

Lalitha Kala Tarangini

Premier Quarterly Music Magazine from
Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira

Volume 2022, Issue 1

January 2022



G Vedanta Iyengar - Founder SRLKM



Lalitha Kala Suma



Lalitha Kala Suma Presentation Function on 23 August 2017

68 artistes representing Vocal, Veena, Gottu Vadhyra, Flute, Violin, Mridangam, Ghata were felicitated

February 2022

It has been 60 years since Shri. G Vedanta Iyengar, the visionary founder of Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira left for his heavenly abode on 13 February 1962. He started Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira to encourage fine arts and music in 1955 in a humble way. He developed it for 7 years before he left it in the safe hands of his children GV Ranganayakamma, GV Neela, Dr. GVVijayalakshmi, and GV Krishna Prasad to propagate it further. The children have given their heart and soul towards this and devoted their whole life and realised what it is today. Indeed, it has been 67 years of glorious existence during which music and musicians flourished and today the institution is tipped to be the top-notch cultural organisation in the country.

Shri. G Vedanta Iyengar was an educationist of high repute and a recipient of the Public Service Medal from the then Maharajah of Mysore, H H Sri Jayachamarajendra Wadiyar (see page 09). His profile written by his son Shri. GV Varada Rajan takes us through his lifetime achievements. A similar write-up on Shri G Vedanta Iyengar by Shri. RK Srikantan reminisces his experiences with the visionary.

In this edition, an effort is made to baseline significant milestones of SRLKM's journey through articles

as well as vintage photographs which will make the readers realise the journey the institution has traversed so far. Maybe, ten years from now, it will help us to look back and determine how far we have travelled further.

SRLKM places on record the blessings received from HH Sri Sri Yadugiri Yathiraja Narayana Ramanuja Jeeyar throughout its existence. It is also a moment for us to thank all the artistes and more so the audience who have made us successful in our journey.

regards,
Anand S

Contributors: Shri GV Varada Rajan, GV Krishna Prasad, RK Srikantan (article reproduced from savourer From the 'Memorabilia', released on the occasion of 50th Year Punyasmarane of the founder Sri. G Vedanta Iyengar. Rajani Arjun Shankar, Embar S Kannan, Subbalakshmi Mukkamala, Late T Sankaran (Source-Karnataka Gana Kala Parishat souvenir, 1976), HS Sudhindra, MB Hariharan.

Photo Courtesy: Personal collection of Vid. A Kanyakumari, Personal collection of M Vasudeva Rao, Personal collection of GV Krishna Prasad, Paniraj, Courtesy 'The Hindu', Personal collection of Prof. Gowri Kuppuswamy.

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.

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Shri. G Vedanta Iyengar (1898-1962) - Visionary Founder,
Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira

Contents

- 05 A Brief profile of late Sri Vedanta Iyengar
Founder, SRLKM
- 08 Memories of my Father
- 10 Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira, The Way forward
- 16 A Quintessential Violinist with dedication and devotion
- 26 Sri G Vedanta Iyengar, remembering you sir
- 32 Music Memories
- 35 Voice of a connoisseur and an Organiser
- 36 My beloved Guru - as I see, Perceive and celebrate
- 40 Prof. Gowri Kuppaswamy, musician and a musicologist
- 45 Rhythmical Journey of Mridangam Maestro Vidwan M Vasudeva Rao
- 54 Suswaralaya College of Music, Annual Music Festival



Special concert on 17 November 2010 by Mandolin U Srinivas on the occasion of SRLKM founders day. CN Chandrasekhar on Violin, Bangalore V Praveen on mridangam and Giridhar Udupa on Ghata

SRI RAMA LALITHA KALA MANDIRA

BSK II STAGE, BANGALORE – 560 070

MUSIC FESTIVAL PROGRAMME - 2022

VENUE : BANGALORE GAYANA SAMAJA, DAILY AT 5.30 P.M

03-05-2022	Tuesday (General Holiday)	Bombay Jayashri Ramnath (Vocal), HN Bhaskar (Violin), Patri Satishkumar (Mridanga), Giridhar Udupa (Ghata)
04-05-2022	Wednesday	Sanjay Subrahmaniyan (Vocal), S Varadarajan (Violin), Neyveli B.Venkatesh (Mridanga), B Rajashekar (Morsing)
05-05-2022	Thursday	Ramakrishnan Murthy (Vocal), Charulatha Ramanujam (Violin), Arjun Kumar (Mridangam), Chandrashekara Sharma (Ghata)
06-05-2022	Friday	Sreeranjani Santhanagopalan (Vocal), HM Smitha (Violin), KU Jayachandra Rao (Mridanga), GS Ramanujan (Ghata)
07-05-2022	Saturday	Shashank Subramanyam (Flute), Mysore N Karthik (Violin), Parupalli Phalgun (Mridanga)
08-05-2022	Sunday	Award Function followed by Music concert: Bhargavi Venkataram (Vocal), Vishnu Venkataram (Violin), Anoor Vinod Shyam (Mridanga), Bhagyalakshmi M Krishna (Morsing)
09-05-2022	Monday	Kunnukudi Balamurali Krishna (Vocal), B Vittala Rangan (Violin), Arjun Kumar (Mridanga), Giridhar Udupa (Ghata)
10-05-2022	Tuesday	Gayathri Venkataraghavan (Vocal), Mysore V Srikanth (Violin), Tumkur B Ravishankar (Mridanga), G Guruprasanna (Kanjira)
11-05-2022	Wednesday	MS Sheela (Vocal), HM Smitha (Violin), Anoor Ananthakrishna Sharma (Mridanga), SN Narayanamurthy (Ghata)
12-05-2022	Thursday	Aishwarya Vidya Raghunath (Vocal), Charulatha Ramanujam (Violin), BS Prashanth (Mridanga), BJ Kiran Kumar (Kanjira)
13-05-2022	Friday	Abhishek Raghuram (Vocal), Mysore N Karthik (Violin), NC Bharadhwaj (Mridanga), Krishna Sriram (Ghata)
14-05-2022	Saturday	Dr. Jayanthi Kumaresh (Veena), KU Jayachandra Rao (Mridanga), Giridhar Udupa (Ghata), Pramath Kiran (Morsing)
15-05-2022	Sunday	Mysore M Nagaraj & Mysore M Manjunath (Violin Duet), Bangalore V Praveen (Mridanga), G Guruprasanna (Kanjira)



GV Neela with Vishaka Hari

Vishaka Hari and SRLKM

Vishaka Hari has been performing for a long time for SRLKM. She has considered various topics for her musical discourses like 'Purandara and the Trinity', 'Sri Krishna Leela', 'Narada Bhakti Sutram', 'Sharanagata' on Shri. Ramanujacharya's birth millennium etc. She was honoured with Sangeetha Vedantha Dhureena on 29 April 2017. An excerpt of her interview by Smt. Vatsala Vedantam follows;

Vishaka Hari embarks on yet another journey into the hinterland of Kannada Nadu to tell us the rich folklore of the Dasaragalu who lived and sang in praise of Vittala and his myriad forms. 'Vasa Udupiyali nelayaadhi Keshavane Dasa nina pada Dasa, Nina pada Dasa Salahalu bharrayya'.. If these memorable words of Kanakadasa moved his beloved Krishna to turn towards him, it is not surprising that this exceptional artiste's recital should move her audiences to tears.

Meet Vishaka Hari, brand ambassador of the 21st century Indian woman - sophisticated, educated, English-speaking, walking encyclopaedia of scriptures. Trained in music by Lalgudi Jayaraman and in katha-kalakshepam by the eminent Tamil scholar Krishna Premi Swamigal, she has slipped into the role of harikatha exponent effortlessly. When I ask her whether women artistes in this country face gender bias, she shakes her head with conviction: "Not at all. India has respected women more than any other nation."

I persist: "In this male bastion where you have excelled, do you feel threatened by competition?"

Again, her answer is stunningly simple: "If one thinks this is a profession, then there is a threat. I do this for *atma thrupthi*. There is no question of competition or conquest."

"I never compare myself with others. I merely ask myself, 'is today's concert better than yesterday's?'"

Whether it is the story of the Dasaragalu of Kannada Nadu, Narayana Theertha of Kerala, Annamayya of Andhra or Meera of Rajasthan, she carries her audiences effortlessly to those lands to depict their lives through song and prayer. As she explains, "My goal in life is to create an awareness and joy in our culture and tradition among young people living far away in other countries."



Our Upcoming Programmes

06 Mar '22 05.30 pm Sunday	Manasi Prasad (Vocal), Mathur Vishwajit (Violin), Vidwan Anoor Vinod Shyam (Mridanga)
26 and 27 Mar '22 Full Day	Pallavi Sammela competition – Full day
03 Apr '22 05.30 pm Sunday	Pavani Bharadwaj (Vocal), Anirudha Bharadwaj (Violin), Vidushi Deepika Sreenivasan (Mridanga)
5th Jun '22 05.30 pm Sunday	Vivek Sadashivam, Mattur R Srinidhi, HS Sudhindra

Music Festival from
3rd May to 15th May 2022
Refer Page 3 for schedule

A Brief profile of late Sri Vedanta Iyengar Founder, SRLKM

*Shri GVVarada Rajan, Bangalore
(From the 'Memorabilia', released on the occasion of 50th Year Punyasmarane
of the founder Sri. G Vedanta Iyengar)*

Sri Vedanta Iyengar was born in 1898 in a middle class family - Having lost his father at a very early age, was brought up by his maternal uncle, late Rao Bahadur S Srinivasa Iyengar, an Executive Engineer in Bombay PWD Services, under the British Regime.

Sri S Srinivasa Iyengar had earned great respect from all his colleagues, British officers for his disciplined, dedicated service and competency in his professional career. In spite of his busy schedule of official work, he would strictly observe his daily routine religious and traditional formalities and Pooja.

His towering personality, his dedicated and efficiency in his profession, left indelible impression on his young nephew (Sri Vedanta Iyengar) - He became a role model and a great source of inspiration in shaping his future career in the field of Education and public service. Sri SS Iyengar had great concern and affection for his widowed sister, Smt. Rangamma and his young nephew. He would regularly send money order of Rs.50/- every month to his sister to meet family commitments.

Sri Iyengar was a bright student, both at school and college. After finishing F.A. Exam., (now, PUC), he joined the famous Maharaja's College of Mysore. The college was well known for aca-



demetic proficiency, both in science, arts and literature.

Sir M Visvesvaraya, the then Dewan of Mysore, succeeded in attracting a team of good professors and teachers like Prof. Dr. S Radhakrishnan (former President of India), Prof. AR Wadia (Philosophy), Prof. CR Reddy (English Literature), besides several professors of English from England, to join the Mysore University (Prof. JC Rollo, etc.). Maharaja's College was the hub of both academic, cultural and sports activities. Sri Iyengar had the rare privilege of being a student of Prof. S Radhakrishnan, Prof. AR Wadia and Prof. CR Reddy, philosophy being his main subject. Sri Iyengar was one of the favourite students of Prof. Radhakrishnan continued to have good contact with his great guru and whenever he visited Mysore or Bangalore would take an interview and pay his respects and arrange for a short music concert by Smt. Ranganayakamma and Neela. He loved to listen to Kannada Devanamas of Sri Purandara Dasaru.

Sri Iyengar had a great fascination for teaching profession. After taking his B.A., Degree in 1920, he joined the Department of Education. He got his first postings as Head Master, Government Middle School, Doddaballapura. He worked as H.M. at various rural areas like Holalkere (Chitradurga Dist.), Kikkeri, Mirle, Saligrama and finally as Head Master, Lakshmipuram Higher Secondary School, Mysore and retired from service in 1945.

Public Service Rendered by Sri. Iyengar

1) Setting up Veerashaiva Orphanage and Hostel at Holalkere

Sri Iyengar had an innate desire and dedication for public service - especially in rural areas. He was like a torch bearer to the rural masses - always looking forward for opportunities to render service to the rural community and improving their miserable state of living. During his stay at Holalkere, he saw a good number of students attending the school - walking 3 to 4 miles daily. He felt, there was an urgent need of a poor students' hostel and an orphanage. He persuaded one of the leading Veerashaiva personality, Sri Murugendrappa to donate for build-

ing a Veerashaiva Hostel and Orphanage for the benefit of poor students. Further, he raised donations from other prominent and leading merchants and organised a mid-day meal service to poor students.

Sri Iyengar maintained good contacts not only with local officers and other enlightened persons and also at State Government Secretariat and Council of Ministries, including Sir Mirza Ismail, the then Dewan of Mysore. Sir Charles Tod Hunter, Private Secretary to His Highness Krishnaraja Wadiyar. These contacts were helpful to him to get the Government grants to the orphanage and hostel set up at Holalkere.

Sri Iyengar was actively involved in the Scout and Red Cross Society movements, which came handy for rendering community services. He would organise Scout Rally, social service camps for community service, invite offices like the Deputy Commissioners and other officers at Secretariat level. They all admired his service involvement and organising capabilities.

2) Establishment of a General Hospital and Maternity and Child Welfare Centre at Saligrama and Veterinary Hospital

During his service at Saligrama in Krishnaraja Nagar Taluk, Mysore District, he started his mission of finding the important needs of the local community and surrounding villages. He gradually built up his association with the local rich merchants and other prominent leaders and local officers at Government level, by involving them in several co-curricular activities and social and literacy camps - They were very much impressed for all his keen concern and interest in working for the local population - besides his attention to academic and scouting and Red Cross Society activities. He earned great love and respect of local leaders and Government officials.

Once, it so happened by divine grace, while he was having a discussion with a prominent local jewellery merchant, Sri Sheriff Padmarajai belonging to Jain community, an accident happened right in front of his house, causing serious injury to a cow hit by a speeding vehicle. The poor cow needed immediate medical

treatment. The owners were forced to transport the cow to a Veterinary Hospital at K.R. Nagar, which was 25 miles away. Sri Iyengar seized the opportunity to impress on Sri Padmarajaiah - the great philosophy of the Jain Religion, "Ahimsa Paramo Dharmaha" and persuaded him to donate for establishing a veterinary hospital at Saligrama itself, his hometown and thus came to the rescue of animals in and around his place. He was overwhelmed by his timely suggestion and volunteered to donate at the first instance.

Sri Iyengar fixed up a personal interview with Sir Mirza Ismail - Dewan of Mysore went with the donation and submitted his proposal for opening a veterinary hospital. After getting the green signal from the Dewan, followed it up at the Government Secretariat level and succeeded in getting the sanction of Government with 50% of Government Maintenance Grant. In about a year's time necessary infrastructures like building, equipment, etc., was ready and was inaugurated by Sir Mirza himself.

3) Setting up of General Hospital Maternity and Child Welfare Centre

Sri Boregowda, a leading person and landlord, was a diabetic patient and he had to make frequent visits either to K.R. Nagar Hospital or Mysore for his medical checkup and treatment. Sri Iyengar impressed on him the need for opening a hospital in his own town and made him to donate for the proposal of opening a general hospital, a maternity and child welfare centre at Saligrama. He took him to Sir Mirza with these proposals and made him to commit himself to donate the required sum of 50%, the other 50% maintenance grant from Government. He followed up the files at the Secretariat level and got the Government to sanction. The people of Saligrama were highly indebted to him for his personal involvement and interest in providing all the medical and public health facility in their town itself.

4) Renovation of Lord Sri Narasimha Swamy and Sri Ramanujacharya Temples

Saligrama is also a pilgrimage centre for Sri Vaishnavas. Sri Ramanujacharya, stayed for sev-

eral years with his pet Shishyas (Modaliandar) before he moved to Melkote. A good number of Sri Vaishnava devotees visit this holy place to have darshan of Sri Lord Yoga Narasimha and Ramanujacharya and have Sripada Theertha in the sacred pond located in the temple. Sri Iyengar found both these temples in poor condition, without a compound wall and misused by all sorts of people and animals.

He succeeded in persuading Sri Boregowda and his rich brothers to contribute for the renovation of both the temples and building compound walls. He contacted the Muzarai Commissioner, made him to visit the place, and made the local leading persons and members present and finally succeeded in getting Government aid and grants for maintenance and routine pooja of the temples.

The local community in recognition of his services to the people in and around Saligrama organised grand felicitation function and got his portrait unveiled in the school auditorium.

As secretary of the local Red Cross Society unit and Scout movements, he organised several social service camps and thus encouraged the youth to actively participate in educating the rural committee for maintaining good sanitation and hygiene.

5) Concern and Love for Poor Students

His residence was almost like a mini "Nanda Gokul", several poor students were accommodated in his house - enjoying his personal attention and academic guidance. His wife Smt. Lakshamma loved these children and treated them like her own kids.

Taking all the public services rendered by him during his active service, his name was recommended by the Government to His Highness Sri Jayachamaraja Wadiyar, the then Maharaja of Mysore, to confer on him, "The Public Service Medal" and he was honoured by His Highness during the Dasara Durbar in 1949 with gold medal.

Memories of my Father

GV Krishnaprasad, Bangalore



15th January 1955----- It was on this day that my revered father late G Vedantha Iyengar envisioned and sowed the seeds for Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira. Seven years later, after the demise of my father, the onus of nurturing the institution and taking it forward had to be shouldered by my two sisters (Vid.GV Ranganayakamma & Vid. GV Neela) and myself. Keeping in mind his exemplary values and vision, we have tried to continue by inculcating all those with steadfast single mindedness. The Institution has now completed more than 67 fruitful years and it bears testimony to all the toil and hard work.

My parents had 7 children with five girls and two boys. It was my father who laid the foundation to all our music; such was his love for karnatak music. It may be noted that our paternal grandfather, Venkata Varada Iyengar was a violin vidwan at that time.

The very first thing that comes to my mind when I think of my father is discipline. He was firm with his principles and he expected the same from his children too. He had taught all of us sanskrit shlokas and we were all expected to recite it early in the morning in front of the God. It is only afterwards would we be given

our morning coffee or milk. After coffee, I had to read the daily newspaper to my father as he had very weak eyesight. After school hours, I was expected to come home straight and complete the regular school homework. Later, I was taught to recite shlokas and had to read religious books to my father.

Our house was a haven for all cultural activities. During the Tamil month of “purattasi” every Saturday, I had to go to a few houses for bhiksha. Even now, I have continued this practice and stand in front of God for bhiksha. It is a very humbling experience and fills me with humility. My father would tell me that my elder brother Varadarajan had to depend on the hospitality of generous people to sustain himself while he continued his education. He also made me understand how well I had to look after my sisters.

My revered mother Smt. Lakshamma had always been the silent pillar of support for all the activities of my father. She would receive the guests with warmth and make them the recipient of her sumptuous hospitality.

I am in awe of my father for imparting all of us with good education be it in music or academics though it was beyond his reach. He made sure that there was a doctor, an engineer, an educationist and musicians in his family. Though he was a teacher by profession, he was a scholar by choice and was in close contact with many of the literary giants of that time. He used to compose shlokas in Sanskrit and would make my sisters sing in many programmes which used to be appreciated.

My eldest sister Ramamani used to play on the harmonium while singing. She had a melodious voice. My other elder sister Padma learnt to play on the veena. My father then decided that



he would make his third daughter Ranganayaki learn both vocal and veena. Looking at her interest and affinity towards veena he made sure that she learnt under very good and renowned gurus. It was not possible for my father to make my other sister Neela learn along with her elder sister; but insisted that she listen to her sister practice. My father would make both of

them sit together to practice one raga at a time. My sister Neela was also made to learn violin. He had me learn mridangam from eminent gurus. It could be said that we could have a vaadya vrinda (orchestra) in our family.

For some time we were all in Davanagere as my sister smt. Ranganayaki was teaching music in the government school there. In January 1955, my sister was transferred to Bangalore and that paved way for the establishment of our music institution Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira. The main idea in naming the institution was that my father wanted the institution to become an encouraging ground for all cultural activities.

One more important thing that my father did was to get me involved in all the paper work needed for the institution. Under his direction, I was assigned to interact with many eminent artistes and invite them to our Institution. He was instrumental in preparing the bylaw for the Institution and had it registered. It was his desire that the institution had its own premises and today, by his blessings we have a premises of our own.

My father had close interactions with many eminent personalities be it the field of literature, music or any other field. He was well known in the Government circles because of his exemplary social service for which he was recognised by the then Maharaja of Mysore His Highness Sri Jayachamarajendra Wadiyar who presented him with a gold medal and a certificate called "Isthiharnama". The then Chief Minister of Karnataka S Nijalingappa and many of his ministers would personally enquire about his needs when he visited them in their office.

My father led an exemplary and sublime life. His was a life dedicated to social causes and love for karnatak music. It was his wish that the institution should propagate Indian music to younger generation in its pure and pristine form. He was loved and respected by people for whom he tried to sincerely help even if it was beyond his means.

He has left footprints on the sands of time.

Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira, The Way forward

GV Krishnaprasad, Bangalore

Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira was founded in-1955 to serve the cause of Karnatak music. In continuation of its tradition of propagating music and encouraging the artistes, SRLKM added another feather to its cap by instituting the award '**Sangeetha Vedantha Dhureena**' in the year 2008 to artistes of high calibre in recognition of their contribution to the music field. This award was instituted in memory of the visionary founder of SRLKM Late G Vedantha lyengar and it carries a purse of one lakh rupees, a silver medal and a citation. The first to receive this award was the legend Dr. M Balamurali Krishna in the year 2008. SRLKM is proud to state that 22 artistes have been the recipients of this prestigious award.

In addition to this, SRLKM instituted the award '**Raga Laya Prabha**' to encourage and recognise young artistes from Karnataka. This carries a cash award of Twenty Five Thousand rupees and a citation. Thirty one young artistes, as of now, have been the recipients of this award.

There are also many artistes and organisations striving for the cause of music. They are the unsung heroes of karnatak music going about their work diligently. The award '**Lalitha Kala Suma**' instituted by SRLKM has been given to one hundred and fifty artistes from Karnataka and sixty cultural institutions in Karnataka and this award carried a cash of Ten Thousand rupees and a citation.

Inspite of the ongoing pandemic, SRLKM continued to organise the concerts every month virtually through face book and you tube for the past two years supporting the artistes in this difficult period.

SRLKM has been organising music workshops regularly. All these workshops are free and are conducted by renowned and well respected artistes who bring with them a wealth of wisdom to enrich the participants.





Sangeetha Vedantha Dhureena - Over the years



Sangeetha Vedantha Dhureena - Over the years

SRLKM brings out a quarterly music magazine 'Lalitha Kala Tarangini' without any advertisements and has made it available for rasikas free of cost. The magazine has been appreciated for its insightful articles and very good quality of photographs.

SRLKM inaugurated the sculpture of the ever-green legend MS Subbulakshmi in its premises in the year 2019. It was unveiled by his Holiness

Sri Sri Yadugiri Yathiraja Narayana Ramanuja Jeevar of Yathiraja mutt. The serene looking face of MS Amma is an inspiration for all the artistes to give their best.

We pray to the almighty to give us the strength to continue our work in all sincerity. We acknowledge and thank all the rasikas for being our inspiration and support in this musical journey.

MS Amma statue enshrined at SRLKM

Sunday, July 7th 2019, was a very auspicious and joyous day for Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira. It was the day when the bust of Bharat Rathna Dr. MS Subbulakshmi was unveiled by His Holiness Sri Sri Yadugiri Yathiraja Narayana Ramanuja Jeevar of Yathiraja Mutt at the premises of SRLKM.

The day turned out to be perfect and the idol of MSS at SRLKM has become a land mark for all rasikas of music and an inspiration to all musicians.

File photo of 19 July, 2019. From L to R - Dr. MR Yogananda, Treasurer, SRLKM, His Holiness Sri Sri Yadugiri Yathiraja Narayana Ramanuja Jeevar, Sri GV Krishna Prasad, Hon. Secretary, SRLKM, Mrs. and Mr. Umesh (Corporator BSK area)





Raga Laya Prabha Award - Over the years



Raga Laya Prabha Award - Over the years

A Quintessential Violinist with dedication and devotion

Subbalakshmi Mukkamala, Chennai
With guidance from Krishnababu (Father of Keyboard Satya)



I wish all the readers of the magazine a very Happy New year 2022. I sincerely hope it will usher in good times of hope, prosperity, peace and wellbeing.

Sangeeta Kalanidhi, Padma Shri, Asthana Vidwan of TTD - Kumari Avasara Kanyakumari, the most quintessential legend of Karnatak music in the genre of the violin has been creating a unique impression for herself in the contemporary musical scenario with her humility, perseverance and her devotion to music.

Having been inspiring many aspiring musicians and connoisseurs indeed, her music is an ear treat for her millions of fans the world over.

Sangeeta Kalanidhi Dwaram Venkata Swamy Naidu popularly known as Fiddle Naidu blessed her at a very young age that her fingers will dance on the violin and she will be an iconic figure in the history of this instrument.

Her intellect commanded the fingers, her heart mastered the “bow”. Her musical journey is a manifestation of the time spent in tremendous practice with her only companion throughout her life “The Violin”

Many awards and rewards had embarked their maiden voyage starting with her, and she is The First female composer by creating the raga “Bharat” in 1997 to show her patriotic spirit.

The very prestigious and famous Sangeeta Kalanidhi awaited many years to adore her and decorate her crown of awards, making her the first female violinist to receive this honour.

In spite of her phenomenal achievements, she always remains firmly grounded and dedicated herself to the holy feet of Lord Venkateshwara and Goddess Padmavathi whom she calls her divine parents.

Let's travel along with the maestro musician and humility personified Kanyakumari Amma.

SM: Can you tell us about those divine parents who gave birth to this Kanyakumari, and the place where you were born? I feel there is divinity, very vivid even in naming you.

AK: I was born in 1951 in the Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh. My parents are Smt. and Sri Avasara Ramaratnam and Jayalakshmi. My father was a police officer and my mother was Veena Vidwan, a graded artist who even played on A.I.R Madras. With a very deep knowledge of



A Kanyakumari performing as a child

Carnatic music, well versed with all the intricacies of it, my mother always aimed at perfection. My mother was a Devi upasaka and offered a silver Veena to Saradambal in Bandar (Machilipatnam), now in the Krishna district of Andhra Pradesh. I feel whatever I am today is because of only my parents and gurus. Children reap “what parents sow” and regarding my name, when I was born, my grandmother was in Kanyakumari as a part of her pilgrimage. She gave the temple deity’s name to me as a blessing from her.

SM: Can you enlighten us about your initial learning process of Carnatic music?

AK: After my birth, my father got transferred to Vizianagaram. Inheriting my mother’s interest, my elder sisters Anjani and Seshamani used to learn music even before me. In Vizianagaram, my mother was searching for a Guru who has got deep knowledge and who knows Navagraha, Navavarna kritis of Dikshitar. From word of mouth, she came to know about Sri Ivaturi Vijayeswara Rao. My mother even tested his knowledge (laughs) and got very impressed with his deep understanding of music. He used to come home and teach my sisters. I was more into playing like any other child and not at all interested in learning music, but I used to hum all the songs learnt by my sisters after listening to them. Sri Vijayeswara Rao suggested to my mother that I got a lot of musical sense intuitively and recommended to make me learn. Initially, my mother said a no and said that I have no interest in learning and I just sing casually. He

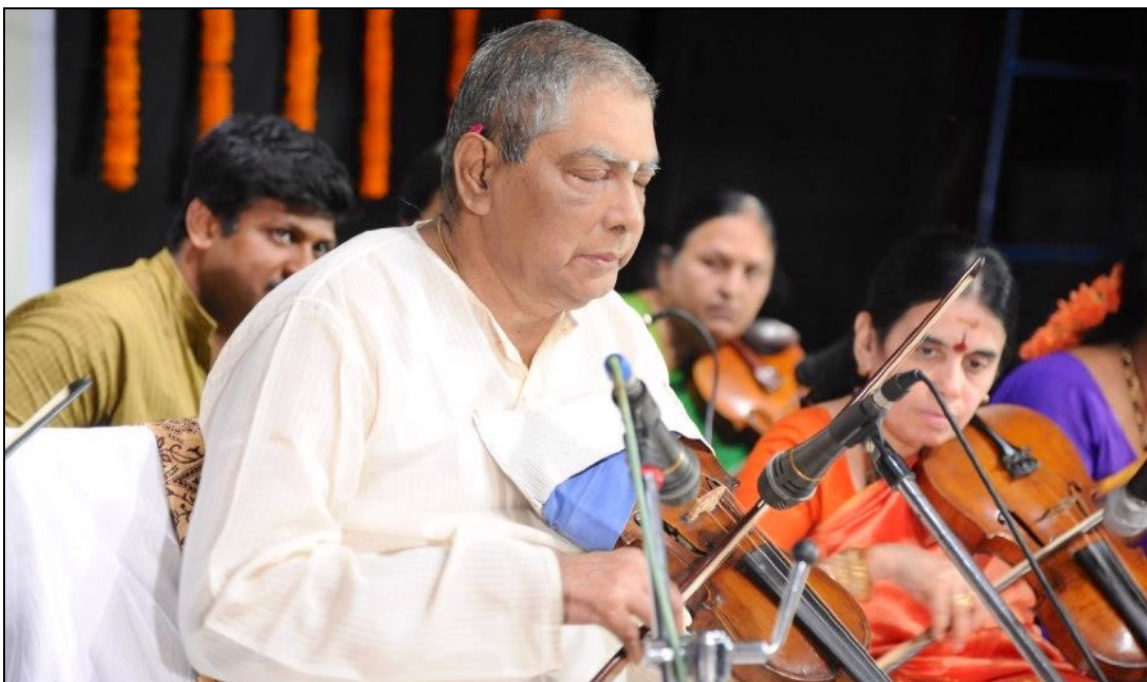
was persistent and said, “I will train that girl and she has musical knowledge latent in her”.

There is an anecdote to my music initialisation. Sri Vijayeswara Rao was also very close to my father like an elder son. He started a music school in his guru’s name Sri Dwaram Narasinga Rao and the fact is that I was the first student of Dwaram Narasinga Rao Memorial (D.N.M.) Music School, Vizianagaram. I still feel his divine intention to start a music school was only for me to learn music. Later, I passed out with a Diploma in music with distinction from Andhra University, Visakhapatnam.

SM: Can we know more about Sri Vijayeswara Rao and his methodology in training students?

AK: Apart from being a Violinist, he was a great vocalist too! His theoretical knowledge of music had no bounds. As he was visually challenged, he used to listen to a lot of music books read by his students and gained profound knowledge. He always advised us to practice hard for long hours every day from early morning. Once in a few days, he would walk through the streets in the early morning to find out whether his students were following his advice or not. This proves his commitment as a teacher and it’s hard to find such ‘Sadgurus’.

Every weekend he would invite his disciple’s home, where he would give a violin recital thus teaching how a concert should be presented. He would make us play the violin along with him. He conducted Tyagaraja Aradhana annually



A Kanyakumari performing with her Guru Sri Vijayeswara Rao

at his music school, where concerts of great Vidwans were featured.

While he was a well-known musician in Vizianagaram, my feeling is “Had he been to Madras at that time, he would have got greater recognition like his contemporaries as the scope for exhibiting an artist’s skill is always high in Madras.” As a Guru, he was very strict but he was like my elder brother, always a well-wisher to our family and vice versa.

SM; Chennai alias Madras is honoured to have you as its resident. Is there any interesting incident or occasion which brought you to Madras (Chennai), the hub of classical arts?

AK: I was continuing with my academics and my tutelage under Sri Vijayeswara Rao in music. After my diploma, I was performing concerts in and around Vizianagaram. I should mention my maternal grandparents at this juncture. They felt that my future is only with Carnatic music and compelled my father to bring me to Madras and get me trained under stalwarts here. During this time, my father got transferred from Vizianagaram and decided to stay all alone and shifted us, the family to Madras. He did many sacrifices for me and our family and he also stayed alone and managed the rest of his service as a

police officer. I owe a lot to my parents, grandparents and my Gurus.

SM: Do you attribute landing in Chennai as a turning point in your musical journey...?

AK: Yes, true indeed!!, our family shifting to Madras particularly for my music learning is a turning point in my life. I had been to Madras since my childhood many times as it’s my vacation home to spend with my uncle and grandparents. We also used to visit Tirupati every year especially in the summer Holidays.

In summer 1969, when we came to Madras, we were trying to get admission in Queen Mary’s College, a government institution to pursue my graduation. We were informed by them that we were quite late for applying as the admission process was almost over. I was very disappointed on knowing this information. As I always believe in Lord Venkateshwara, I requested my parents to take a decision regarding my education after our visit to Tirupati.

Our trip to Tirupati did a miracle that on our return from Tirupati my maternal uncle’s friend voluntarily helped and I got admitted into Queen Mary’s college. This proved my belief that with sincere efforts and Almighty’s grace one will always be rewarded at right time. As I still feel it was Lord Balaji who helped me in the

form of my uncle's friend, I emphasise that the younger generation should realise that nothing can happen without almighty's, Gurus' and parents' blessings.

SM: Can you share some nostalgic moments of yours under the tutelage of Sangeeta Kalanidhi Sri M Chandrasekaran who happens to be your first guru in Chennai?

AK: I applied for a government scholarship to continue my further music learning in Chennai and for which I had to be under the guidance of a guru. After coming to Chennai, I also realised that I should adapt myself to the environment here. My orthodox grandparents wanted me to learn from a teacher nearby and Chandrasekhar sir's house in C.P. Ramaswamy road was close to our house in Annamalaipuram.

When my grandfather approached him to take me as his shishya, I went along with my grandfather and played Sankarabharanam ragam before him. He was very much impressed by my playing and appreciated Dwaram style which is one of the unique and pure styles played on the violin.

He immediately agreed to teach me and he was very clear that I need to change my style, pick it up faster to be under his tutelage. '*Giriraja Sudha Tanaya*' was the first kriti I learned under him and I got adapted to his baani within no time. I also got my scholarship continued learning under him. My musical journey started moving forward and was like "slow and steady wins" with my faith in Lord Venkateshwara. I casted all my burdens on him and did only my sadhana and I still advice my students to do the same. During that time, I participated in many competitions including the Music Academy annual competition, which got me many laurels.

SM: Can you share the experience of your participation in that competition?

AK: It was not less than any concert with a very divine environment, watched by great doyens of that period like Sri MS Gopalakrishnan, Sri, Mudikondan Venkatarama Iyer to name a few. I was very enthusiastic and at the same time a little nervous but played very well and won it. All the Vidwans were very much pleased by my

playing and they all blessed me from the bottom of their heart.

In those days it was a practice that any artist has to apply for performing in a junior slot in Music Academy for December music season and I applied for the same. To my surprise, they had given an opportunity to accompany Vidushi Mani Krishnaswamy who was a then leading artist in the sub senior category. It was an afternoon slot, I accompanied her in the main hall and it was attended by many stalwarts of Karnatic music including critic Subbudu in this concert.

There was a mumbling among the audience that how can a stranger (though I won the academy competition) of just 18 years of age be given a sub senior slot but at the end of the concert I got appreciation and blessings from all the stalwarts including critic Subbudu.

SM: "Thanks for sharing this wonderful experience yes, the respected critic Subbudu compared your music with the ever-glittering diamond stud in the nose ring of the goddess Kanyakumari". Hats off to your grandmother for her vision in giving you this name.

SM: Having discussed about early days of your musical experiences in Madras, can we know about the most cherished moment of your life meeting MLV Amma?

AK: I was accompanying great artists like Vidushi DK Pattammal, Dr. M Balamurali Krishna, Vidushis Saroja & Lalita to name a few. My senior in college a disciple of MLV Amma and my friend Smt Charumati Ramachandran's mother always wanted me to be taken to MLV Amma to play before her. It was a miraculous moment when my friend took me to her house and she asked me to render few kritis. After few days of this incident, I got an opportunity to accompany MLV Amma in a kalyana kacheri. I attribute this as a divine play through my friend's family. In those days there were not so many female accompanying artists but, MLV broke that age-old tradition and gave me an opportunity to be her Violin artist for ever.



A Kanyakumari performing with MLV Amma

SM: You consider MLV Amma as your guru, can you enlighten us on the uniqueness of the training you received with her?

AK: Accompanying her itself is like a learning for me. It's not like a conventional learning where you sit before the teacher, take notes and learn. After a student reaches a certain level, learning happens through *kacheris* and that's how you need to progress for higher standards. When we learn instruments like violin and mridangam most of the improvisation happens only through the experience of concert accompaniment. These artists should not directly debut with solo performances because in solos they are confined to only their ideas whereas in accompanying other artists they get adapted to new ideas and they are exposed to different thought processes too!! By this, an artist's skill set is eventually increased abundantly to get established as a solo artist. My skill set got increased in this way under her and the uniqueness of MLV Amma is that she never had practice sessions with accompanying artists and she sings impromptu on stage. Because of this any accompanying artists for MLV Amma has to be at their best of concentration to accompany her

and my long association with her for about 2 decades made me very robust and embellished me to accompany any artist.

SM: You've been experimenting with many novel ideas throughout your musical journey what is the most inspiring and closest to your heart?

AK: As I always say I attribute all my creations and projects to my godfather lord Venkateshwara. I strongly believe that any idea of mine is his creation and I am only a tool to execute in the way he wants. I travel to Tirupati very frequently and once when I was getting down the hill, the idea "Saptagiri" struck me. The 7 hills that lead us to Thirumala are called "Saptagiri". When I was thinking of their names the idea of creating 7 ragas on those 7 hills came to my mind. The other reason is only a few know their names. The creation of a raga is a very difficult task and it needs a lot of research to prove that the raga is a new creation and never existed in the literature we know. The moment I create a new raga I take the help of few shishyas to make a detailed analysis and do research to establish the precision and authenticity referring through the literature available. All the ragas are



A Kanyakumari receiving the Sangeet Natak Academy award from the Honourable president Sri A.P.J Abdul kalam. Also seen in the picture is Smt. Sonal Mansingh

absolutely new and to the best of my knowledge, there are no female raga creators to date.

SM: In the present-day scenario with many contemporary musicians around you, “You’ve received many awards and laurels which is the probably a dream for many.” How do you perceive this?

AK: I surrender all, my awards and rewards, being the holy recommendations, to the holy feet of my god parents Goddess Padmavati and Lord Venkateshwara, my parents and my gurus. The blessings of my guru MLV Amma came in the form of Kalaimamani award the highest honour from Tamil Nadu Govt. in 1990, the year when MLV Amma left for her holy journey. My father always dreamt of me receiving Sangeet Natak Academy award being a national recognition which I received in 2004. I strongly believe this was his blessing after he reached the lotus feet of almighty in 2003 and I received his dream award from the honourable president Sri A.P.J Abdul Kalam the following year.

I received Padma Shri, one of the highest civilian honours of our country in the year 2015. Once again attribute this to my first Guru and my guide throughout my life Sri Ivaturi Vijayeswara Rao who reached the heavenly abode of Ranganatha in 2014. After I received this award, I went to Visakhapatnam to meet my guru Patni (Guru’s wife). She has been very kind to us since our learning days. she was like a mother to all his shishyas. when she placed the medal at my Guru’s photo a flower fell on the medal from the photo which is a proof that he has been blessing me. He always dreamt of me receiving a Padma award. My guru’s wife told me that “she never saw something like this ever before”.

To continue with, I received Sangeeta Kalanidhi music academy’s prestigious award in Jan 2017 and I strongly believe that this is purely my mother’s blessings and grace after she departed for the eternal journey in the year 2016. Whenever I get an award or listen to a news about it, I immediately pray to the deities in my altar,



A Kanyakumari performing a solo concert for The Madras Music Academy along with Embar Kannan

bow to the lord there and then and I travel to Tirupati conveying my gratitude to say a big thank you as all these belong to him.

SM: You have accompanied many great artists and you accompanying child prodigy Sri Mandolin U Srinivas at his very young age reflects not only your magnanimity which also facilitated him in his musical journey. A few words on this, please?

AK: I call him Ekasantagrahi (one who grasps in one take). I recollect, when he was a small boy, to have in-depth knowledge of some rare ragas like Nasikabhushini, Hamsavinodini etc. He used to ask me to play and show them. His Intellect was extraordinary and his grasping power was also incredible. We had played many concerts together for quite some time. In the same way, my musical journey with Sri Kadri Gopalnath is also very special and we shared the stage for almost 25 years like also my association with MLV Amma for nearly for 2 decades.

SM: You've been a very respected and a very sought-after accompanying artist at the same time you've created your mark as a solo artist too!! How did this transformation from an accompanying artist to a solo performer happen?

AK: Right from the beginning, I am very selective. My busy schedule also didn't permit me to

accompany everyone. But all the artists I accompanied were all great Vidwans and I accompanied them in the peak of their careers. As I mentioned earlier, we've to start as an accompanying artist gain certain standards and experience and then we should embark on our journey as solo artiste. This also brings in greater recognition as this is very unique and I enjoy performing this as well.

There is a subtle difference between enhancing the main artist and overtaking the main artist. An accompanying artist should grab the attention of the audience and we should be very careful especially during the formative years, make effort to create a mark of our own. Accompaniments should be enhancing and attractive too! I feel I am blessed because God granted me all the above traits to me to survive so long in this field.

SM: Now that you have rowed both the oars what is more satisfying to you, Accompaniment or solo performances?

AK: Both are equal to me but I feel accompanying is a more challenging task as it requires understanding the dynamics of the instrument, synchronisation with the main artist who would be from a different baani. This requires complete concentration, actions on the spot ac-



Guru A Kanyakumari along with her students

cording to the situation and the mood of the artists on the stage. In a solo performance, the artist will have the advantage of preparing themselves well before the actual presentation and they control the concert's flow. Accompanying is very inspiring for me as I enjoy taking up new challenges always. (Laughs with a spark on her face).

SM: You've been a very Excellent, encouraging and promising guru for many disciples all around the world. With a very busy schedule all around you how did you start and find time for teaching your shishyas??

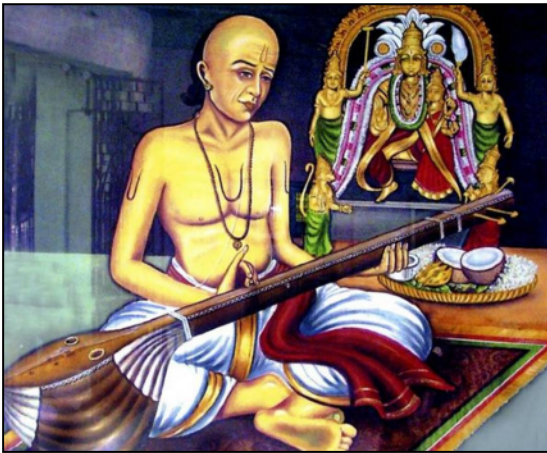
AK: I never wanted to become a teacher rather I was never that free to take up this profession which requires a lot of patience. I never agreed when a few approached me but I couldn't say No to Sangeetabhushanam Sri Embar Sadagopan when he approached me to teach his son Embar Kannan. Kannan is my first and favourite disciple still. Now I teach many and usually, my classes are only at night after I return from kacheris.

SM: It's a well-known fact that you do Vidya daanam and never charge any Guru dakshina or fees from anyone! Can our readers know the noble reason behind this?

AK: Satisfaction. The satisfaction I get when I see performances of my students is more than what I get from my performances. I am just reciprocating what my gurus did to me. Right from my first guru Sri Vijayeswara Rao to MLV Amma none charged a penny from me. MLV Amma always used to pay very quantitatively for all her shishyas if they accompany her and she used to get her accompaniment artists also paid well from organisations. I follow her and also make sure that my shishyas get reasonably paid and I also encourage them in giving decent incentives when they accompany me.

SM: All Your shishyas imbibed your quality of enriching a concert as an accompanying artist what is the special advice you give them that they become so sought-after?

AK: I never teach them with violin in my hand, as doing so will limit their concentration only on reproducing what I play. Rather I sing and



Tribute to Saint Thyagaraja through the 'Tyagaraja Ekaika Ragam' project (Picture courtesy 'The Hindu')

teach them so that they know how to follow what I sing. This helps them to follow the main artist on stage whether he or she is performing manodharmam or whatever. Also, this will develop their Swara gnanam (the knowledge on recognising swaras).

I advise them to understand the main artist's presentation abilities and go along with them as per their needs and requirements and ensure to get the concert reach into the minds of the audience as a teamwork. I also tell them they should improve and present their skills in the short time available to attract the audience and gain recognition. I am very proud to say that whenever my disciples play, they don't need any introduction for the baani they hail from. They never imitate me or the main artist. They've been developing their style by adhering to the rules which is the most important factor that contributes to get great recognitions and rewards.

SM: You are a violinist but you've shishyas who play a wide variety of instruments like veena, keyboard, mandolin who also got awards like Kalaimamani and are popular solo artists as well. What's the methodology you follow for them?

AK: My teaching is student-specific. My methodology is the same for all of them, I ask them to listen to concerts that are available in the

archives and ask them to play as if they were the accompanying artists. I always advise that they should be aware of the mistakes they make. This is the most important contributor for refining them constantly. Above all whatever I teach in my home is heard by the Lord who is always with me which is also a very important blessing for them.

SM: Your recent magnificent project "Tyagaraja Ekaika Ragam" is very unique, tough and was never attempted at least in the recent past! what is the motive to take up this?

AK: I always want to do something challenging and tough which paves way for me to learn and keep me fresh and energetic. Since long I wanted to do a Ekaika ragam series based on just single kriti composed in many Apoorva ragas by Muttiah Bhagavathar and Dikshitar. Around 5 years ago, it struck me to start the series initially with the rare single kritis of Tyagaraja Swamy. However, I could not start the series immediately as it needed a lot of research, learning process along with the constraint of my busy schedule and travelling.

During the Margazhi practice session with my students in dec 2019, going along with the trend of social media we decided to record and post in Face book so that it reaches wide audience around the world. With the blessings of lord Venkateshwara Tyagaraja Ekaika ragam series made its debut with first Kriti presented on 13th dec 2019. This is how it started and the onset of the pandemic gave us a lot of time to continue it non-stop for 2 years. It was an exciting and tremendous task for me and my students and with great satisfaction we completed 104 phenomenal episodes.

SM: Your efforts are sculptured with golden words in the history of Karnatic music as the rare compositions were brought into light by you and your proud shishyas. I'm sure you will say this is also God's will? Am I right?

AK: Yes, That's God's will. It was an opportunity for me and my shishyas to learn and present rare gems of Tyagaraja swamy. I never expected that the project will go this fast. Every kriti needed special attention and nuances in-depth

and we were successful in doing so. All my disciples with a wide variety of backgrounds participated in this holy yagna. This was saint Tyagaraja's blessings on us that in spite of me getting hospitalised for a few days, this series went on without even break of one episode. It is a fact that I can't be without music and my sadhana (practice) allowed me to do this even in such circumstances. I never eat anything without playing Amba Kamakshi in Bhairavi on my violin and this is my way of worshipping her.

SM: The present-day youth are in an illusion that only going abroad will fetch them education, recognition what not. But with your divinity, you disproved this. Your name is mentioned in the USA's congressional record, the official written and annals of the proceedings and debates of US congress by Raja Krishnamoorthy from the house of representatives on 6th Aug 2021. Please share your feelings on this prestigious achievement?

AK: It was a great honour to me as an Indian and I am the first musician from India to receive this Honour. I've been travelling to the US for performances for 40 years and a thought came to me to present my instrumental version of "Star Spangled Banner" the national anthem of USA with my shishyas from all around the world. As it was during the pandemic time this was recorded individually or in smaller groups from where ever they were and was put together which was herculean task, accomplished successfully. This was uploaded in the social media on the Independence Day, 4th July 2021. Incidentally Mr. Krishnamoorthy from the house of representatives also saw this, shared and presented the details in the house which is now mentioned in the USA congressional record.

He was overjoyed on seeing this presentation by making a detail presentation of myself on 6th Aug 2021 in the House providing details about the background of my learning, my journey as a solo and enhancing artist, various distinguished awards achieved and was also impressed on the fact that I was not taking any honorarium from my shishyas as I feel this is the way to pay tribute and honouring my teachers to develop my talents. Mr. Krishnamoorthy had addressed me

as a wonderful musical ambassador, sharing the beauty of Carnatic tradition with music lovers all over the world and I strongly feel this is the highest recognition and honour for the entire genre of Karnatic music.

It is also a fact that this is a tremendous recognition not just for me but for the art form in itself and all classical musicians, and the organisations that promote this form. As I've been saying that my awards and rewards are blessings of great souls around me and this honour is the recommendation from none other than Saint Tyagaraja himself as I am working on his project Tyagaraja Ekaika ragam. (With a big smile on her face!!)

SM: In spite of many innovative happenings in the music fraternity we cannot attend or pay attention to all of them. However, Rasikas dare to miss if there is any presentation from you. What is the next musical treat in line for your beloved rasikas in this new year??

AK: I don't know what is in store for all of us. As far new Projects, I always get hint from my divine father (Lord Venkateshwara) and as soon as I get, I will execute it immediately.

SM: A message in the New year from you to readers, music lovers and learners?

AK: "Nothing comes easier in life". If it comes it will also leave you in the easiest possible way. Work Hard, Be Patient, Do your Duty, and simply surrender yourself at the holy feet of the Lord. He will take care of you.

With this, she signs off.

I am sure all the readers will have a positive take on this interview as every word from her is a piece of advice and guide us for greater lives. She is an achiever with dedication and devotion and the youth of today should inculcate values, build character and work simultaneously to build their respective careers like her. I am confident then a Modern India will be built with three D's i.e., Dedicated, Devoted and Disciplined individuals with core values in their hearts.

Sri G Vedanta Iyengar, remembering you sir

RK Srikantan, Bangalore

(From the 'Memorabilia', released on the occasion of 50th Year Punyasmarane of the founder Sri. G Vedanta Iyengar)



I had the opportunity of meeting and knowing Sri G. Vedanta Iyengar years back, when he used to bring his daughters in a jataka to my residence in Sheshadripuram for music tuition. As he was a student of English Literature, he used to speak only in English. He was very fluent with the language. He had the good fortune of becoming a favourite student of Prof. CR Reddy, Prof. of English, Sir S. Radhakrishnan and Prof. AR Wadia, Prof. of Philosophy.

As I understand Sri Iyengar was an affable gentleman with a bright mind and a warm heart. He was a byword for integrity and discipline. He was a man of concern, humanity and commitment, and had a progressive outlook in every-

thing he did. He carried enormous insight with all simplicity and grace. His personality demanded no concessions for, and no tolerance of any eccentricity or pride. He was everything to his children.

He was born to middle-class parents who were interested in spiritual education and Karnatak music. Sri Iyengar's father, Sri Venkata Varda Iyengar was a violinist. After graduation, Sri Vedanta Iyengar worked as the Headmaster in Govt. Middle School at Doddaballapura and other places. After joining the Education Dept. he was offered The Sub-Registrar's Post, since he had also qualified for the same. However, his primary love for education made him continue in the education dept. He became very popular by conducting various extra-curricular activities for the students.

Being a warm hearted person, he loved his students so much that he went out of his way to provide free education to the poor and needy children at his own house. His wife Smt. Lakshamma, known for her simplicity, kindness and hospitality; provided food for these children. At Doddaballapura, his house was like a "Nandagokula" where bhajans would be conducted every evening and tuitions would be given during the day.

Besides working for the cause of education and music, his large hearted nature made him work for several social causes. At Saligrama, K.R. Nagar taluk, Mysore district, Sri Iyengar left an inefaceable impression in the minds of all people for his exemplary community services. Through the good contacts developed with the govern-



L to R - K Gopalakrishna Rao, Ex. Vice President, SRLKM, Shri. G Vedanta Iyengar, Shivamurthy Sastry, Ex. President, SRLKM, A Ganamukhi, Ex. Education Minister, Kadidal Manjappa, Ex. CM, Karnataka. Veena by GV Ranganayakamma

ment and with Sir Mirza Ismail, the then Dewan of Mysore under His Highness Late Sri Krishnaraja Wadiyar, he was instrumental in commissioning several projects like the Maternity and Child welfare Center Hospital and a Veterinary Hospital at Saligrama. He was also the sole inspiration behind the renovation of the famous Sri Yoganarasimha Temple, where Sri Ramanujacharya stayed for several years on his way to Melukote.

Late Sri Iyengar was highly interested in Music and had a deep artistic sensibility. He recognised the inborn musical talent in his children, Smt. Ranganayakamma and Smt. Neela and provided them extraordinary support in learning music. Smt. Ranganayakamma made her father's dream come true by successfully completing her Vidwath Examinations and was subsequently appointed as the music teacher at Davanagere.

By establishing a music institution, Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira at Sannidhi Road, Basavanagudi, the late Iyengar's mission to promote the fine art of Karnatic music was fulfilled. Today this has the recognition of the government and has grown into a popular music institution in Bangalore. Having successfully completed 50 years of service, the Golden Jubilee Celebrations are afoot.

Late Sri Iyengar is survived by his illustrious children, Smt. GV Ranganayakamma and Smt. GV Neela who played the Veena and sang Vocal Music (Neela violin also), Smt. MR Ramamani (vocal), Sri GV Varada Rajan who practised Veena under Swara Murthy VN Rao, Smt. GV Padma disciple of Sangeetha Kalarathna Sri. RN Doraiswamy, Dr. GVVijayalakshmi a veena artist, and Mridangist - GV Krishna Prasad, who was the Secretary of Bangalore Gayana Samaja for many years and is deeply involved in running the Lalitha Kala Mandira. GV Padma has 3 children - GS Kamala, GS Rajalakshmi who are senior musicians of Karnataka and Sri GS Ramanujam - who is a mridangam and ghatam vidwan.

In recognition of his community and public service besides his active participation in all aspects of primary and secondary education, His Highness Sri Jayachamarajendra Wadiyar honoured him with the precious "Public Service Gold Medal" in the year 1949.

It is only a wish that The Almighty could have bestowed on him a deserved long life as a gesture towards the cause of Music and Education. He was a stern person with wisdom and knowledge, striving for perfection in whatever he did, and expected the same from others. May His Wonderful spirit Live forever!



Pancha Veena concert lead by Vid. GV Ranganayakamma



Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer during the Open Air Theatre inauguration



Vid. GV Ranganayakamma being honoured



GV Krishna Prasad, Hon Secretary, SRLKM receiving Vid. Neela Ramgopal. Also seen in the picture Shri. Ramgopal



GV Ranganayakamma (Veena), GV Neela (Violin) and GV Krishna Prasad, (Mridanga) performing in a concert



Shri. GV Varada Rajan conducting the proceedings of the SRLKM cultural event



During the inauguration of SRLKM open air theatre. L to R - Vid. Ranganayakamma, ??, ??, Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, ??, Shri. Kamalanath, Ex. President Bangalore Gayana Samaja



Inauguration of SRLKM concert hall. Seen in the picture are GV Krishna Prasad, GV Neela, Chiranjeevi Singh, HH Swami Chidanandaji, GV Ranganayakamma, GV Varada Rajan



Bombay Sisters performing for SRLKM



Chittibabu performing for SRLKM



Vid. GV Ranganayakamma receiving Maharajapuram Santanam at SRLKM



When Lalgudi Jayaraman visited SRLKM



When Lalgudi Jayaraman visited SRLKM



Saraswathi pooja at SRLKM



During Thyagarajaswamy and Purandara Aradana at Devagiri Temple - Seen are Rudrapatnam Brothers and Bangalore S Shankar



GV Krishna Prasad and GV Neela receiving Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer during Open air theatre inauguration



GV Krishna Prasad and GV Neela with TM Krishna during his concert



During the inauguration of SRLKM concert hall. GV Neela, GV Ranganayakamma, GV Krishna Prasad with KJ Yesudas



Mysore Sisters - GS Kamala and GS Rajalakshmi in a concert



GV Neela with N Rajam when she performed for SRLKM



GV Neela with RK Srikantan



GV Krishna Prasad receiving Bombay Jayashri Ramnath



GV Krishna Prasad and GV Neela receiving Malladi Brothers and Embar S Kannan



GV Ranganayakamma and GV Neela Performing at Sheshadripuram Ramaseva Mandali



Begum Parveen Sultana performing for SRLKM

Music Memories

Late T Sankaran, (grandson of the legendary Vina Dhanammal and retired Assistant Station Director, AIR)

Source - Karnataka Gana Kala Parishat souvenir, 1976

Charity begins at home. So did my music education. It was ante-natal. I was taught the value of silence, for my maternal grandmother Veena Dhanammal was a stickler. New born babies were frightened into silence by invoking her name. Rasikas however eminent otherwise in life had first to be groomed into silent appreciation of music, whoever be the performer, herself or some other. None dared sneeze, cough or momentarily explode a Sabash. Keeping time even during a Pallavi recital by distinguished Vidwans at her Navaratri court had to be silent. This tyranny of silence lasted till she passed away on 15th October 1938 and even later. Poignant grief was absolutely silent; none dared to articulate a sob before her last remains.

Early Memories

I distinctly remember the Flute concert by Tiruppamburam Swaminatha Pillai at the Jagannatha Bhakta Sabha, Madras when the drummer had his pound of flesh from the misram piece of Syama Sastri, '*marivere gatievaramma*'. The front rank rasikas had a go at the Talam. 'This is an instrumental concert and the rhythm should be kept on the drum and not on steel helmets; the clapping of time only reminds me of the preparation of Cowdung cakes' was her curb. There was immediate response to her vitriolic comment.

Of the two great savants of her days viz., Coimbatore Raghava Iyer and Maha Vaidyanatha Iyer, she was a great admirer of the former. She caught glimpses of the Raghava Iyer style in the music of Tiger Varadachariar and the Nagasvaram maestro TN Rajarathnam Pillai.

She first met Tiger in Dr. Sitapati Iyer's house where she was teaching the doctors daughter Savitri Rajan, happily alive now. Tiger was intro-

duced to her while he was elaborating Bhairavi. At the conclusion of the Alapana, she asked for Kharaharapriya which was reputed to be his forte. Tiger complimented the hard nut that was too difficult to crack and was flattered to be dubbed a chip of the old block viz. Coimbatore Raghava Iyer whom he had only heard of.

Tiger, the great

The next encounter was when the Tiger was her choice for the concert at the wedding of her grandson in preference to other popular musicians. Tiger excelled himself in Begada Tanam in the company of his accompanists; Papa Venkataramiah and Palani Muthiah Pillai. Winding up Tiger protested "Dhanamma how bad of you to compel me to grunt like a bear before you?". 'Yes it was kalkandu' came the hearty eulogy presenting a silver tankard loaded with Sugar candy.

On her death bed she sent for TN Rajarathnam Pillai to play Nagasvaram in her sick chamber with just Tanpura accompaniment provided by her frail fingers. He started off with a bang and continued his godly raco for about ten minutes, "Tambi, what Ragam is this; would you mind enlightening me?" Quick to realise some faux pas, TNR faltered his announcement of 'Vachaspati'. "Oh this is Vachaspati I Very well" could I plead for a round of Kambodi which I understand to some extent? He did and her solace was loquacious. "What a trophy for my initial tomfoolery with Amma" whispered the Nagasvaram wizard once he was out by her earshot.

Konakkol

Just as I was starting to scribble these reminiscences Nagasvara Vidwan Natarajasundaram Pillai reminded me of our association with Kanchipuram Nayana Pillai, Fiddle Govindaswa-

mi Pillai, Konakkol Pakiria Pillai and other stalwarts of our generation. Konakkol is too sophisticated for lesser mortals to appreciate and more often than not it triggered off a loud ripple of laughter when the stock accompanist of Nayana Pillai, Pakiria Pillai reeled off his Korvais or solfa sequences. These stalwarts stuck to their guns and safeguard the dignity of their profession against all odds. The distinguished Patron of a concert wanted to throw his weight and restore discipline on the audience amused by Konakkol. But Nayana Pillai never abdicated his responsibility. Pat came the Tyagaraja kriti '*mariyadagadayya*' followed in quick succession by '*sitaavara sangita jnanamu dhata vraaya valera*', '*buddhi radu*', and '*kaddannu variki*' stressing '*nid-dura niraakarinch*' and '*suddhamaina manasuche susvaramuto*'... The performers and the audience live happily after!

The great Violinist

Dhanammal was one of the mentors of Govindaswamy Pillai who was a stickler for principles and also organiser of the Tyagaraja Utsavam at the Tiruvayyaru, where women had no place in platform concerts until the Vidyasundari Bangalore Nagaratnammal fought for their rights. Dhanammal arrived at Tiruvayyaru without prior notice and a big crisis seemed to brew. Pillai had abhishekam performed at the Samadhi where Dhanammal was accorded the greater privilege of Naadopasana.

Another time she reached his residence in Tanjore in the visible darkness of dawn and tripping on the doorstep smashed her Veena to pieces. Not even waiting to welcome her, Pillai raced personally to the repairer and ordered him to attend to it within three days when he would be absent at Tiruvayyaru. She was left to the care of Nagaraja Bhagavata. At the conclusion of the festival he returned to Tanjore carrying the portrait of Tyagaraja in his arms. The Veena was ready to welcome Tyagaraja and Pillai with '*nannu palimpa nadachi vachchitavo*'. They bathed their ecstasy in ananda bashpam.

Friend Bidaram

Bidaram Krishnappa was Dhanamma's great friend. Once during his visit to Madras, he ca-

joled her into teaching him '*enduku nirdaya*' Face to face they completed the Pallavi and Anupallavi. It was evening by then and time for Krishnappa to catch the train. She politely bade him god speed and requested him to come again for the Charanam in person for nothing on earth would persuade her to compromise with written music in notation. Krishnappa was only too glad to come again.

Past fifty, Fiddle Govindaswamy Pillai had a stroke but recovered soon to accept public engagements. He was a special invitee for the concerts arranged at Chellapalli in connection with the wedding and coronation of the Raja Sahib. Pillai was to provide Violin accompaniment to Nayana Pillai's, concert on the first day and play Violin solo (with Papa) on the second day. The first concert lasting nearly five hours left him limp. So he begged permission to call off the solo and packed up to return to Trichy the next minute. The Raja Sahib was literally overawed by the awe and reverence displayed by the Maha Vidwans of Andhra Pradesh to Pillai and so arranged for the sanmanam to be delivered at Pillai's lodgings !

A Prince Indeed

On the top of the Tambulam was a pair of costly Shawls unlike a solitary Shawl for the other musicians. Pillai at once had the currency notes counted. The fee for two concerts was there in full even though he had not fulfilled his contract for the solo. Pillai politely returned the retainer for the second engagement through Natarajasundaram Pillai. The Raja Sahib insisted that no mistake had been made but that he had deliberately been keen on honouring the great Pillai. Pillai would not be persuaded to play for a select few and begged the Raja Sahib to accept a refund of the excess as otherwise Pillai was likely to be too complaisant about returning to Chellapalli to fulfil the broken engagement. Pillai was a prince among musicians indeed.

I have had the unique privilege of personal intimacy with Muthialpet Tyagier, the son of Veena Kuppur, distinguished disciple of Tyagaraja and a memorable composer in his own right. Tyagier in his eighties was a daily visitor to our house

to play Chokkatti with my grandmother, Tyagier was assisted by Dhanammal's eldest daughter Rajalakshmi for he knew nothing about the game except rattling the dice and shouting in ecstasy. Before returning home, he would literally plead with Dhanammal to open her lips to take in his newly composed Varnams to be published with her inimitable melody : Pandanallur Meenakshi Sundaram Pillai's brother-in-law Nelliappa Nattuvanar was Tyagier's confidante for pruning the rhythm of his compositions. Then he would go round our neighbourhood teaching his compositions to Dhanammal's daughters, Coimbatore Thayee Ammal and a few others.

Composer Tyagier

Tyagier had a rugged and recalcitrant voice with distortions that would in comparison elevate Tiger to Kokilaganam'. But a more vitriolic criticism of his voice cannot be thought of except from his own mouth. He would invite Dhanammal for a concert in his Gokulashtami festival. But his nephew S Doraiswami Iyer, the noted advocate could not resist his friends crowding about the auditorium. Tyagier like Dhanammal dreaded a maddening crowd and

resorted to a device to discourage a crowd. 'Please note that my concert is scheduled for tomorrow evening'. With an air of proud achievement he would announce his publicity trick for frightening away the crowds from his own voice and music.

Mysore Vasudevacharya

It was my proud privilege to interview in a broadcast Sangitaratna, Sangitha Kalanidhi Mysore Vasudevacharya when the Sangita Nataka Akademi decorated him with the Presidential Award for Carnatic music. He welcomed me with great affection because his guru Patnam Subramanya Iyer was also my aunt's guru. He opened his greetings to me with "yes, yes, what a lovely Varnam in Suruti by Tiruvotriyur Tyagier? "I heard the soulful rendering of one Varnam by your cousins. I am glad to be interviewed by a scion of a musical tradition and I am grateful to the Highness of Mysore and to my Guru for their choicest blessings to me"

I am proud of these associations but my education in music is still in the Primary stage. Is it their fault? Definitely No.

From R to L : GV Neela, GV Vijayalakshmi, GV Ranganayakamma enjoying a SRLKM event. Mysore sister Kamala at the back of GV Ranganayakamma



Voice of a connoisseur and an Organiser

*Harini Raghavan, General Secretary, Nadasurabhi, Bangalore
(From our archive but edited for the context here)*

For over six decades now, Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira - SRLKM has been serving the cause of Carnatic Music untiringly, through concerts, training in Carnatic Music, work shops etc. The organisation's status is that of a "Big Brother", to many younger and up coming music organisations, in the way it conducts concerts and all other activities under the banner throughout the year. As many of us know, in the recent years many deserving senior musicians, worthy young and upcoming artists have been honoured and awarded under various categories, for their contribution to the field of music. Last year 150 artists were honoured with "**Lalitha Kala Suma**" awards. This year, the honorary Secretary Sri GV Krishna Prasad has gone a step further to felicitate and honour with "**Lalitha Kala Suma**", 60 plus cultural organisations recognising their service in the field. This

is an amazing gesture by him. To honour so many artists and organisations periodically, selflessly, without any expectations, is beyond comprehension!

SRLKM takes inspiration from Dr. DVG's poem, '**Vanasuma**'. But Sri Krishna Prasad himself represents the '**Vanasuma**' described by the great poet! DVG in the last stanza of the poem says, "VipulAshrayavanEva suphala suma bharita pAdapadante..." Sri GVK is likened to that tree (pAdapa) full of ripened good fruits, and flowers which offers abundant support to everyone without expecting any return. For the long time service to the carnatic music field, SRLKM most deservedly received the most coveted Karnataka Sangeetha Nrithya Academy Award last year. Many organisations have personally honoured Sri GVK lauding his yeoman service to the field. May his tribe grow like '**Vanasuma**'!

File photo of September 2018 - HH Sri SriYadugiriYathiraja Narayana Ramanuja Jeeyar blessing GV Krishnaprasad with a specially brought 'Thomala' a garland of flowers from Tirupati



My beloved Guru - as I see, Perceive and celebrate

Embar S Kannan, Chennai

It's quite interesting to recall how I came under my Guru's tutelage. I was 11 when I cleared the CCRT (Centre for Cultural Resources and Training) exam and got the scholarship in 1986. To avail the scholarship, we had to mention the Guru's name and submit the form. The approved list of Guru's had Kanyakumari Amma's name. So, my appa (father) filled Kanyakumari Amma's name and submitted the form. Shortly my scholarship was approved and we were asked to get her signature in the forms. We did not even know her whereabouts at that point in time and we mentioned her name without even taking her permission. My father went to AIR and got her address and We went straight to her residence and prostrated at her feet. Kanyakumari amma exclaimed with a big laugh

"Oh! Is that you, as she had received a call from CCRT that her student has got scholarship and she had been wondering who that was as she had no student then.

When we met her in 1986 June, Kanyakumari Amma was literally leading a NRI status. She was playing for ML Vasanthakumari, Mandolin Srinivas and many other stalwarts and she would be travelling outside India nearly 8 months in a year. And rest of the time when she was in India too, she had a chock-a-block calendar. In spite of her busy schedule and travelling status she magnanimously took me under her tutelage. Even though I joined her under CCRT scholarship program she never accepted any fees. There is yet another facet that I have to

Young Embar S Kannan supporting his Guru in a concert with Thiruvurur Bhaktavatsalam on Mridangam



mention that she was too bold and receptive to ideas that she allowed me to continue my western music lessons with Divakar Sir.

My classes with my Guru were of a different nature. We didn't have a weekly two class or any such modern timetable. She would call us for a class whenever she was home and free. My father and I would take a bus from T Nagar to her residence. In an hour she would teach enough content to practice for next 3 months. It would take me the next few weeks to decipher it and assimilate it. As my father Sangeetha Bhooshanam Sadagopan himself was a musician he was able to handhold me when I practiced at home. My Guru's classes were power packed sessions, as unlike today those days when she travelled outside India, we had no means of communication and the next session would be only after she returns from her trip.

Slowly we graduated from bus travel to bicycle trips and later to two wheelers but the classes and the content and the focus remained the same. At that time, I used to play concerts for children's academy with artists of my age group and my Guru would ask me about each and every one of it and would encourage me. The encouragement remains the same even today.

Guru's classes had many special things. She always believed that Manodharma Sangeetham must be as per each person's imagination and flow of thought and shouldn't be spoon fed. Hence, she focused on Kalpitha Sangeetham, that is taught the krithis. Most of the time she would sing and ask me to play, in due course she was inculcating in me the ability of an accompanist to listen, notate and play and in due course made me learn the sahithyam which is the key to play like how one sings. The class rooms were like concerts and madam without even letting me know prepared me for on stage performances. She would have just come back from a trip only to leave for the next and in-between the two she would teach me. Her dedication is inexplicable. Her dedication to students and teaching is a quality I try to emulate. What I am today is truly her blessing.

In 1989 my father registered my name for competitions in 5 different sabhas in the same year. Entry age for these competitions were 14 and had participants up to 28. These competitions always take place between September and October. My Guru used to spend entire Fall and Spring in the US. Music Academy's syllabus for the competition was vast and tough. In June, madam gave me a session, asked me to record

A Kanyakumari and Embar S Kannan in a concert at Madras Music Academy accompanied by Patri Satish Kumar on Mridangam and V Suresh on Ghatam



and completely covered the syllabus and started off her tour. Taking my father's support, I continued to practice and went for the competition and by my Guru's grace I got the first prize in all the sabhas. My Guru was delighted on hearing this.

The next big leap was a concert with my Guru for NCPA (National Centre for Performing Arts), Mumbai in 1990. As a precursor she made me play with her for a wedding concert in Chennai. Her accompanist, vidwan Kalaimamani Sri Tiruvarur Bhaktavatsalam was gracious enough to accept me on dais. Everything about the concert was first to me. It was my first trip to Bombay. First travel with my Guru by train. First time I played with my Guru and it was a mic less concert. Every single concert I play with her is unique but the first concert is still etched in my mind.

Whenever Kanyakumari Amma called me for rehearsals, we would practice a bunch of krithis which may be a part of the concert or may not. I had to be prepared for any item from our repertoire. On the dais too, when the Manodharma sangeetham is played at the spur of the moment she would ask me to pick-up and continue that I had to be on my toes. This helped me to stay focused and razor sharp all the time. I was all of 14 when I started to play with her and she gave me ample and equal opportunity to play. Learning on the stage as we perform is a unique learning technique and she bestowed it on me. When I played with her, the accompanying artists were also of her stature which might not have happened if I had played alone. She was a star and people came for her and I got into limelight with her which is sheer blessings. My Guru just made these happen without any fanfare. Slowly my Guru brought in more students under her fold.

In March 1992, Kanyakumari Amma accepted a concert in Shanmugananda Hall, Delhi. She wanted me to play with her. My father readily accepted it ignoring the fact that it was the class II Annual exam time. My father never winked a second when it came to music. He said such a great Guru is calling you, come what

may you have to go with her. Then we took permission from the school as I had to miss two exams as it would take 5 days to travel back and forth. My school JRK Matriculation school also appreciated my leaning towards the art form and allowed me to pursue it. As I was in class II, my father said I could travel alone and that marked my first travel by myself in Grand Trunk Express 2 nights and a day to Delhi. On my return, I went to school directly from the railway station and took the exam.

After my school I joined maestro Ilayaraja Sir's orchestra. Joining Ilayaraja Sir's orchestra is much more than an article ship or internship. I used to be there from 7 AM to 9 PM. At a time when Carnatic musician playing for film music was considered a sin, my Guru allowed me and encouraged me to play for film music. This also shows the confidence that she had in me as it was a period of rigid values when people believed that playing film music will make one compromise their shastriya sangeetham. She broke all the dogmas and magnanimously allowed me to play for Ilayaraja Sir. That was the time when orchestra and singers performed together. Notes were given and one had to learn and play immediately, which is completely different from the Carnatic music world. I was able to learn and enjoy best of both the worlds. I would play in the orchestra in the morning and play in the concert in the evening.

The film music helped me to perfect my skills. Also because of my western music training I used to use the fourth finger which is sparingly or not used in Carnatic music. My Guru was so liberal to allow me to continue to use it which any other Guru might not have encouraged.

My first flight was also with my Guru when we flew together for a concert to Hyderabad. It's her blessings that today I have travelled far and wide to various places for concerts. Also, my first trip along with her to US is a remarkable journey. Even though I had been learning from her for 20 years then, the US trip is when I was with her day and night for 2 months. She would inform her hosts that she would come along with her sishya (me). Every single meal she

would ask me if I had food even though she would be fasting most of the time. She gave me a level playing field in the concert halls. For a youngster like me it was a great opening and I played with her in numerous concerts to the crowd that came for her. Whenever she introduced me to someone as her student their love and regards for me grew instantaneously. This, no amount of publicity can achieve.

I have played many recordings with her. I would say I was in the right place at the right time with her that I got ample opportunities. I have been a part of almost all her innovative projects. I have had many first musical experiences with her. My classes with her remains the same all these 35 years. Even today she would ask me what I played in a concert. She would appreciate if I compose any item. Most importantly, when

she composes, she would ask if I liked it. That would show her childish inquisitiveness.

From the young boy that I joined her, today I feel very responsible when she delegates the task organising concerts and research projects. It's just not music there are many life skills that I have learnt from her. For the league and stature that she comes from she never puts an air. If she hasn't heard from me for a day or two, she would call to enquire about my welfare. This is the same dedication she shows to all her Sishyas.

As a Guru she has inculcated music, values and discipline in me and as a Sishya I imbibe those and celebrate her in my everyday life.

Sri. GV Krishna Prasad honoured



Sri. GV Krishna Prasad being honoured by Sri. M Vasudeva Rao and Sri. Srimushnam V Raja Rao on 24th Dec 2021. Also seen in the picture are B Rajashekar, Phanindra Bhaskara, Shubha Santhosh.

Prof. Gowri Kuppuswamy, musician and a musicologist

Anand S, Bangalore

When we talk about Pudukkottai, Maha Vidwans like Manpoondia Pillai (the inventor of Kanjira), Dakshinamurthy Pillai and Pazhani Subramania Pillai come to the fore. Gowri Kuppuswamy is one among many great artistes Pudukkottai produced but musicians like her are not mentioned in the same breath. It is quite possible the greatness of the Maha Vidwans overshadowed everybody else.

Gowri Kuppuswamy was born on 3rd August 1931 to R Natesan and Balakujam Natesan in

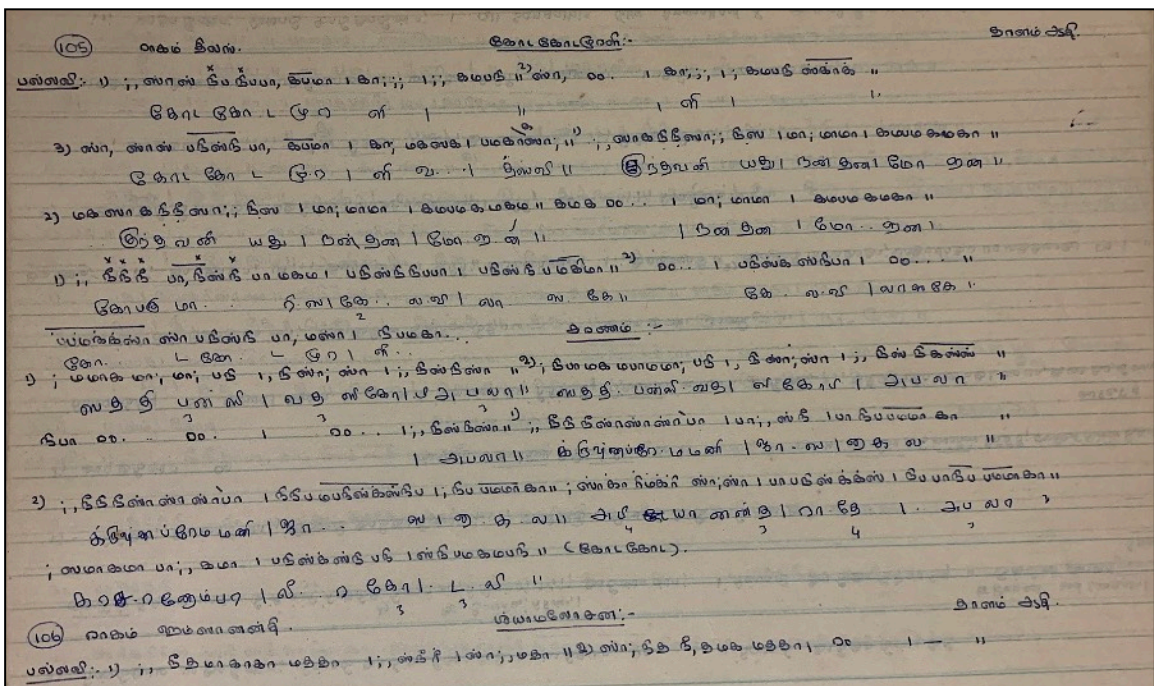
Pudukkottai, Tamil Nadu a vibrant place for music just like Tanjore in those days.

Recognising her 92 years of glorious service to music as a musician, musicologist, academician, the Kannada and Culture Department, under the Government of Karnataka bestowed on her the prestigious '**Shri Nijaguna Purandara Award**' on 18th August 2021. This award carries a Plaque, Shawl, Garland, and cash of Rs. 5 lakhs.

As a child, she was soaked in music and her house was always filled with music. The affluent

Gowri Kuppuswamy receiving the '**Shri Nijaguna Purandara Award**'. L to R : Shri. Ashok Chalavadi, Joint Director, Shri. S Rangappa, Director, Shri. Sunil Kumar, Kannada Culture and Energy Department, Shri. Basavaraj Bommai, Chief Minister of Karnataka, Shri. KH Channur, Joint Director





Immaculately notated kriti by Dr. Gowri Kuppaswamy

household hosted who-is-who of music like Mali, Semmangudi, GNB, MLV, S Kalyanaraman, etc. for whom it was a home away from home in Pudukkottai. The ambiance provided her with a perfect platform for musical learning by sheer listening. The Vidwans taught her during their stay and she acquired a wide repertoire at a very young age, mastering some of the very rare compositions. MLV along with her mother Lalithangi always stayed at her house and taught her Purandaradasa kritis. Flute maestro Mali stayed in their house for over three years and every day her house was filled with his ragas like Mohana, Sahana, Kedaragowla, etc. Gowri Kuppaswamy recollects 'Mali always used my tambura for his concerts as it was tuned to my Sruti 'G', the same sruti he played. One Thangamani who was supporting him on tambura used to come to my house and carry the tambura for his concerts'. Gowri Kuppaswamy opinions, "Mali's music was 'gandharva gana' and there will never be another musician like him.

Gowri Kuppaswamy's grandmother was not inclined to have her consider music formally because of her own life experiences and also the prejudices that prevailed at that time. Her parents were keen to have their daughters married off at an early age. Once when Semmangudi wanted to take her to Chennai and teach her,

her grandmother vehemently opposed and told him that she wanted Gowri married soon. Though she joined Meenakshi Sangeetha Vidya Salai at the age of 8 yrs and learned under Calcutta Krishnamurthy and Dr. S Ramanathan, it was short-lived and by the time she was 14 yrs, she was married off to Kuppaswamy and shifted base to Bangalore and then subsequently to Mysore. She recollects "those were the days I used to study very well and I was ahead of my age. I could not give my PUC (Class XII) exam because I was underage. My grandmother said, since you are going to be married anyway, you don't have to continue your education".

The marriage with Shri. Kuppaswamy turned out to be a blessing for Gowri Kuppaswamy as she received immense support from him. Mysore Chowdiah ji took a special interest in her and encouraged her to come to his house frequently and sing. Shri. Kuppaswamy sent her to Madras often to continue her music. Calcutta Krishnamurthy had shifted base to Madras by then and provided her the continuity in learning. GNB was a close friend of her uncle which enabled her to learn from the maestro directly. She was very good at notating and during the course of her association with GNB, she notated all the kritis the maestro used to render. However, it is a pity that the book is not trace-



From Left to Right - Dr. VS Ramadevi, Dr. Gowri Kuppuswamy, Kum. Madhurambika, Shri. Kuppuswamy, Dr. M Hariharan

able now. She recollects “I was the first to notate GNB’s rendition of ‘mamavathu sri saraswathi’ in HIndolam. It was because of GNB that the kriti is very popular today even though many used to render it before him. GNB used to render with swaram at ‘rajadi raja’ and made it his personal asset. I remember the kritis ‘sri rama ramani manohara’ in Mohanam, ‘upacharamu chese varunnarani’ in Bairavi the way GNB taught me even today at 91 years. GNB used to spend a lot of his time in pooja and had no time to practice because he had concerts every other day”.

Gowri Kuppuswamy continues “GNB used to stay at my house whenever he visited Mysore. He along with Chowdiah ji enjoyed the food prepared by me especially my ‘Vatha Kulambu’. On the day GNB passed away, I was in Mandya for a concert. After hearing of his demise, I could not sing and had to wind up the concert abruptly. I kept on crying for a long time as though I lost my father.”

This is also the time she developed an excellent bonding with MLV and Tanjavur S Kalyanaraman. MLV never taught students in a formal way and the students were expected to pick up and learn as she was singing at home or the concert stage. Gowri Kuppuswamy used to complete her notations by the time MLV finished rendering a song that left MLV amazed at times. Gowri

Kuppuswamy joined MLV on stage several times but it was restricted due to her college schedules at Mysore. Gowri Kuppuswamy recalls “I have been part of her life all through especially during her fag end when life was not kind to her. I invited her to Mysore and offered her to create a seat for her in the university, but she refused to come to Mysore. My daughter, a reputed doctor (MBBS, MD) visited her when she was in her daughter’s house suffering from Jaundice but we knew not much could be done at that stage”.

TM Thyagarajan once suggested Tanjavur Kalyanaraman to perform at the Ganapathi Sachidananda Ashrama in Mysore. He stayed at Gowri Kuppuswamy’s house during that trip and developed a bonding with her family and became one among her family. He used to visit her regularly ever since and also gave concerts at their family functions. Gowri Kuppuswamy immensely benefited from this association and learned many kritis from him. Gowri Kuppuswamy quips “I used to sing very much like MLV, but it was Kalyanaraman who advised me to develop a style of my own and not to imitate MLV”.

In the course of time, Gowri Kuppuswamy had made a mark in the University College of Fine Arts, Mysore. It was Shri. Kuppuswamy who encouraged her to take up Academics. It was through Chowdiah ji’s blessings that one Ramachandra Iyer, registrar provided her an opportunity to teach at the University College. She went on and pursued her Ph.D. and her thesis ‘Comparative study of Carnatic and Western Scales’ was well received which is now available as a textbook. She joined as a Lecturer and went on to become the Head of the department in 1980 and served till 1992. That was a time when Violin maestro Vid. S Mahadevappa, Flute maestro V Desikachar, and Nagabhooshanachar (Mridanga) taught along with her at the same University.

She earned a very good name as a professor and head of the department and served for 25 yrs guiding many youngsters on their research work. Dr. Mysore Manjunath was one of her



From Left to Right - Dr. Prabhakar (SIL), Dr. Gowri Kuppuswamy, Aparna Prabhakar, Shri. Kuppuswamy, Radhika Prabhakar (Daughter)

early student who did his BA, MA and pursued Ph.D. under her guidance. Her own son Dr. M Hariharan was also her student. Dr. VS Ramadevi who was a student of Dr. Gowri Kuppuswamy and also her daughter-in-law says, "My mother-in-law was a very accomplished professor and has guided over 30 Ph.D. aspirants. She has presented over 100 research papers. She was most sought after academician and the universities in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala availed her services. She along with her son Dr. M Hariharan authored over 45 books on music published in Kannada, Tamil and English with some of them undergoing several editions. Notable among her works are 'compositions of Purandaradasa' in three volumes, 'Javali', 'Ragamalika', 'Tamil Padangal' 'Music of South India', etc. She participated in several music conferences, workshops organised by prestigious organisation like Music Academy, Krishna Gana Sabha, (Chennai), Karnataka Ganakala Parishat, Bangalore Gayanasamaja (Bangalore) etc. and her research findings have appeared in their reputed journals.

Recollecting her stint with All India Radio (AIR), she says "It was around 1949 when I used to practice alone at home for long hours. One Gopala Rao, a mridangist in Mysore AIR heard

me sing and conveyed to the Station Director of AIR about me. Soon I received an invitation to sing for All India Radio without undergoing the audition. I still remember my first half an hour rendering in AIR fetching me 40 Rs. I was on cloud nine seeing the remuneration which was big in those days. Subsequently Gopal Rao along with RK Srikantan visited my house and asked me to sing for them. I sang 'sankari samkuru' in Saveri set to Tisra Nadai Adi Tala with neraval and swaram. After hearing me, RK Srikantan came forward and offered to teach me. However, this did not last long because my husband was transferred to Australia and I shifted base to Chennai". Gowri Kuppuswamy has given concerts for Mysore, Dharwad, Madras and Pondicherry stations of AIR. She has also performed TV concerts in Tashkent (USSR), Singapore and Malaysia.

Gowri Kuppuswamy says "The role played by my husband is immense and I owe all my achievements to him. He was a musicologist himself by passion. He was a voracious reader and acquired knowledge being with the books. At times he was even invited as a judge for music competitions. We used to finish daily chores by 8 pm and practice music which used to go on for 2-3 hours. He used to help me plan con-

certs and provide impartial reviews of my concerts. He was a pillar of strength for me and I wish he was with me now which is his centenary year”.

Prof. Gowri Kuppuswamy was awarded the Best Teacher in music by Mysore University in Nov 1987. Over the years, Prof. Gowri Kuppuswamy has trained many students; among them are performers of repute and they include Vice-Chancellors, Principals, Directors of AIR Music, Therapists, etc. To name a few are; Dr. Sarvamangala Sankar, Prof. MK Mohanachandran Nair (late), Smt. HR Srimathi (late), K Seshadri, Prof. Nagamani Srinath, Dr. M Hariharan (her son), Dr. Manjula Sriram, Dr. Sukanya Prabhakar, Dr. VS Ramadevi (her daughter in law), Sudha Ravi, TS Rama, Dr. Mysore Manjunath, Dr. Manonmani etc.

Prof. Gowri Kuppuswamy traveled extensively. She was part of the Govt. of India's cultural delegation visiting the then USSR, East Germany, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria during July-September 1970. She gave several concerts in the USA, Singapore, and Canada during April-July 1981.

She traveled to France, England, Canada, USA, Malaysia, Singapore in 1984 for a concert tour and lectures involving music universities.

Prof. Gowri Kuppuswamy is a rare gem gifted by Tamil Nadu to Karnataka. It is a long journey since she moved to Karnataka and her selfless service to the cause of Music is well recognised with several awards and titles. She was awarded, Hon. Ph.D. degree by Gangubhai Hangal Music and Fine Arts University in 2017. She received the best musicologist award from The Madras Music Academy in 2016. Among several of her awards 'Nadabrahmam' from Nadabhamha Sangetha Sabha, Mysore, 'Sangeetha Kalaratna', from Gayana Samaja, Bangalore, 'Sangita Kala Sri' from Karnataka Sangitha Nritya Academy stands tall.

At 91, she is still energetic, high in spirit, and raring to go. Her son Dr. M Hariharan and Dr. VS Ramadevi are continuing the good work where she left. Her daughter Dr. Radhika Prabhakar and her SIL Dr. Prabhakar are very reputed doctors living abroad.

During the annual celebration of SRLKM. Second from left is G Vedanta Iyengar, to his left is K Gopalakrishna Rao, Vice President SRLKM (Scholar) following keenly the speech of Ex. CM of Karnataka Kadidal Manjappa



Rhythmical Journey of Mridangam Maestro Vidwan M Vasudeva Rao

Vidwan HS Sudhindra, Bangalore

Translation credit Vidushi Chandanabala Kalyan

Om Sri Gurubhyo Namaha.

At the outset I thank Sri. GV Krishna Prasad, Hon. Secretary, Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira, for having given me an opportunity to interview one of my Guru's Sri. M Vasudeva Rao Sir, aged 78 years, who has been playing and teaching Mridangam for over 65 years.

HSS: Sir we all know that your entire family is a family of musicians, but we would like to know how your parents developed their interest in Music? And how was the interest passed on to you?

MVR: First of all I would like to make a point that if a human being is meant to develop culturally with moral and traditional values in place, the society that he lives in plays a very

significant role like the educational institutions, Matas etc. When a human being is surrounded by a sound environment in this manner, he is encouraged to develop a positive personality and has roots to grow in the right direction. Having said that, the environment that my parents (father) grew in was Chamarajapet. My grandfather had moved into this locality and often visited Sidhdhaashrama which had just gained popularity as a cultural hub. It was in walking distance from my house and here many Bhajans and Harikathas were being organised. This was initiated by Sidhaaroodha's disciples and followers. Ram Mandira, near my house also was a popular place for cultural activities. My grandfather was also a Volunteer at this Ashrama and had participated in organising many





From L to R : Sriyuths - Venkateshmurthy, Bhaskar(Raja Dresses), Narayanaswamy, H Puttachar, VV Srinivas Rao, M Vasudeva Rao, Keshavamurthy

such events. Similarly my father also was involved in the activities of the Aashrama. In this manner, Karnatak concerts, Pravachanas, Bhajans and Harikathas were organised. Many musicians and artists who resided in various parts of Bangalore were invited to perform at this venue. So, being close to this cultural centre helped our family grow in an environment of rich culture and tradition.

HSS: Can you please mention your parent's names?

MVR: My father's name MN Mannaji Rao and my mother is Lakshmi Bai.

HSS: Your father was a known Hindustani Classical musician. Can you please share with us how your father developed interest in it?

MVR: It was because of the environment of Sidhhaashrama that my father grew up in. My father was a student at Fort High School. He and his school mate Sri Ramrao V Naik (the legendary Hindustani classical musician) were great friends and used to play football together. He had a great influence on my father. The young Ram Rao Naik told him that since they were friends, he wouldn't be able to teach him personally but coaxed him to learn music and

took him to Professor Bhawe who was the father of Smt. Shyamala Bhawe. Infact, I believe that Hindustani classical music entered Bangalore because of Professor Bhawe's efforts. In this manner my father started learning Hindustani Classical Music. In the meantime, the great Musician Sri Seshadri Gawai moved to Chamara-japet and soon my brother Jaimuni Rao Mohite, started learning the Harmonium from him. Since Sri Gawai was from Gadag he had a great association with Sidhhaashrama and was involved with them closely. My brother started performing under his guidance and acquired great name and has accompanied the likes of Nagaraj Rao Hawaldar, Sangeeta Katti and so on. My father only restricted his practise to Bhajans and did not take this up as a profession while my brother took it up seriously and earned a great name for himself. This is our background in Hindustani Classical Music.

HSS: Glad to know that sir. How is it that while your father and elder brother pursued Hindustani, you chose to Karnatak style and then your brothers Dayanand Mohite and Subbanna followed you ? Were you never compelled to learn

Hindustani? How is it that You chose Karnatak Classical music and that too Mridangam?

MVR: My father made the choice for me I must say. In those days Hindustani musicians were rare and few. Karnatak Music was more popular and there were a greater number of musicians also. While my father worked in Anjanapura in Kolar, they used to conduct Tyagarajaswamy Araadhana celebrations. And all the artists were invited from Bangalore. My father would host many of these musicians who had travelled to perform. One such musician was my Gurus Sangeeta Kalaratna Sri Puttachar and they became very good friends. Sri Puttachar opined that it was good to have more number of musicians amidst them instead of having to bring musicians from different other places and chose to teach me, here by my tutelage with him began.

HSS: In this context you used to talk to us a lot about Harikatha artists and the role they played. Can you please share it once again with our readers.

MVR: The real reason I was made to learn was that there should be another accompanying artist amidst us to play for Bhajans and Harikathas. Hence, I was literally being prepared for the role. That's only my Guriji's grace. During those days there were a lot of Venues and initially I was playing mostly for Harikathas and Bhajans. It was only later that the Karnatak Classical concerts came into picture. There were many Harikatha VIdwans during that time who were great scholars in mythology, Sanskrit, music etc. Among them were some greats like Venugopaladasaru, Jayasimhadaasar, and some great artists from Prabhat Studios were also regular performers. Apart from them there were Sri Hande Vedavyasa Daasar, also Gururajulu Naidu, Hunusuru Srikantha Shastry and Harikathe Mysore Brothers etc. They were extremely skilled and used to sing Nerval and Kalpana swaras also which would be very encouraging for artists like us and very interesting compared to just Harikatha concerts. From the music perspective they were great musicians and used to give us space to play Thani Avaranam.

HSS: Sir, How did your brothers Sri Dayanand Mohite and Subramanya Mohite develop interest in Karnatak Music ? How did they start their tutelage under you?

MVR: When I started learning and used to practise everyday, my brother Dayanand used to sit next to me and watch me play. While practicing since we needed someone to put Taala for us, I encouraged him to put Taala while I played. The good thing was that he used to listen to me and was receptive. So after I would finish my practise I would teach him what ever lessons I had learnt and would ask him to practise. It gives me great satisfaction that he also got to learn and practice along with me in this manner.

Subramanya was very small and not old enough to join us for practise. But he used to attend concerts along with us and that's how he had the environment to learn classical music. First, he would only listen when I used to teach. Later though he would not practise like Dayananda, the environment helped him pick up music.

HSS: Could you also please share with us about your Gurus, their tutelage and your tutelage with them and some experiences related to this?

MVR: My Guru Sri H Puttachar originally belonged to a small town near Nelamangala. He used to play Tabla for folk music, dance and theatre programs in his village. After which he learnt music systematically. He often would mention that Gurus would not give lessons easily those days. Students were made to wait for many days before they would be taught. They would judge a student's capacity and sincerity and also commitment and only if they were convinced would they teach them. But My Guruji was an exception to this. Since he had faced so many hardships in his early days he decided not to impose the same on us. Instead, he generously taught us Music with a lot of love and affection with keen interest in our development. He was a very strict teacher (and sometimes would even whack us with a mridangam bar) if we played anything wrong. We students dreaded this immensely those days but now when we recollect it, we laugh about how just the sight of the bar would make us students play our



Vidwan M Vasudeva Rao accompanying Chintalapalli Krishnamurthy with RR Keshavamurthy on Violin., L Bhimachar on Morsing, KN Krishnamurthy on Ghata

lessons correctly. Even to this day, we know that even though when it came to the teaching part of it, he was a task master. His intention of making us concentrate on our lessons and seeing us grow into successful artist was a sincere one. But those were the days when people would believe in “Dandam Dasha Gunam Bhaveth” and even parents would encourage the teacher to beat the students a little if they didn’t learn or practise well. But these days we cannot afford to be strict with students, leave alone beating them we cannot even speak sternly with them. We are immediately told off by the students themselves for being strict.

HSS: Please share with us if your Guruji had any special methods of teaching.

MVR: Our Guruji always emphasised on the knowledge of sound Laya. He gave additional importance to the Eduppu concept. So, he would teach us a concept from Sama to Sama and then would make us play it from Various Eduppus. He believed that this exercise would help us in developing a good sense of Laya Jnana.

HSS: These days there is a lot of encouragement for Local artists. But that was not true those days. How did your guru help students in promoting them in Local concerts? And how would

your Guruji motivate students to get through this phase of not being given enough opportunities?

MVR: In those days, music concerts were mostly held in Matas, Temples and Bhajana Mandiras. Music organisations such as Bangalore Gayana Samaja took birth later. Other than that, there were good plays. At these places singers used to get a lot of encouragement by being well applauded and by being asked to sing again and again. In those days even concerts were very long and sometimes would go on up to 4 to 5 hours. And since people didn’t have any other distractions, they would also enjoy these long hours of music. My Guruji used to encourage us to perform in such Venues. Initially my Guruji would take me along just to listen to these concerts when he performed. Later he would give me a dholak to play along with him. In this manner I have received a great deal of encouragement from him.

HSS: Can u please mention the names of some of your Guru Bandhus and Seniors?

MVR: My seniors were, Kalburgi Keshava Murthy, C Subbu, Natesh, Malagachar and my batch mates were VV Srinivas Rao Bhaskar from Raja Dresses in Chamarajpet, Narayanaswamy, GV Krishna Prasad and a few others. We all

learnt and practised together. My Guruji's Son Ramachar was in a different house and independent by then. Great Morsing Vidwan Sri Bheemachar also used to learn mridangam from him then. Dhruvraj, son of Bhimachar was also his student.

HSS: Sir, when did you start performing? At what age? What are your earliest memories?

MVR: I started learning at the age of 11 and started performing at the age of 15. I have accompanied my Guru when he was playing with Narayanaswamy Bhagavatar and also Chintalapalli Krishnamurthy, Devendrappa, Veena Venkataraya and later Sri Kulitalai Krishnamurthy. Also, I have played Dholak with my Guruji for Violin Trio Concerts with Sri H.V Krishna Murthy, for Veene Raja Rao and so on. As the primary Mridangam accompanist I have played with Sri Chintalapalli Krishnamurthy. His music was very rich and traditional, and I enjoyed playing with him a lot.

HSS: Can you please tell us a little about your practise regime.

MVR: When my Guruji was away for concerts, a group of us would meet and practise together. We also used to have a lot of fun playing together. We were not given the actual concert mridangams for practise instead we were given what was called as "KaTTe" which was not as sophisticated sound wise like the Mridangam. Sometimes our fingers would even bleed because of playing on such rough surfaces. Kutcheri Mridangams were strictly used and given only for concerts. So, we had various categories of Mridangams like Practise Mridangams, Kutcheri Mridangams, Araadhane Mridangams and so on.

Regarding his teaching and the practice regime, my Guruji had taught us a few Geethams and Varnams as he considered it very important that we know how to sing the compositions as well. He used to sing them too while he taught us how to accompany for those compositions. That is how we would understand the finer nuances of accompaniment for Varnams and Krithis.

HSS: When you were growing up which musicians were you listening to the most and who were your idols?

MVR: Those days it was only through live concerts that we got to listen to music as recorded music was very little. And even the Venues weren't too many. Rammandira and Seshadripuram were two important concert venues. Since these concerts were so precious, we wouldn't leave any artist out. We would listen to every single artist who would perform in the series.

HSS: When did you choose to take up music as a profession?

MVR: My father made us learn music with the intention that it remains a hobby only along with another profession. So, neither my father nor I intended to make this my Profession. He only believed that we should embrace 'ART' not essentially as a profession but with the belief that it would take care of us at some point in our lives. But I experienced overwhelming emotions and attraction to the art-form while learning and playing new concepts and would love to practise. And I was always drawn towards practise more than studies. So, after PUC I chose to grow in Karnatak music.

HSS: I would like to ask you a personal question Sir. We live in a day and age when musicians find it hard to find a suitable spouse as the family hesitates to marry off their daughter to a professional musician for various reasons. But during your time how did your alliance come along and how did you receive support from your better half post marriage?

MVR: People in our circles knew well about our family, that we were culturally inclined and that we would participate in Bhajans, Harikathes etc. and that we had an own house and that my father was employed. I had started teaching music which was a regular means of income though income from concerts was not very regular. However, I was determined that I should make it in this field only. Later I took up a job with Valley School and later at Jnanodaya School which became a regular source of income for me.



During Suswaralaya annual event at Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira in 2007 - from L to R - Vidwans HS Sudhindra, Srimushnam V Raja Rao, Umayalpuram K Sivaraman, M Vasudeva Rao.

My wife's family were followers of Yoga practitioner Shri Vishweshwaraiah. They heard about me and decided to give their daughter's hand in marriage to me. She has always been very interested in music and has been very supportive and has taken care of me.

HSS: What are your observations about the status of the Mridangam and how it has evolved over the years?

MVR: There has been a gradual growth in awareness that this is a very special art-form and that there is a lot of scope for growth in this field. This wasn't the case earlier. Very few mridangam artists were given the recognition that was due to them.

HSS: Sir, you have been a great Guru to many students like me, have cycled all the way to student's home and taught mridangam, encouraged to play in concerts, aradhane and so on. Did you receive the same kind of support from your Gurus?

MVR: I believe that I belong to the legacy that my gurus have left me. I have only followed in their footsteps and not done anything more than that. I had realised earlier on that playing at various venues would open out many opportunities to young musicians hence I would en-

courage my students also to play at various Venues to get noticed.

HSS: When did you decide to start teaching? And what difference do you see in students then and now, spanning your long teaching Career?

MVR: I can't really lay my hands on the year when I started teaching. It just happened along the way I must say.

HSS: Your teaching career has spanned over 60 years, What is your observation about students and their attitude towards learning and how it has changed over the years?

MVR: I have tried to implement the principles of Sri Jiddu Krishnamurthy that Children should learn while they play. I have always been friendly and encouraging towards them and kept away the strictness I had experienced as a Child and student myself. In my experience the formula to teach hasn't changed much. Having understood what helps a student 'Learn', I have used the same methods with all students observing their psyche and personality.

The manner in which students regard and respect the teacher has seen quite a transformation. The way in which respect is expressed has

also changed with time and is in tandem with the changing societal values etc. So though we know that there is respect and regard, surely there is a difference in the way it is shown.

Having said that I have noticed that some students these days are oversensitive and don't hesitate from complaining about the teacher to parents. We belonged to a generation who feared the Guru immensely along with respecting them. Speaking against the Guru was just blasphemous. But these days some kids can easily speak ill of the teacher and complain, and the parents also sometimes come back with feedback regarding our teaching methods. Which was just not the case when we were students.

HSS: You had mentioned that your teacher was very strict with other students but with you he was lenient and fond of you. Why do you think it was so?

MVR: I was already facing a strict environment at home and the prospect of having to face a strict Guru also scared me. So, I was well mannered, obedient, and sincere right from the start. So, I was mostly spared beatings.

HSS: Sir, How did your institution "LAYA SURABHI" take birth?

MVR: I have always wanted the student community of musicians to grow and be recognised. Laya Surabhi was established with that intention of providing students a stage to perform and encourage. It is also inspired from the practise of my Guruji. He would organise Tala Vadya concerts and take us all along to various places and make us all perform there. Watching all this I felt like creating one such ensemble and continuing the tradition. That is why I established Laya Surabhi.

HSS: You have so many students who have taken up Music as a profession and flourished. Can you name a few of your students who have made it big in the field of music professionally?

MVR: Dayanand Mohite, SV Giridhar, Sethu Madhava Rao, HS Sudhindra, KS Bhavani Shankar, Harish Narayanan, Kapalishwar, N Amrut, P Sreenivas Murthy, SV Balakrishna, SV Sreenivas, P Janardhana Rao, Lingaraju, G Gurumurthy, Krishna Prasad, Ravishankar Sharma, R

Ramesh, Ramabhadran, AS Kumar, Srinidhi and my brother Subramanyam Mohite are a few of my students who have taken up music professionally.

HSS: Which are the various institutions in which you have taught?

MVR: Vani Institute of Music, G Chennama's Institute called "Gana Mandira", Valley School, Jnanodaya School, Vidya Bhavan, Sri Ranga Kalakshetra and so on.

HSS: How do you feel when you think of the achievements of your students.

MVR: I feel very proud of all my students, starting with you, HS Sudhindra, N Amrit, SV Balakrishna and many others. These 3 students are A - Top Artists from All India Radio and it makes me glow with pride. Many are graded B-High and A and have also set up their own organisations and training their own disciples too. I feel fulfilled and content when I see their achievements.

HSS: Can you please mention a few of the Titles and Awards that you have received in recognition of your Talent and services.

MVR:

1976: Best Mridangam Artist from Bangalore Gayana Samaja, Bangalore.

1974: Mridanga Vadana Ratna from Jagadguru Parakala Mutt Seer from

Sree Ramotsava Celebrations, Bangalore.

1988: Layavadya Chatura from Sri Vyasaraaja Mutt Seer

of Gururaghavendra Seva Samithi, Magadi Road, Bangalore.

1997: Layavadya Kalavatamsa from Sree Mookambika Talavadya Sangeetha Kala Shaale, Bangalore.

1998: Nada Chintamani from Chintamani Gayana Samaj, Chintamani.

1999: Layavadya Kala Bhushana from Sree Thyagaraja Gana Sabha, Bangalore.

2000: Datta Kalasangeetha Chatura from Dattatreya Kala and Samskrita Kendra, Bangalore.

2000: Laya Bhushana from K N K Foundation, Bangalore.

2001: Karnataka Kalashree From Karnataka Sangeeta Nritya Academy, Govt. of Karnataka.

2002: Mridanga Vaadana Praveena from Gaana Vaadya Rachana Praveena Sri Narasingarao Memorial Award by Shree Sri.Sri.Vishveshwara Teertha Swamiji, Bangalore.

2004: Layakala Nipuna from Percussive Arts Center(R), Bangalore.

2007: Abhinava Kalavaridhi by Sheshamahagana-pathi Mahila Sangha, Bangalore.

2008: Sangeetha Layavadya Shiromani (24/2/2008) by Shree Rama Seva Samithi & Shree Rama Centre of Performing Arts, Bangalore.

2010: Sangeetha Kala Tapasvi by Shree Purandara Thyagaraja & Vaggeyakaarara Aradhanotsava Samithi, Mysore.

2010: Mridanga Kala Koustubha by Gaana Sourabha Kala Kendra (R), Bangalore.

2010: Bhajana Kala Vibhushana from Shree Subrahmanya Swamy Bhajana Seva Mandali & Temple(R), Bangalore.

2010: Sangeetha Kala Tapasvi by Sri Purandara Thyagaraja Aradhana Samithi, Mysore.

2010: Visvesvaraya Prashasthi by Bharatha Rathana Sir M.Visvesvaraya Engineering Pratishthana Trust(R), Bangalore.

2013: Sangeetha Paramparaa Nidhi from Chintalapalli Pracheena Paramparaa Sangeetha Samsthanam (Chintalapalli Paramparaa Trust), Bangalore.

2013: Vidyapeetha Guruvara by Guru H. S. Krishnamurthy Memorial Trust, Shree Kamakshi Sharada Veena Mandira(R), Tumkur.

2014: Kalajyothi from Nadajyothi Sri Thyagarajaswamy Bhajan Sabha(R), Bangalore.

2014: Sangeetha Kalaravinda by Sangeetha Krupa Kuteera, Bangalore.

2016: Laya Gnana Nidhi by Nadahamsa Academy of Music(R), Bangalore.

2017: Lalitha Kala Suma by Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira(R), Bangalore.

2018: Kalabhooshana by Thyagaraja Gana Sabha (R), Bangalore.

2018: Sambrama Puraskar by Sangeetha Sambrama, Bangalore.

2019: Nadalaya Visharada by PGL Samskarana Vedike, Mysore.

2019: Nadalaya Acharya by Nadamaya Sangeetha Prathishtaana, Bangalore.

HSS: Is there anything you would like to share for the benefit of the future generations?

MVR: I have always felt that the very foundation of Karnataka Music is to offer it to the almighty. Any sadhana that is done with this intention is bound to be blessed. This is what I would like to tell the younger generations.

HSS: Do you have any instance you have felt has been extremely content and fulfilled?

MVR: Gayana Samaja would identify young and upcoming artists and give away awards on prestigious occasions to encourage and inspire them. As a youngster, it was a very memorable moment for me when I received "The Best Mridangist Award" in one such functions. Having begun my journey by playing for Harikathas and Bhajans, I never thought I would be recognised as a Karnataka classical Artist. So, this was a very memorable moment for me.

HSS: What is the difference between teaching in Institutions and teaching at home. How do you adapt and make changes and what kind of changes do you make?

MVR: In schools we have limited time frame to teach as the duration of the classes is limited to 1 hour, classes are held only on certain days, sometimes due to vacations there are long holidays etc. Within this limited time frame we must cover the portions in the syllabus and bring the child to a certain standard. Since this time frame is not sufficient to achieve that, I focus more on creating interest and curiosity about the subject and make them see the beau-

ty of the art-form and how they can develop it further when they want to. When we take Private classes, since there is no limitation of time, we can teach at the pace the student is comfortable to learn and along with this if the child belongs to a musical family then it's all the more a benefit.

HSS: What are your suggestions to improve Music Teaching in schools?

MVR: All schools should most definitely include Music as a subject. Classical Music should be played and the environment to understand and appreciate it should be created. This will make at least some students develop a keen interest in music and realise the value of the art-form and may even inspire them to become musicians themselves.

HSS: Is there any advice you would like to give musicians who are opting for music as a Career?

MVR: These days avenues for musicians are many. There are opportunities in the field of Dance also. I only advise them to be involved and dedicated.

HSS: What do you feel about maintenance of Mridangam and the price at which they are sold. How has it changed over the years?

MVR: There is huge difference with respect to the Price of the Mridangam. The first one I ever bought for practise was 35 Rupees in those days. Palghat Mridangam which was brand at that time costed 65 Rupees. Today if you were to buy a mridangam of that quality it will cost you not less than 20,000/- Even a practise Mridangam will not cost you less than 10,000/-. So you see how steep the difference is? Since the maintenance of the Mridangam is also a skilled art-form and cannot be done on our own, we need to shell out a significant amount to the repairers (well deserving) to maintain them well.

HSS: Who were the musicians that you remember having accompanied from your younger days?

MVR: Chintalapalli Krishnamurthy, ML Vasanthakumari, Maharajapuram Santanam, S Shankar, Honnappa Bhagavathar, Pallavi Chandrappa, Dr.

K Varadarangan, NL Cheluvvaraju, Bellur Sisters, Suparna and Mythili, Bhagyalakshmi Ramanna, TS Rama, NS Raman, Saralaya Sisters, Hyderabad Sisters, S Ashok and MB Hariharan, Nookala Chinnasatyanaratana, Trichur Ramachandran, R K Srinivasa Murthy, HS Krishnamurthy, S Venkateshiah, EP Alamelu, Indira Devi, HS Shivaramayya, RK Suryanarayana, GN Subramanyam, Basavanagudi G Nataraj, GV Neela and GV Ranganayakamma, SV Ananth, HV Krishnamurthy, MS Srinivasa Murthy, MR Doreswamy, KC Ashwatnarayan, SA Shashidhar are some musicians I remember.

HSS: What are your hobbies Sir.

MVR: In my younger days I liked to watch movies with my friends.

HSS: It is amazing how you are so tech savvy in your age and have adapted yourself to taking lessons online owing to the lockdown and the Covid situation. I am curious to know how you learnt to use these various online media like Skype, Google meet etc to teach.

MVR: Pre- Covid days apart from using a phone I didn't know how to use devices. Our school started online classes and it was mandatory to use a Lap-Top to be able to see more students in one window. My older son got me a Lap-Top and my grand daughter taught me how to use each of the applications. I learnt it one by one and some times if I still have some doubts, I ask my students or friends and get them clarified.

HSS: Thank you so much for giving me an opportunity to sit with you and talk to you about your life and music Sir. As a student, it is a an experience of a lifetime for me.

Suswaralaya College of Music, Annual Music Festival

MB Hariharan, Bangalore

Suswaralaya College Of Music, Bangalore headed by Ganakalashree Vid HS Sudhindra celebrated its 22nd anniversary with a grand music festival organised at Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira from December 24th to 26th.

Karnataka Kalashree Vid M Vasudeva Rao inaugurated the festival and distributed prizes to the college students for their achievements (Scholarships/AIR Gradation) in the last one year & "Suswaralaya.org" Website was launched on this occasion by him. "Swaralayarathna", an award instituted in memory of Smt Bangalore Nagarathnamma, was conferred on Vid Dr Shreekantham Nagendra Sastry by Karnataka Kalashree Dr TS Sathyavathi. Kalaimamani Vid Srimushnam V Raja Rao conferred the title of "Swaralayashruna" on renowned Vocal artiste Vid Tirumale Srinivas. Sri GV Krishnaprasad, Honorary Secretary, Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira was felicitated by Vid M Vasudeva Rao and Vid Srimushnam V Raja Rao on the occasion of his 80th birthday.

The inaugural function was followed by a scholarly vocal recital by Swaralayarathna Dr Shreekantham Nagendra Sastry that was filled with several interesting and rare compositions like *Varalandu* (Gurjari), *ParamaPurusham* (Lalitha Panchamam), *Karuninchi Kaavavemira Srirama* (Kedaragowla), *Sompaina Manasutho* (Ahiri) and *Karedarebarabaarade* (Kamach). RagamTanam-Pallavi in Raga Bhairavi and Kanda Triputa Thala (4 Kalai) was majestic. Lyrics of Pallavi being "Velavane Kolaahalane Unadhu Paadham Tunaiye! Oraarumugane Aarumugane!" The Concert concluded with a Mangala (Vasantha) of Mysore Sadashiva Rao. The concert was elevated by excellent and lilting support by Vid H M Smitha (Violin) along with seasoned percussion duo Vid

BC Manjunath (Mridanga) and Vid ASN Swamy (Khanjira) who also played an enjoyable thaniavarthana for Kanda Triputa Tala.

Day 2 commenced with laya vinyasa (Adi tala – TisraNadai) by Suswaralaya students Chi K M Likhith, Chi RS Pranav, Sri D Vijayanand, Chi SrikaraShivakumar, Chi Sarvajith B S, Chi Adithya Prahlad, Chi Tejas Srivaths Manmohan who used a metronome for keeping time.

Vid Ashwini Satish presented an interesting lecdem that covered rare compositions of well-known haridasas and also some compositions of lesser known haridasas. She sang *Kavudemmanu* (Arabhi - Vadirajaru), *Duritha Gaja Panchanana* (Malahari - SripadaRajaru), *Ninna Maganene Gopi* (Bilahari - Vyasaraajaru), *Bandeveiyya-Govinda Setty* (Kanaka Dasaru), *Sheshashayana* (Saveri - Kanaka Dasaru), *Rama Ramenniro* (SuddhaDhanyasi - PurandaraDasaru), *Uma Kathyayani Gowri* (Thodi - Vijaya Dasaru), *Sharanu Sri Raghavendrager* (Malayamarutha - Jagannatha Dasaru), *Sharanara Surabhoja* (Behag – KamaleshaVittala), *Palayamam Kollapuravaasani* (Poorvikalyani - KamaleshaVittalaru), *Anandavayithu* (Hindola - Mahipati), *Tunge Mangala Tarange* (Sindhubhairavi - Amba Bayi), *Palisenna-Gopalakrishna* (Vasanta - Jagannatha Dasaru), *Nigama Vedyale Ninna* (Surutti - HarapanahalliBheemavva) etc. Composition of Gopala Dasaru in Mohana (*Tada Madabedavo Henalla, Bariyya Ba Ba Priya*) received special appreciation. Kudos to Ashwini for the wonderful and impactful presentation.

The next segment was a very interesting lecdem by Ganakalashree Vid HK Venkataram on "Violin as a versatile Solo and accompanying instrument in Carnatic Music". He started with a brief evolution of Violin and then went on to

elaborate the unique contributions and experiments done by several past masters like Tirukodikaval Krishnaiyer, Malaikottai Govindaswamy Pillai, Semmangudi Narayana Swamy Iyer, Mysore T Chowdiah, Dwaram-Venkataswamy Naidu, Parur Sundaram Iyer, Kumbakonam Rajamanickam Pillai, Lalgudi Gopala Iyer etc. He also demonstrated salient features of 4 violin baanis - Sriyuts TN Krishnan, Lalgudi Jayaraman, MS Gopalakrishnan and M Chandrasekaran. He also covered the nuances of accompanying on the violin by giving several examples. It was a content-rich demonstration that was enjoyed equally by layman audience as well as musicians and music students. He was accompanied on vocal support by Bangalore Brothers.

The evening program started with a crisp Laya Vinyasa (Mishra Chapu) by Suswaralaya students Sri Shivaram Srikantiah, Sri C Sudheendra, Chi Diganth Bhat, Sri R Vishwanath, Sri Vishnu Raghunathan, Sri G Chandramouli, Sri Ashish Gurjar and Sri B J Santhosh who are all working professionals and pursuing mridangam with passion.

Kum R Varalakshmi and Kum Jyotsna Hebbar presented a melodious Violin-Veena duet concert, with a dual Mridangam accompaniment Sri BJ Srinivas and Sri A Sriram. The Concert started with the lilting Behag Varna (TRS) following by Sri Mahaganapathim Bhajeham (Atana - Jayachamaraja Wodeyar), Shobillu Saptaswara (Jaganmohini - Thyagaraja). They chose Rama Rama Gunaseema (Simhendramadyama) for elaboration followed by a fantastic thaniavarthana by Srinivas and Sriram with Jyotsna accompanying on Konnakol.

Vid AS Murali began his concert with Brochevarevare (Sriranjini) followed by a lilting Needu Moorthini (Natakuranji - Pallavi Gopala Iyer). Next he sang Kangalidyathako (Thodi) of Sripadarajaru with Raga, Neraval, and Swaras. Then came the renditions of Maa Ramanan (Hindola - Papanasam Sivan), Lokavana Chatura (Begade - Thyagaraja), Maamava Raghuvēera (Mahuri - Dikshithar), Saraswathi Namosthutte (Saraswathi - GNB). Detailed elaboration of

Sankarabharana was followed by Enduku Peddala of Saint Thyagaraja with swara Kalpana. The concert was enhanced by the wonderful accompaniment of Vid Balu Raghuraman (Violin), Vid Srimushnam V Raja Rao (Mridanga) and Vid Madipakkam Murali (Ghata). The grand thaniavarthana received thunderous response from the audience. The Concert concluded with a tillana in Hamsanandi composed by Vid Srimushnam V Raja Rao. AS Murali was very well supported by Kum. Aditi Prahlad.

Day 3: The Morning session began with Laya vinyasa in Tala Rathnangi (melakartha tala) by Vid Phanindra Bhaskara and Vid Rakshith Sharma supported by Vid Krithik Koushik (Violin) and Vid S Ashok on Thala. They presented a Pallavi in Raga Kambodhi followed by Thani Avarthana in this intricate tala. I avartha of this tala comprises of I Guru, I Anudhrutha, I Laghu, I Dhrutheshekarā Viraama, I Laghu.

Vid Ranjani Venkatesh presented an insightful lecture demonstration on "The Role of Mridanga in concerts". She played several audio clips as examples to explain various facets of Mridanga accompaniment in concerts. Ranjani also effectively demonstrated the different styles of accompanying for various types of Compositions in concerts and what impact each of the styles creates. Different ways of embellishing the compositions were covered with examples. She was ably supported on the Vocal by Vid Dr She-shaprasad.

Vid Shubha Santhosh presented a scholarly lecture on Compositions by Vainika Composers. Some of the compositions she covered were Swara Sthaana Varna (Sarigadaani - Thodi - Ramaswamy Dikshithar), Needu Moorthini (Natakuranji - Pallavi Gopala Iyer), Intha Parakela (Begade - Veena Kuppaiyer), Jathi Swara (Kamach - Veena Seshanna). Some other vainika composers she covered were Veena Venkatagiriya-pa, Veena padmanabhaiah, Veena doraiswamy Iyengar (Salaga bhairavi Tillana), Dr S Ramananthan (Lakshana Varnas in Gopriya), Varadacharya Deva Paripaahi (Poornachandrike). Shubha concluded her session with a tillana of Prof R Vishweshwaraiah in Raga Miya KI Malhar.

Ranjani and Shubha's presentations were well received by the audience present in large numbers.

The evening session started with an amazing jugalbandhi concert by Kum.Mahathi S (Violin) and Kum. Shreeraksha Shanbhog accompanied by Chi.R Sudhanva (Mridanga) and Chi. Pradyumna Udayaraj (Tabla). First, Mahathi played *Paridana Micchithe* (Bilahari - Patnam Subramanya Iyer) while Shreeraksha played a composition in Raag Thodi in Dhruth Teen thaal. Then they presented a composition together set to Sankarabharana (Raag Bilaval) and Adi Tala followed by percussion solos by Sudhanva and Pradyumna. They concluded with *Vaishnava Janatho*. This concert was an instant hit among the audience and the children received a standing ovation for their performance. These Children were all aged with in 14 years.

The concluding concert of the festival was a grand Vocal recital by Swaralayashruna Awardee Sri Tirumale Srinivas. With excellent support by Vid Nalina Mohan (Violin), Vid Dattatreya Sharma (Mridanga) and Vid B Rajashekar (Morsing), Vid Tirumale Srinivas presented a

memorable concert that included well known varna *Sarasijanabha* (Kambodhi-Atta) followed by *Chintaya Sada Vaarana Vadanam* (Sindhuramakriya - Jayachamaraja Wodeyar), *Sooryamurthe* (Sourashtra), *Neevada Ne Gaana* (Saranga) (With alapana and swaras), *Evarikai* (Devamanohari). After a detailed exposition of Raga Shanmugapriya, Mysore Vasudeva Charya's Kriti *Manamutho* (Abhi) was presented followed by an energetic thaniavarthanam. The concert concluded with *Gopa Gopanendu Kokila* - Rare Devaranama - Purandara Dasaru. Violin accompaniment provided soothing support throughout the concert. Percussion duo's energetic accompaniment and thunderous thanianarvathanam lifted the concert to greater heights.

All Laya vinyasas were well structured to be crisp and effective and had very good coordination between the students. Each of the lecture demonstrations had unique features that gave very good material for learning to all music students. Concerts on all days were both educative and entertaining. Presence of many musicians and good connoisseurs in large numbers added a lot of energy and made the music festival a memorable one.

GV Neela along with GV Krishnaprasad receiving M Balamuralikrishna at SRLKM when he was awarded with Sangeetha Vedantha Dhureena in Feb 2008





Lalitha Kala Suma - 2018

Lalitha Kala Suma Presentation Function on 09 November 2018

50 artistes representing Vocal, Violin, Veena, Flute, Mridangam, Morsing, Khanjira, Ghata, Nagaswara, Dollu, Tambura, Mridanga Manufacturers were felicitated



Lalitha Kala Suma - 2019

SRLKM presented the 'Lalitha Kala Suma' awards to 62 music organisation across Karnataka for their distinguished service to music

Lalitha Kala Suma Presentation Function on 03 March 2019 for Music Institutions

60 music and cultural institutions were felicitated