fingers.

There have been great Nagaswaram Vidwans like Veera Swamy Pillai and many others - scores of very good Nagaswaram Vidwans I have regard for over these 8 decades of my listening, including Arunachalam's guru Vid. Rajarathnam Pillai. Still, with the full value for my 'critical listening', Vid. Arunachalam still remains as "objectively best" Nagaswaram Vidwan for all time in Karnatak music, whose statue deserves to be installed like they have done for most respected Srimathi M.S. Subbulakshmi.

It may be some 55 years ago, I had the opportunity to meet Arunachalam in Thiruvananthapuram in the great Varahaswamy Temple in their 10 day music festival in which our concerts were arranged on consecutive days which gave me a life's opportunity to listen to his 6 hr. concert - 3½ hrs on the dais and the rest in the utsava of Padmanabhaswamy around the temple. The speciality of the concert was a most memorable 2 full hours of heavenly Suddha Dhanyasi aalaapana. Deekshitar's "Subrahmanyana Rakshitoaham" and extensive Swara Kalpana.

The humility of the Vidwan - the native quality for real achievers - when I poured out with tears of joy and respect - my heavenly experience of listening to him, took him even higher. I had immense pleasure when he visited me, remembering my invitation, when he was in Mysore for a concert for Ganesha Festival, a few months later.

My compliments to Sri Shailesh Ramamurthy whose article portrays the personality of Vid. Arunachalam and the unsuppressed excellence of his music as also the unique command on the Nagaswaram.

Well ! because of all that I narrated overleaf I thought of sharing it all with you.

Please read it, write about it in the next issue of the Lalitha Kala Tarangini your critical estimation and introduce the book for your readers.

Just one observation

You bestowed the 'Sangeetha Vedanta Dhureena' Award on my in 2017 (I guess I was the first Vainika for this!)

The music world can see that there is a clear discernment in making your selection for this award - which is based on "proven substance" in music and not popularity only - nor on "other considerations" as in the case of many other "annual awards" which sometimes loses track.

Like I had said earlier sometime when I and you shared the same platform, only few have genuine, pure hearts and minds and selflessness in a time sense like you and who dedicate life's earnings or wealth for respecting excellence in music and recognising it in the deserving

Acknowledgements

SRLKM is thankful to Dr. Meera Rajaram Pranesh for sharing her research work which is now available in the form of a published book 'Musical Composers during Wodeyar Dynasty'. We came across this painstaking work by her when researching on our current topic during this edition. We are grateful to her for providing consent to publish extract from few sections of her book.

We are thankful to senior vocalist Vid. Sukanya Prabhakar for guiding us throughout this edition.

As always we are extremely thankful to all the contributors of the articles and photographs that has enriched the current edition.

- Editor

quarters with "objective evaluation" and I must say this : and "one who is a satputra" in every sense, of a most respected and noble father. living up to the highest cultural standards by making such father "live for ever".

Forgive the length of the letter, please acknowledge receipt.

With warmest regards in all sincerity.

Prof. R Visweswaran M.A., Mysore

We regret an inadvertent error in the previous edition of the LKT June 2022. Indeed Prof. R Visweswaran was the first Vainika to be honoured with 'Sangeetha Vedantha Dhurina' by SRLKM. Page 54, first para, line 7 of the edition is in error and we regret for the same.

- Editor

Dear Shri. Krishna Prasad,

Kudos to you and Editor S. Anand for the special issue on Nadaswara which is highly note worthy. Nadaswaram/Nagaswaram has a special role in our South Indian culture. Every auspicious function in Hindu religion/families like house warming ceremonies, Up-anayana and marriage, this Nadaswaram/Nagaswaram

is a must. I have seen even the last journey of the departed is accompanied by Nadaswaram in few villages in old Mysore region even to this day! Similarly its cousin Shehnai in North India.

I had the privilege of attending Sadguru Thyagaraja Aradhaha at Thiruvaiyaru to relish the soul stirring Nadaswara recitals by legendary vidwans Sangitha Kalanidhi Thiruvadaimaradur Veeraswamy Pillai, Samapannarkoil brothers, Vedaranyam Vedomurthy, Kulikkarai Pichiappa Pillai, Namagiri Petai Krishnan, Andhanarkoil Selvaratnam, Sheik Chinna Moulana Saheb, Thirupamburam brothers, Mannargudi Paramashivam Pillai etc. from the late 1960 onwards. These concerts are all etched deep in memory. Each of these maestros have contributed in their own style and enhanced the rich cultural heritage of this instrument. Each of them deserve Nadaswara Kalanidhi award.

In the past Sruti magazine brought out a special feature on Nadaswaram in which it has analysed in detail the various factors/process in manufacturing this instrument, its conversion/adoption to accommodate accompanying instruments like Violin, mrudangam etc.

Chikkanna CP, Bangalore

Dr. TS Satyavathi, senior musician of Karnataka was awarded 'Sri Shanmukhananda Bharat Ratna Dr. MS Subbulakshmi Sangeetha Pracharya Award' for the year 2022 by Sri Shanmukhananda Fine Arts and Sangeetha Sabha, Mumbai. The award was presented on 17th September 2022 in a grand function. Past recipient of the honour include T Rukmini, Vikku Vinayakaram, Suguna Varadachary, Neyveli Santhanagopalan, Adyar Lakshmanan etc. Seen in the picture Dr. V Shankar, Chairman, Sri Shanmukhananda Fine Arts and Sangeetha Sabha presenting the award to Dr. TS Satyavathi. Also seen in the picture are Sarod maestro Amjad Ali Khan and his wife Subhalakshmi Barooah.





BN Suresh

- 12 Mysore Karigiri Rao (1853-1927)
- 15 Vainika Praveena Veena
Subbanna (1861-1939)
- 18 Mysore K Vasudevacharya (1865 - 1961)
- 23 Vaggeyakara Vasudevacharya
- 27 Bidaram Krishnappa (1866 - 1931)
- 36 Harikesanallur Dr. L Muthaiah Bhagavata
(1877 - 1945)
- 42 Compositions of Mysore T Chowdiah - A Brief
Study
- 45 Wedded to Music - The Life and Music of H
Yoganarasimham
- 50 Belakawadi Srinivasa Iyengar
- 51 Poet of the Flute, BN Suresh
- 64 In a resplendent garden - The Veena Music of D
Balakrishna

Contents

- 05 Mysore Kingdom - a Home to the Musicians
and Vaggeyakaras
- 07 Mysore Sadashiva Rao
- 09 Veena Seshanna (1852-1926)

Arunodaya School of Music, celebrated their 10th Annual day on Sunday, August 28th 2022 at Aksharam Sabhangana of Girinagar. GV Krishna Prasad, Hon Secretary, SRLKM was honoured during the occasion by RN Thyagarajan



Mysore Kingdom - a Home to the Musicians and Vaggeyakaras

It is said that King Yaduraya founded the Mysore Kingdom around 1399 as an off-shoot of the Vijayanagar Empire. It is a well known fact that during the Vijayanagar Empire, South Indian music rose to historic heights as Karnatak music and evolved to what it is today. It looks like Yaduraya inherited the patronage Vijayanagar kings accorded to the fine arts and culture. During the Mysore Wadiyar dynasty, the musical culture and patronage gained momentum and dominated for the next several centuries.

Wadiyar dynasty kings were not merely patrons of art and culture but they were themselves erudite scholars and outstanding composers. Their compositions are a significant contribution to Karnatak music and are rele-

vant even today and find a place in modern-day concerts.

Wadiyar III (Mummadi) (1799 - 1868), Chamaraja Wadiyar X (1868 - 1894), Nalwadi Krishnaraja Wadiyar (1902 - 1940), and finally Jayachamaraja Wadiyar (1940 - 1947) were solely responsible for the development of music during this time. Wadiyar kings were the most knowledgeable patrons of music in those days. The Royal kings were noted composers and proficient in playing musical instruments both solo and in concert with others. Krishnaraja Wadiyar IV (Nalwadi) was well versed in playing musical instruments including the Veena, Violin, Mridangam, Nagaswara, Sitar, Harmonium as well as Western instruments such as the Saxophone and Piano.

A music concert is in progress at Mysore Palace



During this time several music schools were opened where the court musicians taught music to students with a view to propagating music. These schools became a great seat of learning. The patronage of art and artistes helped to spread the music further.

Late Shri. S Krishnamurthy, grandson of Shri. Vasudevacharya says, "it was Krishnaraja Wadiyar IV (Nalwadi) reign which was the most significant during the golden era period. He was hailed as 'Raja Rishi' and was an exponent in all three forms of music Viz. Karnatak, Hindustani and Western. There was hardly any musician worth the name who did not visit the state during his benevolent rule, seeking royal patronage and grace. It was also very hard to get his patronage considering he himself was a scholar and a hard critic to please. It was during his time that the king organised public address systems that enabled a large number of audience to relax and enjoy music on the lawns inside the fort".

The last king of Mysore Jayachamaraja Wadiyar had a deep knowledge of music and tremendous generosity in promoting the growth of music. Even after independence and surrender-

ing the kingdom, he was a musical icon for the whole country. He went on to support and inaugurate 'The Madras Music Academy, the iconic music institution in the country today. His 94 composition is in vogue even today and they are an invaluable contribution to the treasure of Karnatak music in the post-trinity era.

The ecosystem created provided patronage, honours, and recognition to artistes for their talent. Many scholars from Tamil Nadu and Travancore came to Mysore in search of excellence. Some of them were so mesmerised by the culture that they decided to stay back in Mysore. While Mysore kings helped in making our music reach its excellence, the legacies of the artistes who received patronage continue to embellish and enrich our art and music even today. So in a way contribution of Mysore kings to music is everlasting and sustaining even after several centuries.

Vidwan M Vasudeva Rao and Vidwan D Balakrishna to be honoured



Vidwan D Balakrishna has been unanimously selected to preside over the 52nd music conference of the Bangalore Gayana Samaja which will be conducted between 09 October to 16 October 2022. He will be bestowed with the title 'Sangeetha Kalaratna' on 16 October 2022. The title carries a purse of 50,000 Rs.

and a citation. As a mark of our appreciation to Shri. D Balakrishna, we have included an interview of him in this edition. It may be noted that LKT carried an elaborate article of his father in our June 2019 edition.

During the conference, Vidwan M Vasudeva Rao will be conferred with the title 'Karnataka Kalacharya'. The title carries a purse of 50,000 Rs. and a citation. We had carried a detailed article on Vidwan M Vasudeva Rao titled 'Rhythmical Journey of Mridangam Maestro Vidwan M Vasudeva Rao' authored by Vidwan HS Sudhindra in our January 2022 edition.

SRLKM wishes both Vidwans the best of health and prosperity.

Mysore Sadashiva Rao

N Channakeshavia

(This article is an extract from *The Hindu* dated 21 January 1970)

'Sakethanagaranatha' in Harikambhoji, "Vachamagocharundani" in Atana and "Sri Kamakotipetastithe" in Saveri are admired by the music lovers even today. Mysore Sadashiva Rao, who gave us these was a disciple of Walajapet Venkataramana Bhagavathar, who himself was a disciple of Tyagaraja. He composed and sang for 50 years from 1835 to 1885 and is stated to have had the distinction of singing before the Saint himself. When Tyagaraja visited his disciple, Venkataramana Bhagavathar, at Walajapet, Sadashiva Rao, it is believed, was there and sang before him "Tyagaraja Swami Vedalina" in Thodi, which he had composed for the occasion and received the saint's blessings. His Keertanas have stood the test of time and are continuing to be learnt and sung.

Full biographical details of this composer are not available. He was born in the early years of the 19th century at Girampet, near Chittoor, of Ganesha Rao and Krishna Bai in a Smartha Desastha family. He is said to have left home in a spirit of adventure at the age of 12, to make a name for himself. Later, he worked as a clerk in the Chittoor Collectorate. It is therefore presumed that he had managed to acquire some general education. About this time, he married Sundarabai belonging the Arni Jagirdar's family.

Along with general education, he seems to have undergone training in music under Walajapet Venkataramana Bhagavathar. He is said to have been introduced to the Mysore Palace by two brothers, Kopparam Pedda Muniswami Setty and Chinna Muniswami Setty, who wielded influence with Maharaja Sri Krishnaraja Wadiyar III. The Maharaja, impressed with his musical scholarship, immediately made him Asthana Vidwan. Sadasiva Rao settled down in Mysore composing and singing. The most

prominent of his disciples were Veena Seshanna and Veena Subbanna. His other disciples were Anekal Chidambaraiah, Cikkanayakanahalli Venkatesaiah and Ganjam Suryanarayanappa, Chintalapalli Venkata Rao was for some time a disciple of Chidambaraiah.

Kind and Generous

Sadashiva Rao was a great Bhaktha and was kind and courteous to everybody. He enjoyed royal patronage and the patronage of rich friends and was in comfortable circumstances. He helped deserving causes by generous gifts. A great believer in Atithi satkara, every day at noon, he would stand at the entrance of his house looking out for guests and he would not be satisfied until he had assembled at least a dozen people for food.

Though he was devoted to all the Gods of the Hindu pantheon, he was a Narasimha upasaka. One evening, it is stated, when he was singing, his admirers wanted him to sing his composition in Kamalamanohari 'Narasimhudu Udayinchenu'. He used to sing this keertana only on certain occasions but in his reluctance to disoblige his audience, he began singing it. As he uttered the words, 'Sarasijasananamu pagula', it is said the glass of the portrait of Lord Narasimha crashed to pieces and all the lights went out. Sadashiva Rao is stated to have stopped singing at once and performed Mangala Harathi. From then onward his audiences never used to press him to sing that piece.

Once it is said a close friend of his, a merchant, had to leave on business and he entrusted the management of his shop to Sadashiva Rao. Knowing his kindness and generosity and seeing their opportunity, his numerous acquaintances carried away goods from the shop pleading necessity. On his return, the owner it

is stated was dismayed to find his shop almost empty. Sadashiva Rao is believed to have asked him. "Will you consider all that has been given as given away in charity (Krishnarpana) and acquire the resultant Punyam, or will you let me make good the entire cost of the goods myself and retain the Punyam! The merchant, it is stated, was good enough to adopt the first alternative and found to his pleasant surprise, that his business brought him unprecedented profits subsequently.

Sadashiva Rao composed hundreds of keertanas, but unfortunately, many of them have not been preserved. So far, 52 of them have been collected. The Madras Music academy has brought out a volume giving the notation of 17 keertanas and proposes to publish a supplemental volume. The Sangita Kalabhivardhini Sabha of Mysore has published a volume of keertanas giving the notation of 35 and the Sahitya of 12 pieces. The available songs include a famous Padavarna ('Ee Maguva' in Dhanyasi) a Swarajathi and a Tillana. Sixteen Keertanas are in Sanskrit and the rest in Telugu. The compositions are in popular as well as in the apurva ragas. There are two in Balahamsa, and one each Abhogi, Kamalamanonarl, Gambhiranata, Purnashadja, Punnagathodi and Chandrachooda.

The Vaggeyakara toured the famous pilgrim centres of South India and composed Keertanas in praise of the deities there. Fourteen of the keertanas are composed in praise of the deities at Srirangam, Kancheepuram, Belur, Srirangapatnam, Walajapet, Triplicane (Madras), Palani and Bhavani.

Raga Bhava

"Sadasya Nuta, Kavi Sadashiva Nuta, Bhudhavarya Kavi Sadashiva Nuta, Sadashivartihore, Sadashive Bhagyadheye, Sadashiva Bhayahara", these all are his mudras. In a few Keertanas he uses Madhyakala Sahityam. His keertanas are full of bhakti and conform to the canons of Yati, Gana and Prasa. They are fully expressive of the raga bhava and also strike a departure from the beaten track. The chittaswaras for several of his keertanas and their accompanying sahitya,

stand out for their raga bhava and imagination. While they are certainly impressive, if rendered properly, they are generally not easy to learn and sing and approximate more to the variety known as Narikela-Paka.

Sadashiva Rao lived a full life and was over 80 when he passed away. He seems to have been prescient of his end. On the last day of his life, he is said to have sat facing North and singing his Vasantha keertana, "Kamalakantha Sri Krishnanatha" in a low voice and left the mortal frame by breath control. His descendants are living in Mysore. One of his grand-sons called Curtain Rama Rao, was a well-known actor and another was a civilian officer who retired as Director of Industries and Commerce.



Sangita Kalanidhi TV Sankaranarayanan, inheritor of a rich Madurai Mani Iyer bani, and his techniques passed away on 02 September 2022. He carved out his own style of music keeping the Madurai Mani Iyer bani as a foundation. He was a disciple of Madurai Mani Iyer, and his mother was Mani Iyer's sister by the name Gomathi. He used to take the audience to heaven by rendering 'eppo Varuvaro'.

He performed for SRLKM on several occasions. We remember one occasion in which he captivated the audience who did not move an inch despite the heavy rains that day.

We pass on our sincere condolences to his family members, his fans, and the whole music fraternity and pray for his Sadhgati.

Veena Seshanna (1852-1926)

Late V. Doreswamy Iyengar

(This article is an extract from *The Hindu* dated 17 June 1970)



Fox Strangways, in his book, 'Music of Hindustan' has vividly described his meeting with the Veena vidwans of Mysore palace and praised in particular the art of Seshanna. It is nearly 80 years ago that he recorded his impressions. The same subject has been dealt with more graphically by Margaret E Cousins in her book, 'Music of Orient and Occident'. There she has described with a sensitivity and feeling the Veena music of Seshanna and hailed him as the 'king of Veena players'.

But at this distance of time particularly for a whole generation that has grown up without any knowledge of either Seshanna or his art, these laudations may sound more romantic

than real. Yet, it is a fact that Seshanna was revered as such during his life time and received rich and even kingly honours including a palanquin and bodyguards from the Gaekwar of Baroda, befitting the divine quality of his art.

Lasting Impact

Seshanna's name is to be found in almost all the books on Indian music particularly South Indian music, whenever veena and its music is discussed. His art has left a durable impact and is still ringing in the ears of the fortunate few who belonged to his times and are still happily with us. But the beauty of his creative art can be best appreciated in most of the compositions he has left behind. Who has not been charmed by that intensely romantic and yearning appeal of his tillana in the raga Jinjoti which is played in most of the concerts? Seshanna has left behind, many such compositions that seem to carry the very soul and essence of the raga and testify to the fecundity of his creative imagination. They are a rich storehouse of melody and rhythm.

Seshanna was born in Mysore in 1852 (Virodhikrithu) on Karthika Bahula Panchami day. His father, Vidwan Chikkaramappa, himself a great vainika, was a descendant of Adiappaiyya of the 'Viriboni' varnam fame. Seshanna's mother also came of a distinguished family of musicians. It is no wonder that with such an artistic lineage Seshanna showed signs of genius even from his childhood.

Chikkaramappa was a leading vainika in the court of Mumtaz Ali Krishna Raja Wodeyar. On Shivarathri day, it was the custom of the Maharaja to invite all the vidwans- local as well as



visiting - to the palace. The musical session would start in the evening and go on till the early hours of the morning. An interesting feature of such a session was that one musician among them would start a pallavi and the rest of them had to take it up by turns and demonstrate the originality and skill. On one such occasion Chikkaramappa had taken his boy Seshanna to the palace. One of the visiting veteran vidwans started an intricate pallavi. When it came to the turn of the vidwans of the palace the situation became discouraging. None of them seemed to be prepared to tackle that pallavi. The Maharaja felt humiliated and looked at Chikkaramappa as the leader of his vidwans.

Meanwhile, the boy Seshanna was tugging and whispering to his father to permit him to sing that pallavi. Though he frowned at the boy's ill-manners initially, Chikkaramappa realised the gift of his boy and ventured to put it to test. "What is there in this pallavi my lord?" he said to the Maharaja. "It is so simple that even a boy could render it". Then he ordered young Seshanna to come forward and sing the pallavi. At once the boy, even though weighed down with

the dress imperative for attendance in royal presence - came forward, bowed to the Maharaja and rendered the pallavi very fluently and easily. Every vidwan present was stupefied. The Maharaja's joy knew no bounds and he ordered for some immediate arrangement to dispel the effects of evil eye.

So started the career of Seshanna at the age of ten. When he was 16, his father died leaving the family in poverty. Seshanna had only his elder sister Venkamma to look after him and guide him. He had to continue his veena studies further under Doddaseshanna who was a very stern and exacting guru. Seshanna had to practise constantly throughout the day to satisfy his guru. Venkamma keenly watched him during his practice compelling and ensuring perfection. In addition, Seshanna also learnt vocal music under Mysore Sadashiva Rao.

In a short time, Seshanna attained great mastery over the Veena. He toured all over the country and established himself as a vainika of unquestionable eminence before he was 28 years of age.

People who have enjoyed his music are still with us today. I have heard it said that the 'mee-tu' (plucking of the strings) was so mature that only the purest sound emanated from the instrument. His 'manodharma' was so rich that he could elaborate a raga for more than one hour without repeating himself. His sense of tala was such that he could improvise hundreds of avartas (without any body counting the cycles for him), without the least hindrance to the artistic beauty. A few of his compositions are the only things left for us now, which can reveal his creative genius.

Sense of Rhythm

Seshanna's compositions number about 58-11 swarajathis; 9 varnams; 16 kritis and 1 tillana. These compositions are both in 'prasidha' ragas and 'apoorva' ragas. The 'swara' patterns which he has woven in his swarajathi show his wonderful sense rhythm. At many places, one can perceive his ingenuity in 'datuswara' prayogas which he has used without marring the beauty of the raga. His swarajathi in Karnataka Kapi which is set in Khandajathi Ata tala is so full of 'datuswara' pravoga that it baffles even expert vainikas.

The varnams are full of ragabhava and gamakas peculiar to Veena. He has composed varnams in unusual talas like Khanda Dhruva, Khanda Matya, Misra Triputa, Sankirna Matya etc. There are two ragamalika varnams in which he has included rare ragas like Abherini (Janya of Sankarabharanam : Poorvi (Janya of Mayamalavagowla) : Gumma Khambhoji (Janya of Mayamalavagowla) : Chitta-Mohini; (Janya of Sanakarabharanam). One of these two ragamalika varnas is a monumental work. It is a "Sapta Taleswari". Opening with Begada it has incorporated 21 ragas in its scheme.

His genius is best evident in the tillanas, every one of which is replete with raga bhava and rhythmic patterns which are ideally suited to dance. Besides the Jinjoti tillana there are others which are equally charming, in ragas like Sankarabharanam; Behag; Kapi; Kamas; Kannada; Pharaz; Begada and Kannada. His tillana in Dar-

bari Kanada goes to prove that he was quite at home in Hindustan ragas also.

The bulk of his compositions is in Telugu except 5 kritis which are in Kannada. He dedicated all his varnams and tillanas to his Royal Patrons, Sri Chamaraja Wodeyar and Nalwadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar, the then rulers of Mysore.

In his varnams and most of the tillanas he has not used any mudra which gives a clue to his authorship, but in his kirtanas he has used mudras like "Seshadrisha", "Sesha", "Seshadasa", "Seshasayana" and "Seshagirisa".

Seshanna was a true devotee of veena. During his last days he used to say: 'I am only now understanding the real spiritual beauty of Vena but unfortunately I am physically enfeebled to practise and realise it'. That was his humility. He felt unable to satisfy his hunger to get more and more soulful music from that divine instrument.

A good astrologer that he was, he very nearly anticipated the day of his death. He passed away on July 25, 1926.

Prominent among his disciples were Vainikapravina Venkatagiriappa, Veena Lakshminarayappa (both of Mysore Durbar), Ramaswamy Iyengar of Srirangam and Sri Shermadevi Subramanya Sastry, an eminent vainika who is with us now. Among his grandsons are Vidwans AS Chandrashekariah and VN Rao who are well known vainikas of Mysore.

Mysore Karigiri Rao (1853-1927)

Dr. Meera Rajaram Pranesh

(This article is an extract from Musical composers during Wodeyar Dynasty
by Dr. Meera Rajaram Pranesh, Vee Emm Publication, Bangalore)

A person with expertise in both theory and practise is rare among musicians. One such rare musician is Karigiri Rao. He was born in a family of orthodox and scholarly family, belonging to Rik shakha, Ashwalayana sutra, Gowtama Gotra of Madhwa Aravattuvokkalu community. His grand father Vedanti Gopalacharya of Tumkur had two sons - Vedanti Venkata Nrisimhacharya and Vedanti Lakshmi Narasimhacharya. Lakshmi Narasimhacharya, a Sanskrit pandit in the court of Mummadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar, had four children - Vedanti Venkata Narasimhacharya, Lakshamma, Karigiri Rao and Shridharacharya.

Karigiri Rao was born in the year 1853 A.D. He was named Karigiri after the lord Ranganatha of Karighatta. When Mummadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar shifted his capital from Srirangapatana to Mysore, Lakshmi Narasimhacharya followed the King to Mysore along with his family. Young Karigiri was fond of music which was banned in his family due to orthodoxy. but he started learning music secretly from father's friend Subbarayaru (nephew of Veena Shaman-na).

After some years of learning, it so happened, once the whole family visited Nanjangud for the Aradhana festival of Raghavendra Swamy. The Mathadhipati who was aware of Karigiri Rao learning music, asked him to sing during the celebrations. Forgetting the presence of his family members, Karigiri sang and was appreciated by one and all. But learning that his father and brother were furious, Karigiri ran away from the house. He went to Hyderabad, stayed in a relative house and continued his music

there. But he returned to Mysore only when his father was on death bed. After father's death, frustrated by his elder brother's harassment, he started travelling, performing concerts and earned laurels. At the age of 50, he returned to Mysore, after his brother's death, and was appointed as a Court musician in April 1903 by Chamaraja Wodeyar IX.

Honours

All stalwarts during that time like Sheshanna, Subbanna, Shamanna, Veena Padmanabhaiah and others honoured Karigiri Rao with the title Sangeeta Vidya Kanteerava along with golden Thoda (bracelets) decorated with bells. Chamaraja Wodeyar had bestowed upon him the title Ganakala Durandhara; Sangita Bhushan from the authorities of Kashi Vidyapeetha; and the King of Gadwal honoured him with a Golden Necklace (kanti hara) and a pair of Shawl along with good remuneration.

Compositions

Karigiri Rao has to his credit of composing Varnas, Kritis, Tillanas and notation for 200 Devaranamas. His style of composing Kritis resembles that of Thyagaraja's with more Sangeethas. His compositions are adorned with Rhetoric beauties and Subtleties:

Most of his Kritis are with crisp Chitteswaras in different patterns like:

Datu swaras as in:

r s m r p m n p s n

(Varna, Vani pai in raga Nata)

g r p g d p s d r s g r

(Kriti, Nenarunchira in raga Mohana)

Janti phrases like;
p d ś d ś ś r r ġ
(Kriti, Nenarunchira in raga Mohana)

Parallels like:
ś r ś Ś p n p P s r s S s S p P ś Ś
(Varna in Nata. This phrase also indicate Vadi Samvadi bhava)

Ettugade swaras of Nata varna has combinations of swaras like :
P , p m p m m P , - m g m g g M , - r s r s s R ,
ś r ś ś n p - n ś n n p m - g p m m r s
P p - S s - P p - Ś ś

The last avarta has plenty of vadi samvadi relationship:

P p Ś ś p ś n p m g p m r s | P p S s P | p Ś n p
m g m ||
p p n n m m p p g g m m s s r r | s g g s m m s
p | p s n n p m g m ||
p n n p ś ś p r r ś r ġ m r Ś | s r g m r S s | , R g
m p d n ||
Ś Ś ś P P p S S s ś | , Ś P P s | , S s g m p n ||

He has composed a Swara Sahitya Varna 'Sarigamadani' in the raga Vasanta set to Adi tala. All the four avartas of pallavi and anupallavi begins with 'Swaraksharas' and the Charana begins with the raga's name.

The second ettugade swara is in 'Shrotovahayati' pattern :

r s η
m g r s η
d m g r s η
n d m g r s η
ś n d m g r s η

In the kriti 'Saraswati bhagavati' set to the raga Saraswati, the sahitya resembles 'gopucchayati' pattern :

S a r a s a v a n i
r a s a v a n i
s u v a n i
v a n i

Prasas are also incorporated in this kriti:

Saraswati bhagavati | vidyavati shubhamati || P ||
Saraswani rasavani | suvani vani madhuravani ||
Veena pāni Kalyani | kokila vani Shubha vani||
A.P ||
Sangīta sahitya|sāmraja prade|| Sāyujya
sāroopya|sāmīpya prade||
Sāmagāna Vidya trade | sārāsāksha mode
prade||
Sārasarva sampatkare |nārasimha kripāprade ||
c||

His Pani grahana mangala Ragamalika kriti 'Yuvaraja Kanteerava Nrisimham' wishing Yuvaraja Narasimharaja Wodeyar for his wedding, was composed as per the wishes of the Deputy Commissioner Sri. Kantha raje Urs and was presented to the court on 1st of July 1910. This composition is in twelve ragas - Nata, Mohana, Kalyani, Shahana, Nayaki, Arabhi, Todi, Saveri, Kanada, Vasanta, Mukhari and Shri. Names of the ragas are indicated in their respective sections, woven neatly with the sahitya. Each section has chitteswaras.

Mudras

His ankita is 'Narasimha' but in some compositions he has incorporated other mudras like:

Raga mudra as in:

Varna - Vāni pai - Nata -Adi tala - charana as gāna sudha madhura 'Nātya raga'.

Swara Sahitya Pada Varna - Vasanta - Adi tala Charana as 'Vasanta raga vihari' along with his ankita as Karigiri vāsa.

Kriti - Kadanakutūhala 'Sri Rama mantram' - Kadanakutūhala - Adl tala

Kriti - Saraswati Bhagavati Vidyavati Shubhamati - Saraswati - Rupaka tala.

Pāni grahana mangala ragamalika

Poshaka Mudra as in :

Tilana - Vasanta - Adi - mudra as 'Krishnaraja' (Nalwadi)

Apart from Composing, Karigiri Rao has authored two unpublished books - 'Gana vidya rahasya prakashini' and 'Sangīta Subhodhini', on Lakshya and Lakshana aspects of Music. As said

earlier, Karigiri Rao had sufficient knowledge of Sanskrit, learnt from his father and brother. This helped him understand all the Sanskrit granthas on music and become an expert in theoretical aspects. After reading these he thought of writing, basics of music in simple language Kannada for the benefit of Musicians, which resulted in writing the above mentioned treatises. 'Sangītha Subodhini' explains the technical terms of music in the theoretical section, and in Practical section - Sarale varases, Kritis and Devaranamas are written with notations.

Disciples

Karigiri Rao served as a Music teacher in blind school at Mysore. He had many students who earned name, fame and continued the lineage of Karigiri Rao. Nanjunda Rao, Bidaram Krishnappa, Chikka Ramarao, Harikatha Ananta Shastri from Gadwal, Dodda Ramarao, Piteelu Ramaswamy, Krishnamacharya, Shamacharya of Mandya, Subbaraya Shastry of Bejawada, Rallapalli Anantakrishna Sharma, Lakshmana Rao and T Venkata Rao his grandson, are prominent among his disciples. He was a bachelor, but reared his brother's grandson T Venkata Rao, who was an ace Vainika. Karigiri Rao passed away at Mysore on 25th October 1927 due to illness.

Senior Kanjari artiste AV Kashinath passes away

Senior Kanjira Vidwan and a master craftsman Sri. AV Kashinath known as Kashi in music circle passed away on 20 September 2022.

He was the grandson of Harmonium legend Late Arunachalappa and son of Violin Vidwan Late A Veerabhadraiah. Shri. Krishna Prasad, Hon. Secretary of SRLKM and Sri. AV Kashinath learnt Mridanga under Guru Sri. H Puttachar at the same time period. Kashi was adept at playing multiple instruments.

We are saddened by his demise and pass on our condolences to his family members, and his fans. We pray God for his Sadgathi.

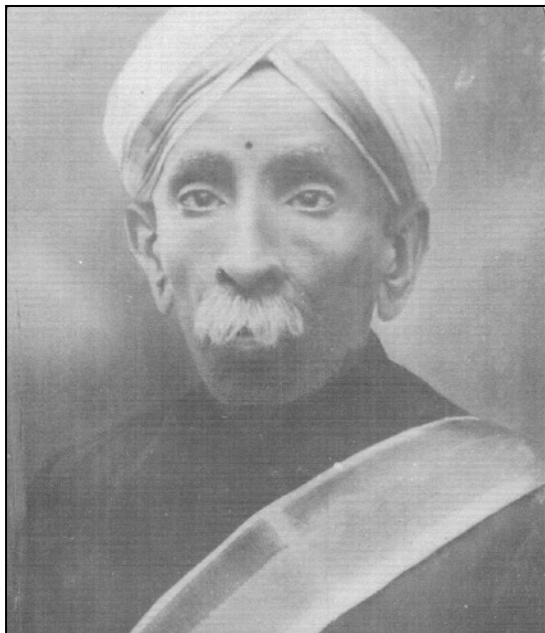
Our Upcoming Programmes

02 Oct '22 Sunday 5-30 p.m	Kruthi Bhat (Vocal), Sindhu Suchetan (Violin), BS Prashanth (Mridanga), Anil Parashara M (Kanjari)
28 Oct to 01 Nov '22	Music Festival in Association with SUSWARALAYA COLLEGE OF MUSIC
06 Nov '22 Sunday 5-30 p.m	Swarathmika (Vocal), Sindhu Suchetan (Violin), Akshay Anand (Mridanga) Courtesy : S. Anand Family
13 Nov '22 Sunday 5.30 p.m	Rendering of compositions of Sri H. Yoganarasimham to commemorate with his 125th year Birthday Celebration. G Srikanth (Vocal), BK Raghu (Violin), Anoor Anantha Krishna Sharma (Mridanga), Omkar Rao (Ghata).
04 Dec '22 Sunday 5.30 P.M	Sruthi Sagar (Flute), Vaibhva Ramani (Violin), GS Ramanujan (Mridanga), SN Narayanamurthy (Ghata)
01 Jan '23 Sunday 5.30 pm	Special Veena concert for the New Year Ramana Balachandran (Veena), B.C. Manjunath (Mridangam), Anoor Sunad Anoor (Kanjari)
08 Jan '23 Sunday 5.30 pm	HS Prashanth (Vocal), Nalina Mohan (Violin), N. Vasudev (Mridanga), Ranganatha Chakravarthi (Ghatam)
05 Feb '23 to 12 Feb '23	Spring Music Festival Programme at Bangalore Gayana Samaja
05 Mar '23 5.30 pm	HV Raghuram, Mattur Vishwajith and Karthikeya Ramachandra (Violin Trio), S Anirudha Bhat (Mridanga), Anil Parashara (Kanjari)
18 -19 Mar '23 Full Day	Pallavi Sammela - 2023

Vainika Praveena Veena Subbanna (1861-1939)

TB Narasimhachar

(This article is an extract from The Hindu dated 05 July 1987)



Though Vainika Shikhamani Seshanna's name is more familiar among music lovers and musicians, both within and outside Karnataka, Vainika Praveena Subbanna, a relative and contemporary of Seshanna had earned for himself a place in the galaxy of eminent vainikas. He was an equally colourful personality. If the Mysore veena tradition has survived for more than 25 generations, he has played a prominent part in it. Subbanna survived for nearly 13 years after Seshanna's death and has left behind a coterie of disciples who are in turn passing on his tradition.

Seshanna and Subbanna trace their ancestors to the brothers Veena Kuppayya and Appayya, who are said to have lived during the early part

of the 18th century. They are said to have migrated to Thanjavur and earned laurels for themselves as eminent musicians in the court of King Sarfoji, the Maharashtrian ruler and a great patron of music, who presented to them the Jagir of Kapisthala, a silver veena and other costly presents in recognition of their musical eminence. Kuppayya's grandson was Veena Venkatasubbaiah, who adorned the court of Maharaja Krishnaraja Wodeyar III of Mysore. Venkatasubbaiah's grandson was Veena Bakshi (chief) Subbanna. Thus, Subbanna became heir not only to the rich musical legacy of his grandfather, but also to his vast lands and other properties accumulated through munificent royal patronage.

On Venkatasubbaiah's death, his second wife is said to have adopted Seshappa, who later came to be known as Dodda Seshanna, an eminent vainika, who became the guru of both Seshanna and Subbanna. Chikkaramanna, a relative of Venkatasubbaiah, migrated back to Mysore from Thanjavur and sought royal patronage. His son was Vainika Shikhamani Seshanna. Thus, Seshanna and Subbanna became the fountain heads of the Mysore veena lineage, which continues to this day and may be expected to continue for many generations to come. Both learnt vocal music under Mysore Sadashiva Rao and veena under Dodda Seshanna. In addition, Subbanna received general education in the royal school along with the heir apparent Chamaraja Wodeyar. Because of their relationship and common musical training, Seshanna and Subbanna would appear to have given many veena duets in their early life. But, Subbanna, having had a vast fortune of his own, in preference to a professional life, derived pleasure



File photo of Veene Subbanna (Left) with Veene Sheshanna

from imparting his knowledge to a host of disciples. In fact, he patronised many musicians both local and visiting by arranging chamber music programmes in his house and bestowing costly presents on them on par with those presented by the Ruler himself. He lived a sort of epicurean life. He was fond of costly perfumes, silk and lace dresses and entertaining his guests on a lavish scale. Naturally this landed him in penury during his last days.

Subbanna had two wives. Having lost his only son, Subbanna treated his disciples like his own sons and lavished his affection on them in all ways. When Maharaja Chamaraja Wodeyar ascended the throne, he remembered his boyhood friend and classmate, Subbanna and had him as his constant companion and adviser in matters of music. In fact, the Ruler indulged in the pastime of accompanying on violin Subbanna's vocal music with Seshanna playing veena. There is an interesting anecdote regarding Subbanna's affection for Seshanna. The latter was for all purposes a professional musician but, the main source of patronage was from the Ruler. There was a time when he became 'Persona-non-grata' with the Maharaja and found himself in economic distress. Subbanna came to know about it and tactfully persuaded the Ruler to present Seshanna with a sum of four thousand rupees (remember its then purchase value) by pointing out that Seshanna had an invaluable jewel in his possession which could be had on payment of the Seshanna's immortal Tillana in the Raga Jhanjooti (Senjuruti) which is a favourite with vocalists and instrumentalists

even to this day, wherever Carnatic music is heard (Dhirana Tana dheenta Dirana). Thus, when the ruler came to know about Seshanna's plight, the latter was restored to royal favour. On another occasion, that guileless immortal violinist Tirukodikaval Krishna Iyer straight away on arrival in Mysore sought royal audience, not being aware of the palace formalities, to approach the Ruler only through the proper channel, namely, through the Bakshi concerned (Subbanna) as Iyer thought that the telegram from the Palace inviting him to perform before the Ruler entitled him to direct audience. Subbanna, who came to know about the predicament of this eminent violinist extricated him from an embarrassing situation and later arranged for Royal audience and honours in addition to his own munificent gifts.

Subbanna was never known to turn a visitor or poor dependent out of doors. He was generous to a fault. He often ran into heavy debts with his grocer and other traders and had to clear them by selling his property, movable and immovable one by one. The late vainika Sermadevi Subrahmanya Sastri, a senior and well-known disciple of Seshanna has vouchsafed for the fact that stalwarts like Kalyanakrishna Bhagavathar of Trivandrum (senior), his brother Ramachandra Bhagavathar, Sangameswara Sastri of Pithapuram, Venkataramana Das of Vizianagaram (all eminent vainikas of Subbanna's time), Tirukkodikaval Krishna Iyer (violin), Mahavidyanatha Iyer, Ramanathapuram (Poochi) Srinivasa Iyengar have all had unstinted tribute to the excellence of Subbanna's mastery over

the instrument which they heard when he played host to them. As a disciple of Mysore Sadasiva Rao, he had a good repertoire of his guru's compositions.

Whenever Subbanna undertook a tour, a retinue of followers accompanied him with all the paraphernalia required for his camping, including a box full of costly presents. When he visited many places in Tamil Nadu (the then Madras Presidency) he paid his respects to various Pandarasannadhis, who were great patrons of music, the Rajas of Ramanathapuram, Travancore, etc., with valuable gifts. They in turn after having listened to his veena play conferred on him titles like Vainika Vara Kesari (Raja of Ramnad), Vainika Vara Choodamani (Pandarasannadhi).

Amongst his disciples may be mentioned many eminent musicians like (late) Chikka Rama Rao (vocalist) Belakawadi Srinivasa Iyengar, Swaramurti VN Rao (veena), V Srikantha Iyer (veena), Subbamma alias Akkammanni, Andal Sisters. Dr. PS Krishnamacharya, one of his disciples, was also a qualified sculptor and as such had the unique privilege of his guru Subbanna visiting his studio to pose for his busts in plaster and marble, at a number of sittings. These busts won universal acclaim for their artistry and fidelity to the maestro's personality (1936). Many other musicians used to seek his guidance. Subbanna had a bias for Rakti Ragas like Kalyani, Begada, Khamas, Kedaragowla, Kambhoji and the two kritis, 'Kanikaranunchi' (Panchama Raga by Tachur Singaracharyulu and 'Rama Neeyada' (Dileepaka) were his favourites. He has composed Swarajathis in Kambhoji, Karnataka Kapi and Keeravani, Varnas in Atana, Poorvikalyani kritis in Kannada language, in the ragas Dharmavathi, Dhenuka and Rishabhapriya. He has also composed a Navaragamalika, many tillanas and javalis. He was also an expert in singing 16 Kalai Pallavis in his fine high pitched voice (4-katta sruti) and used to blend well with his gayaki style of veena play.

It was customary for him to attend the palace daily and along with Seshanna und Bidaram Krishnappa supervise the progress of the

younger musicians and guide them. These stalwarts constituted the unofficial audition board for young aspirants before they could venture to sing or play before the Ruler.

Subbanna used to conduct a number of music concerts at his residence just to encourage and introduce budding artistes from within and outside this State. In doing so, he would excel in the payments in cash or presentation the royal rewards given to them. He had cupboards full of costly walking sticks, boxes full of gold rings studded with precious stones from which he used to readily select and present to these aspirants. He was famous as Punugu Subbanna, because the costly perfumes used to herald in advance his arrival. Even in his food habits he was an epicurean, and ate only a limited quantity of food of his choice.

But this magnificent way of life could not last long and he was forced to pay the inevitable price for it during his last days. He withdrew from all the people who used to surround him during his days of opulence, the sycophants, who misused his magnanimity. Once, Subbanna desired to reward a young vainika from Tamil Nadu, whose musical attainments, he very much appreciated. He offered him the diamond ring which he was wearing at the time with the remark that he had only that left with him to offer. Once, a senior disciple of Subbanna, out of jealousy towards a young musician who had found favour with Subbanna, made some critical remarks about the young man. Subbanna who happened to overhear them, immediately sent this disciple out of his house but, in his usual compassionate way took him back after three months of anxious waiting.

Some old timers recall the tragic sight of Subbanna when he was on his walks. His death on July 13, 1939, at the advanced age of 85 years proved Nature's act of mercy on this prince amongst musicians, who did not deserve to live in such utter penury. But the rich veena tradition which he had left behind through a host of disciples, continues to this day.

Mysore K Vasudevacharya (1865 - 1961)

H Yoganarasimham

(This article is an extract from The Hindu dated 01 March 1970)



ON the warm auspicious morning of May 28, 1865, a pious pandit was going round the inner shrine of Sri Varahaswamy temple inside the fort at Mysore, chanting the name of the Lord Para Vasudeva on his lips. A person appeared there and enthusiastically told him of the birth of a grandson to him. The pandit bowed to the Lord with closed eyes and said "Since the Lords name Vasudeva is on my lips, the child will bear that name". This child lived for almost

a century to become the great composer Vasudevacharya who enriched Karnataka music with some 200 songs. The pandit was Sri Gopalacharya, his maternal grandfather.

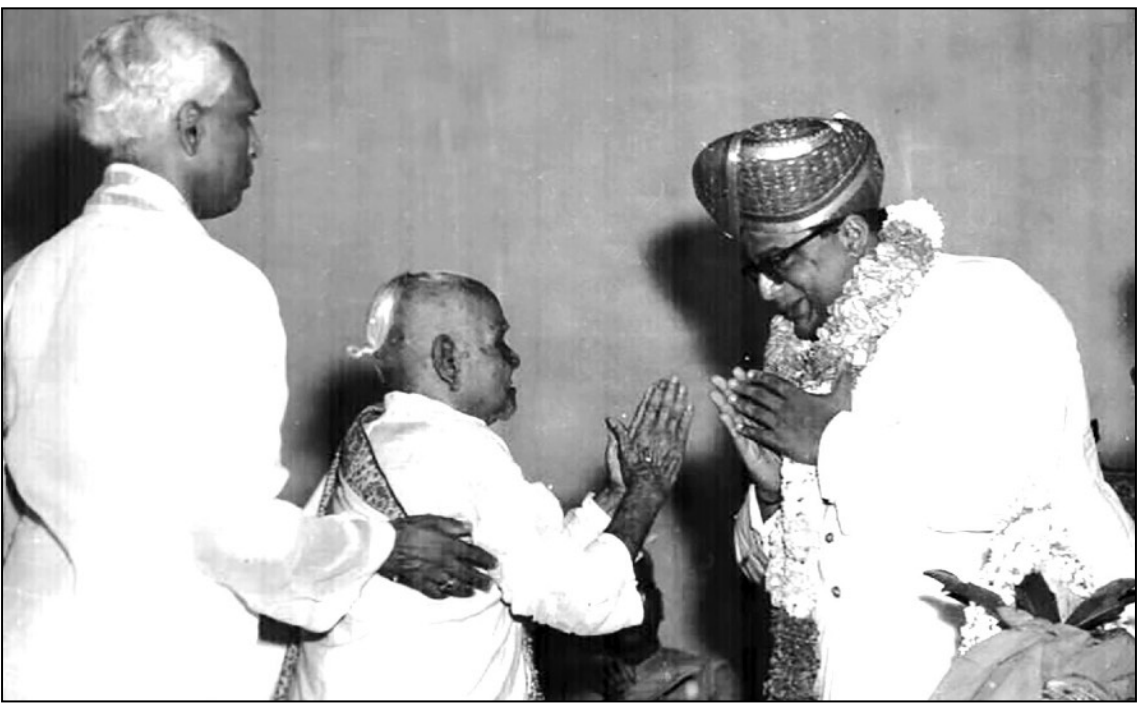
Vasu was the son of Pandit Subramanyachar, a pauranik in the Mysore palace. Unluckily for Vasu, he passed away when the latter was barely three years of age. He grew under the tutelage of his maternal grandfather. Gopalacharya was a disciplinarian and he was determined to make Vasu a greater Sanskrit Pandit than his father. Vasu's early Sanskrit lessons were begun under Pandit Periswamy Thirumalachar. But, his early instinct for music made him take music lessons from one Subbaraya, much to the dislike of his grandfather.

Early Training in Music

Vasu's regular schooling seems to have started late in his thirteenth year in the Maharaja's Sanskrit college. He had to study two subjects - Sanskrit Sahitya and his favourite subject, Sangita. Lessons in music were given by Veena Padmanabhaya. Vasu got married in his 16th year, but his formal education continued. The turning point in his life came in his 19th year when he happened to listen to a music concert given by

Patnam Subramania Iyer. He was so overwhelmed by the music that he spared no effort to become his pupil. He succeeded in getting a scholarship and a recommendation from the palace which enabled him to go to Tiruvaiyaru and study music under Patnam Subramania Iyer.

Vasu's discipleship under him was for six years according to one account and two years according to another. He imbibed the style and



Mysore K Vasudevacharya with HH Sri Jayachamaraja Wodeyar

technique of his master. Patnam Subramania Iyer started with the varnam 'Marachi' in Bega-da which was his favourite raga. This one varnam alone took three months. Vasu had to do each avarta in three degrees of speed forward and backward and had also to do the raga alapana within the compass of each avarta. In this way, raga alapana and neraval came in for intensive practice in due course. Vasu also watched his master composing varnas and kritis in the afternoons.

As a Gayaka, Vasudevacharya was a rasika and a creator of rasikas. He was ranjaka as well as a 'sikshakara' even for professionals. Mastery of the intricacies of raga, tana, neraval and pallavi portrayal formed the 'forte' of the Acharya. His singing of Sanskrit slokas in ragamalika expounding the meaning and mood through appropriate ragabhava, was his inimitable speciality. He was equally at home in the singing of Hindustani ragas.

The Acharya's voice was 'ghana' and 'prachura' (voluminous). His voice production was varied including the 'vadyakaku' for instance, imitation of the sound of the conch and sometimes of the veena. His store of breath seemed inexhaustible and no word in the sahitya was broken in the wrong place for lack

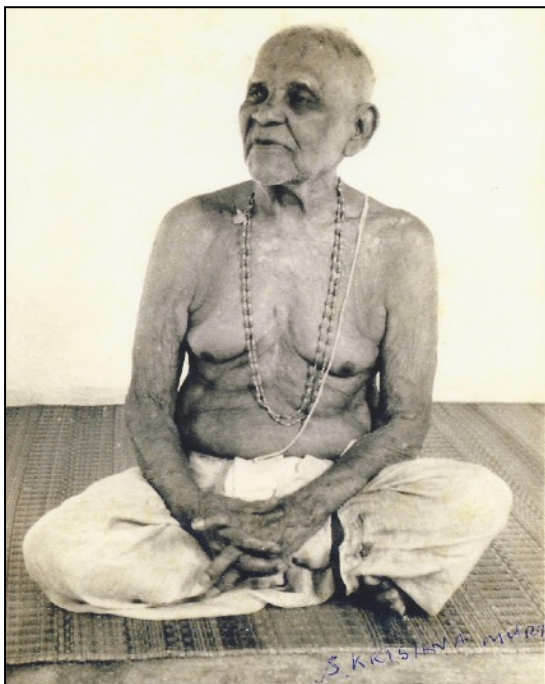
of breath. The sruthi assonance was perfect. He would patiently spend a long time tuning the tambura.

Stress on 'Mandra-Sadhana'

The Acharya's voice ranged from anumandra panchama to tara shadja. This suited his portrayal of ghana ragas and tanas. He felt some difficulty in the tara sthayi. His theory was that the lower the voice can reach, the higher it can also reach just as the greater the force with which a rubber ball is hit on the ground, the higher it will bounce. He laid stress on 'mandra-sadhana'. Voice specialists of the North, like Pandit Vishnu Digambar and Pandit Onkarnath Thakur, also strongly advocated 'mandra-sadhana' and realised the advantages of facility in the tara sthayi.

For some time, he conducted Bhajana every Friday evening. These were a musical feast. On one of these occasions, about the year 1920, he sang the raga Sahana for about an hour and a half. It was enthralling. I remember how Sri N Channakesavaiah choked with tears fell at his feet, exclaiming "From which Heaven did you bring down Sahana today to this earth"

The Acharya lost his wife when he was about 40. His only daughter had slipped into a well



Mysore K Vasudevacharya (Photo courtesy Late Shri. S Krishnamurthy, Grandson of Mysore K Vasudevacharya)

and died. His only son was not a success in Life. These events and the uncongenial atmosphere at home, made him discontinue the weekly Bhajana. He, however, asked his pupils to carry it on in their respective homes. Accordingly, Sri BK Padmanabha Rao held Bhajanas on Thursdays, the writer on Saturdays and Sri N Channakesavaiah on Sundays. The Acharya attended these regularly and he was such a good listener.

As Guru, the Acharya was the very personification of grace. Instead of the pupils going to the guru, it was the guru who came to the pupils homes. His teaching consisted of sustained demonstrations rather than actual instruction. It was my great good fortune to learn under him, especially from 1928 to 1936. The Acharya regarded his pupils as his good friends.

Several Titles and Decorations came to the Acharya. Rabindranath Tagore called him "Sangita Kala Kovida". "Sarasa Gana Shiromani" "Sangita Sahitya Vidwanmani" were the titles awarded to him by the Heads of Mutts. The Madras Music Academy awarded him the title of "Sangita Kalanidhi" in 1935. "Sangita Sastra

Rathna" and "Sangita Sastra Visharada" were the titles awarded by the Mysore Palace.

With all his greatness as a performer, it is as a composer that the Acharya will be long remembered. He has composed about 200 songs. He had published his own compositions, which in itself is a unique privilege not given to any previous composer. This is due to the aesthetic appreciation of and the discerning patronage bestowed on him by two Maharajas of Mysore. Two volumes of his kirtanas entitled "Vasudeva Kirtana Manjari" and a volume "Navaratna Ragamalike" have come out. They contain 150 compositions. About 50 more compositions of his are understood to be getting ready for publication and would contain Swarajathis, Varnams, Tillanas and a Tala-raga-malika, covering the 35 Suladi Talas.

100 Ragas handled

Among his compositions may be mentioned :

- (a) a group of 24 kritis, all in Sanskrit on the 24 names of the Lord, Keshava, Narayana, etc.,
- (b) ragamalikas on the Musical Trinity,
- (c) The music he set for the Ramayana ballet designed at Kalakshetra, Adyar.

In the compositions so far published, the Acharya has handled about 100 ragas, all of them popular ones, except for a piece in "Megha Ranjini". To have brought out genuine, original tunes in familiar traditional ragas like Bhairavi, Shankarabharanam and Thodi is the true measure of his greatness.

To mention a few celebrated songs : 'Palukavademira' in Devamanohari was acclaimed by MS Ramaswami Aiyar (author of Tyagaraja) as one song enough to immortalise the composer. 'Brochevarevaruva', so well popularised by Smt. MS Subbalakshmi establishes Kamas as a Bhashanga Raga in Carnatic music, 'Pranatarthi haram' in Janjoti is another of his popular pieces. 'Lambodaramavalambe' a dignified song in Kambhoji can at once spell the success of any concert. The grace of 'Ramabhirama' in Madhyamavathi overpowers the soul.



Mysore V Doreswamy Iyengar discussing about music on a palm-leaf manuscript with Mysore K Vasudevacharya (Photography TS Satyan, File photo courtesy from Illustrated Weekly of India)

Melliflence is a characteristic feature of the Acharya's compositions. He is often called "Abhinava Tyagaraja" on that account. Anyone who has tried his hand at composition will easily realise how easy it is to compose a difficult song and how difficult it is to compose an easy one.

The tempo of his composing was varied, sometimes quick sometimes slow. Early in 1940, he once happened to be my guest. After going round the house, he stood near the garden and suggested a number of flower plants and fruit trees to be grown. When it was pointed out they were all there he exclaimed, "How thick skulled of me to have given such plentiful suggestions before looking round in the garden".

At that time, his kriti 'Sivepahi Sri Chamundeswari' in Surati was taking shape in his mind. He had only composed the pallavi. He walked about in the garden and finished the song the very next day and taught it to my daughter. (By the way, the dedication of this song to Maharaja Krishnaraja Wodeyar IV has been needlessly changed to the name of his successor in the printed book).

Once the Acharya visited Tumkur. His old friend, UD Narayana Murthy, Munsif of the place took him to the tennis court. He gave the Acharya his pen and a bit of paper and requested him to compose a song in the raga Kharaharapriya by the time he finished his game. The entire song 'Ganasudharasa' was ready.

At the end of his Kriti 'Nannubrochutaku' in Sankarabharana, he composed the chittaswara in Western Style beginning: ss re nrnp dd. The Maharaja heard this from the palace band during his evening drive and felt amused. He sent word that he wanted another chittaswara in the Carnatic style. The new chittaswara was ready: s, P, dnsrs, n, srg, srgm, pgrs, rgmp, g, etc. The Maharaja heard this the very next day and was so pleased with it that he sent the composer a handsome present.

'Harini Bhajinche Bhagyamu' (Sankarabharana) was composed at the request of Vidwan Belakavadi Srinivasa Iyengar who challenged vidwans to get a kriti composed by the Acharya to match Muthiah Bhagavatar's 'Sahajaguna Rama' (Sankarabharana). The Acharya's piece



Mysore K Vasudevacharya (Left most) with Veena Subbanna and Veena Venkatagiriappa during Dasara festivities

earned equal admiration. But some time, a composition would be held up for several days. His 'Aniruddamashraye' in Aarabhi was thus held up. A pandit friend of his jokingly said to him: "Oh Your Aniruddha (unobstructed Lord) has become Nirudha (obstructed) !"

I wonder why the raga is found changed to Saranga in the published volume. I have the original version in Aarabhi taken down on July 16, 1922 along with a Sanskrit composition by the Acharya, 'Phalaksha Pahi' in Choornika style.

Sanskrit was his favourite medium. Ninety-four out of 150 compositions published so far are in Sanskrit. The rest are in Telugu. There is a criticism that his Sanskrit is not high-flown. In this respect, it was his aesthetic sense that prevailed. He would not like a song to be overweighted with high-flown words which would distract the mind from the music and melody. But he has shown in some of his Sanskrit slokas that he could rise to that level. His Sanskrit diction was correct and idiomatic.

There is yet another criticism that he did not favour Kannada as a medium for his songs though he was a Kannadiga. There is only one song in Kannada. 'Karunisou' (Saraswati Manohari) attributed to him. Maharaja Krishnaraja Wodeyar IV desired that he should compose in Kannada 108 pieces on Sri Chamundeshwari the guardian deity of the Mysore Royal House. The Acharya did not accede to it even at the risk of incurring royal

displeasure. It is a tribute to his composing skill that many of his songs passed on to the professional's repertoire even during his life-time.

Presidential Address

The last eight years of his life he spent at Kalakshetra Adyar, as Vice-President and Head of the Music Department. To crown all his titles, the award of Padma Bhushan by the President of India came to him in 1959. The Acharya full of years and honours, passed away on May 17, 1961.

The man was as great as his music. An intensely musical soul, he had realised Godhead as Ananda, and has shared his bliss with us through his beautiful songs. His religious devotion did not distinguish between Hari and Hara and he disapproved of the quarrels between the Heads of Mutts. He stood for devotion, pure and simple. He never made any mention of the tragic mishaps that befell him during his life. Throughout the 30 years of my association with him I never heard him say anything uncomplimentary about any other person, including musicians. Genial, kindly, full of jokes about himself as of others and as Sangita bhava incarnate he was always sought after. He won the love of one and all and the people of Mysore lovingly built a house for him, a unique tribute to any musician. True to the connotation of his name (Vasathi iti Vasuh), the Acharya will ever abide in our hearts and live through his compositions.

Vaggeyakara Vasudevacharya

*Original article in Kannada written by Dr. Nagavalli Nagaraj, Bangalore
English translation credit : Sachi R Sachidananda, Bangalore*



Painting of Vasudevacharya by VP Muraledharan of Kalakshetra, Madras

The cultural heritage of our land, Bharat, is personified by our classical Karnatak music, as it is a highly effective and powerful medium of art. This system of music has been nurtured and enriched by many great composers.

The term Vaggeyakara is applied to a composer who has created both the music and sahitya or lyric for the composition. There is equal importance in a Karnatak composition for both the music and the lyric. The melding of these two is what makes a good composition.

The essentials of a good composition are an emotive and rich musical structure as well as an evocative and meaningful lyrical structure.

Our compositions are set in rhythmic Tala structure. Melody, rhythm and words together combine in a composition to make it the central part of our Karnatak music. This also means that we hold in high reverence the Vaggeyakaras or composers who have created and gifted this rich treasure to our music.

There has been historically a succession of great composers in our music.

Among them are Sripadaraya, Vyasaraaya, Vadiraja, Purandara Dasa, Venkatamakhi, Kanaka Dasa, Kshetrajna, Sadashiva Brahmendra, Ramaswamy Dikshitar, Shyama Shastry, Thyagaraja and Muthuswami Dikshitar. These and many other great composers are reverentially remembered everyday by us.

Another great composer who comes in the tradition of the Trinity and has imbibed their Vaggeyakara Dharma is Sangita Kalanidhi Sri. Mysore Vasudevacharya. He enjoys an exalted position among Vaggeyakaras. He has enriched the compositional treasures of our music with his kritis, having shone as a bright star in the music world during the twentieth century.

Sahitya (lyric) full of devotion and Sangita of high creativity have combined in each of Sri. Vasudevacharya's compositions that number nearly 300 and are treasured by Karnatak musicians.

Jatiswara, Padavarna, Tanavarna, Kriti, Javali, Tillana and Ragamalika – all these compositional forms have been composed by him and have enriched our repertoire. He has even invented some ragas.

Sri. Vasudevacharya created a new raga 'Sundavadinodini' and composed in it the famous kriti, "Devadi Deva".

The Acharya also performed a large number of concerts from the age of 31 years till he was 85. He received many titles and honours including Padma Bhushan, Sangita Kalanidhi, Sangita Sahitya Vallabha, Gana Kala Kovida and others.

Belonging to a Madhva Vaidika Brahmana family, Sri. Vasudevacharya was born on 28th May 1865 to Sri. Subrahmanyacharya and Smt. Krishna Bayi. His forefathers were renowned as Pauranikas and Vedic scholars who came from the Coimbatore region first to Kanakapura and then moved to Mysore for better prospects.

Sri. Acharya lost his father early in his life and faced several hardships. His upbringing became the responsibility of his grandfather, Sri. Gopalacharya. The young Acharya was deeply interested in music and learnt his first lessons from one Sri. Subbarao who lived in their vicinity. But his grandfather wished that he pursued the study of Sanskrit in the famous 'Maharaja Sanskrita Pathashala' located nearby in order to master Sanskrit Vyakarana and literature. The young Acharya did so.

Sri. Vasudevacharya then went for advanced musical training to the famous maestros Sri. Veene Sheshanna and Sri. Veene Padmanabhaya. Thereafter, the Maharaja of Mysore gave him a scholarship to go and study under the famous composer Vidwan Patnam Subramania Iyer in Tiruvaiyaru.

On his return, Sri. Vasudevacharya enjoyed the status of the Asthana Vidwan in Mysore and lived a rich musical life for nearly a century. This honour from the Mysore Royalty was a fitting tribute to his lineage and his musical stature.

Sri. Vasudevacharya has composed beautiful kritis in both Telugu and Sanskrit. His lone composition in Kannada is in Saraswati Manohari, "Karunisau Thaye".

Determining to follow a solid structure in his compositional methodology, Sri. Acharya began with the 57 holy names of Maha Vishnu, viz. Keshava, Madhava and so on. Over the next 57 years, he composed 140 kirtanas/kritis.

The unbroken patronage of the great monarch, Sri. Nalwadi Krishnaraja Wadiyar, saw the publication of the first volume of Sri. Vasudevacharya's compositions in 1929. Then, in 1956, the munificence of His Highness Jayachamaraja Wadiyar saw the publication of the second volume. These two volumes are incomparable treasures of the Karnatak music system.

Sri. Acharya's first composition was in Mayamalavagaula, "Chintayeham", set to Trisha Rupakam. This composition was born after Sri. Acharya performed parayanam of the Ramayanam 108 times offering it at the feet of Saint Thyagaraja.

Sri. Acharya has composed more or less on all deities.

The Metrical and Lyrical Aspects of Sri. Vasudevacharya's Compositions

It is considered essential to have metrical agreement (Prasa) between Pallavi and Anupallavi in any composition. But musicologists allow some latitude in this respect when it comes to Charanams.

In Sanskrit, Prasa or metre is in the ending of the "pada" or quarter. But in Telugu and Kannada, the metre or Prasa has to be at the beginning of the line. It is a hallmark of his excellence as a composer that Sri. Vasudevacharya has adhered to metrical rules for both the beginning and end of the quarter. Let us see now six types of Adiprasa in his works:

(IAST diacritical marks have been added below to show the text unambiguously)

Siṃha Prāsa

1. rāga: Māyāmālāvagaṇḍa tāḷa: ādi

*kali narulaku nī mahima tēlusunā
jaladhīsayana jagajjanmādi kāraṇa*

2. rāga: sāveri. tāḷa: caturaśra rūpaka

*puruṣottama māṇḍapālaya vāsudeva
karuṇākara kamalanayana devadeva*

Gaja Prāsa

1. rāga: kānaḍa tāḷa: khaṇḍa tripuṭa

vāsudevamaniṣaṇḍa namāmyaham

bhūsurādinuta padāmbhoruham

2. rāga: kalyāṇi tāḷa: caturasra rūpaka

*śrīmadādi tyāgarāja guruvaram namāmyaham
bhūmijāramāṇa caraṇakamalabhajana durand-
haram*

Haya Prāsa

1. rāga: simḥemḍramadhyama tāḷa: miśra chāpu

*pannagendraśayana pannagāri vāhana
pannagācala bhavyasadana prapannārti haraṇ
nipuṇa*

2. rāga: madhyamāvatī tāḷa: caturaśra tripuṭa

*nannu brovarāda vegame
sannutāṅga śrī sītāpate*

Vṛṣabha Prāsa

1. rāga: kedāragauḷa tāḷa: ādi

*śaṁbho śaṅkara pāhimām
jaṁbhārivinuta padāmboruha*

2. rāga: haṁsadhvani tāḷa: caturaśra tripuṭa

*vaṁdesniśamaham vāraṇa vadanam
nandīśavāhana vara nandanam*

Anuprāsa

We can see plenty of the use of Anuprasa and such śabdālankāras in Sri. Acharya's compositions. Let us see an example in his composition in Todi.

*parātpara raghuvara ninnu nēranammitira
dayākara
sarojabhavamukha surehitārthada girīśa surucira
śarāśamadahara*

We can observe here the repeated occurrence of repha.

In another kriti of his, “Gokulanilaya Kripalaya Palaya”, we can see plenty of Adi and Antya Prasas as well as Chekaanuprasa.

In Sri. Acharya's kritis, in addition to Shabdālankara, we can observe Arthalankara and Rupakalankaras (metaphors and similes).

In Sri. Vasudevacharya's compositions, we can also see the expert incorporation of Chitte swaras. Examples are the Bilahari kriti, “Sri

Chamundeshwari”, Mohana kriti, “Rara Rajivalochana” and the famous Khamach kriti, “Broche Varevarura”. In this last one, we can see the special use of Kakali Nishada by Sri. Acharya.

While ‘Ikanaina’ is associated with the raga name Pushpalathika, Sri. Acharya called the same raga Pushpalatha. His own composition, ‘Guru Kripaleka’ employs this raga very differently compared to the composition ‘Ikanaina’.

It is possible to perform a complete concert with variegated hues singing only Sri. Vasudevacharya's compositions. Starting with the varnam especially to depict one's prowess by singing an Ata Tala varnam. Sri. Acharya has composed an Ata tala varnam in Kambhoji, “Akhilandakoti Brahmandanayaka”. In addition, several madhyama kala and vilamba kala (medium and slow tempo) kritis have been composed by him. They address a number of different deities. His compositions like ragamalikas, tillanas and javalis give much scope for enhancing the display of manodharma in a concert.

The publication titled “Vasudeva Kirtana Manjari” in two volumes covers all compositions of Sri. Vasudevacharya with sahitya as well as clear musical notations.

The book by Sri. Acharya titled, “Naa Kanda Kalavidaru” is autobiographical and gives very interesting anecdotes about many colourful experiences of the Acharya. His other works are “Navaratna Ragamalike”, “Karnataka Sangita Lakshana Bhaga”, and “Valmiki Ramayana”. In his sunset years, acceding to the request of Smt. Rukmini Devi of Adayar Kalakshetra, he took the position of principal Acharya in the famous institution. He also set to music select verses from the Valmiki Ramayana and created operatic works suitable for dance dramas. As a result, the Kalakshetra Valmiki Ramayana dance dramas are world famous to this day.

Taking a comprehensive look at the works of Sri. Vasudevacharya, one can say that his compositions provide authentic study material for students of music as well as teachers and expert musicians. They help them to develop a deeper understanding of the Lakshya and Lak-

shana of Karnatak music. Looking at the bountiful aesthetic riches of his works, one can say that Lakshya and Lakshana come together in them in a most appropriate manner to give great delight to connoisseurs.

Thus, by dedicating his long and rich life in the service to Karnatak music and creating a great body of compositions, Sri.Vasudevacharya

shone as a supreme Vaggeyakara which is a matter of pride for Mysore and all of South India.

Honorary Doctorate Degree to H H Sri Yathiraja Jeeyar Swami by Tumkur University

Recognising the 53 years of his social work and services to humanity, Tumkur University recently conferred an honorary Doctorate Degree on H H Sri Yathiraja Jeeyar Swami at Sri Chowdaiah Memorial Hall attended by over thousand devotees. Honourable Governor of Karnataka Sri. Thawar Chand Gehlot presented the Degree and Honourable Higher Education Minister Dr. CN Ashwath Narayan (Pro Chancellor) presided the occasion. Swami gracefully accepted the honours and said that he is happy that

an esteemed educational University has recognised the service to humanity and dedicated his honour to Swami Ramanuja. Vice Chancellor of Tumkur University and other Academy Council Members were among the other signatories present on the special occasions. The act of Tumkur University conducting the convocation outside the University campus or Raj Bhavan (of course with the due permission of the Chancellor - The Governor) was duly appreciated by one and all.



Bidaram Krishnappa (1866 - 1931)

*Late S Krishnamurthy (grandson of Mysore Vasudevacharya)
(This article is an extract from the book 'With Masters of Melody
by S Krishnamurthy published by Ananya GML Cultural Academy, Bangalore)*



(The book "With Masters of Melody" by S Krishnamurthy is a translation of the original Kannada version of the book 'Naa Kanda Kalavidaru' by Mysore Vasudevacharya. The article is a narration of autobiography of Bidaram Krishnappa by Mysore Vasudevacharya)

Krishnappa was a Konkani Brahmin. His ancestors hailed from Nandalike village near Udupi in Dakshina Kannada. Krishnappa's father Viswanathiah was an actor in the Dasavatara Mandali of Dharmasthala. He had made a name for playing the roles of women characters, especially that of Sita.

Once, on his way back to Mysore from Subramanya, His Highness Mummadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar visited Dharmasthala. Heggade, the religious head of the place, arranged a few performances by the Dasavatara Mandali to mark the royal visit.

The Maharaja was pleased and invited Seshappa, the leader of the Mandali, to bring his troupe to Mysore.

Viswanathiah came down with his troupe and settled down in Mysore. The actors who visited Mysore and made it their bidara (camp) came to be known as Bidaradavaru.

Viswanathiah was getting old by now. Acting was strenuous for him. He was finding it hard to earn a living. He had lost all his children except two sons, Subbaraya and Krishnappa. The brothers realised the difficulties their father was facing and tried to earn whatever they could to support the family.

The elder son Subbaraya had an attractive voice. Carrying a tamboora, he went round the city singing and seeking alms. Krishnappa followed him.

Crowds collected around the singers as they moved from street to street singing devaranamas melodiously and with great devotion. Admirers took them home and rewarded them as liberally as they could.

Subbaraya conducted weekly bhajans at his place on Fridays. Prominent local vidwans used to take part in these bhajans. Karur Ramaswamy, a famous vidwan of the times, sang on one such occasion and it was a superb per-

formance. Krishnappa's mother, Saraswati Bai, requested him to train Krishnappa in music.

Ramaswamy was past seventy and had no wife or children to support him in his old age. "Let us see. God is great", he said.

On a certain morning, Krishnappa could not accompany his brother on his rounds. Subbaraya did not return home till late in the afternoon. Meanwhile, Krishnappa, feeling hungry, asked his mother for something to eat.

Poor woman ! There was nothing at home she could give him before Subbaraya returned home and brought provisions. She broke into tears.

Krishnappa left the house and came to the Anjaneya Temple inside the fort. Sitting in front of the temple, he started singing devaranamas. But who would come to the temple at that unearthly hour? Oppressed by hunger and thirst, he soon fell asleep.

Just then, one Dr. Nanjundiah chanced to pass by. He shook Krishnappa awake and heard his pathetic story. He took pity on him and sent him home placing a rupee in his hand.

Since that day Krishnappa used to sit in front of the Anjaneya temple singing devaranamas, incidentally earning a few coins.

He attracted the attention of Sahukar Timmayya who used to visit the temple regularly. "Here was a bright young boy whose voice had rare dignity and sweetness," he thought

"What is your name, young man?"

"Krishnappa"

"Do you wish to learn music?"

"I am so poor that I cannot even afford to live on ganji (gruel)! How could I even dream of learning the art of the gandharvas?" replied Krishnappa.

"Come along with me," said Timmayya.

Krishnappa was now lost in a whirlpool of thoughts. Who was this man who was trying to help him to realise his long-cherished desire?

How did he come to be interested in a fellow for whom nobody cared?

Engrossed as he was in such thoughts, Krishnappa was hardly aware of the distance they had walked. He became conscious of the world around him only when Timmayya halted in front of a house and tapped on the door.

"Who is it?" came a voice from inside. It sounded familiar to Krishnappa. The door opened. It was incredible. Krishnappa had longed to have this person at his house and prayed to God for the fulfilment of his longing every day. Here, without any effort on his part, was fulfilment before him.

"Please come in, Sahukar. What makes you come all this way to see me ? Come in, Krishnappa," said Ramaswamy.

"How do you know this boy?" exclaimed Timmayya.

"I know him well", the vidwan replied.

"I sang in his house only the other day. May I know the object of your visit?"

"It is only this boy who brings me here. Kindly accept him as your pupil.

Train him up with all your heart. It will be my pleasure to see that your efforts do not go without proper reward", said Timmayya and placed a hundred rupee note in Ramaswamy's hand.

Ramaswamy said: "Have I ever disregarded your word? The other day, his mother made a similar request and I told her that I would consider the matter. Her request is now supported by your command. I am happy. I shall teach him to the best of my ability."

Krishnappa was overcome. He hung down his head and stood speechless. His eyes moist with tears.

By his devotion to his guru and earnestness in his studies, Krishnappa made rapid progress. Sahukar Timmayya who called there frequently was happy.

Krishnappa's voice was rough and did not help him to sing with ease in the low and higher octaves. He had to do rigorous lagas as it were to make his voice pliable. But he was a man of strong will and managed it. As advised by his guru, Krishnappa used to sit waist deep in water in the early hours of the morning and practise.

His guru used to tell him: "A good physique is as vital for a musician as a good voice. After the morning sadhana and before taking your bath, you should do physical exercise. While singing, sit erect in padmasana, as otherwise, the notes will not originate from the nabhi and take their accurate form. You should learn to maintain the tempo of the piece from start to finish".

The sole aim of the disciple was to follow implicitly the commands of his guru. The result was that Krishnappa's voice softened. Shaped by strenuous sadhana, his voice became melodious and acquired a wide sweep.

Till the last day of his life, Krishnappa took as much care to preserve his voice as he had earlier taken to acquire it. Never did he step out of the house without protecting his throat with a woollen scarf. His concert would generally begin by four in the afternoon and last till ten in the night. During this long recital, Krishnappa did not even put a pepper corn into his mouth to clear his throat. Throughout the performance, his voice retained a uniform strength and sweetness.

After learning under Karur Ramaswamy, Krishnappa continued his studies under Giribhattara Tammayya, Karigirirayaru and Veena Seshanna.

Timmayya's next effort was to secure royal patronage for Krishnappa. The other person who was similarly interested in Krishnappa's progress was Dr. Nanjunda Rao. Whatever Krishnappa achieved, he owed to the support and encouragement of these two well-wishers.

Dewan Rangacharlu was planning to convert the Dharmasthala Yakshagana Mandali which had settled down in Mysore into a palace troupe and arrange stipends for all the actors. He got three stage plays written : Prahladachar-

itra in Sanskrit, Dhruvacharitra in Marathi and Ambarisa Charite in Kannada. Rangacharlu himself chose the cast. Krishnappa was allotted the role of sutradhara. These plays were first staged at Hosa Chatra which is now known as Samskrita Pathasala.

With the Dewan himself evincing such interest in the plays, the performances were naturally of a very high order. The Maharaja was very much pleased.

As suggested by Rangacharlu, the actors were sanctioned salaries from the palace. Krishnappa was sanctioned a salary of six rupees a month. He performed a couple of concerts before the Maharaja which brought him royal honours.

It was Krishnappa's firm conviction that the hunger which prompted him the other day to run up to the Maruti temple and unexpectedly secure the patronage of Dr. Nanjunda Rao and Sahukar Timmayya was in fact a blessing of Maruti and God Rama who became his favourite deity.

Rama Mandiras were the usual venues of musical concerts in those days. Krishnappa had performed in almost every one of them and associated himself with their work in many ways. None of them had a building which was impressive or a concert hall which could be termed adequate. He decided to do something about this and set out on a musical tour of South India. His concerts not only secured a place of pride for Mysore in a larger cultural heritage but also brought in ample funds for the Rama Mandira he wanted to build. The present Sri Prasanna Sita Rama Mandira at Mysore stands as a glorious testimony to Krishnappa's devotion to Rama and his own attainments in music.

Krishnappa's visits to the South established closer contacts between the local vidwans and those of the South and the impact this had on the growth of the art in Mysore was significant.

When Krishnappa's name spread far and wide, he naturally became the victim of treachery of those who were jealous. They did not hesitate even to poison him. Krishnappa's mother Saraswati Bai grew nervous and started worry-

ing about his safety. She made him promise that he would not accept any thing to eat or drink anywhere outside the house. Infact, Krishnappa would not accept even a cup of milk at the end of his concerts.

While his antagonists caused him great anxiety, he faced them with great boldness. A certain Narasimhaiah who was a manager in the office of the Resident Engineer, Southern Maratha Railways, had once arranged a concert by Krishnappa in his house in Bangalore. The concert was attended by many vidwans and connoisseurs of music who bestowed unique honours on Krishnappa for his performance.

This news reached Mysore. Soon after Krishnappa returned to Mysore, Veena Seshanna invited him to his house. A big gathering had assembled in Seshanna's place including a well-known South Indian musician.

"Krishnappa, I heard all the news about your achievements in Bangalore. It appears the people have proclaimed you a Mahavidwan. Well, it is entirely the privilege of vidwans like us to confer such a distinction. You are, therefore, required to sing before us today and earn our recognition before you can accept the distinction conferred on you by the people of Bangalore", declared Seshanna.

Meanwhile, the South Indian vidwan demonstrated a aksharakala pallavi which he had practised in privacy for over six months and said, "Krishnappa, it is not necessary that you should perform a full length concert. It is enough if you negotiate for a while the pallavi I sang just now

Krishnappa was burning with indignation. Yet, he did not lose heart. He stood up respectfully and told Seshanna : "Guruji, whatever reputation and fame I have earned is all due to your kind blessings. If you insist on putting your disciple to test, well, I am fully prepared to obey your command and also to accept the vidwan's challenge. But on one condition. After I sing the pallavi with which this vidwan has come prepared, I shall frame a pallavi here, right now. The vidwan should sing it.

Krishnappa sang the six aksharakala pallavi with absolute ease and confidence. "Now what about my challenge?" asked Krishnappa.

Seshanna hugged him with tears of joy and said, "Krishnappa! Really, you are a ganakesari. I made you come here today and sing only with a view to proving your worth to those who were talking lightly of you behind your back. May God bless you!"

The Maharaja conferred the title of 'Ganavisarada' on Krishnappa. He was soon the favourite of the king.

An interesting incident happened on the occasion of the marriage of His Highness the Yuvaraja of Mysore. The Maharaja summoned the vidwans to the palace and ordered that each of them should compose a ragamalika to bless the royal couple.

Krishnappa was in a fix, for, till then, he had made no attempts to compose music. On his way back home, he bought an eighty page note book and a couple of pencils. As soon as he reached home, he washed his feet, wore the traditional 'madi dhotra' and entered the pooja room. He placed the note book in front of the

deity, opened it and wrote on the first page in a bold hand the auspicious letter "Sri". For a long time, he sat gazing at the picture of Sharada and awaiting Her blessings for inspiration. It did not seem he would have the divine blessings as easily as he imagined.

Back he went to the palace and submitted to the Maharaja: "Your Highness may be graciously pleased to pardon me. I must confess I am unable to compose the lyric for the ragamalika. If your Highness would permit me, I shall get the text written by somebody and try to set it to music." The king smiled and gave his consent.

Krishnappa got the words composed by a Telugu Pandit by name Kopparam Appavu Setty and set it to music. Never did Krishnappa undertake an assignment for which he did not feel equal nor did he give up at any time any job as lost once he had taken it upon himself.

Krishnappa did not go back on his word at any time. Once he had just begun his recital at a temple in T. Narasipur. There was a huge audience. It looked as though Krishnappa was not in a mood to sing at all that day. Every now and then, he was turning this way and that, as if looking for something. He was singing in a mechanical way and the audience felt that Krishnappa was totally bankrupt of his characteristic manodharma. But they could not make out why it was so.

After a while, an old gentleman who was seated in front seemed to have caught the point. He took out a snuff box from his waist, prepared a little pinch in a most orthodox manner and offered it to Krishnappa.

At the very sight of it, Krishnappa brightened. The temptation to accept it was irresistible. But he thought it was not in good taste to accept snuff from an elderly person and use it in his presence.

"You will kindly excuse me, Sir," said Krishnappa very respectfully. "I have given up using snuff." Never again did he take even a pinch of snuff.

Krishnappa looked for the good in everyone. He was always straightforward. In those days, there was no dearth of mischief-mongers who carried tales and brought about misunderstandings between Krishnappa and me (Vasudevacharya). Yet, Krishnappa looked upon me with affection and regard.

I had received several reports that Krishnappa championed my cause in open assemblies. When he went out on concert tours and the audience praised his music, he would remark : "You are delighted with my music and applaud it so much. But there is a senior Asthana Vidwan in Mysore who is an expert in both sangita and sahitya. You should invite him at least once and hear his music." How many vidwans would be as magnanimous as Krishnappa!

I was once singing at Seshanna's house. My disciple, Veena Lakshminaranappa was supporting me. I sang the Kirtana '*Ganasudharasa*' in

Kharaharapriya which I had composed that very day.

In the sahitya of the kirtana I have used the words Tyagaraja and Vasudeva (Mysore Vasudevacharya). This gave room to a difference of opinion between Seshanna and Krishnappa about the authorship of the composition. Krishnappa contended it was a Tyagaraja kirtana. "No," said Seshanna, "It must be one of Acharya's".

At the end of the kirtana, they desired I should sing it all over again. I did so.

"Whose composition is this, Acharya?" asked Seshanna.

"I composed this kirtana just today. I shall be glad to correct myself if there are any shortcomings," I replied.

"After this music, I do not feel like taking food. Let me quietly sleep at the feet of my Lord Krishna," said Seshanna.

Krishnappa stood up and addressed Seshanna : "Guruji! You should kindly permit me to garland the Acharya today". "That cannot be," said Seshanna. "It is my privilege to garland him".

Both of them tried to pick up the garland and began dragging it this way and that. In the end, Seshanna garlanded me first.

Krishnappa then took it out and garlanded me again with tears of joy.

Later, Krishnappa came to me and told me with great feeling : "Acharya! It is a pity you were born here instead of somewhere in the South. You are rotting unrecognised in this wretched place"

He brought some milk and himself poured some into a tumbler and placed it before me. "I am not hungry," I told him. "Well, Acharya, I can quite read your mind. I shall pour half of that milk into another cup and drink it myself first. Ten minutes later, if you are convinced of my integrity, you will drink it, I suppose!" remarked Krishnappa. Both of us were in tears.

"Acharya, do not trust tale bearers. If you could tear open my heart, you may find for yourself what regard I have for you; said Krishnappa with a heavy heart. Since then no misunderstandings between us were possible. Both of us had a long, heart-to-heart talk till late that night and, like Seshanna, we too slept near the pooja room.

Krishnappa devoted three-fourths of the day to teaching. The lessons were conducted in the Rama Mandira from five in the morning to twelve noon and again from five in the evening till nine in the night.

Krishnappa advised his disciples : "Knowledge is something one does not get for the asking. One has to work hard for it. I shall teach you in the way I was taught and only as much as I feel confident about. It shall be your responsibility to enrich your knowledge by your own intelligence and experience. Preserve the traditions and working within the limits imposed by them, bring in the innovations you desire." He occasionally narrated to them the difficulties he had to encounter in his younger days.

It was Krishnappa who gave the devaranamas of Purandaradasa a status in classical concerts. He made the Kannadigas indebted to him by rehabilitating these precious compositions which otherwise might not have found a place on the concert platform.

The most prominent among Krishnappa's disciples was the famous Chowdaiah of Mysore who placed the State on a high pedestal of artistic glory. He learnt under Krishnappa and carried on his practice on the violin for twenty-one years. No wonder Chowdaiah acquired such a mastery over the instrument that he was able to make it obey his commands. Krishnappa was himself a great violin vidwan and would not easily be satisfied with the shishya's sadhana. Since the time Chowdaiah was able to play accompaniment it was he who provided violin accompaniment to his guru.

Once, Krishnappa was singing in the Rama Mandira and most unexpectedly Chowdaiah's fingers slipped and a wrong note emerged. Kr-

ishnappa was so put off that he slapped Chowdaiah in the open sabha. Chowdaiah did not even lift his head but accepted the punishment obediently as a blessing from the guru.

At the end of the concert, Krishnappa spoke to Chowdaiah with affection: "Did you feel insulted, Chowdaiah? Believe me, it was not my intention to hurt you or disparage you before the audience. The minutest flaw in sruti or tala irritates me and makes me lose my temper." The whole country enjoyed the rewards of this ideal guru shishya relationship. Rachappa was Krishnappa's first disciple. Kolar Nagaratnamma and Bangalore Nagaratnamma were also Krishnappa's students.

Krishnappa did not waste even the little time he could spare. He served as Municipal Councillor and Manager of the Palace Dramatic Company.

Dice and cards were his pastimes. He was particularly fond of a game of cards known as "Katte Ata" which literally means "donkey's play". Kundoor Srikanthaiah, Tabala Surpandit, the famous actor Lakshmipati Sastri and I (Mysore Vasudevacharya) used to play this game with him.

A condition of the game was that the loser should put on the costume of a sepoy, shoulder the rifle, stand before the winner and give him a military salute. The rifle and the costume were obtained on loan from a sepoy and were always kept ready on hand.

Once Krishnappa was the loser. He was about to step into the shoes of the sepoy when a harikara (Brahmin courier of the palace) came running and told Krishnappa that His Highness wanted him at once. He stood waiting and refused to go even when Krishnappa told him.

It was embarrassing for Krishnappa to play the fool while the harikara watched him. Helpless as he was, Krishnappa gritted his teeth, put on the costume and standing in all humility before the victor, gave the salute.

The harikara was highly amused and under the pretext of wiping his nose covered his smile.

There were some notorious persons in Srirangapatna whose sole purpose in life was to set people quarrelling. At a function in that town, concerts by Seshanna, Krishnappa and myself (Mysore Vasudevacharya) had been arranged. Seshanna played on the veena first. I followed him. Next was Krishnappa's turn. He began his recital with Bhairavi ragalapana.

Dewan Madhava Rao and Dewan Krishnamurthy Rao who were present left the place in view of other engagements. This was an opportune moment for the mischief-mongers who had somehow come to know that my friends and admirers were planning to arrange a concert by me and honour me with a *ghanta toda* as they had honoured Krishnappa earlier. "We should make Krishnappa and Vasudevacharya sing together and decide who is the better musician. Vasudevacharya should be permitted to receive the honour only if both are adjudged equal in merit and not otherwise," they perhaps thought.

After much discussion, they took Seshanna out and requested him to announce their suggestion "It wouldn't be proper" pleaded Seshanna. But they wouldn't listen. Seshanna had to yield in the end. He stood up and addressing us said : "Please comply with their request."

We were in a peculiar predicament. I had a heavy meal and was in no condition to sing. Krishnappa had an attack of dysentery and was feeling weak.

"Acharya! You may please sing the raga for a while. We shall then conclude the recital with some pallavi," suggested Krishnappa.

Neither of us was sure how the other would sing a particular pallavi. Finally, Krishnappa sang the pallavi '*Ma madhura Meenakshi*'. After the usual *neraval* and *kalpana swaras*, we rounded off the concert.

"What wonderful fellows," exclaimed Krishnappa in a whisper. "Thank heavens, we know each other well enough and God has granted to us both sufficient courage to face the challenge. What would have happened otherwise?"

"Forget it," I told Krishnappa. "This is just another of our unforgettable platform experiences."

That very night Krishnappa was scheduled to sing in the palace at the annual Ganapati Visarjana function and had to leave urgently. But to our shock, not one of those who were supposed to be in charge of our boarding, lodging and journey arrangements was to be seen anywhere. We were about twenty in our party and as luck would have it, none of us had a paisa on us.

Fortunately, the Station Master was known to us. "Don't you worry. It is my good fortune that I can be of some service to you", he said and got us tickets.

Though a month or two lapsed after this shameful incident, none of us - Seshanna, Krishnappa, Chikkaranga who had provided us the tabla accompaniment and myself received our remuneration. We had to serve them with a lawyer's notice before we could collect the money.

Krishnappa had a similar experience at the same place even prior to this event. He was invited to sing at a concert on fee of one hundred rupees. At the end of the concert, the organisers promptly offered him *phalataamboola* on a silver plate and two paper packets called *thotas*, containing his remuneration in coins. On his way back, Krishnappa opened the packets and found to his horror that each of them contained twenty-five one rupee coins and twenty-five half rupee coins arranged side by side.

"Never again in my life shall I venture to step into this awful place, Acharya," said Krishnappa after this second bitter experience.

His Highness had ordered that Krishnappa and I should sing together on the occasion of the *teppotsava* (festival of float) on the Chamundi Hills. His Highness asked us to sing a *Dikshitar kirtana*, '*Mahishasuramardini*' in Narayani which neither of us knew. Dodda Venkataramaniah who was accompanying us on the violin

told us he knew just the trend of the pallavi and sang it for us.

When the float moved away from the bank on which His Highness was seated and glided towards the other, we mugged up the pallavi. As the teppa (float) was again nearing His Highness, we started singing kalpana swaras to the pallavi of the kirtana, one avarta each. When the teppa drifted away from the king, we kept quiet. We thus managed to get out of the ordeal.

"O God! We are spared today" we exclaimed with a sigh of relief and had a hearty laugh.

The very next day, both of us had a call from His Highness and went to him. "The kirtana you sang yesterday was excellent. We should, however, like to listen to the anupallavi and

charana of the kirtana as well," said the Maharaja. A mischievous smile was lurking at his lips.

We both turned pale and with some effort managed an artificial smile.

Krishnappa was mad after astrology. One of his great ambitions was to go to the Western countries and acquaint the people there with the charm of Karnataka music. Whenever an astrologer came his way, he would ask him if he had a chance of going abroad. "You have a splendid chance," prophesied every one of them.

But Krishnappa's dream never came true. He passed away on July 29, 1931.

Arunodaya School of Music

Arunodaya School of Music, celebrated their 10th Annual day on Sunday, August 28th 2022 at Aksharam Sabhangana of Girinagar. Arunodaya School took this opportunity to honour Sri GV Krishna Prasad, Secretary of Sri Rama Lalita Kala Mandira, Bengaluru. Being an ardent admirer of arts, he has nurtured and served the art field for more than 60 years.

Sri. GV Krishna Prasad was bestowed with the title "Arunodaya Kala Bhushan" by the eminent guests of the day, Sangeeta Kala Acharya, Padmashri, Vidwan RN Thyagarajan and HV Raghuram, Principal, Arunodaya School of Music.

Impressed with the style in which Arunodaya School of Music has successfully managed to carve its mark, through its activities and talented students, the guests of honour blessed the school and wished them more success and accelerated evolution in future.

The audience was treated to a melodious musical performance by the students. The vocalist presented Vasanta Varna, Shuddha Saveri Raga, 'Samaja varada' a Kriti composed by Pooci Srinivasa Iyengar, Devara Nama and Swara

Kalpane. Violinists played Sri Raga Varna, Notu Swara, 'Tulasi Dalamulache' and 'Sujana Jeevana' a Kriti in Khamas raga composed by Saint Thyagaraja.

Among the audience were the eminent guests of the day, well-known revered members of the society and the parents of the students. Everyone enjoyed and appreciated the performance.

At present more than 100 students are enrolled in the school and getting trained under the guidance of dedicated teachers in vocal or violin. The school is providing training to aspirants in multiple locations across Bengaluru.

The details are as follows:

- Teachers of Arunodaya School of Music and Vidwan HV Raghuram at Girinagar
- Vidwan Vishwajith and others at Kathriguppe, JP Nagar and Marathahalli.
- Vidwan Kartikeya at Uttarahalli
- Vidwan Kartik (Vocal) at Kathriguppe and Uttarahalli

Statue of Peace at Srinagar, Kashmir

A fitting tribute to Swami Ramanuja by H H Sri Yathiraja Jeeyar Swamiji



His Holiness Sri Sri Jeeyar Swamiji of Yathiraja Mutt with the Statue of Peace

A true and a dedicated follower of Swami Ramanuja, the 41st Peetadhipathi of Sri Yadugiri Yathiraja Mutt, H H Sri Yathiraja Jeeyar Swami recently blessed the humanity with a divine tribute to Jagadacharya Ramanuja by installing a White Marble Statue and called it as Statue of Peace. It was unveiled by honourable Home Minister of India Shri. Amit Shah Ji and presided by the Lt. Governor of J&K Shri. Manoj Sinha Ji on the 7th July at Shuryar Mandir in Srinagar, Kashmir. This is a divine move to also acknowledge the historic happening of Goddess Saraswathi (Kashmir Pura Vasini) blessing Ramanujacharya for his divine Script Sri

"Sri Ramanuja, the proponent of Vishishtadvaita was an epic personality who always longed for the creation of an equitable society and the 'Statue of Peace' of Swamy Ramanujacharya will bring peace and blessings in Kashmir and will take people of Kashmir towards development and peace"

Home Minister, Amit Shah

Bhashyam (named by Saraswathi Devi herself) and she blessed him with a title Bhashyakara. Several hundreds of devotees of Sri Yathiraja Mutt accompanied Swamiji for this historic event apart from scores of locals who attended the event and appreciated the divine initiative. Young and dynamic MP Sri. Tejaswi Surya and honourable Minister for Higher Education of Karnataka Dr. CN Ashwath Narayan also participated and laid the foundation stone for the new Yathri Niwas and Branch of Sri Yathiraja Mutt in Srinagar.

The icing on the cake came from Sri. Amit Shah Ji as he announced that another Statue of Ramanujacharya would be installed soon in Gujarat. And owing to the requests of staunch devotees Sri Yathiraja Jeeyar Swami too announced that the next Statue of Acharya Ramanuja would be installed in Kanyakumari on the 25th November this year which is auspicious anniversary day of Pattabishekam of Jeeyar Swami and this would be in Black Granite and would be called as Statue of Harmony.

Harikesanallur Dr. L Muthaiah Bhagavatar (1877 - 1945)

Dr. Meera Rajaram Pranesh, Bangalore

*(This article is an excerpts from Musical composers during Wodeyar Dynasty
by Dr. Meera Rajaram Pranesh, Vee Emm Publications, Bangalore)*



‘Avariddade vondu kala degulaviddante bhasv-aguttittu’ (He lived in a time, it felt like being in a temple) - This was remarked by a great Musician and Composer Mysore Vasudevacharya about his contemporary Musician, Kathakalakshepa exponent, a versatile Composer, an able Teacher and great Academician Harikesanallur Dr. L Muthaiah Bhagavatar.

Early Life

Muthaiah Bhagavatar was born in a village Tirunelveli in Ramanathapuram district of Tamil Nadu on 15th of November 1877. His father Lingam Iyer, was a descendent from the family of Sarvadhikaris of Ugali mutt, installed by Adi Shankaracharya. He was a scholar in Sanskrit and patron of music. Muthiah Bhagavatar's mother Anandambal also hailed from a family of Scholars. Her father Muthu Subba Bharati,

proficient in music, Sanskrit and Tamil wrote Vedanta natakas and her brother Lakshmana Suri was also a great scholar like his father.

Muthaiah was sent to learn music under Appakudam Shastry, along with his elder sister Kantimati and younger brother Hariharan. Unfortunately he lost his father at an young age of six, and with no other alternative the family shifted to reside with his uncle Lakshmana Suri at Harikesanallur. He was sent to Thiruvayyar to learn Sanskrit from Muthu Ghanapadigal. Those were the days when the atmosphere at Thiruvayyar, was charged with music of highest order. Since his interest leaned more towards music than Sanskrit, Muthiah went to learn music under Sambasiva Iyer, who belonged the Shishya parampara of Thyagaraja. He learnt for six years struggling hard for food and shelter. Mysore Vasudevachar who was also at Thiruvayyar during that time, taking training under Patnam Subramanya Iyer, has written about Muthiah's apprenticeship at Thiruvayyar, in his book “Naa Kanda Kalavidaru”.

After staying for some years at Madras with his teacher, he returned to Harikesanallur, practiced Lakshana gitas of Venkatamakhi, Chitte Tanas, Prabandhas and Suladis taught by his Guru Sambashiva Iyer. He paid particular attention to akara, ikara, ukara and amkara sadhanas in all the three octaves, which resulted in a remarkable voice noted for its range and richness. He married Shivakami Ammal, his paternal aunt's daughter in the year 1899.

As a Kathakalakshepa Artist

Muthiah Bhagavatar stepped into the field Kathakalakshepam in the year 1903. He took

guidance from Karandattangudi Govinda Bhagavata at Tanjavore and also from Krishna Bhatji of Maharashtra, imbibed the techniques of Kathakalakshepa like Nirupanas, rare and attractive varna mettus, and became proficient in this art. His Versatile personality and excellent narration of the subject added to his success in this field. His favourite topics were Valli Parinaya, Seeta Kalyana, Paduka Pattabhisheka, Sugreeva Sakhya, Anguli pradhana, Vibheeshana Sharanagati, Sati Sulochana, Rama Pattabhisheka and Thyagaraja Charitre. He had a versatile knowledge in composing Notes in different Nadai-s (gati) which he was matching for different situations Katha kalakshepa.

At Mysore

Muthiah Bhagavata visited Mysore for Dasara celebrations in the year 1927. Though he was rewarded by King Nalwadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar for his performances, he was disappointed for not being appointed as a court musician. Before returning, he visited goddess Chamundeshwari at Chamundi hills to offer his prayers. When he was singing his own compositions 'Tappulanni talukomma nadu' in Bhoul and 'Manamu kavalenu talli' in Shahana, the King who was also offering prayers listened. Pleased by his singing, the King appointed him as a court Musician of Mysore in 1927, for a salary of Rs.100 per month. In the later years, he became one of the chief court musicians of Mysore palace.

As an Academician

Muthiah Bhagavata specialised in the theory of Indian Music, when he was at Tanjavore with his uncle Lakshmana Suri. He came into contact with Dr. Abraham Pandithar, a Doctor by profession, who was not only a connoisseur of music, but also an expert in the theory of Music and had authored several books on the subject. Bhagavata associated himself with this personality, did considerable research work in Saraswati Mahal Library and obtained mastery over the subject. He participated regularly and delivered lectures in Music conferences conducted by Dr. Abraham Pandithar at Tanjavore and Music Academy at Madras.

Bhagavata served as the Principal of Teachers Training College of Music, started by Madras Music Academy, from 1932 -1936. He was appointed as the first Principal of Swati Thirunal Academy of Music at Trivandrum, which was affiliated to Travancore University in the year 1939 and resuscitated the compositions of Maharaja Swati Thirunal.

Honours and Titles

Muthiah Bhagavata was honoured by connoisseurs, Jamindars and Kings of different States. When he performed at Travancore in his early years, Sir Moolam Thirunal Rama Varma, the Maharajah of Travancore, presented him with robes of honour, golden bracelets along with suitable remuneration. He was honoured in the same manner by the King of Ramnad, Mutthuramalinga Setu Pateendra. The connoisseurs of Tuticorin, presented him a Tambura, which accompanied him in all his concerts. The Chettians of Chettinad used to pay him very high remunerations for his splendid performances of Kathakalakshepa. Without his 'Valli Parinayamu' there were no wedding celebrations in the rich families of Chettinad.

Nalwadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar conferred upon him the title "Gayaka Shikhamani" in the year 1928. with golden bracelets to both the hands and suitable remunerations. After completing 108 Chamundeshwari ashtottara kritis in Kannada, Bhagavata was gifted Pearl Necklace with Chamundeshwari idol carved in a pendant studded with Gems and Rs. 10,000. The Seer of Shringeri Sharada pita, Sri. Sri. Chandrashekara Bharati blessed Bhagavata, by presenting Emerald Linga, after listening his 108 Shiva ashtottara compositions in Sanskrit.

Bhagavata presided the conference of Madras Music Academy in the year 1930, and was conferred upon the title 'Sangeeta Kalanidhi'. Muthiah Bhagavata was awarded Doctor of Letters on 5th of November 1942, by the University of Travancore, for his treatise "Sangeeta Kalpadrumam" in Tamil.

His Disciples

Bhagavata had a flock of students wherever he resided. He had started Thyagaraja Sangeeta

Vidyalaya, Music School at Madurai in 1920. Among his students Ramanathapuram Shankara Sivan, Madurai Mani Iyer, Appavier, Gotuvadyam Narayana Iyer, Srinivasan, Belakawadi Srinivasa Iyengar (jr) and his brother Varadaraja Iyengar, Supreme Court Judge TL Venkatarama Iyer (Bhagavatar's uncle Lakshmana Suri's son), Narayana Bhagavatar, Nallai Krishna Murthy, Budalur Krishnamurthy Shastry, and Vaidyalingam Bhagavatar (Muthaiah Bhagavatar's brother Harihara Bhagavatar's son who was later adopted by Muthiah Bhagavatar) are prominent.

Compositions

Muthiah Bhagavatar was one of the greatest composers of post Thyagaraja period for having a largest record of about 400 compositions to his credit. His compositions with the mudra Harikesa are in Sanskrit, Kannada, Telugu and Tamil. He has composed 10 Tana Varnas among which 5 are Adi tala and 5 are Atta tala. 1 Pada Varna, 4 Daru Varnas, 3 Ragamalikas, 352 Kritis (inclusive of Madhyama kala and Vilamba kala), 11 Tillanas, Notes and Nirupanams.

Bhagavatar's interest for composing songs started when he was 16 years old. Later when he performed Kathakalakshepam, he was not satisfied just by giving illustrations. He thought that Kathakalakshepam would be interesting and colourful if he could compose kritis which could be sung in appropriate situations. His early experiments of composing were perhaps occasional due to the necessity of introducing apt pieces like Nirupanams, Notes and Kritis in his narration. His first Kriti 'Kalilo Haris-
maranamu' in the raga Kapi set to Adi tala, was composed to sing for the purva peetika of Ramayana. Some of the important Kritis composed for Ramayana are :

Sahaja guna Rama, Shankarabharana, Adi

Sharanagata Vatsala, Kharaharapriya, Adi

Dhira Shikhamani, Reetigowla, Adi

Some of the Kritis composed for the story Valli parinayamu are :

Valli nayakane, Shanmukhapriya, Adi

Nive itu paraku, Kharaharapriya, Adi

Sharavana bhava, Pashupatipriya, Adi

Teliyakane, Huseni, Rupaka

Samayamide, Budha manohari, Adi

Ikane tala jalanura, Guha ranjani, Adi

Sharavana bhavunivina, Sumana priya, Rupaka

Ennaluru tirugudunu, Mandari, Khanda chapu

This was only a beginning. He started composing Varnas, Darus and Tillanas apart from Kritis.

Varnas

Apart from composing Varnas in major ragas, his Varnas are also in minor ragas like Andolika and Narayanagowla which has less scope for elaboration.

In the 3rd Yettugade swara of the Adi tala Varna 'Sri Raja Matangi' in the raga Shuddha Dhanyasi, the consonant notes Sadharana Gandhara and Kaishiki Nishada has been blended with the raga beautifully

g m N n m g s N n g m p n s |

G g N n G l g m g s l n s g m l l

Swaraksharas can be noticed in most of his Varnas. For instance: anu pallavi of the Atta tala Varna "Shri Shubha hamsa gamane" in Todi :

Atta tala Varnas in the ragas Todi, Mohana, Hindola and Kambhoji have a special type of Swaraksharas in one yettugade swara. Here the swaras are assembled in such a way that, the

d d m D n - s n g* i n d | , n** n d g i g m g g i r
l . . bha . ja . ga . . ma . na . . sri . . . kri . .
s r** g m d n s i g | m g r - s n d - g* |
shna ra . . jen . . . dra gha
i n d m | n d m g** || m g m s r n s r
na . . ra . si . ka shi . . ro . ma . ni

swaras when split heralds the glory of the God or the King.

For instance. The 4th Yettugade swara of "Shubha hamsa gamana" in Todi:

N M m g n - m n d m d n - m g s m , D | n - M
g r - p r - m n d D s - p i s n , - s g | , - d d n s
N d | m g G - n g i n || s s g n s M g

When split, it glorifies King Nalwadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar in Tamil. In fact this Varna was composed on the King and was offered to him, when Bhagavata visited Mysore for the first time.

N M m g n - You are the most superior person
 m n d m d n - Praised by all
 m g s M D n - Known for celebrating festivals with grandeur
 M g r p r m n d D s p r s N s G - Lord of several elephants, horses, soldiers and slaves
 d d - known for generosity
 n s N d - speaks always truth
 m g G n g r n s s g - patron of several musicians
 n s M g - genuinely

mana bhushanira sukumara gambhira velu ko ra
 Charana

The pada Varna 'Pankaja lochani' in Ananda bhairavi set to Adi tala is decorated with Swaraksharas : the chitte and yettugade swaras ending with Mukuta swaras having consonant notes

m̃ ġ ī ś Ś - ś n d p P - m g r s S - p P - ś Ś
 P Ś Ś ś n d - p P P m g r - s S S g r g m

Daru Varnas

Bhagavata composed four Daru Varnas in the ragas Shahana, Vasantha, Khamaj and Kapi, mainly depicting Shringara rasa. His Students once questioned about the structure of Daru Varnas, which was mentioned only in the theoretical works. Darus were in vogue, but not Daru Varnas. So Bhagavata composed the Daru Varna in Shahana, for his students, and later the other three also took shape. These resemble Varnas with pallavi, anupallavi, chittaswara, charana and yettugade swaras. But these are composed with Jatis and sahitya for chitteswara and yettugade swaras

Kritis

All though Bhagavata has composed several music forms, Kritis form the bulk of his compositions, totalling to 355. This includes: Shiva

ashtottara Kritis -7 Invocatory, 108 Ashtottara and Mangala, totalling to 116 kritis.

In the invocatory songs, the composer has asked for blessings of the deities to compose Shiva ashtottara kritis.

Chamundeshwari Ashtottara Kritis

6 Invocatory, 108 Chamundeshwari Ashtottara and 1 Mangala - 115 Kritis

Ragamalikas

3 Ragamalika in all. Pancha, Sapta and Nava Ragamalika. Bhagavata, a Sri Vidya upasaka like Muthuswamy Dikshitar worshipped Maha Tripura Sundari every day. He composed Nava varna kriti in Nava ragamalika. Here we find nine Avarana stutis in nine ragas dedicated to different celestial beings to reach the supreme eternity.

Navagraha Kritis

7 Navagraha kritis (excluding kritis on Rahu and Ketu). Some are of the opinion that he has composed Vaara kritis - kritis on seven days of the week: and kritis on different Gods and Goddesses.

Rhetorical beauties in his Compositions

Sangatis : Bhagavata has followed Thyagaraja in introducing more number of Sangatis in his Kritis, which are good voice training exercises Swarakshara : As in Anupallavi of 'Shashi shekhara' in Purna chandrika:

P* D P* r s R ; s** n P P* d p R S ||
 Pa shu pa te . . . sri . . paa . . rva ti

Prasa as in 'Anantaya sarvaya' in Bhoul:

Anantāya sarvāya || Ādyanta rahitāya ||P||
 Anaghāya atulāya || Ānanda vighrahāya ||AP||
 Namō hiranyāya || Namō varenyāya ||
 Namō raja bhūshāya || Namō Hari keshāya ||
 C||

Chitte Swara : Almost all the kritis of Bhagavata are decorated with Chitteswaras, like a bunch of flowers adorning a beautiful creeper.

Madhyama Kala Sahitya : Bhagavata has incorporated Madhyama Kala Sahitya in some of

his kritis. For instance, one of the Navagraha Kritis 'Shri Bhagavam' in the raga Shri.

Note : Bhagavatar has composed many Notes in English tunes for his Katha kalakshepams. Among them "G m g r g p R g s" which was made famous by his disciple Madurai Mani Iyer is a beautiful composition.

Tillanas : Bhagavatar has composed 11 Tillanas. The Tillana in Kapi was composed during the coronation of Jaya Chamaraja Wodeyar. There is no prayoga 'Kakali nishada' in this Tillana. Most of them are in Madhyama kala.

Ragas : After Thyagaraja and Muthuswamy Dikshitar, Bhagavatar is one of the very few composers who has used so many ragas, with 25 Janaka ragas and 153 Janya ragas. No raga will repeat in each set of Ashtottara Kritis i.e. Chamundeswari ashtottara kritis and Shiva ashtottara Kritis. We find a charming picture of a wonderful variety of ragas, some of them rare, or new and are remarkable for their high musical qualities.

Bhagavatar has composed in ragas wherein there were only the names of the ragas and their scale mentioned in the theoretical books on music, but for all practical purposes they did not exist. Bhagavatar took up some of these ragas, gave them a form, breathed life into them and brought these ragas within the sphere of Practical music. Some of these ragas are Urmika (Janya in Simhendra madhyama), Vinadhari (Janya of Chakravaka), Vijaya Saraswati (Janya of Simhendra madhyama), Maya pradipam (Janya of Kharaharapriya), Naga bhushani (Janya of Dheera Shankarabharana), Gouda malhar (Janya of Shankarabharana), Chakrapradeepa (Janya of Kharaharapriya), Vijayanagari (Janya of Dharmavati), Valachi (Janya of Chakravaka), Budha manohari (Janya of Dheera Shankarabharana), Guru priya (Janya of Vachaspati), Hamsa dipikam (Janya of Gouri manohari), Hamsa gamani (Janya of Ramapriya), Niroshtha (Janya of Dheera Shankarabharana).

The composition 'Raja raja radhite' in the raga Niroshtha (means non contact of lips), was composed when King Nalwadi Krishnaraja

Wodeyar suffered from severe mouth ulcers. Bhagavatar was moved so much by the King's suffering that he could not sleep the whole night. Early in the morning at 3 A.M, he got up prayed Devi, composed this Kritis and offered to the Goddess praying for the speedy recovery of the ruler. This is composed in such a way that the lips do not come into contact while singing either swara or sahitya of the kritis.

Bhagavatar who was highly knowledgeable in the rules relating to Harmony and Consonant notes was a genius inventing melodies. He drew from folk songs, and even tunes of western music expressions of melody suitable to the scheme of Indian ragas. It was this capacity to assimilate and invent that enabled him to evolve new ragas

Some of these ragas are; Kokila bhashini (Janya of Dheera Shankarabharana), Karna ranjani (Janya of Kharaharapriya), Sumanapriya (Janya of Harikambhoji), Saranga malhar (Janya of Dheera Shankarabharana), Alankari (Janya of Gamanashrama), Pashupatipriya (Janya of Harikambhoji), Guha ranjani (Janya of Harikambhoji).

Talas

He has not only composed in common talas like Adi, Rupaka, Khanda chapu, Atta, Mishra chapu etc, but also in talas like Sankeerna chapu, Chaturashra Jhampe, Sankeerna rupaka Khanda jhampe, Khanda tripata etc.

Mudras

Apart from using Vaggeyakara mudra as Harikesa, Bhagavatar has incorporated :

Raga mudra as in the compositions :

Varna:

Atta tala Varna, Mana Mohana, Raga Mohana

Kritis:

'Bhairavi Parameshwari', Raga Bhairavi, Rupaka

'Parāṭṭpare pakarinate', Sama as Sama gāna vino-dini, Adi tala

'Simhavahane amba', Raga Simhavahini, Rupaka

'Sudhamayi sudhanidhi', Amritavarshini as Ananda amrita varshini, Adi tala

'Vanadurge vanaspati', Vanaspati, Rupaka tala

'Kadamba vana vasini', Raga Bhupala as Pandya
bhupala nandini, Rupaka tala

Poshaka mudra as in the compositions :

Varna, *'Mahishasura mardini'*, Andolika, Adi tala
(Nalwadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar)

Kritis:

'Shri Mahabala Shaila vasini', Shuddha Saveri, Adi
tala (Nalwadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar),

'Mana Mohana', Mohana, Atta tala (Muthu Ra-
malinga Bhaskara Sethupati)

'Manchi panatira', Hindola, Adi tala, (Balarama
Varma Kulashékara)

Pada Varna:

'Pankaja lochani', Ananda bhairavi, Adi tal
(Balarama Varma Kulashékara)

Daru Varna :

'Mate malayadhwaja', Khamaj, Adi tala, (Nalwadi
Krishnaraja Wodeyar)

'Sannutangi' , Vasanta, Adi tala (Nalwadi Krish-
naraja Wodeyar)

'Shri Raja Rajeshwari', Hindustani Kapi, Mishra
Chapu tala (Jaya Chamaraja Wodeyar)

Tillana :

'Dhim tana nana dhirana', Vasanta, Khanda jathi
Eka tala (Nalwadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar)

'Udanatadana tana', Hameer kalyani, Adi tala
(Nalwadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar)

Bhagavatar composed *Srimat Thyagaraja Vijaya*,
Sanskrit Kavya in the year 1940. This work
deals with Saint Thyagaraja's biography,
achievements and his contribution to the theo-
ry and practise of music. The whole work con-
sisting of 487 Slokas, is condensed in seven
Sargas.

Dr. L Muthiah Bhagavatar, who was born in
Tamil Nadu and travelled many places, returned
to Mysore in his last days and passed away in
Mysore as per his wishes, on the night of 30th
June 1945.

Belakawadi Srinivasa Iyengar's composition in 72 Mela Ragas



Young Belakawadi Srinivasa Iyengar (Senior)
was highly respected in Nalwadi Krishnaraja
Wadiyar's court though there were towering
musicians like Veena Sheshanna, Bakshi Sub-

banna, Bidaram Krishnappa etc. in the court.
He belongs to the lineage of Mysore Sadasiva
Rao (and Saint Thyagaraja) as he was a disciple
of Bakshi Subbanna.

Once the king set a prize of 5000 Rs. (A huge
sum of money in those days) to any musician
who would compose songs in all 72 Mela ra-
gas. It was Belakawadi Srinivasa Iyengar who
won the prize. The manuscripts are believed
to be in the custody of the palace.

Vasudevacharya has composed three of his
kritis at the residence of Belakawadi Srinivasa
Iyengar. They are: *'Mari Mari vachchuno'* in
Kamboji, *'Harini Bhajinchi'* in Sankarabaranam
and the Mohanam masterpiece *'Ra ra rajeeval-
ochana rama'*.

Compositions of Mysore T Chowdiah - A Brief Study

Manasi Prasad, Bangalore



Introduction

It is indisputable that Mysore T Chowdiah was among the greatest violin maestros in the realm of Karnatic music. Through in-born talent, the guidance of great gurus, hard work and deep introspection, he carved a unique place for himself in the firmament of legends of Karnatic music. He was deeply respected as both an accompanist and soloist par excellence. He was an intelligent innovator who adapted to the demands of the pre-microphone concert era through his development of the seven-stringed violin, which added to his pre-eminent stature among both musicians and audiences. He left a rich legacy of disciples who went on to become noted performers and educators themselves. To the layperson, Chowdiah's name

is synonymous with the eponymous Chowdiah Memorial Hall, built to honour his memory.

What is perhaps less known is that Chowdiah was also a composer par excellence, whose compositions deserve perhaps a wider outreach on the classical music platform and in the music classroom than they currently have.

Presented here is a very brief analysis of the compositions of Mysore T Chowdiah, from a practitioner's perspective.

Analysis of Chowdiah compositions

There are two books of Chowdiah's compositions that have been compiled and published by his disciples.

The first, "T Chowdiahnavara Krithigalu" is by Prof V Ramaratnam, and the other, "Sukruthi" by Dr. Anasuya Kulkarni.

Prof. Ramaratnam's book has notations for 17 krithis and 5 thillanas, while Dr. Anasuya's book has 7 krithis and 3 thillanas, including the very unique 'panchanadai thillana'. I have been informed that there is a book in Tamil that lists 31 of his compositions with notations, however this book is not available with me. Overall, he is said to have composed nearly 50 compositions spanning varnams, krithis and thillanas.

Some salient features of his compositions that I have experienced are:

Lyric

- Languages used are Kannada, Telugu and Sanskrit
- Ankita nama used is Trimakuta, a reference to his birth place of Tirumakudalu Narsipura, which is the confluence of three rivers – Kaveri, Kapila and Sphatika Sarovara

- The lyrics are full of familiar, easily pronounceable words arranged in an uncomplicated manner, again providing scope for musical exploration

Musical structure

- They have a simple structure, and hence are easy to learn and sing
- The ragas used are mainly rakti ragas such as saveri, natakuranji, saranga, kalyani etc. which can be explored with manodharma
- While the notations do not have too many sangathis listed, there is ample scope to add more, within the aesthetic framework of the composition
- Almost all compositions are suitable for kalpana swara, and many for neraval exploration as well
- A few chitteswaras have been given in the available notations, but again there are many krithis where more chitteswaras can be added. In particular, the Kuntalavarali composition “*Sharavanabhava*” has a chitteswara, which can be elaborated in many different ways by both vocalists and instrumentalists to create interesting patterns. Such compositions can serve as optional alternatives to “*Bhogeendra Shayinam*”, or “*Raghuvamsa Sudha*”, which continue to be among the most popular compositions sung/played before the main composition.
- One can surmise from the flow of musical ideas that these compositions have been created by a performer, and not a theoretician
- These mostly madhyama kala compositions are quite brisk and can brighten up any concert. However, there are some vilamba kala krithis as well such as ‘*Sri Venugopala*’ in Kamboji, which can serve as the main composition in a concert.
- The thillanas show interesting patterns of jathis, with variations in nadai and kaala. Despite their briskness, they retain the flowing essence of the ragas such as Kapi, Sahana and Hamir Kalyani. This allows for retaining

the melodic character within the rhythmic structure.

Overall

These compositions clearly follow the pattern of post-Trinity composers, who have deeply studied and been inspired by the compositional structures laid down by the Trinity, and steadfastly adhere to these traditions and conventions. If one reviews the compositions critically, one may perhaps observe that there is no single ‘characteristic’ feature that distinguishes his compositional style - one could argue that they seem like ‘any composition’. While this is partially justified, the very fact that these compositions have been created by one of Karnataka’s and indeed Karnatic music’s greatest musicians means that these compositions form an important part of music history and deserve to be preserved and propagated.

Reasons for relatively less popularity

In summary, when one analyses these compositions, one wonders why they have not been as popular on the concert platform as compared to the other Mysore composers. Some possible reasons could be:

- Perhaps Chowdiah was much more focused on his career as a performer rather than as a composer, which is why the number of compositions are limited
- As a violinist and an accompanist, he probably had relatively limited avenues to popularise these compositions (it is easier for vocalists to popularise new compositions in concerts as the lyrics are identifiable)
- Many of his students were also instrumentalists, which again is a limitation when it comes to carrying forward a legacy of compositions.

Having said that, there have been efforts to document and bring out Chowdiah’s compositions as CDs and books, and several are available. I am sure that with more concerted efforts by musicians, teachers and those belonging to his shishya parampara, we can bring new light to these gems and ensure they secure the

place on the concert platform that they richly deserve.

Online archive www.chowdiah.com

With a view to document and help propagate the compositions of Mysore T Chowdiah (to whose shishya Parampara I belong via my mother Tara Prasad, a disciple of Prof.V Ramaratnam), I embarked on a project to video record and provide notations for the compositions of Mysore T Chowdiah in an easily accessible format. Along with several music colleagues, such as vocalists Bangalore Brothers and Ranjani Vasuki, we have currently video recorded 18 of Chowdiah's compositions. I gratefully acknowledge the grant funding received from the Academy of Music (Chowdiah Memorial Hall) and Sri BR Ramprasad to complete the video recording.

The result of this project is an online digital archive - www.chowdiah.com - which is a collaboration between the Indian Music Experience Museum (of which I am the museum director), and the Shankar Mahadevan Academy's non-profit project - Archive to Alive. The website contains Youtube videos of the compositions, along with English language notations, which are available for free download. The website additionally contains some images, a biography, and other information about the maestro. We hope to continue to augment the archive, and complete recording all available

compositions. I gratefully acknowledge the family of Sri Chowdiah, specially Smt. Sheela Boriah for providing valuable information for the website.

As part of the launch of the website, our organisations jointly conducted "Smarane" - an online competition in Chowdiah compositions in the year 2020-21, which was adjudged by senior musicians such as Dr. TS Satyavathi and Chowdiah's grandson and noted flautist Chandan Kumar. The winners of the competition also interacted online with noted musician Shankar Mahadevan, where the compositions were highlighted, thereby allowing it to reach a larger audience.

Conclusion

While it is undeniable that the Trinity hold an exalted position in the realm of vaggeyakaras, simultaneously, I believe it is the duty of performing musicians and music educators to learn, perform and teach 'contemporary' (newer) krithis as well. The compositions of Mysore Chowdiah and indeed other 20th century composers represent a vital documentation of the development of Karnatic music, and let us all contribute to preserving and propagating this rich heritage.

(The author is a well-known Karnatic vocalist and the museum director of the Indian Music Experience)

Schools for propagating music

Wadiyar kings opened many schools to teach music with the intention of spreading music far and wide. They also encouraged the court musicians to open schools for music and train students.

The kings appointed court musicians and composers as teachers in the Mysore Maharani's High School and the Maharaja's Sanskrit School. T Chowdiah, the violin maestro founded the Ayyanar College of Music in Mysore and trained hundreds of students in

vocal, violin, veena, and flute. Harikesanallur Dr L Muthaiah Bhagavata, started a music school called Tyagaraja Sangeeta Vidyalaya in 1920. Veena Venkatagiriappa, a court musician during the reign of Jayachamaraja Wadiyar, was appointed by the king to oversee the functioning of various schools of fine art in the kingdom. Veena Padmanabhaiah, the court musician during the reign of Chamaraja Wadiyar IX, was a music teacher in the Mysore Maharani's High School and the Maharaja's Sanskrit School.

Wedded to Music - The Life and Music of H Yoganarasimham

Shylaja Venugopal, Mysore



A man, who didn't hurt anybody's feelings and allowed everybody to pursue the call of their heart was none other than H. Y. Yoganarasimham. His humane nature very often made one feel that he was some extra-terrestrial creature, who has come to visit this earth. He was born to Holenaraseepura Naranappa and Palalli Lakshmiddevamma couple on 17 May 1897. This is the 125th birth anniversary of that great scholar and human being. The warm memories preserved by his sons, daughters, relatives, close associates and his students have kept him alive to this day. His musical compositions have immortalised him. He was an adept in music, Sanskrit and English languages and a

teacher of very high order. He influenced almost every one of his acquaintances. He came up in life by dint of sheer talent and hard work. He taught his children the same values.

He graduated from Maharaja's college, Mysore. He passed in first class and stood first. He was trained under great teachers like Prof Hiriyan-na, Prof Wadia, Dr Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, Dr CR Reddy, Prof Radha Kumud Mukharjee. He was their favourite student. He became proficient in Sanskrit, Philosophy and English, but his first love was music. The study of philosophy and literature broadened his vision and his concept of culture. This in fact changed the way he comprehended music. It gave a touch of modernity to his music. Dignified behaviour, pleasant voice, neatness, and thoughtfulness were the hallmark of his personality.

He was appointed as a Sanskrit Tutor in 1917 at Maharaja's College, Mysore. He was a dedicated teacher and taught with lot of love. His erudite teaching earned him great appreciation from his students. Famous Kannada poet V. Seetharamaiah was his student. He says that HY was a very effective communicator, and his teaching was very convincing. He held different posts in the Department of Education. He became the principal of Sanskrit College in Bangalore as well as Mysore. Then returned to the Department of Education and retired as District Education Officer. He was also with Sharada Vilas Education institutions for some time.

His wife Saraswathi was a Sahadharmini in the true sense of the world. She who was far ahead of her times. She was the daughter of Vajapeyam Venkatasubbaiah, a member of



Smt. HY Saraswathamma

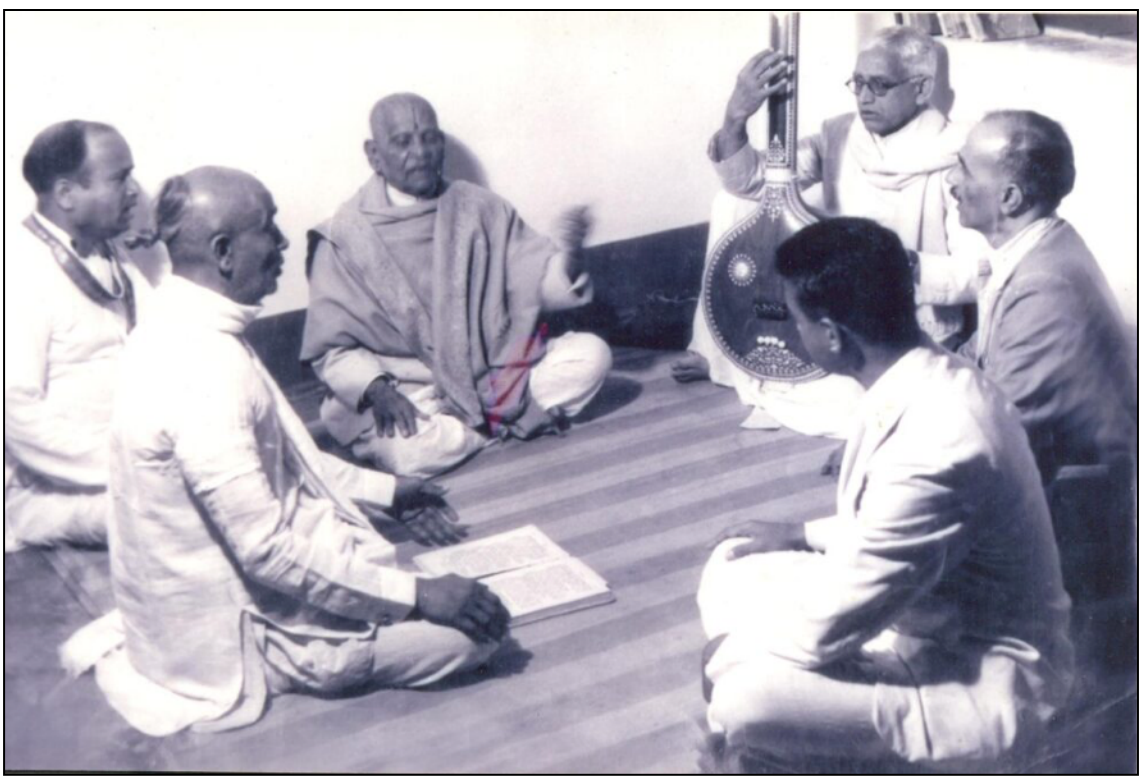
Gokhle's Servants of India Society, a dedicated social worker. This exposure had made her confident, independent, self-reliant, simple, hardworking, and socially committed. She never grumbled about anything and managed her family with available resources. She fed her family and the guests alike. That is why writer Vaidehi calls her "Halavu Makkala Tayi" which means "Mother to Many". She never remained just an ideal housewife. She was involved in writing stories for children, and she was instrumental in opening the Mysooru Makkala Koota for children. She was involved in lot of social work.

For Yoganarasimham music was an essential and inseparable part of his existence like the air he breathed. He didn't seem to have any desire to become a famed professional musician. He sang because singing made him happy. Music was always with him like the air he breathed. He imbibed his love of music from his mother and sister. His mother had incredible interest in music. She knew hundreds of songs. His sister Gowramma listened to the music lessons taught to the girls of royal family, who lived next door and immediately scribbled it on the

wall and then practiced. Yoganarasimham too was like that. His daughter Neeraja remembered that her father, who went to Bidaram Krishnappa Ramamandira regularly carried a fan made of thin sheets of bamboo, as it was hot inside the auditorium. If the musician sang a rare composition on that day, he would scribble it on that fan. Yoganarasimham had a wonderful grounding in music. He was the disciple of Sangeetha Kalanidhi K Vasudevacharya. In addition to it, his keen and ardent listening and critical mind made him not only a good musician but also a virtuoso

His sruti alignment was perfect. His obsession with pitch perfection was well known in music circles. Veena Doreswamy Iyengar recalled that he was very happy to tune the tambura perfectly and strum it continuously and enjoy it. Sometimes he slept with the tambura on his chest and strummed it and was totally lost in that 'river of nada.' He had a very soft, pleasant, and melodious voice. His voice expressed extremely subtle gamakas very clearly and beautifully. Many of his contemporaries felt that his music expressed the typical features of his personality like delicateness, gentleness, and dignity. Dr R Satyanarayana, who knew him very intimately used to tell that he always sang to his own happiness, which is a very rare quality. He was a perceptive listener and critic.

He started composing kritis Probably at the fag end of his life. In the beginning of his career, he used to set music to the shlokas. Most important of them are 'Omkara Panjara Shukeem' and 'Shyamala Dandaka' composed by Kalidasa. These two were broadcast by AIR Bangalore. They became very popular. Today the memories of Yoganarasimham in the world of Carnatic music is mainly as a composer. He belonged to a tradition of great composers heralded by saint Tyagaraja continued by Manambuchavadi Venkatasubbaiah, Pattanam Subramanya Iyer, Mysore Vasudevachar. Yoganarasimham was one of the prime disciples of Mysore Vasudevacharya. He has composed in all the genres of Carnatic music. "Deva" is his signature. His compositions are in Telugu, Sanskrit and Kannada. Homage to the Indian National Flag is



From L to R - Sri N Chennakeshaviiah, MS Chandrashekhariah, K Vasudevachar, H Yoganarasimham, BK Padmanabha Rao and S Krishnamurthy

also one among his compositions. His compositions are in rare ragas. A highly reputed musician A Subba Rao feels, "His compositions in rare ragas bring out the aesthetics of those ragas in a very touching way. Tyagaraja's strong influence is discernible in his raga delineation."

Anthology of his compositions is titled Geethakusumanjali. It consists of 36 compositions. The number looks very meagre. It is because he started composing only during the last four years of his life (1967-1971), that too when his health was sharply deteriorating. Despite his deteriorating physical health, his senses, thoughts and reason were pretty sound. He has written a beautiful note on the combination of notes he has used in the compositions set to Latantapriya and Dwijavanthi ragas. He has tried to explain the rationale behind those movements of the raga. Dr R Satyanarayana tells "We rarely find composers writing such notes with reference to their compositions. His thoughtfulness is highly appreciable." MS Subbulakshmi was all praise for his compositions and recorded a host of his compositions and brought out an audio recording. BV Keskar,

Chairperson, National Book Trust and TL Venkatarama Iyer, who was a judge of the Supreme Court of India held Yoganarasimham in very high esteem.

He was also into editing books and translation. Under the auspices of Sangeetha Kalabhivardhini Sabha, Mysore he edited the compilation of the Veene Sheshanna and Mysore Sadashiva Rao. He translated Bertrand Russel's Conquest of Happiness and Maharshi Karve's autobiography into Kannada. Mysore Vasudevacharya, Voice Culture: An Urgent Problem in Karnatic Music and The Musical Scheme of the Navagraha Kritis of Muthuswami Dikshitar are some of his important articles.

Yoganarasimham was an open-minded person. He could enjoy and appreciate every form of music. He was greatly influenced by Rabindranath Tagore and the ambience of Shantiniketan. He learnt 'Ayi Bhuvano mano mohini' composed by Tagore and taught his children. He always used to say that vigorous and captivating voice of the playback singers was responsible for the popularity of film music. He was extremely impressed by the depth, gentle-



H Yoganarasimham with the maestro Sri K. Vasudevacharya (centre) and brother H Lakshminarasimhayya (A File photo of 1952)

ness and tenderness of KL Saigal's voice and the clarity, vigour, sparkle, and gracefulness of Pankaj Mullick's voice. Whenever he listened to Hemant Kumar, he used to say, "How beautiful our Dikshitar's composition would sound in that voice!" He could spot the talent of people. In 1938 he was travelling with his son. He was listening to radio. Some female singer was singing a ghazal. On listening to her, he immediately commented that she would become very famous. The singer was none other than Begum Akhtar, who was later called "The Ghazal Queen." He was fascinated by the sruti alignment, pitch perfection, aplomb with which the Hindustani singers sang. He was all praise for their practice and voice culture.

He often expressed his dissatisfaction and unhappiness about Carnatic music because it undermined the importance of voice culture. He felt that it had affected the quality of Carnatic music itself. He was concerned because Carnatic musicians were giving undue importance to learning more compositions, when in fact, they should have paid more attention to im-

proving and sustaining their voice. Only a good and tempered voice can render compositions effectively. He felt that Carnatic musicians are not paying enough attention to the sruti alignment, breath control and voice culture. He used to say that those who don't have good voice can always take to playing instruments. He wasn't very happy about the excessive prominence given to rendering Kalpana swaras. He thought it was detrimental to the voice because it would affect the continuous flow of voice, which was very important for the expansion of raga.

Compared to his contemporaries and the times he lived; his thinking was quite unconventional. He allowed his children to pursue their interest. He never asked his children to prioritise studies on other activities. He encouraged them to play during evenings, sing, take part in drama, and pursue their hobbies. He respected individual freedom and was a true democrat. He allowed his children to take decisions on their own. His eldest son HY Sharadaprasad decided to quit college to take part in the freedom struggle. Yoganarasimham did not come in his way. The Government issued an order asking the government servants should prevent their children from participating in the freedom movement. He just ignored that order and told "I have pledged my services to the government and not the services of my wife and children." This bold and upright decision cost him a great deal in his career. He did not get his promotions on time. Financially too he suffered a loss. He cared two hoots for these things, because his commitment to the values of life mattered to him more than anything else. There was an innate gentleness, courtesy, and politeness in him, which manifested in all his actions. During his last days, when he was in hospital, one day despite his efforts to control, he threw up near his bed. He was feeling very guilty about the inconvenience caused by him. He apologised to the nurse, who came to clean it.

Theatre was another area of his interest. He had staged Sanskrit playwright Bhasa's play Urubhanga in Maharaja's college. He adapted

Kalidasa's Shakuntala for All India Radio. He had played the role Yaugandharayana in Swapnavasavadatta. He used to play different roles in plays staged in ADA theatre. He had adopted French playwright Moliere's play into Kannada under the title Manassiladamadve. Shakespeare and Browning were his favourite writers.

His senses were very sharp till he breathed his last. When he was counting his days, he composed the song 'Arbhaka Geetham' in Sanskrit. His son Narayana Datta assisted him while composing it. The song was in fact a dream, about how the life of the children should be. It

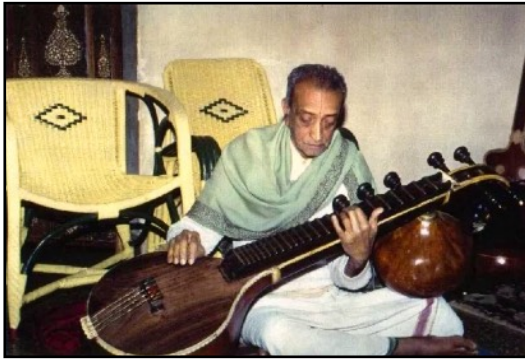
says, "Let the life of the children be full of adventure, full of fun, full of enjoyment of good poetry and literature, filled with reason and broadmindedness." Today in 21 century, life has become miserable, because of thousands of divisive forces. Shouldn't we dream like Yoganarasimham for a peaceful and healthier future of our children?

Sources

1 Sangeethada Siri H Yoganarasimham

2 Geethakusumanjali.

Venerable Vainika of Mysore, Doreswamy Iyengar



(This is an extract from an interview of Veena maestro with SV Krishnamurthy)

Do you recall any memorable event during your tutelage under your Guru?

The Mysore Maharaja was very particular that a second line of vainikas, vocalists and others was prepared. So one day he asked my guru Veene Venkatagiriappa whether he had given training to young persons to take on his mantle. Then, along with me, Ranganayaki Parthasarathy and Nallar Rajalakshmi were also learning veena. The Maharaja asked my guru to bring his disciples one day to the Palace so that he could hear them. I remember I played for half an hour. The Maharaja

heard me and asked my guru, "Who is that boy"? pointing to me.

"He is our orchestra veena vidwan Venkatesa Iyengar's son" said my Guru. The Maharaja told my Guru, "Train this boy well. He is full of promise". I was pleasantly surprised when the Maharaja gave me Rs.50. As word spread about this incident, many came forward to offer me chances. By about 16 or 17 years, I was a complete vainika, I presented many cutcheris. I want to mention here a significant comment Venkatagiriappa made. As I was getting more offers to perform, my guru called my father and said, "Do not expose him too much to the public. Let him practise more and more". He was only against overexposure, I had to attend to my general education too. I am a graduate of the Mysore University. My father was very particular that I should get a degree, though my guru often advised my father not to push me too much towards a degree. Today I feel my university degree has brought me great benefits, made me cultured, taught me to behave well with people and my professional fraternity and given me the capacity to analyse and come to the right conclusions. Education is a must, I feel.

Belakawadi Srinivasa Iyengar

*Excerpts from Karnataka Ganakala Parishat souvenir
Original Kannada article translated to English*



Jr. Belakawadi Srinivasa Iyengar being honoured with 'Ganakalabhushana' title by Karnataka Ganakala Parishat in 1980. File photo of BD Jatti, Ex Vice President of India presenting the award. (Photo Courtesy - Karnataka Ganakala Parishat)

It happens very rarely that a father and son both have the same name. Belakawadi Srinivasa Iyengar (Junior) was born in 1910 to Belakawadi Srinivasa Iyengar (Senior) in Belakawadi located in the Malavalli taluk of Mandya district in Karnataka. As a boy, his house provided an excellent musical ecosystem to inculcate music. He along with his brother Belakawadi Varadaraja Iyengar started learning music from Titte Krishna Iyengar from 1922 onwards. The brothers joined their father in concerts as they progressed in their learning. In addition to performing in Karnataka, they gave concerts in Devakottai, Madurai, Kottayam, and Rameswaram accompanied by famous musicians such as Mysore T Chowdiah and Palakkadu Subbayyar.

Belakawadi brothers gave their first duet concert at the Oriental Conference in Mysore during the year 1927-28. The concert was a big success and they earned laurels and a certificate. Belakawadi Srinivasa Iyengar went on to

study Indian Music Diploma at the Madras Music University in 1932-33. In the University, he came under the tutelage of Tiger Varadachariar. It was a great opportunity for him to learn music under Tiger along with his other disciples like GNB. Belakawadi Srinivasa Iyengar passed out with flying colours at the University. During the same year, he also joined a music school run by Muthaiah Bhagavathar at the Madras Music Academy. He passed out with distinction and became a disciple of Muthaiah Bhagavathar subsequently.

He returned back to Mysore State and was appointed as a Music teacher in the state-run Vanivilas Institute in 1936. Thereafter he taught music at many music schools for the next 33 years and retired in 1969. He has contributed to producing many performing musicians. He has authored books on Tiger Varadachariar, Maha Vaidyanatha Iyer, Muthaiah Bhagavathar, etc.

He was appointed as the 'Asthana Vidwan' of Mysore in 1947. He passed out with high rank in the Trinity College of London's Western Music Exam for which he was honoured by Nalwadi Krishnaraja Wadiyar. He was at ease with both 'Lakshya' and 'Lakshana' and has to his credit many compositions. He was gifted with excellent theoretical knowledge and was an expert in the practical application of the same. He was known for his teaching methodology and straightforwardness. He was an unassuming personality and was respected for his humility and courtesy to others in the music community.

Poet of the Flute, BN Suresh

Late GT Narayana Rao

(This article is an extract from "The Poet of Flute" published by the 'Flute BN Suresh Smaraka Samiti' during the first death anniversary of BN Suresh)



".....and that evening's avalanche of flute-melody, flowing majestically from Mali's instrument, sublimated me to a state of rasa-samadhi, a bliss whose quality and depth I cannot describe", said the professional flutist BN Suresh recalling how the Mali magic had cast its spell on him as early as 1954.

Suresh was then in his eighth year. Occasion: The annual Sri Rama Navami music festival at the City Institute campus in Bangalore. The youngster was attending the classical music concerts every evening there. But that

evening's melody had a different message. In the words of poet Bendre.

*Revolving on the river was the lodestone
Floating in the river was an iron foil*

Particularly three kritis, 'Ninuvina Namadendu' (Navarasa Kannada), 'Raghuvam-sasudhambudhichandra' (Kadanakutuhala) and the snake-charmer's folk tune in Punnagavarali - imprinted an indelible impression on the little master's photo - or sono-sensitive mind.

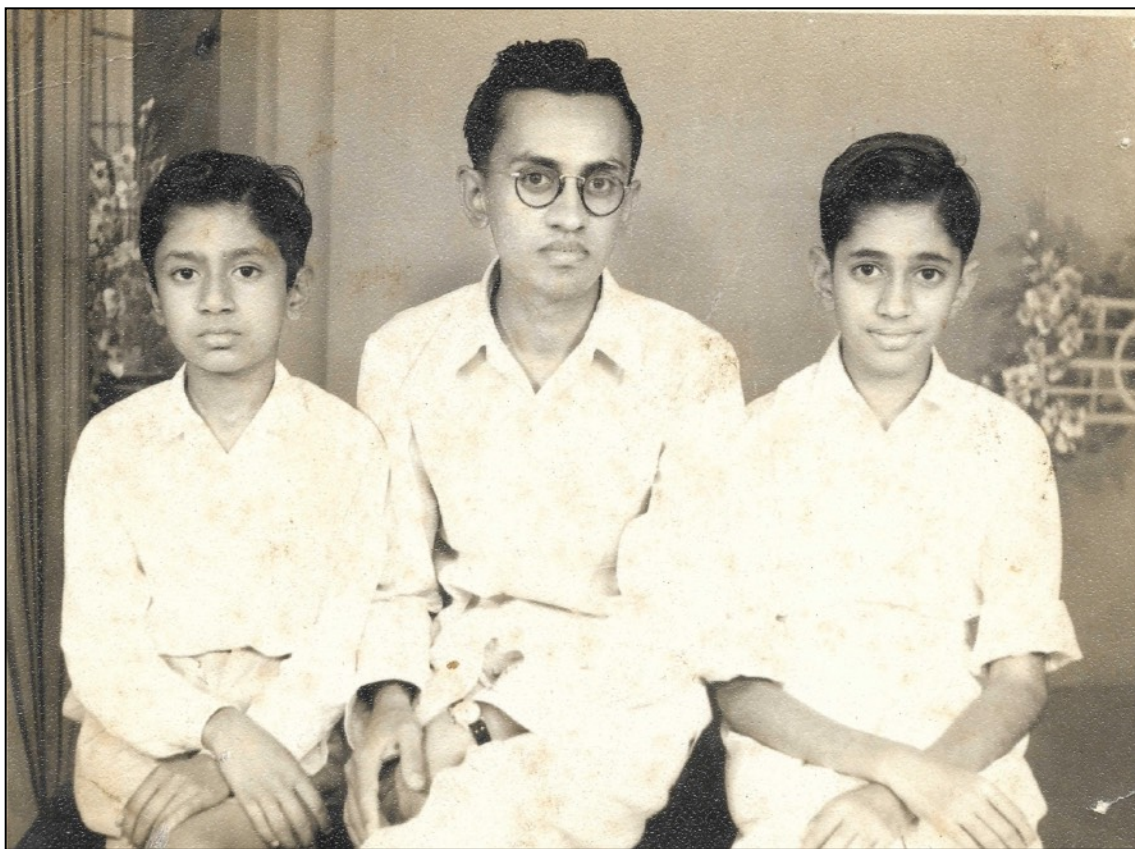
"Flute is my medium" he decided. Everything else was to be subservient to it.

The magic of music

In the world of fine arts it is the general rule that a prodigy is born into a dynamic tradition, normally confined to a particular lineage. The inherited potential is nurtured by home environment, suitable training and a congenial social climate. And when the time is ripe the genius moults into bloom as the latest exponent of the eternal song.

Rare is the instance when the reverse process takes place: the germination of a genius in an apparently unconnected atmosphere or an uncultivated soil. And when it does happen, it looks as if tradition had gone all out to choose its metier: Bangalore Nilakantan Suresh (born on 7-1-1946) was one such handpick.

His father B Nilakantan (1916-83), an Engineer by profession, whose interest lay in tennis, must have seen in his progeny a budding techno- or bureaucrat who would exhibit his mettle in the aristocratic game of tennis. This dream was fully realised though in a different field: Suresh, a graduate in Engineering, was a Senior Electri-



BN Suresh and BN Ramesh with Bangalore K Venkatram

cal Engineer with the Indian Telephone Industries Ltd Bangalore, and the melody sweeps and rhythmic strokes he wielded through his instrument, the flute, could be the envy of ace tennis players.

Tradition for reasons never knowable by us 'conspires' peculiar situations, combinations and incidents whose end-product is something phenomenal. The advantage of hindsight allows us to trace the track record of tradition culminating in Suresh.

In the early thirties Nilakantan, like all boys of his age, was more interested in games, and of course, in culinary delicacies. About that time, the violin wizard Chowdiah, whenever halting in Bangalore, would invite these youngsters to his 'den' to form an audience for him. For hours together he would practise in their presence. And at the end, they would be rewarded with as many masale dose as they could eat!

Suresh's mother Jayalakshmi had gone through the initial lessons in music at home. It was one

of the essential qualifications for a prospective bride to get a pass in the matrimonial interview.

Perhaps these indirect influences had laid the plan for the future Suresh to evolve. Right from infancy, he was attracted by classical music. Radio, gramophone and live concerts had served him as sources of motivation.

He was about three then. The family had gone to Mysore. In the evening they attended a Karnatak vocal music concert by Mysore Brothers. The mother felt the boy might be a nuisance inside the hall and so preferred to stay away. No. Suresh insisted on getting into the auditorium. The music so enchanted him that unknowingly he had crawled on to the stage and taken position by the side of the vocalists.

Next day there was a veena-vocal recital by Nilamma Kadambi at Nanjanagud. The family had gone there. Even at the outset the boy walked up to the stage and sat by the side of the artist. At the end of the recital he patted the instruments with unbounded joy.



BN Suresh performing as a young boy supported by Anoor Ramakrishna on Violin, ML Veerabhadraraiya on Mridanga and Bangalore Manjunath on Ghatam (File photo of 18 Aug 1958 during a marriage concert in Bellary)

Music had cast its spell on him. His 'outlandish' interests were an enigma to the parents. But the liberal atmosphere at home and the musical environment in the City helped these unusual instincts develop gradually.

Nachiketa meets Yama

"Get me a teacher to teach flute." The boy's insistence was serious. The not unwilling father obliged the 'little devil' by fixing MS Srinivasamurthy as his Guru. Indeed a routine action by every harassed parent to get over an immediate irritant.

But Suresh was made differently. Soon he outgrew the group level. He would skip the mechanical drill in musical notes and land on his favourite Mali-tunes. The Guru felt the timbre of the shishya and preferred to give individual attention to him. Even here Suresh's progress was phenomenal. He would produce new hues out of existing colours to the surprise of the teacher. Mali-tunes had 'possessed' him and the Guru had to tailor his lessons accordingly.

At the next year's music festival, Suresh was presented to Mali: a curious little lad in front of the great flute wizard! Their eyes met. Mali gave his flute to Suresh and asked him to play on it. The boy enlivened it. The tonal quality displayed by him simply enchanted the Maestro. It was great for a seven-year-old, Mali felt; and at the

invitation of the parents he agreed to visit them to have a closer look into the boy's accomplishments.

Only greatness can appreciate greatness. Mali did it. He said that Suresh should be exempted from the routine rigmarole and straight be initiated into the modern advanced techniques of flute-playing. He would have willingly and gladly accepted the responsibility, but as he was not a resident of Bangalore, he suggested, Suresh could be put under the tutelage of B Sivaramiah, a close friend of him and who was well conversant with modern techniques.

Enters Sivaramiah

As a boy, Sivaramiah had learnt flute under Narasinga Rao at Bangalore. But before he could attain professional competence the Guru passed away (1936). In 1938, the lone-tracker Sivaramiah heard for the first time the twelve-year-old genius Mahalingam breathing life into the bamboo reed. A familiar chord vibrated sympathetically in his heart: it looked as though the techniques his Guru had imparted him had been refined and perfected by Mali.

They were of the same age. But Mali had reached the pinnacle of glory. Sivaramiah made bold to invite him to give a recital. This initial meet of like interests forged a life-long friendship between them.



BN Suresh performing at Thiruvaiyaru with Tiruvapur Bhaktavatsalam on Mridanga and BN Ramesh on Kanjira (File photo of 1981)

Over the years, Mali could perceive well Sivaramiah's potential even though the latter, out of shyness, had never played flute in front of the maestro. As a teacher, especially of the Mali-techniques, Sivaramiah was superb. Mali had known it. About the time Mali met Suresh, Sivaramiah had virtually withdrawn himself from public activities because of a personal calamity. But then he couldn't say no to Mali. The charming young boy by his side compelled the melancholic Sivaramiah to come out of his cocoon, and accept Suresh as his disciple.

Early in the morning, the young toddler had to cover a long distance to reach his Guru's home. The call of music was irresistible. The happy symbiosis of the loving teacher and willing pupil thus developed into a great style in flute. Guru showed the way, Shishya strode on it; Guru indicated the direction, Shishya reached the goal; and Guru explained the details, Shishya explored the possibilities. "But he that received seed into the ground is he that hears the word, and understands it; which also bears fruit, and brings forth, some an hundred fold, some sixty, some thirty."

In 1955 Mahalingam was to give a recital at the Century Club, Bangalore. Elite audience had to be served the choicest items. He invited Suresh

to accompany him. Mali, having earlier watched periodically the progress of the boy, had fully understood his mettle. However the parents and Sivaramiah were understandably nervous: a nine-year beginner with a twenty-nine-year genius?

There was no plan, or rehearsal but only a hint to the boy as to the swaras to be played. Perhaps out of childish innocence or an inexplicable innate confidence, the little fellow had accepted the big offer.

As the concert gained momentum the maestro relished greatly the little blower's enthusiasm and confidence. With the loving support of Mali at crucial points Suresh did well to the total delight of the connoisseurs. A pleased Mahalingam declared "It is only Suresh who can and will carry my mantle. None else has the capacity."

The Theosophical Society of Bangalore presented on 7-6-1956 "a musical soiree : flute by Master Suresh Nilakantan (boy prodigy aged 10)." The die had been cast. Knowledgeable rasikas spotted a new melody, a rare hue and a lively vibrancy in this young talent.

Child-Pied Piper of Bangalore

Concerts came in search of the child prodigy. The most prestigious music organisation in the State, Bangalore Gayana Samaja, sponsored his recital on 24-11-1957 with B. Vishwanath (violin) and K Venkataram (mridanga). Rajasri, a vainika and music critic, wrote his remarks on this maiden professional recital by Suresh: "The veteran members of the Samaja will recall the scene several years ago here when the Secretary VT Srinivasan had literally carried a ten-year old lad to the stage from among the audience. The boy was absorbed in fondly caressing an ordinary bamboo stick. The elixir of melody he poured out of it simply metamorphosed us: never was heard such captivating melody before. That was the boy Mali making his royal presence felt in the music world. By a strange quirk of fate, the same scene repeated here on November 24. The same secretary helped an eleven-year-old boy ascend the same stage holding the same instrument in his nimble hands. Again, it was the same divine melody that flooded the hall for well over 2 hours. Mali was prominently seated among the rasikas.

"Thus strode Master Suresh into public gaze. Since then it was one continuous ascent for him. Soon an invitation came from Madras, the Kashi of Karnatak music. Just before the concert, the senior accompanists, on seeing the little boy, felt insulted and got into argument with the organisers. Lot of cajoling had to go in before they could move on to the stage. They sat with wry faces. However once the concert began with the Bhairavi sweep in 'Viriboni' in vilamba and trisra paces, their studied indifference instantaneously vaporised, they sat alert and provided the best support. "The young master is a master artist" was their spontaneous remark.

His cup of emotion was overfull. How to describe it? Romain Rolland in John Christopher has given expression to it: "The music especially worked wonders. It bathed the whole scene in a misty atmosphere, in which everything became beautiful, noble and desirable. It bred in the soul a desperate need of love, and at the

same time showed phantoms of love on all sides, to fill the void that itself had created."

From Madras to Pondicherry was the immediate hop. The same 'senior accompanists' willingly went with the party.

Just before the recital the boy demanded a cup of ice-cream. Father told him with concern that the cold delicacy would affect his breath and the recital might go awry. "Immediately after the concert I'll take you to the ice-cream parlour across the road."

The crowded audience saw Lord Krishna in Suresh - in grace, melody and dedication. The Holy Mother of Aurobindo Ashram heard the concert from her sequestered seat.

Concert over. People rushed to the stage to have a glimpse of the child prodigy. But where was he? Yes, he was very much there, at the ice cream house!

The Holy Mother desired to see and talk to the boy at her chamber. "You are an avatar of Sri Krishna! She blessed him and presented a plate with fruits and mementos.

Typically the little fellow snatched a fruit out of the plate and went on enjoying it in the very presence of the Holy Mother. The parents were visibly embarrassed. "That's precisely the way Lord Krishna would have acted" said the Holy Mother and eased their anxiety.

The subsequent evolution of Suresh is the concrete example to the abstract poem of Tagore "This little flute of a reed thou hast carried over hills and dales, and hast breathed through it melodies eternally new. At the immortal touch of thy hands my little heart loses its limits in joy and gives birth to utterance ineffable."

Suresh began constructing his own citadel on the Mali foundation.

Mali foundation

Several years later, the professionally mature artist Suresh explained scientifically the salient features of modern techniques in flute-playing. They are appropriately called the Mali-tech-

niques as they were introduced for the first time by him.

Flute is the simplest and oldest musical instrument ever invented by man. Any musical note, a combination of notes, a sweep of melody etc can be produced out of it depending upon the capacity of the player. It is indeed an amazing feat that in this little hollow bamboo pipe the human spirit can express its infinite vibrant moods in different shades.

Mythology has associated it with Lord Krishna. He wove divine melodies out of it and mesmerised His followers, cattle, and even inanimate things. This symbolises the potential of flute.

Over the millennia it had gained importance as a *sushira vadya* (wind instrument). In fact *vaana* (its modern variant is *santoor*), *veena* and *venu* (flute) have been with us since vedic times. The first two are stringed instruments.

Venkataram says "It was Sarabha Sastry who had given status to flute as one of the main concert instruments. Perhaps he was the first to give independent flute recitals as well. Paladam Sanjeeva Rao was the more famous concert player of the pre-Mali days...

The essential principles of the Mali-techniques are four:

First, choose a high-pitched flute, usually 4 or 5. The impact of flute-timbre or melody as different from other instrumental melodies can be felt only from such a high-pitched instrument.

Second, blow powerfully a jet of air into the lip-hole. In fact the instrument compels the artist to do so - just as a spirited race horse requires an alert jockey to, prod it. And the artist has to orient his tongue and lips in such a way that air dissipation is reduced to zero. Otherwise the solidity and melody part of the music is lost, and in their place unwanted unmusical noises will occur. Also harsh shrillness will pierce the ears of the listeners. When blowing is properly done the laser-jet air enlivens the air column within the instrument and makes it vibrate. The bamboo walls begin res-

onating. Total effect is a combine of solidity, melody, emotion and above all clarity.

Third, apply well modulated fingering techniques: which finger-hole is to be covered or uncovered, how much pressure to be applied and so on are to be learnt systematically. Such a modulation alone will produce the *gamakas*, the soul and spirit of Karnatak music.

Finally, while blowing, in consonance with the musical phrase or the text of the composition, appropriate *tuttookara* variations are to be introduced. These will highlight the live spots of the composition. Stress is laid on the correct syllables of the text consistent with the meaning enshrined therein. A discerning listener who is familiar with the composition can follow the recital as if he were listening to a vocal concert. His imagination is thus helped to transcend the instrumental melody and reach the devotional-emotional *rasas* inherent in the compositions. His participation in and enjoyment of the concert are thus enhanced. In the absence of this technique the impact of the text gets diluted and the musical idioms loose orientation.

Suresh concluded "The Mali-techniques produced a rich harvest of melody-emotion-meaning combine till then unknown. Overnight flute regained its ancient glories. It became an independent instrument of music like *veena* or *violin*."

The Alathur forte

An historic analysis of the track-records of great artists and geniuses tells us one thing: a genius is a freak of tradition; lesser mortals should derive inspiration from this perennial source and chalk out their own paths to suit their equipment and potential; those who do other wise - who think they can remain either a carbon copy of the genius or even out beat him in due course - end up disastrously as insignificant nonentities.

It was a piece of good luck that Suresh was not direct disciple of Mahalingam. Even when the youngster was 'held' by the Mali magic, he had tuned his antenna to the Karnatak music of the times. He had absorbed the best in Ariyakudi,



BN Suresh performing during The Bangalore Gayana Samaja conference with Lalgudi Jayaraman on Violin, Karaikudi Mani on Mridanga and Harishankar on Khanjira (File photo of October 1996)

Semmangudi, Musiri, MS, DKP, GNB, Madurai Mani Iyer, Ramnad, Alathur and a host of others who were expanding the frontiers of classical music through the vocal medium.

"For structural grandeur, emotional embellishment and exuberant ideas, all within the framework of classicism, Alathur Brothers had set a standard never excelled by others. Every kriti when delineated by them would be a piece of exquisite artistry. And the fullness of music one experienced in their concerts could only be compared with the star-studded firmament - ever changing yet invariant, quite familiar yet radiating new ideas, and very intimate yet never penetrable." This is how Suresh expressed his admiration of the vocal duo.

The Alathur music "possessed" him while the Mali techniques 'held' him. Suresh is thus a three-in-one: Mali at the base, Alathur at the structure and his own 'pratibhe' (resplendent creativity, inquisitive curiosity and innovative capacity) synthesising them into a new concoction. The mridanga-ghata artist Bangalore K Venkataram instructed him initially on concert planning.

The vocalisation of flute one discerns in Suresh's style is due to this Guru. Venkataram would sing and Suresh would accompany him. It was thus, initially, a joint venture until Suresh mastered the techniques of vocalisation.

"Man masters nature not by force but by understanding it."

Exploring newer pastures

Such a talent, especially when it is young, never is content in maintaining the status quo. It yearns to explore new avenues, excavate hidden nuggets, dress them elegantly and present as gifts to the rasikas. Thus in his fourteenth year when he was invited to participate in a private jugalbandi concert with the Sitar Maestro Pandit Ravi Shankar, he jumped into the fray without a second thought. Ravi Shankar was highly elated and blessed the teenager Suresh "You are going to chart out a new track in Indian music."

The Queen of Melody, MS Subbulakshmi, desired to listen to Suresh in private. The two-hour recital at VT Srinivasan's home (where she was staying) pleased her so much that she gifted him an exquisitely carved statuette of Lord Krishna, saying "I felt as if the Lord Himself was playing His divine tunes."

These well-meant and deserved compliments never got into his head or intoxicated him. The parents were very strict about one thing: their son was just a beginner; he was not going to be lured by money or praise, and that he would never let his sights down. For the first several years father insisted on the boy giving free concerts only, lest money should detract him from the path of righteousness.

Suresh dived deep into the science of music, made a thorough study of it and explored the various possibilities of flute. Every fresh concert posed a double challenge to him: how best he could present the not-so-popular facets of classical music to the rasikas, and how best he could educate and elevate them to appreciate these new trends.

Fire ordeal

In every recital he would present one or two new vaggeyakaara kritis in unfamiliar ragas, and a number of familiar compositions of Haridasas. Also he would set tunes to quite a few Haridasa kritis. The latter, especially, would throw a heavy responsibility on him: the meaning and message of the composition, its emotional refrain and the compulsions of metre had to be understood fully and appropriate raga-tala-gati set. That is why his concerts were always replete with freshness of ideas, fascinating structures, polished artistry and a good deal of filigree work. Never did he rest on his oars. Waters were vast and deep, energy was steady and reverberating, and the boat was adaptive and accommodative. Row on, row on!

Mali used to say "Every concert is an agni pariksha to me. The yawning abysmal gap separating the intention and execution, or planning and performance, has always left me a dejected soul. The mind soars, the medium lingers. How to bridge them?"

As a professional melody-maker and charm-weaver, Suresh would accept the engagement with all humility, prepare for it thoroughly and serve his best with total dedication. When rasikas praised him for his attainments and extolled his originality he would just recall what the great Newton had said "If I have seen further than other men, it is because I stood on the shoulders of giants." "I do not know what I may appear to the world, but to myself I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the seashore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me."

Academic accomplishments

A precocious student, disciplined and diligent at academic studies, with a natural inclination towards mathematics and allied sciences, Suresh had a brilliant school record. Music was his constant companion while studying the lessons for the school or college.

He had scored excellent marks in the pre-university examination (1963) PCM group. He applied to the Government Engineering College (its present name is Vishweshwaraiah College of Engineering) and additionally, as a precautionary measure, to the BMS College of Engineering. Both the colleges offered him seats. The tuition fee was very much less in the former, and so Suresh's father decided to admit him to the GEC.

There at the GEC, Suresh saw a heartrending scene. A poor widow was begging the Principal to accommodate somehow, her only hope of future, son, in that college. He had just missed the seat for want of a few marks. The Principal was pleading his inability as there was absolutely no vacancy. Finally, overcome by her pathetic appeals, he told her, in case any selected candidate did not join the college, then he could admit her son to that vacancy. But such a chance was very remote, he added.

It moved the artist Suresh's heart. He told his father he would withdraw his candidature from the GEC and get admitted to the BMSCE so that the poor widow's tears could be wiped off. "You can afford to pay the extra fee demanded in the BMSCE" argued the altruism-motivated Suresh.

"Pain and suffering, in any form and anywhere, would simply melt his heart. He would go all out to help students in need. That was our Suresh. We admitted him to the BMSCE and made way for that lady's only son to join the GEC," concluded his mother.

Music and Engineering had a symbiotic existence in him. He came out well in the final BE examination (1969). A casual application shot to the Indian Telephone Industries Ltd. got him the appointment order itself! Though it was his



BN Suresh performing with AKC Natarajan during Ramanavami April 1976. Bangalore K Venkatram and BN Ramesh on double mridanga and Sheshagiridas on Kanjira

ambition to remain a full-fledged professional artist, this unexpected offer spurred him to join the ITI Ltd. as an Electrical Engineer (1969).

Affectionately yours

Suresh was married to Sudha in 1975. It was an arranged marriage. While her interest in music was just normal (not technical) his knowledge of her subject (she was is MSc in Physiology) was next to nothing. Semi jocularly he had told her "I do not know much of physiology and you of music. It is better this way. Otherwise we would be criticising each other every day."

She was encouraged to do her research in the subject. In 1984 Sudha received her PhD degree, and in 1985 she was employed in the MS Ramaiah Medical College as a Lecturer. A grateful and affectionate wife recalls how he helped her to work her way up academically and realise her full potential.

"He was a gentleman par excellence. A man of few words but he had a very warm heart. Even in private he never talked ill of others. 'Music is my first love. I live only for it. I protect my body and limbs only to serve music.' These were his often repeated remarks. To those disciples who came to him with a sincere desire to learn and practice flute, he gave out his best freely and willingly. His generosity was a byword among his disciples and friends. Even when I knew he

was my trusted possession I knew he had belonged to the tradition of great music." Mrs Sudha Suresh was recalling thus in a pensive mood.

In 1982 Suresh had gone on a musical tour of USA and UK. While he was in the USA the happy news of a baby girl born to the couple was flashed to him. That was on 16-10-1982. "May she be sruti to my sangeeta" exclaimed the elated artist. The girl was named Sruti.

"Since that time his life oscillated between Sruti, the beloved daughter, and sangeeta. Nothing beyond them seemed to have existed for him" remarked Sudha.

Karnataka Government had nominated him twice a member of the Sangeeta Nrutya Academy. He evinced a keen interest in its activities, and helped the deserving Karnataka artists get stage both within and without the State. His concern for their welfare, dream to elevate the standard of classicism in the younger artists, penchant for diversified programmes and leadership in organising cultural festivals in remote corners of the State won him all round approbation. He dreamt, expressed and acted great.

O, what a fall was there, my countrymen!

During the beginning of 1983 Suresh had gone to Mettupalayam for a concert. Late in the night he had to catch a train rather hurriedly.

He was about to cross a rail way line. But then someone from behind pulled him back even as a dashing train roared off the very rails. A fatal accident was thus averted.

Next morning, 8-4-1983, he was back home in Bangalore. His wife received him and after attending to the usual household duties she left for the College. Suresh was too tired, and as such he preferred to take rest at home. He was alone.

Why not take a nice oil bath? I should take proper care of my bushy hair. He decided thus and entered the bath room. A luxurious bath and a careful grooming of the hair all over. He felt greatly refreshed. Let me have an hour's sleep and get rejuvenated, he decided. Stood up and turned to step out. The slippery floor betrayed him. He fell, a very tragic fall indeed.

The impact was so terrific and sudden that a metallic fixture in the wall that hit his right shoulder penetrated deep up to the bone and ripped open the muscular ligaments. The right hip bone was fractured. He fell down unconscious. Blood gushed out. Not a single soul there to render him help.

Several minutes later he regained consciousness. He crawled all the way to the telephone unmindful of the killing pain and bleeding wounds, lifted its mountain-heavy handle, rang his mother "Will you please come?" Overcome by the excruciating pain he lost his consciousness again.

At the other end stupor struck the loving mother. No further response Or communication. She came rushing. The bolted front door had to be forced open. The ghastly scene she saw there chilled her marrows: he was lying unconscious in a pool of blood as if some one had brutally attacked him.

She administered him first aid, phoned to Sudha and sent for an ambulance. "Barely an hour after reaching the College I was informed of Suresh's fall. I rushed back home. The agonising scene unnerved me: he was being carried to the ground floor (we lived in the first floor) in a stretcher. I looked at his face: same pleasant

handsome expression. He smiled at me. That smile gave me confidence to ask him as to what had happened. With a tantalisingly mischievous wink of his eyes, so characteristic of him, he said a monkey had played a trick on him when he had tripped and fell. As monkeys were our constant visitors I thought Suresh was right after all."

He was immediately shifted to a well known nursing home where the necessary first aid and other treatments were immediately administered. The orthopaedic surgeon who attended on Suresh explained the gravity of the situation in the evening: in addition to the bleeding wound in the right shoulder Suresh had suffered a fracture of the neck of the femur.

For various reasons best known to the surgeon the operation was performed after three days. It was a major one. Imagine full 72 hours after the accident remaining under traction. The post-operation care needed greater medical expertise.

Back to the stage?

"It was a slow journey, both demanding and painful, towards recovery. He had to lie on the bed for days together staring blank at the ceiling. Little Sruti, our daughter, was the only hope for him. He was very emphatic 'I live for my music. Why should I linger thus?' Some how he wanted to stand and walk as early as possible. A special wheeled chair was improvised for him. With the help of crutches he could slowly walk across the home.

"Physiotherapy and other exercises were continued systematically. After more than a year of ajnatavasa he was able to move around with the help of just one crutch. He couldn't avoid limping. Yet another operation in April 1984 as he had developed some complication inside which had caused him splitting pain.

"Slowly he moved back to the stage. Akashavani was the first to record his concert. Later sitting on a chair - he couldn't squat - he began giving public concerts. A major concert at the Bangalore Gayana Samaja and one more at the prestigious Madras Music Academy reassured the



BN Suresh in a recording with Lalgudi Jayaraman on Violin, Vellore Ramabadrar on Mridangam and Bangalore K Venkatram on Ghatam

rasikas that the artist Suresh was quite vigorous, creative and great.

"But then the critics and the press in Madras especially did not take kindly to Suresh's chair-music. The unacademic observations by them hurt his sensitive mind. 'Why should they be bothered about my posture? The quality does not change whether I squat or sit on a chair' he remarked painfully.

"A foldable wooden seat was innovated. With some efforts he could squat on it. Thus the critics' objection was removed. He longed for recognition and sympathy. But the much needed solace from the quarters that could give it did not come to him. Meanwhile the forced sitting on the wooden seat added to his discomfort. At the end of each concert, for days together, he had to suffer from agonising pain of the hip."

I will take Fate by the throat

Friends and admirers of Suresh in the USA offered to provide him the best medical attention absolutely free. With modern surgical techniques the hip could be replaced and the lingering pain alleviated. The trip, however, could not materialise. With an artificial hip he would never be able to sit and play on the instrument. Traditional diehards and conventional bigots among artists and critics wouldn't accept a 'chaired artist'. He was, it would appear, 'possessed' by an obsession: he should squat, render the concert as a normal artist and thus

prove to the uncharitable critics that he had met their objection.

Spirit was soaring high with musical ideas. Physique was throwing impossible challenges. Result? Mental and physical agony, a complete feeling of anguish and total surrender to fatalism. Yet he was accepting concert engagements, pouring out his heart and later suffering from killing physical pain.

"Why not call it a day and retire?" To such well meant questions from friends he would say "Why should I live without music?" To him life was synonymous with music and death with no-music. "I will rather die on the stage playing flute than linger long leading a nonfunctional existence."

Nevertheless his body was getting emaciated. He appeared a confused person. Back in 1979 or so some stupid self-styled future-reader, it would appear, had told him that he (Suresh) would not live much beyond his forty-fifth year. It had now struck him as an obsession, and it looked as though he was eagerly awaiting the arrival of the day of reckoning.

Quite often, like Beethoven under distress, he would say "I am resolved to rise superior to every obstacle. I am sure my fortune will not desert me. With whom need I be afraid of measuring my strength? I will take Fate by the throat."

In private conversations he used to echo Beethoven's feelings of distress "Your Suresh is most unhappy and at strife with nature and Creator. I have often cursed the latter for exposing his creatures to the merest accident, so that often the most beautiful buds are broken or destroyed thereby. Only think that my noblest faculty, my mobility, has greatly deteriorated."

He was determined "Let not my lameness affect my art." Yet he felt his time was running out. Ignore the physical system, train pupils, give concerts, and breathe the last while in action - seemed to be his desperate stand. Though he was advised hospitalisation in November 1989 he did not heed to it as he had several concert

engagements on hand.

Comes the fateful 1990

It was April 1990. He was playing with one of the implements for isometric exercise. Quite unexpectedly the spring snapped and he suffered a fracture in the left arm. Next evening he was scheduled to give a public recital at Jayanagar, Bangalore. By the night the hematoma of the left arm caused swelling. There was slight temperature, and more, the pain was unbearable.

"Give me some pain-killer. I will fulfil my engagement. I don't care for my arm. The concert had to be cancelled. Subsequently he gave a number of concerts supporting his left arm on artefact. "Why should I live without playing on the flute?"

It was on June 29. Place Mysore. My friend and Suresh's cousin M.Lakshminarayan rang me to ask whether I was game that evening for a flute recital by Suresh at Nanjanagud. I jumped at the offer. Later about that concert, which I never dreamt could be his last one I could hear, I wrote (Star of Mysore, 2-7-1990) While ragas and kritis he chose were quite familiar to listeners of classical concerts, it was his style, which abounded in creativity, that lent a new charm to the concert: ultimately it is the live artist who breathes new hues to old ragas and kritis...." It was one of his best recitals I had ever heard.

While returning to Mysore he told me "Last year you chided me for fast tempo and the mathematical jugglery in kalpanaswaras. It was never my nature. But I can't explain why I did it then. Slow is peaceful"

"..... and soulful too !" I added.

Yes, in that concert, where the environment was not particularly musical, he poured his 'soul' at the feet of Lord Srikanteshwara. Before leaving Mysore next morning, he had told his aunt that, perhaps, that was his last visit to Mysore.

Next month, July, he went on a concert tour of Andhra Pradesh (Vijayawada). He was running

mild temperature. The 1983 Mettupalayam brush with death and the fortune-teller's foreboding had made deep inroads into his psyche. Even as he boarded the train he told his wife "Look! If something happens to me come immediately."

She implored him to cancel the engagement and remain at home. But he turned this advice down with an emphatic no. "I will fulfil the concert engagement even at the expense of my very life."

Well, he returned home without any major setback.

Sudha writes "His physical condition was on the wane. Meanwhile he was required to record a concert at the Doordarshan on September 17. It was to be telecast in October. He was planning the concert paying meticulous attention to details.

"But Fate had decided differently. In the early hours of September 10 he took severely ill. He was hospitalised. The TV programme and the astrologer's prediction were haunting him. The doctors told me Suresh's condition was causing anxiety. "You have to give him the will to overcome the physical agony. Compose yourself. Never give way to your emotions in his presence' they advised me.

"I turned to God. How could He be so cruel to an artist who always sang His glories? Suresh had immense faith in God. But where was He.? When we most needed Him He was conspicuously absent. I hoped for a miracle to occur and save my dear Suresh. I prayed.

"As if in answer to my fond hopes and sincere prayers he recovered after a four-day fight with Yama. During that period he did not close his eyes. He wanted me to remain by his bedside continuously. When asked how he had kept himself awake for such a long period he replied 'Had I closed my eyes I would never have come back alive. I wanted to live, and play on my instrument which alone gives me succour.'

"He had plans to write a treatise on flute. A grand synthesis of Hindustani and Karnataka flutes was his dream. Getting back home, he

said, he would retire from service and devote all time to his pet love: music.

"Suresh's mother had been summoned from Bhopal where she was staying with her (another) son. Now that he had regained health she thought she could return to Bhopal. An apparently healthy Suresh quipped 'Why are you in a hurry? Almost immediately you will have to return.' Indeed a soul-stirring request. She did not proceed.

"Even as we were rejoining at the fact of his initial success in the fight with Yama, the Lord of Death must have been chuckling within Himself at our foolishness. Suresh took ill suddenly on September 18, Mahalaya Amavasya day. On the Ayudha Pooja day he went into a state of deep coma from which he never recovered.

"Just before that final fateful turn he was imploring his mother 'Cure me soon. I want to give expression to my novel innovative ideas. You please take them and preserve for posterity.' No power on earth could cure him. He was snatched away from us permanently on October 7."

Epitaph

"He was an artist. Who comes after him will not follow the same path; he will have to start anew; for he who went first did not stop until he had reached the place where all art stops." These were the words spoken at the funeral of Beethoven.

Heavenly touches

People of my generation who have witnessed the birth, evolution, achievements and premature demise of the phenomenon called Suresh will recall with deep feelings, the eternal melodies he breathed through his live instrument, and the evergreen quest he cast through his inquisitive eyes. In Shakespeare's words

*If I could write the beauty of your eyes
And in fresh numbers number all your graces
The age to come would say "This poet lies -
Such heavenly touches ne'er touched earthly
faces."*

A solitary note, a gentle curve, a caressing gamaka, or a mischievous tilt would convey the

essence of the intended raga, and also suggest the kriti likely to follow. It was like a single ray of light from a distant Blue Giant star: so rich in content.

Only a genius with a strong traditional background and zest for life could attain such heights so early and look zenithward. Earlier, Mali (Mahalingam 1926-86) had paved the way on which the young Suresh (1946-90) strode elephant like exploring newer pastures.

Today both of them are not alive. But the melody structures sculpted by them will remain ever fresh. They rejuvenated the Karnatak flute, gave a welcome turn to tradition, and uncovered a new vista for further development. Mali revolutionised the art of playing, while Suresh stabilised it, Mali charted a new path, while Suresh walked on it, and Mali gave status to flute, while Suresh embellished it.

After Sommerfeld, the Physicist, who wrote to Planck, the harbinger of a new discipline in Physics to explain nature, the Quantum Theory, Suresh could pay tributes to Mali thus:

*You cultivated the virgin soil
Where picking flowers was my only toil*

And Mali could reciprocate the sentiments to Suresh as did Planck to Sommerfeld:

*You picked flowers, - well, so have I
Let them be, then, combined;
Let us exchange our flowers fair,
And in the brightest wreath them bind*

(I record with gratitude the materials provided by Mrs Sudha Suresh, the facts supplied by Mrs Jayalakshmi Nilakantan, and the cross references corroborated by Mr BN Ramesh and Mr M Lakshminarayan. Mr Bangalore K Venkataram has critically read the article and suggested several points to be touched up. This process has put the facts more explicit. My special thanks are due to him.... Late GT Narayana Rao)

In a resplendent garden - The Veena Music of D Balakrishna

Sachi R Sachidananda, Bangalore

Not long ago, I saw on You Tube a song tribute to India that is Bharat presented during our seventy-fifth year of independence. It was titled, “Aikyamrutam - a musical tribute to mother India”. Featuring the veena, sarangi, flute, and percussion as well as lovely voices, it was a medley of a choice collection of patriotic and popular songs from around our country. The video shows the ensemble sitting and performing in a verdant garden. I posted my comment: “Congrats to Vid. Balakrishna and team for a most uplifting medley of songs done with finesse and a regard for the original songs. Perhaps the only video so far where the same artistes do all the different songs!” The entire presentation was created by Vid. Balakrishna and presented with fellow musicians.

Also, recently, I watched on You Tube (Shaale venue) a most wonderful presentation of the operatic poetry of Sri.PuTiNa set to music by Vid. Doreswamy Iyengar and turned into concert-worthy compositions. These songs were born sixty years ago. They were revived and presented by Vid. Balakrishna and sung by Vid. Amrutha Venkatesh.

After these two experiences, I realised the multifaceted musical artistry of Vid. Balakrishna and my regard for the vainika of the famous Mysore Bani grew significantly.

No musician would really like to be called “a chip off the old block”, especially if he is the son and disciple of a vainika prodigy appointed at the Mysore royal court in his early teens. This is the case with Vid. Balakrishna, son of



Veene Mysore Doreswamy Iyengar. Vid. Balakrishna has been shining in his own right on the Carnatic stage for over 4 decades and presides over the Gayana Samaja conference in 2022.

Early Years

Vid. Balakrishna was born in 1955 and grew up in Hale Agrahara Mysore, in the house of his grandfather, Vid. Venkatesha Iyengar, who was also an Asthana Vidwan.

Vid. Balakrishna knew vaguely even as a young boy that his father was a famous vainika, noticing that Vid. Iyengar used to travel often on concert assignments. Vid. Iyengar had also been persuaded to join AIR Bangalore as a producer in 1955 after the AIR director general Sri BV Keskar heard him once during a national programme live concert. But the family stayed back in Mysore till 1963.

Vid. Balakrishna tells me how his father had consciously carved out his own style that finally emerged as the incomparable Mysore Veena Bani. This was championed by Vid. Iyengar for many decades, into the nineties. Among four children, he was the only one who followed in his father's foot steps.

Speaking of his own musical journey, Vid. Balakrishna describes how he began his mridangam lessons at seven under Vid. C.K. Ayyamani Iyer. He reached a good level of proficiency and remembers to have accompanied Vid. Doreswamy Iyengar on the mridangam in a wedding concert.

Sri. Varadachar, the paternal uncle of Vid. Iyengar, was visiting them in Bangalore when he heard Vid. Balakrishna as a ten/twelve year-old playing a few snatches on the veena when his father had gone for his bath. He was impressed. He convinced Vid. Iyengar to start veena lessons for Vid. Balakrishna. The maestro was happy to do so, since the boy Balakrishna had already shown a good grounding in Layam. The first song he was taught was "*Rama nee pai*" in Kedaram.

Vid. Balakrishna says that his practice sessions with his father were long sessions every evening that were mini-concerts. The maestro

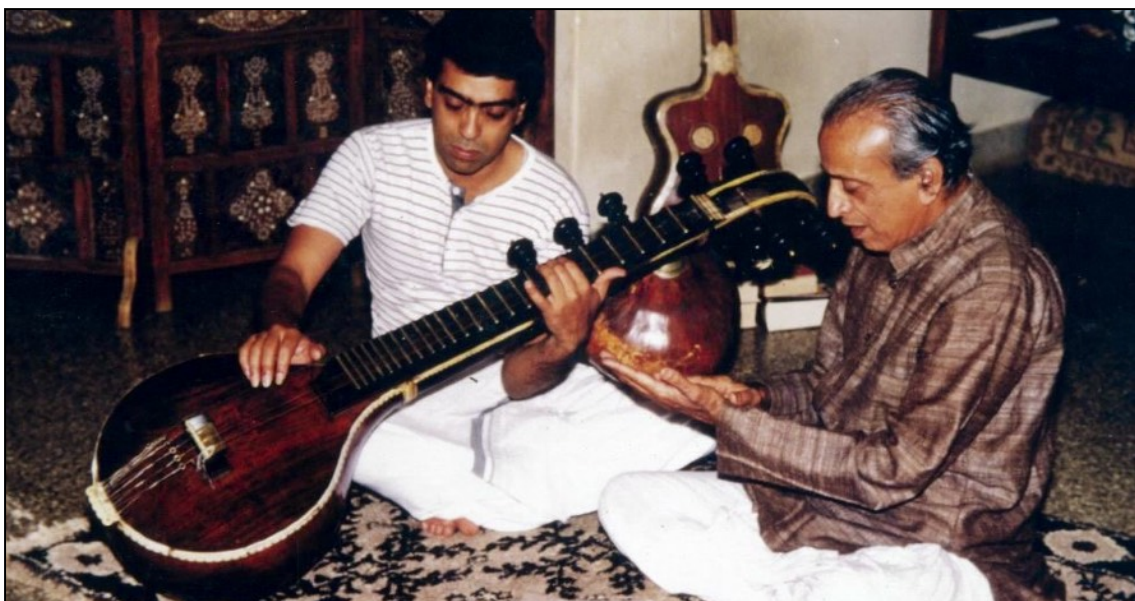
hardly expected Balakrishna to simply copy him and reproduce the same music. Gentle and evocative was Vid. Iyengar's music, and so it seems to have been his teaching style too. Vid. Balakrishna remembers his first veena concert along with his father that took place in 1973 or so. Vid. Palghat Raghu played the mridangam in the duet concert at Bidaram Krishnappa Ramamandira, Mysore. Later at Fort High School, it was Vid. Guruvayoor Dorai. Vid. K.S. Manjunath was on the ghatam and he later told him, after the concert, that he had acquitted himself well!

Mysore Veena Bani

Vid. Balakrishna explains in a few words the genesis of the Mysore Veena Bani. "My father had heard from his guru Vid. Venkatagiriappa and also his own father, Vid. Venkatesha Iyengar, how the legend Vid. Seshanna approached the veena. Seshanna possessed a legendary mastery over the instrument. He very rarely followed the vocal style. He felt the instrument had its own supreme musical personality.

According to the Mysore Bani, a veena concert has to be a judicious blend of the instrumental and vocal styles. If the vainika starts imitating the vocal delivery, he will limit the possibilities of the instrument. The veena holds immeasurable and endless riches, all to be revealed based on the ability of the musician.

What are the superior features of the Mysore Veena Bani, more appropriately called the "unique sound of the Doreswamy Iyengar veena"? In one of his interviews, Vid. Balakrishna explains, "It is difficult to explain the distinct aspects of a Bani. It can only be heard and experienced. However, there are certain unique characteristics. The first one is the right hand technique. The quality of 'meetu' (plucking of strings) is given importance. It should be firm, steady and soft. This ensures a continuous flow of sound. The plucking is done with natural nails. Much importance is also given to the left hand technique. Difficult musical passages are then negotiated with speed and ease. The technique of using the left hand index and middle



Doreswamy Iyengar teaching his son D Balakrishna

fingers, holding them apart, is another unique feature.”

Of course, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. Reviewing a Dec. 2008 Vid. Balakrishna veena recital in Chennai, the Hindu reviewer titles the article, “Solemn, profound, pleasant”, and writes: “Rendering an alapana with long strings of swaras in akara is common enough. While this activity does not pose any special challenge while singing or in the use of the playing fingers in most other instruments, it calls for commendable skill when it comes to this instrument, which stretches over two feet horizontally, with the player left with only the index and middle fingers of the left hand to produce the effect! Even to a non-player the extent of practice needed to accomplish this should be evident. Balakrishna kept doing this over and over during his recital, without slipping up even once. Pidippu’s like pdpmgrsndpdsrgpmg and srgpdsrgpmg (higher) came out with every svara standing out, producing the effect of the pianoforte. Muthuswamy Dikshitar’s ‘Sri Balasubrahmanya’ came up for elaborate treatment, the mridangam immediately tuning into the mishra rhythm of the song, with its aroma of majestic richness, profundity and solemnity, as during a Kritigai festival.”

Learning under the Maestro

Vid. Iyengar was not a very obsessed father or Guru. But he did teach all the superior features

of the Mysore Veena Bani. Every keen student learns the basics, and begins to understand the Carnatic idiom from his guru. But as he listens to music of the masters, indeed music of all kinds, he starts to develop his own mind map of music. Imbibing the best of what other musicians present, both on the veena and in vocal renditions, which will enrich the musician’s mind map and show him new landscapes. Sadhana and talent are both essential. What finally is presented to the audience is like a splendid garden of its own beauty and uniqueness.

In fact, every evening, Vid. Iyengar spent a few hours playing at home like in a concert. He asked his young son to sit down and listen. He would ask him to put Talam also. Lots of listening, for many years, happened. Later, Vid. Balakrishna understood that while he was putting Talam, Vid. Iyengar was in fact developing and exploring his own new musical ideas. By then, Vid. Balakrishna had started sharing the stage! Vid. Iyengar also spoke much to his son about great musicians of the present and past generations, and stirred the young man’s imagination about musical possibilities and even more so, musical sensibilities.

I still remember attending the Sangita Kalanidhi concert of Vid. Doreswamy Iyengar in Madras in 1984. Vid. Balakrishna shared the stage. The hall was full, and I remember Semmangudi, Sadasivam and MSS sitting in the front row and



D Balakrishna performing along with his father Doreswamy Iyengar with Vellore Ramabadran on Mridangam at Chamarajpet Sri Rama Seva Mandali.

soaking up the wonderfully evocative, sensitive, nuanced sounds of the veenas. Vid. Kuttralam Vishwanatha Iyer and Vid. KS Manjunath were the accompanists.

Vid. Balakrishna says that in the 70's and 80's, the father-son duo used to perform around seventy concerts every year, in all major sabhas.

Unique Identity

But that was not the entire story. Vid. Balakrishna, early in his veena performing career, was advised by Sri. PuTiNa, a great connoisseur of music, "Why do you play simply like your father? That will not take you very far. You have to discover your own style, your own music. People should hear "Balakrishna, the vainika", and not a copy of Vid. Doreswamy Iyengar." At that stage, Vid. Balakrishna was only twenty. This advice sent him into a big tail spin, and he took, he says, fifteen long years to sort out who "Balakrishna, the vainika" was. His father was helpful, as he gave him freedom, but would gently nudge with his own advice after the experiments. Their discussions, as well as all the musical ideas he had imbibed from listening to all musical genres and musical maestros, ensured that he was confident finally of his own music.

Vid. Doreswamy Iyengar did not go out of his way to push or project his son on the concert stage. In fact, when Vid. Balakrishna applied for audition in AIR in the 1970s, even though Vid. Doreswamy Iyengar was the Producer at AIR

Bangalore, he stayed away from the auditions. Vid. Balakrishna won the First Prize at all India level, and started performing on AIR. A steady association with AIR has seen him performing as an A Top Artiste for quite some time now.

The highest compliment that Vid. Balakrishna got throughout his career from his father was once in early 90's when he was discussing musical matters with his father. Vid. Doreswamy Iyengar mentioned his appreciation for several current musicians, and added, "ನೀನೂ ಪರವಾಗಿಲ್ಲ" which can be translated as, "you are also pretty OK.!" A pithy understatement indeed!

Vid. Balakrishna explains how it was rather difficult to share the stage with the famous Vid. Doreswamy Iyengar. He would not plan the concert or rehearse any composition ever. Even if Vid. Balakrishna asked, however big the occasion, Vid. Iyengar would shrug and say, "Let's see. It all depends on the audience and mood of the concert." So, playing virtually by the ear, improvising his own ideas on the stage without disturbing his father's musical thoughts, Vid. Balakrishna walked the tight rope and distinguished himself.

After his father's passing in the 90's, Vid. Balakrishna became the ambassador of the Mysore Bani. He has performed far and wide, including travelling to the USA and Canada a few times. He has performed jugalbandhis with Vid. M



D Balakrishna being blessed by His Holiness Sri Sri Jeeyar Swamiji of Yathiraja Mutt

Chandrasekaran (violin) and Pandit Rajiv Taranath (sarod). Both these senior maestros have shown much respect for his musical ideas.

Vid. Balakrishna has received many honours and awards. In Oct. 2022, he is going to preside over the Bangalore Gayana Samaja's 52nd conference. He will also be conferred the title of "Sangita Kala Ratna." In 1997, Karnataka Ganakala Parishat gave him the "Ganakalashree" award. In 2015, Karnataka Sangeeta Nritya Academy awarded him "Karnataka Kalashri" award of honour.

Vainika's Dharma

I attended recently a chamber concert of Vid. Balakrishna, where he played a number of wonderful ragas. His very first phrases unveiled the raga's beauty in full glory. I noticed close at hand his fingering technique that had come in for much appreciation at the Music Academy during his lec-dem two years ago. He revelled in swara prastharas, egging on the percussionists, with his panache for Talam and Layam. He made sure the audience got its musical highs by blending chaste musical idiom with popular compositions.

It should also be mentioned that Vid. Balakrishna served in the Reserve Bank of India for nearly forty years after studying M.Sc. Statistics in Central College. It is therefore commend-

able that he balanced his music and the job for over four decades.

When I ask the Vidwan what is the "Dharma" of the musician, he says, without a second thought, "Always remember that just as you are performing on the stage, the listener in the audience is also performing within himself or herself. That is the core of rasikatva. Therefore the musician has to strive constantly to please, resonate, enlighten and uplift. No doubt the instrumentalist does not have the advantages of sahitya, bhasha, or familiarity enjoyed by vocalists. But he has a versatile veena in his hands, waiting to be explored. Goddess Saraswati lives in the veena, and is worshipped by the vainika.

Of course, the rasikas and organisers have also their own Dharma to follow, but that is another discussion. Having trained a number of vainikas, Vid. Balakrishna is confident that the Mysore Bani will flourish in future too.

We wish more students, rasikas, and connoisseurs continue to listen to the Vainika Maestro Vid. D Balakrishna for long years and also wish him all the best.

(Sachi R Sachidananda, after a career of 45 years in international techno-marketing, spends his silver years as a student of Sanskrit and a rasika of classical performing arts.)

Arunodaya School of music - 10th Annual day Celebration



Vocal Artists from Left to Right - Sunaina Vallishayee, Dhruvteesh Bhargav, Pragnya Ravikumar, Smitha Bhargav, Tejas Krishnan, Nikhil Krishnan, Bharat, Smt. Mayuri, Violin support by Vishwajith Mattur and Mridangam support by Master Aprameya Hosahalli

Spring Music Festival - 2023

Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira

Banashankari II Stage, Bangalore 560 070

Venue - The Bangalore Gayana Samaja Auditorium

5th February 2023, Sunday	5.30 pm	TM Krishna (Vocal), HK Venkataram (Violin), KU Jayachandra Rao (Mridanga), Giridhar Udupa (Ghata)
6th February 2023, Monday	5.30 pm	Sanjay Subrahmanyam (Vocal), S Varadarajan (Violin), Neyveli B Venkatesh (Mridanga), B Rajashekar (Morching)
7th February 2023, Tuesday	5.30 pm	Kanchana Sisters - Shriranjani & Shruthi Ranjani (Vocal duet), Mattur R Srinidhi (Violin), Tumkur Ravishankar (Mridanga), Guru Prasanna (Khanjira)
8th February 2023, Wednesday	5.30 pm	Sandeep Narayan (Vocal), B Vittal Rangan (Violin), BC Manjunath (Mridanga), GS Ramanujan (Ghata)
9th February 2023, Thursday	5.30 pm	Ambi Subramanyam (Violin), HS Sudhindra (Mridanga), B Rajashekar (Morching)
10th February 2023, Friday	5.30 pm	N Vijay Siva (Vocal), Vigneshwaran (Vocal support), L Ramakrishnan (Violin), NC Bharadwaj (Mridanga), Krishna Sriram (Ghata)
11th February 2023, Saturday	5.30 pm	Heramb & Hemanth (Flute duet), Charulatha Ramanujam (Violin), Sai Giridhar (Mridanga), Chandrashekar Sharma (Ghata)
12th February 2023, Sunday	4.30 pm	Award Function followed by a Concert of Abhishek Raghuram with HN Bhaskar on Violin, Patri Satish Kumar on Mridanga, and Giridhar Udupa on Ghata