

**Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira (R)**

(Distinguished Service to Carnatic Music since 1955)

# **Lalitha Kala Tarangini**

Quarterly Music Magazine

Volume 2017, Issue 2

June 2017



GV Neela, Chief  
Founder, SRLKM  
(1935-2017)

## Vishaka Hari Honoured

The title “Sangeetha Vedantha Dhureena” was presented to Harikatha Choodamani Vishaka Hari in the divine presence of “H H Sri Sri Yadugiri Yathiraja Narayana Ramanuja Jeeyar” on 29th April, 2017.

The title carries a purse of Rs. One Lakh, a silver medal and a citation. This award is instituted in memory of the founder Shri. G Vedantha Iyengar who started the institution 62 years ago.



***Vishaka Hari receiving the ‘Sangeetha Vedantha Dhureena award’***

*L to R - Hon. Secretary GV Krishnaprasad, Vishaka Hari, Swamiji, Sri. HR Yathiraj, Vice President Dr.Yogananda M.R, President Sri. DR Srikantaiah*

1.4.2017

### Message

We are happy that Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira (R) is bringing out a Special Issue of the Magazine "Lalitha Kala Tarangini" on completing three years of its useful existence.

Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira, Bengaluru, has been doing yeoman service in the field of Karnatak and Hindustani music for more than six decades. It has carved itself a *niche* in the art circles of the Garden City. It has been hosting Annual Music Conferences where artistes of high calibre render their melodious presentations. As part of informing the people at large about the activities going on in the Kalamandira, "Lalitha Kala Tarangini" Quarterly is being brought out during the last three years. The issues of the magazine are impressive by their content and presentation. It is difficult to bring out magazines — that too exclusively meant for music and culture — these days. One should appreciate the commitment of the people behind this exercise, in producing the same at regular intervals.

We wish the new issue of "Lalitha Kala Tarangini" meant to commemorate its third year will have scholarly articles and will be a useful piece of compendium for musicians and music lovers.

Shubham Bhooyath.

**Jagadguru Sri Shivarathri Deshikendra Mahaswamiji**

## June 2017

With a heavy heart I have to announce the sad demise of Vid. GV Neela, Chief Founder, SRLKM. She reached the heavenly abode on Saturday, 3rd June 2017. She was 81.

She was one of the pillars of Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira and toiled hard to develop the institution to what it is today. She, along with her sisters and brother realised Shri. Vedanta lyengar's vision to propagate and popularise Karnatak music. Shri. Vedanta lyengar who was an educationalist and recipient of Public Service Medal from the then Maharaja of Mysore, Jayachamaraja Wadiyar, will be very pleased with the way Vid. GV Neela has contributed to the progress of the institution.

The focus and dedication of Vid. GV Neela is seen to be believed. She taught music to hundreds of students till her last. Life meant only music to her. Her contribution to Karnataka and music in specific will be a monumental effort and will be unparalleled. Team SRLKM will really miss her. We pray God to rest her soul in peace.

While we dedicate this edition to our founder Vid. GV Neela, we have covered some of the Jambavan's of music in this edition.

S Ramanathan has been called a rare phenomenon in our music by many. He was synonymous with classism and even today's practitioners refer to him to achieve technical perfection. He was a composer, vaggeyakara and a performer par excellence. His Lec-demo sessions became extremely popular even with layman and drew large gathering. An excellent article on Saintly S Ramanathan is a must read.

Radha and Jayalakshmi form a versatile link in the chain of GNB Parampara. They set a new style with their briga-

laden music and they were compared with the male duo Alathur Brothers. Excellent article on them makes an interesting reading.

We have covered three generations of music from the stable of senior vidwan Shri. HV Krishnamurthy. This article is sure to bring nostalgic memories of a bygone era of music in Bangalore to many old timers.

MS Sheela epitomises how well a sincere disciple can inherit a great tradition and parampara of a versatile Guru. The current day practitioners will benefit by reading and understanding her rigorous tenure with Vid. RK Shrikantan.

KSFA, a consortium of ten music Sabhas of Bangalore pulled off one of the outstanding Carnatic Music event 'Purandara Darshana'. A three day festival in memory of the Sangita Pitamaha that included over 400 artistes performing for 3 days and with over a thousand people attending on each day. It may not be an understatement to say that an event of this kind on Purandaradasa was never conducted to this scale. KSFA plans to continue the festival year after year from now on.

Anand S

Contributors - Sachi R Sachidananda, C Ramakrishnan, Rajashree Yogananda, CP Chikkanna, Sangeetha Kala Acharya Neela Ramgopal, Ashwin Anand, Prof.V Aravinda Hebbar, Shubha Srikanth, Sindhu Gopinath, Anita Mahabaleshwara, Uma Ramamurthy, Anagha Yoganand.

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Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira (SRLKM) founded by Shri. G Vedanta lyengar 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 Sankaranti 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 Karnatak Classical Music. SRLKM is a Trustee of Karnataka Fine Arts Council (Regd.) which is a consortium of 10 sabhas in Bangalore.

"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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### Magazine Committee

Editor - Anand S

Senior Associates: Neela Ramgopal, KS Kalidas, Dr. Mysore M Manjunath, Rajashree Yogananda, Deepa Ganesh and Sudha Prakash.

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## Lalitha Kala Tarangini - Inbox

To the Editor,

Sir,

I am very pleased that you have brought out a special issue of 'Lalitha Kala Tarangini' on Karnataka's pride Vidushi T Rukmini. I went back several decades relishing my association with her during our festivals in Mysore. She has performed for over 25 years at 8th Cross, Ganesha festival for SPVGMC Trust and it was always a pleasure having her in Mysore.

Lalgudi bhani freely flowed from her violin and she was a delight for a main artiste to accompany. Being a disciple of Vidwan RR Keshavamurthy and later Lalgudi, she accompanied who is who in music in those years. Having spent my years with Mali very closely, I must say her accompaniment for Mali was extraordinary. She accompanied several doyens of music like Mali, DKP, DKJ, TRS Chembai, Nayathankara Vasudevan, Rajkumar Bharati, U Srinivas, Namagiripetai Krishnan etc. in our festivals. Her solo concerts with Vidwan Guruvayur Dorai is still etched in my memory.

Once there was trouble in the state and Bangalore-Mysore highway was blocked but she managed to reach Mysore with great difficulty for our silver jubilee festival. This just shows the commitment she had for this great art. It was unfortunate that she lost her mother during one of our festival and we had to make arrangements to drop her off to Bangalore.

It is a pity that Govt. of Karnataka and Govt. of India have not recognised her to the extent that she contributed to our music. It is a great injustice but I hope she will get her due soon.

I wish her and her family good health.

CR Himamshu  
Secretary, SPVGMCTrust  
8th Cross,V.V.Mohalla, Mysore-570 002

To the Editor,

Sir,

I thoroughly enjoyed reading LKT, March 17 issue which contains contributions from Eminent people in the field of Carnatic Music. Considerable amount of home work has been done in compiling minutest details of the Artists Covered in the issue.

Yes, we have been listening to great artists of last three generations, as we ourselves were young lads accompanying our parents for concerts those day. To read them in your issue is undoubtedly a very pleasant task.

While every article is excellent in their presentation and content, I am overwhelmed by articles on Smt.T Rukmini, which is extraordinarily good, having been attending her concerts as young boy in Bangalore and later in Bombay, she did extremely well accompanying eminent vocalists and she was too good playing for Mali right from early days. It was a pleasure meeting her few years back when she was honoured in Bangalore and Chennai.

Sir our generation is extremely lucky in listening to good Music in all three cities namely Bangalore, Chennai and Mumbai not to leave behind Calcutta from great Maestros. What is great is we have a quarterly Magazine like Lalitha Kala Tarangini coming out regularly with excellent content and professional quality presentation.

I congratulate your Editorial team for many such issues. I laud the positive untiring efforts of Sri GV Krishna Prasad, rain or shine he is there on time to make great success of everything he takes up.

Sir I also enjoyed reading other Articles as well, especially on Mysore Sri.Mahadevappa and we are proud of him.

Wishing all the best.  
C.K.Srinivasan, Mumbai



## Our Upcoming Programmes

**06 August, Sunday, 5.30 pm, SRLKM auditorium**

Music concert by Sriranjani Santhanagopalan (Vocal), Vittal Rangan (Violin), Vijay Natesan (Mridangam), Omkar Rao (Ghata)

**23 August, Wednesday, 4.30 pm, The Bangalore Gayana Samaja auditorium**

Anagha Yoganand vocal concert followed by "Lalitha Kala Suma" award presentation to 68 artistes from Bangalore in presence of His Holiness Sri Sri Yadugiri Yathiraja Narayana Ramanuja Jeeyar. The honours will be presented by Shri NS Krishna Murthy, Former Station Director of All India Radio, Bangalore.

**03 September, Sunday, 05.30 pm, SRLKM auditorium**

Music concert by Aditya Narayanan (Vocal), BK Raghu (Violin), Akshay Anand (Mridangam)

**08 October, Sunday, 05.30 pm, SRLKM auditorium**

Music concert by Brinda Manickavasagam (Vocal), Vittal Rangan (Violin), Trichy A Aravind (Mridangam)

**11 November, Saturday, 05.30 pm, SRLKM auditorium**

Music concert by Aishwarya Vidya Raghunathan (Vocal), Nalina Mohan (Violin), Anoor Ananthakrishna Sharma (Mridangam), Sukanya Ramgopal (Ghata)

**03 December, Saturday, 05.30 pm, SRLKM auditorium**

Music concert by Bellary Raghavendra (Vocal), Mathur Sreenidhi (Violin), Tumkur B Ravishankar (Mridangam), Sharat Kaushik (Ghatam)

Watch out for our Sankranti (31 Dec to 07 Jan) and Spring Festival (4 Feb to 11 Feb) programmes in the forthcoming edition.

# **The Madras Music Academy Awards**

Executive committee of the Madras Music Academy has unanimously selected Chitraveena maestro N Ravikiran for the title of “Sangita Kalanidhi”. He will be presiding over the 90<sup>th</sup> annual conference of the Music Academy in December 2017. He will be conferred the title “Sangita Kalanidhi” at the sadas on 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 2017.



The Executive committee of the Madras Music Academy will also be conferring the following awards during the Sadas.

## **“Sangitha Kala Acharya Award”**

V Kamalakar Rao (Mridangist)

Radha Namboodiri (Vocal)

## **“TTK Award”**

Sukanya Ramgopal (Ghatam)

Othuvaram Muthu Kandasamy Desikar

## **Musicologist Award**

TS Sathyavathi

## **“Papa Venkataramiah Award” for violin**

Thirvallur Parthasarathy

## **“Natya Kala Acharya Award”**

Lakshmi Viswanathan

*Team SRLKM Congratulates N Ravikiran and all the artistes selected for the awards. We believe the selection of N Ravikiran is an outstanding decision by the Academy and it is richly deserved by Ravikiranji*



# Vid. MS Sheela - Exceptional music from a honeyed voice

*Sachi R Sachidananda*

This June morning, the air is fresh and cool from overnight showers. Cuckoos are singing, and our garden is blooming with Jasmine and Parijata. I start listening to a recording of Sringeri Sarada Suprabhata. It has been rendered in a robust, clear, and melodious female voice, set to wonderful Carnatic ragas. The words are resplendent in adoration; the musician is intoning the words with beauty and reverence. I am transported.

The singer is Sangeetha Kala Rathna, Ganakalashree Vid. MS Sheela, who is well recognised as one of the front-ranking vocalists in Carnatic music for several years now. Vid. Sheela is a TOP rank artiste of AIR and Door-darshan. She is the first female artiste to get TOP Rank in Carnatic music from Karnataka. She is also a TOP Rank artiste in Light music. It is very rare to find an artiste holding proficiency in both forms of music. Based in Bangalore, she continues to perform in all major festivals across India, and in many other countries. Vid.

Sheela is also a composer, teacher, organiser and Executive Director of Hamsadhwani Creations.

I am privileged to interview Vid. Sheela for Lalitha Kala Tarangini. As I start doing my ground work, I am struck by a consistent pattern of opinion among audiences and critics about her music. Reputed critics shower unstinting praise for her melody, mastery, and measured delivery. Let me illustrate with a few examples:

“She has a fluent voice, and exploits it subtly, sensitively, to suggest niceties. She indulges in no fancy filigree work and no gimmicks. Every move is loaded with music.”

“The first thing that strikes you about Bangalore MS Sheela is her honeyed tone. The second is that she uses this exceptional instrument to fine effect in every aspect of her singing, whether it's a raga essay, kriti rendering or, swara singing.” These words were written in a review by the well-known Vidwan Calcutta KS

*With mother Vid. MN Rathna*





Krishnamurthi, after one of her December Season concerts in Chennai, in 1996.

The famous critic with a gifted turn of phrase, Sri. Subbudu, waxed eloquent in his review of her concert in the Madras Season in 1994:

*"MS SHEELA's vocal concert at the Mylapore Fine Arts Club was outstanding. Her music is of the MLV type- daredevil and adventurous. There is no musical phrasings on earth that she cannot negotiate with ease, and what a range, what melody!..."*

Sri. Subbudu's review has been reproduced in its entirety in an accompanying box.

### Early Years and Training

Vid. Sheela's first guru, mentor, and biggest support, was her mother, Late Smt. M N Rathna, an 'A' grade artiste of AIR.

Vid. Sheela remembers that as a young girl she was able to repeat whatever her mother sang. She wanted even to share the stage with her! But the mother used to say, "Not yet. Wait... you need to perfect what you sing". The girl couldn't understand her, but felt happy when

she took the stage in her mother's concerts and started playing the Tambura.

Learning classical arts from one's own mother is less than optimal due to the easy-going closeness that comes from the filial bond. Therefore Vid. Sheela's mother took a major step.

When the girl entered High School during '60s, she approached the legendary musician, Padmabhushan, Sangeetha Kalanidhi Dr. RK Srikantan (of Tyagaraja Parampara). When she requested him to teach Sheela, he expressed surprise. He said there was no need for it as Vid. Rathna herself was an accomplished musician and the girl could very well be taught at home. But she persisted, saying that she wanted her daughter to get a solid, lasting, grounding in classical music, know what excellence is, and do even better than her, and therefore he should kindly accept the student. Srikantan Sir happily agreed.

The initial days were very hard. Srikantan Sir was in his prime; his "school" was a very rigor-

### Subbudu's review in the Indian Express, Madras, Dec. 1994

MS SHEELA's vocal concert at the Mylapore Fine Arts Club was outstanding. Her music is of the MLV type- daredevil and adventurous. There is no musical phrasings on earth that she cannot negotiate with ease, and what a range, what melody! In a jiffy she can run up and down three octaves and a half and return safely to the launching pad.

Every one of her alapana or kriti was marked by highest professionalism. Her handling of Shankarabharanam swept the audience off their feet. I am certain even a nadaswaram vidwan cannot reproduce some of her bravura passages. And those triple note phrasings. Oh God! Sheela, are you a computer? It is just enough to say that it was of the superlative variety.

Dikshitar's composition "Akshaya linga vibho" was sung with great aplomb bringing out the structural beauty of the composition.

Ritigowla is one of the rare and unique ragas of the South with no counterparts in any system of music in the world. It has to be very carefully rendered as even the slightest slip in reaching the nishaadam straight from madhyamam would land the musician in Sriranjani. It has also a typical south Indian flavour which no alien musician can muster or master.

Sheela gave a most scintillating delineation of the raga in the alapana.

The kriti "Matangi" was rendered neatly and when it came to swaraprasthara - well, you have guessed right - she was the master of all she surveyed.

Sheela was ably assisted by Durai Swaminathan on the violin and Murugabhupathy on the mridangam and Adambakkam Shanker on the ghatam.

ous one known for open throated singing. His voice was robust, his temper fiery, and he wanted absolute perfection always.

Sheela was daunted, but mother comforted her, saying, “First you listen very attentively, and gather precisely whatever he says and wants. Don’t engage in any other banter, stick to music and music alone. Your only goal is to learn the lesson precisely and render it back to his total satisfaction. If you face difficulties, or have questions, bring them home to me. I will sort it out. I have put you in a great gurukula, don’t worry.”

Many factors helped. Vid. Sheela’s house in Kumara Park was only ten minutes walk away from Srikantan Sir’s residence in Seshadripuram. He was at that time very busy with his position at AIR and his concert-related travels. But the girl was an eager student and was always ready for the class and would go at whatever time he would fix, 6:30 or 7:30 in the mornings. Sometimes the classes had to be put off due to unexpected engagements. But he always took one-to-one classes and focussed totally on the teaching during those sessions.

Vid. Srikantan had a very versatile voice, and could sing in any pitch, even the girl’s high pitch-G Sharp. He would insist that whatever was

taught was to be learnt and presented perfectly in the next class. Otherwise, she would face his wrath, something fierce. No student today would be able to deal with it.

Just a few years ago, Vid. Sheela reminded him about his bouts of anger and how tough it used to be on her as a youngster. He brushed it off smilingly, saying, “yes, my anger, scolding, lesson, insights, all of that you were able to absorb. That is why it has worked out so well. It isn’t everybody’s cup of tea”.

At the same time, if the girl rendered the lesson well, she would be rewarded with a smiling nod from Sir. It was also a blessing that her mother would help her revise the lesson, and overcome any difficulty.

Vid. Srikantan’s focus had to be matched by the learner’s unwavering attention. Nothing would be glossed over. His expression used to be perfect and clear in his notation. It used to capture precisely the sangathi and nuance he wanted.

Vid. Sheela recalls how their sessions were always about music, nothing else. He would give insights into the raga lakshana captured by the composer, the musical subtleties, and how to deliver the song.

*With her guru Vid. RK Srikantan*





Listening to other masters and absorbing their high points was also a part of young Sheela's learning process. She used to attend concerts with her mother. Understanding the musicians' ideas and presentation styles would not mean copying, ever. Vid. Sheela says, "My music had to be my own. Of course if you could discern in my music Srikantan Sir's style, that's but natural, as I belong to his Parampara!"

Vid. Sheela used regularly visit Vid. Srikantan, until his passing a couple of years ago. This continued long after she returned in 1989 from her stay in Abu Dhabi, well into the period when he was in his nineties. Vid. Sheela fondly recalls those sessions to have been very rewarding, as they covered many topics in music. Vid. Sheela emphasises that there is never an end to one's learning, and that her guru was such a storehouse of insights and experiences.

Vid. Sheela gives a 3-word mantra: "Kalike, Kelme, and Abhayasa." Kalike means good learning from a solid paathaantara. Kelme is active listening to the masters, to understand their ideas and manodharmas. One can vastly benefit from this. Abhyasa is rigorous, dedicated, and focussed practice, with clearly defined goals.

Quoting her guru, she says, "The krithi presentation has to go like a royal chariot. The song has to unfold step-by-step, bringing out the musical beauty of the raga and the composer's grand conception. That firm foundation naturally leads to proper niraval elaboration, and kalpana

swaras. Kala pramana should also flow naturally, from the song structure and one's ability. Speed cannot be an end in itself."

It is pertinent to mention how Vid. Sheela embodies all these values. Reviewing one of her concerts at the Madras Music Academy, a well-known critic stated: A general character of propriety pervaded the vocal concert of MS Sheela. Whatever one might look for in a concert performance- value in melody, richness of manodharma, aptness of selections – were there. He went on to say how her Begada rendition shone in 3 octaves and the kriti that followed, a rare one of Swathi Thirunal, 'Vande Deva Deva, tava padambhoja yugalam' was presented in perfect articulation. He also noted that Dikshitar's Bowli kriti 'Sri Parvati Parameshwaram' was rendered with all the solemnity it merited.

Vid. Sheela herself is an accomplished tunesmith and her many popular albums are ample testimony.

### All India Radio

Vid. Sheela has had a rich and long association with All India Radio. For many decades, AIR was the first and foremost medium of exposure for any talented artiste to make her mark. She first acted as a child artiste in the radio plays such as Krishna Lila, Nachiketa, and Bekkina Kannu. After radio plays, she soon started singing on AIR. Winning AIR competitions gave her a direct entry. Akashvani (AIR) always gave Vid. Sheela many opportunities, not discriminating against

her young age. She sang in musical features, performed along with stalwarts, gave National Programmes, and sang in Geethaaradhana, Suprabhata, Vachana, Dasasahitya, Sugama Sangeetha, and Sangeetha Rupaka- so many different kinds of programmes.

There were also prestigious concerts before invited audiences, around Yugadi and Independence Day. Vid. Sheela has performed in several of them. Also, Vid. Sheela has rendered yeoman service by singing, for the AIR archives, Veene Seshanna compositions, Mysore Sadashiva Rao compositions, and a few of Muthiah Bhagavata's Sri Chamundeshwari Ashtottara krithis and Shivasthottara krithis.

Sri Muthiah Bhagavata was in the court of Nalvadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar, the Mysore King, in early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The king asked him to take up and compose 108 kritis on Goddess Chamundeshwari, following the archana ashtotarashata namavali.

All these special programmes had participation from several artistes and came out very well. Vid. Geetha Ramanand was in-charge and produced them.

Similarly, Vid. S Krishnamurthy commissioned Vid. Sheela and Vid. RA Ramamani to render a few compositions of Sri Jayachamaraja Wodeyar, from Sri Vidya Darpana. Vid. Sheela has also rendered many works of Sri. Pu Ti Na, in operas such as Megha Sandesha, Kisa Gothami.

### **Performing Career**

Vid. Sheela's very first concert was when she was nine-years old, at the Balepete Laldas Devasthanam, in the Thyagaraja Aradhane conducted by Vid. Arunachalappa. Her slot came late in the night. There was a good response, and soon, many concerts started coming her way.

Vid. Sheela performed in Chennai for the first time in mid-70s. She remembers one concert for a well-known Sabha (it was also called the 50-50 Club) where Sri. SY Krishnaswami, ICS, was seated right in the front. Since she was relatively unknown to Chennai rasikas, many in the audience had drifted to the Bajji/Coffee stall outside the hall. But soon after she began

singing, Sri SYK went outside, and pulled the straggling rasikas inside, saying, "hey, come inside, listen to this young talent from Bangalore who sings so well."

That concert made an impression on everyone. Next day, Sri. SYK hosted lunch for Vid. Sheela and her team. He asked her to record under his direction for HMV the Lalitha Sahasranama and Sringeri Sarada Suprabhata. (That is the one I listened to this morning, and referred to in the beginning!)

The LP of Vid. Sheela's rendition of the Lalitha Sahasranama, in combination with Shyamala Dandakam sung by the legendary Vid. DK Pattammal, was released under the HMV/Saregama label. It became hugely successful. Even today the recordings are available for purchase. Vid. Sheela says that she found this experience very fulfilling.

She remembers one concert in Calcutta, when the Sringeri Jagadguru HH Abhinava Vidyatirtha Swamiji was visiting during Ramanavami. She had been featured in the concert series. She went to the Swamiji to seek his blessings before the concert. He asked her to render a Raga-Tana-Pallavi in Shankarabharanam. The concert went off very well. The Jagadguru was very knowledgeable about music and appreciated her performance. Vid. Sheela remembers with great emotion that she was privileged to get his kind appreciation and blessings.

Vid. Sheela's concerts all these years have been noted by all for a high consistency of success. Characteristically, Vid. Sheela says, "I attribute it to God's grace and teamwork. Of course, I do not expect that every concert of mine should receive only generous praise. I read every review and take feedback as an opportunity for improvement and development. In fact every artiste will make mentally his/her own review after every concert."

There is an interesting tribute, penned in his characteristic flowery style, by the legendary playback singer Sri. PB Sreenivos when he attended Vid. Sheela's performance in 2000, at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Chennai, during the De-





*With Vid. M Chandrasekaran and V Murali, President, The Music Academy, Chennai*

ember Season. He recalled their duets sung in the mythological film, “Subhadra Kalyana”. He describes Vid. Sheela, in that tribute, as a honey-voiced songstress and says how every listener is easily enthralled by her enchanting and authentic rendering, and how connoisseurs sit glued to their seats and listen to her soulful music with rapt attention.

Vid. Sheela has been visiting the USA for concert tours almost every year since mid ‘90s. She remembers with some amusement her 1996 concert at CMANA, a New Jersey-based organisation. The CMANA functionaries showed some concern when they heard that she was from Bangalore, not Chennai. But the same people showed a sense of relief when she added that her Guru was Vid. RK Srikantan! After the concert, they emailed their very happy reaction to the concert, along with a copy of the concert recording, to her husband.

The concert tour extended to Nada Tarangini based in Washington. And then Bhairavi, Cleveland festival, and so on. There has been no looking back.

Vid. Sheela mentions how Mrs. Usha Char and Mr. Char of Karnataka, settled in Washington, have supported her a lot. She also mentions Dr. Ashok Madhav and her aunt Smt. Venkatalak-

shamma, who have supported her in her US concert tours.

The ticklish topic of being “an artiste from Karnataka” is briefly dealt with. Vid. Sheela states that if any artiste learns music and lives in Karnataka, he or she would have to work 3 times harder and longer and strive a lot more than artistes from outside Karnataka, for the same success and popularity. She feels blessed to have achieved this, and attributes it to her solid musical training, the vast repertoire she has built up in so many genres and languages, and the generous blessing of her gurus.

It was a very happy experience for Vid. Sheela to receive the Best Senior Vocalist award from the Madras Music Academy in 1997. That same year, Vid. RK Srikantan was bestowed the title of Sangeetha Kalanidhi.

I ask Vid. Sheela about her first performance at the Madras Music Academy. She says that her first Academy concert was in mid-70s. She was totally unnerved, seeing Vid. Semmangudi, Vid. Balamurali, and many other senior vidwans and vidushis, including her guru Srikantan Sir.

After many of her concerts, Vid. Srikantan would say, with a smile to Vid. Sheela the next day, “It seems you sang so well yesterday, tell me all about it!” He was happy that his prime disci-



*Receiving the Chowdaiah Award instituted by Academy of Music from Mallikharjuna Kharge*

ple was carrying on his Parampara the right way.

Vid. Sheela moved to Abu Dhabi in 1982, after her marriage. Her husband took up an engineer's job at an Oil company. Her guru was dismayed, and said, "Will you go away, after all this learning and success? I had such expectations..." She replied, with a confidence that I find surprising, that she would surely come back, without any doubt, as these were only temporary life moves. She was determined to return to her music and her roots here.

In fact, when she came back after 7 years, there were anxieties. In those days, there was no Internet, Skype, music uploads and virtual ways of keeping in touch. She was wondering how audiences would receive her after such a long break. But Vid. Sheela was happily welcomed back and her performing career resumed with the same old momentum.

Vid. Sheela's two daughters learnt music, but chose Engineering/MBA courses and are married and happily settled down in Bangalore now. Her husband and family have been a big strength to her; they are all big music lovers. She says she could not be where she is today without their constant encouragement and support. Her children coped during their growing years with her travels, recording sessions, and so many long overseas tours, without complaint.

Vid. Sheela did two summer school teaching assignments in Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, London. She also went to Singapore to adjudge their National Competition. Vid. Sheela has undertaken concert tours to Australia, New Zealand, Middle East, and many other countries.

Quite early in her performing career, Vid. Sheela made an impression on the cognoscenti. In the Sixties, she received all six prizes one year in the Gayana Samaja annual competition. When this subject comes up during the interview, I mention to Vid. Sheela how I had heard that Sri. VT Srinivasan was highly impressed by her initial performances and had predicted a bright future for her.

How did her mother react to that level of success? Was it not true that Vid. Rathna also had a successful performing career when her daughter started performing? Very much so. But then Vid. Rathna made a major decision and took her own career down a notch or two.

I discuss voice culture with Vid. Sheela. She says that voice and voice culture are crucial in Carnatic music. Everyone has to choose their most comfortable pitch, for ease of singing and sustainability. It should not be influenced by anyone else's pitch. If there are kinks in one's voice at the chosen pitch, one has to work assiduously to sort them out.

Vid. Sheela started initially with a very high pitch, and worked hard on her voice and finally settled at G Sharp (5.5). She was comfortable performing in AIR with others, even along with male voices because of her range.

She mentions how a fine voice is only God's gift, but to harness it requires great effort, method, and a disciplined life-style. Vid. Sheela's mother used to make her practise for hours every morning, all the vocal exercises in different speeds and sthayis. Later, Vid. Srikantan trained her to be able to sing any type of song, in any speed, with ease. He repeatedly instructed her to be careful during travels, and that she should not eat anything and everything.

He also used to advise his protégé how to plan the concert, based on the occasion, if it was a thematic concert, or a part of a conference, or a special event. Vid. Sheela assiduously used to ask for feedback from her mother and Guru after every concert. Once she was established, they used to laugh off such questions.

### **Kalavanta**

Vid. Sheela was invited in 2014 to be a judge in the first edition of the music contest named Kalavanta conducted by a consortium of music

sabhas, The Karnataka Fine Arts Council. When she was told that there would be only one Top Prize, combining Vocal and Instrumental, she suggested that there should have been two First Prizes, separately for Vocal and Instrumental, as both have different aspects to be evaluated.

Vid. Sheela recalls that there were many very good performances, and the team of judges went through a very methodical evaluation matrix. There was also the audience poll duly considered for weightage.

Vid. Sheela feels that the Kalavanta idea is good and it has been going on well since 2014. Such a large-scale competition requires cooperation from many quarters and it is a credit to Kalavanta. She also feels that Kalavanta could feature a greater number of deserving youngsters from Karnataka.

Vid. Sheela is happy that there are many talented youngsters coming up, and they are performing in DD Chandana, SVBC, and so on. Nowadays, there are many such avenues for getting exposure. In olden days, one had to depend solely on recording companies. Vid. Sheela's LPs released by HMV of the Lalitha Sahasranama and Sri Sarada Suprabhata have received appre-

*Receiving the Sangeetha Kalan Ratna award at The Bangalore Gayana Samaja*





ciation from a large number of listeners over time and even today ardent followers of music call her acknowledging the same.

Towards the concluding moments of the interview, we again talk about family. She says, “My husband is a staunch devotee of Sri Raghavendra Swamy. I agree very much with his words: We always remember God when we are facing troubles. It is more important that we remember the Lord and express our gratitude when things go well for us.”

When Karnataka Sangeetha Nritya Academy started awarding the Karnataka Ratna award, in the very first year, Vid. Sheela was chosen for the award. The function was in Mysore and Vid. Sheela recalls that it was indeed a blessing that she received the award from Vid. Srikantan’s own gracious hands.

#### **Some Honours and Titles bestowed on Vid. MS Sheela**

Gaanakalashree, GaanaVaaridhi, Sangeetha Sharade, Sumadhura Sangeetha Dhruvatare, Sangeetha Sudha Saraswathi, Guru Gaurava-Kaarini, Sangeetha-Raga Amrithavarshini, Sangeetha Gana kalanidhi, Sangeetha Sahyadri Shikharini, Sangeetha Saraswathi, Sangeetha Vaagdevi, Kalaa Tapasvi, Pranavashri, Kalaabhushana, Gaandharva Vamsha Nidhi, Gaana-Chetana, etc.

#### **Awards and Recognitions**

The Bangalore Gayana Samaja selected Vid. Sheela as President of 47th Music conference and conferred the title “SANGEETHA KALAA RATHNA – 2015”.

Veena Seshanna Memorial Trust honoured Sheela with “Swaramurthy VN Rao National Award”, 2015.

Indiranagar Sabha Bangalore honoured with “Purandhara Prashsthi” a National Award, - 2015.

Academy of Music, Bangalore, Prestigious “Chowdiah National Award”, 2013.

Sri KalaSudha Telugu Association has conferred her the title “Sangeetha Sudha Saraswathi” in 2012. received from the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu.

“ASTHANA VIDUSHI” of Sri Krishna kalakshetra, Isckon, Bangalore in 2011.

“ASTHANA VIDUSHI” of Shankarmutt, Avani Bangalore.

Karnataka State Sangeetha Nrithya Academy (of Karnataka Govt.) has given a Special Honourary award “RAJYA RATHNA” for the year 2008, Received from Chief Minister of Karnataka.

During the Annual Music festival of Karnataka Ganakala Parishat for the year 2000, Sheela has been adjudged as Best Musician of the Conference and has been awarded “ANANYA PURASKAR”, an award instituted by Ananya.

Madras Music Academy, during 1997, adjudged Sheela as an “Outstanding Senior Female Vocalist”,

Karnataka State Film Chambers has given an award to Sheela as, “Best Female Playback Singer” for the year 1997-98. Received from Chief Minister of Karnataka.

Sheela received the title “Ganakalashree” from Karnataka Ganakala Parishat in 1993.

Karnataka state government has honoured Sheela by giving “Rajyotsava Award”, in 1993 Received from Chief Minister of Karnataka.

“ASTHANA VIDUSHI” - Dakshinamnaya Sri Sharda Peetham, Sringeri, “Aryabhata Prashasthi”, “Parimala Prashasthi”, Bangalore Nagarathnamma Prashasthi, Saangeethya Aasthana Award, Pranavashree Award, Rangashree Prashasti.

#### **Hamsadhwani Creations**

Vid. Sheela runs, along with her husband, HAMSADHWANI creations, an organisation actively promoting classical arts. They have released a number of albums and present ‘HAMSADHWANI PURASKAR’ every year to senior artistes.



# Musiri's house - Here flows pristine music quietly

*C Ramakrishnan, Chennai*

Chennai is undoubtedly the Mecca of Carnatic Music and Mylapore is the cradle of Carnatic music in Chennai. The prestigious sabhas of Chennai like The Music Academy, Narada Gana Sabha, Brahma Gana Sabha, Mylapore Fine Arts Club, Ragasudha Hall, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan etc. are all operating in the Mylapore- Alwarpet belt. Amidst the hustle bustle of all these sabhas, the house of Sangeeta Kalanidhi Musiri Subramania Iyer stands unique by providing serene chamber music concerts once in a month by top musicians as well as artistes of promise. Actually the venue where the concert is held is constructed by Mr. Thyagarajan, who is the grand son of the brother of Shri Musiri Subramania Iyer. Musiri did not have children and he considered the entire family protégés as his own and nurtured them with love and care and ensured that they all settled well in life. The

present venue of the concert used to be Musiri Subramania Iyer's car shed and adjoins the house where Musiri lived which is presently occupied by Mr. Thyagarajan's daughter. The house is situated in Oliver Road, in an inside lane- not visible from the main road and the road had been renamed as Musiri Subramania Iyer Road, thanks to the pioneering efforts of Semmangudi Sreenivasa Iyer.

Mr. Thyagarajan is an industrialist and music runs in the family blood. His spouse Mrs Rajeswari Thyagarajan is also deeply involved in music. After Musiri's demise, the family was fully involved in their work and for some time, away from music. The house was constructed by Thyagarajan in 1984. They were close aides of Mr. SV Krishnan of Ragasudha and were part of his chamber concerts. It was their indulgence in

*Sangita Kala Acharya Neela Ramgopal performing with Mysore Srikanth and Dr. Ashok Kalidas performing at Musiri house*





*Youngsters from Bangalore Heramba, Hemantha (Flute duet), Apoorva Krishna (Violin), Akshay Anand (Mridangam) along with Sunil Kumar (Kanjari) performing at Musiri house*

attending the chamber concerts that triggered them to start chamber concerts in the house of Musiri and bring back pristine music in the hallowed premises. The concert is held in the central hall of the house which is of perfect size for holding chamber music. The hall is immaculately maintained with many curios/antiques/lamps tastefully adorning the walls and corners. The old world charm coupled with the intimate setting, makes it an ideal venue to make music and experience it at its highest level. The entire family pitches in to get the home ready for each recital a couple of days before each recital by rearranging the furniture and making ample space for the visitors to sit and savour the music that is offered with sincerity and reverence. About sixty people can squat on the floor and twenty people can sit on the chairs. Many a time the hall is fully occupied and people sit in the adjoining rooms also and enjoy the concert peacefully. Normally the concert starts at 4 P.M. on a Sunday except in summer when it starts at 6.00 P.M. The concert generally extends up to 3 hours. Along with the Thyagarajans, Mr. Chandrasekharan, brother in law and his son Sidharth are coordinating the entire show. The venue has acquired state of art audio system

which is handled by Chandrasekharan and Sidharth and the listening pleasure is doubled when the audio is excellent and is managed by people who know music, which is not always the case in many sabhas.

The chamber concerts commenced from the year 1994. The inaugural concert was given by Raji Gopalakrishnan and S.V. Krishnan provided the necessary guidance to begin with. There was no looking back from there and monthly concerts are held without break. Initially post cards were sent to prominent music lovers about the concerts and now e mail is sent as per the mailing list besides advertisement in the Hindu daily. The venue has seen many out of the world concert experiences. The family can really take pride in organising some of the best concerts in Chennai. In 1994, Semmangudi enthralled the listeners and the next year MS Subbalakshmi gave an unforgettable concert experience with Rama Rama Gunaseema as the main song as her homage to Guru Musiri who taught her this song. Next year it was the turn of DK Pattammal. Other musicians who were featured here are TK Govinda Rao, Bombay Sisters, TN Seshagopalan, TN Krishnan, Mani Krishnaswamy,

Suguna Purushothaman, Suguna Varadachary .... The list is pretty long. The year 1998-99 was Musiri Centenary year which was celebrated with two concerts a month- one by a vidwan/vidushi from the Musiri lineage and the other concert by another senior vidwan. The concert of KV Narayanaswamy in this series is still fresh in the memory of those who were fortunate to listen to that concert. His *Tiruvadi saranam*, *Varugalamo* are unforgettable. It was in this venue that three prominent disciples of Musiri-Mani Krishnaswamy, Suguna Purushothaman and Suguna Varadachary shared the stage for the first time to present their homage to Guru Musiri. The combination received the patronage of music aficionados and soon the trio presented concerts in many sabhas. The ambience of the venue, the warmth of the hosts, do inspire the artistes to include one or two Musiri favourites in their concerts. When Shri Thyagarajan came to know about the music of Vidushi Parassala Ponnammal, he went to the doyen's residence in Trivandrum and invited her for a concert in the Musiri house. Ponnammal gave a three hours astounding performance on a Sunday morning to packed house and it was a feast to those who were fortunate to attend the same. Nagaswaram concerts by Injikudi Subramaniam, Kasim-Babu, Vyasarpadi Kodandaraman etc also were featured in the open terrace of the building. The VV Subramaniam-TV Gopalakrishnan combo concert held recently was a highly acclaimed event. The organisers also give platform to many up and coming musicians. The flute duet concert of young Heramba and Hemantha from Bangalore was an instant hit among the rasikas.

Since the last two years, the concerts are web-cast live for the benefit of overseas rasikas and those who cannot be physically present due to age related constraints and are permanently archived in the you tube.



### SGBS Trust Gokulashtami Programmes

29th Jul, Sat 6 p.m. - Sri P. Unnikrishnan, Sri V.V.Ravi, Sri Arjun Ganesh, Smt. Sukanya Ramgopal

30th Jul, Sun. 5.30 p.m. - Smt. Shanmughapriya & Kum. HariPriya (Priya Sisters), Sri M.A. Krishnaswamy, Sri B. Sivaraman, Sri Purushottam

31st Jul, Mon. 6.00 p.m. - Sri S. Saketharaman, Nagan Sri R. Sriram, Neyveli Sri Narayan, Sri D. Sunaad Anoor

1st Aug, Tue 6.00 p.m. - Sikkil Sri C. Gurucharan, Sri V. Sanjeev, Sri S. Sumesh Narayan, Sri R. Bharadwaj Sathavalli.

2nd Aug, Wed 6.00 p.m. - Kum. Kanyakumari, Dr. Nishanth Chandran, Srimushnam Sri V. Rajarao, Sri U.N. Girdhar Udupa.

3rd Aug, Thu 6.00 p.m. - Kum. Sriranjani Santhanagopalan, Smt. H.M. Smitha, Sri J. Vaidyanatha, Sri H. Sivaramakrishnan.

4th Aug, Fri 6.00 p.m. - Sri T.M. Krishna, Sri Sriram Kumar, Sri K.V. Prasad, Sri Chandrasekhar Sarma

5th Aug, Sat 6.00 p.m. - Sri Bharat Sundar, Sri M.R. Gopinath, Neyveli Sri Skanda Subramanyam, Sri S. Srishyla

6th Aug, Sun 6.00 p.m. - Sri N. Ravikiran (Chitravina), Kum. Akkara Subbalakshmi, Sri Arjun Kumar, Sri Ranganath Chakravarthy

7th Aug, Mon 5.30 p.m. - Sri Sriram Prasad & Sri Ravikumar (Malladi Brothers), Sri B.U. Ganesh Prasad, Mannargudi Sri A. Eashwaran, Sri G. Guruprasanna.

8th Aug, Tue 5.30 p.m. - Sri Vidyabhushana, Sri M.S. Govindaswamy, Sri B.S. Prashanth, Sri S. Srishyla

9th Aug, Wed 5.30 p.m. - Smt. Nityashree, Smt. Charulatha Ramanujam, Sri Manoj Siva, Sri A.S.N. Swamy

10th Aug, Thu. 5.30 p.m. - Sri Srikrishna Mohan & Sri Ramkumar Mohan (Trichur bros.) Sri Ajith Kumar, Trichur Sri R. Mohan, Kovai Sri Suresh

11th Aug, Fri. 5.30 p.m. - Sri Ramakrishnan Murthy, Sri H.K. Venkataram, Sri Arun prakash, Sri Anirudh V. Athreya

12th Aug, Sat 5.30 p.m. - Sri Pandit, M. Venkatesh Kumar, Sri Ravindra Katoti, Sri Ravindra Yavagal

13th Aug, Sun. 5.30 p.m. - Smt. Sudha Raghunathan, Embar S. Kannan, Palladam Sri Ravi, Sri V. Suresh

18th Aug, Fri. 6.00 p.m. - Sri O.S. Arun, Sri B. Ananthakrishnan, Poongulam Sri Subramaniam, Sri Praveen (Tabla)

# Neela Aunty

*Rajashree Yogananda*

There is always this feeling that I will be getting a call from Neela aunty anytime with a genteel rebuke for not having called her these past few days.

Smt.GV Ranganayakamma and Smt. GV Neela were my music teachers, and that is how I slowly got acquainted with them. There used to be many times when they would reminisce about their father Sri G Vedanta Iyengar and question him as to why they were not made to pursue their education as they were sure to have fared well. Their father would reply that he had given them the education that was suited to help not only in this world but also in the world to come. Over the years, they realised the wisdom of their father and would say music has made them what they are today. SRLKM was their child and they nurtured it with utmost care.

Though Neela aunty learnt violin from other teachers, for Neela, her elder sister Ranganayakamma was her guru too. Their father could not afford to pay the tuition fees for both of them and her sister saw to it that Neela could imbibe what was taught to her and the bonding between the sisters grew. Both were very beautiful. Neela was tall and Rangu aunty would always complain that things were kept out of her reach! They were so close that it was difficult for us to talk without mentioning the other and so it was always RanguNeela aunty.

Sometimes aunty would talk about the days when with the passing away of their father, the onus of running the family fell on their young shoulders and together they toiled and took on the financial burden and steadied it with unconditional love to their younger sister and brother. They saw to it that their younger sister Dr. GV Vijayalakshmi went to the medical college and fulfilled her ambition of being a doctor.

Music was their life, and that is what one got to hear when anyone entered their house whatever time of the day. They were either taking music classes to their students or listening to the radio. Their father had made everyone in the family learn music; be it Vocal, Veena, Violin, Harmonium or Mridangam and together they could give a kutcheri and made a very fine team. My husband, who is their nephew, always felt that their place was his second home and all the summer vacations were spent at their place. Though he was young, they used to take him along with them for their kutcheries and would make him play on the tamboora and influenced him a great deal for his love of music.

I have observed that Neela aunty was always particular about the way things were kept around the house and especially her clothes. As uncle Krishnaprasad recalls, even the hand napkin used by her would be folded neat without a crease.

Aunty was a great story teller and she had a knack of conveying the most mundane in a way which would keep us riveted till the end. SRLKM made it possible for both the aunts as well as our uncle to have close interaction with most of the greats of classical music and Neela aunty would share those treasure house of experiences which helped us to get a peek into their lives which we would be bereft of otherwise.

Theirs has always been a close knit family and the bonding and affection between brother GV Krishnaprasad and sisters was genuine. When Smt.Ranganayakamma was confined to bed for a long time, they both tended to her with care and devotion. Even then, she made sure that she took music classes as they had an cathartic effect on her. Losing both Ranganayakamma and their sister Dr. Vijayalakshmi in a very short





*Vidushis Ranjani and Gayathri always have had special affection for SRLKM, Smt Neela and Sri GV Krishnaprasad. They have made it a point to call them regularly and talk just like any family member. They also shared their experiences after their kutcheri trips abroad. Both paid a visit to SRLKM after Smt. Neela's demise to express their condolences and spent quite some time talking to GV Krishnaprasad, Hon. Sec.*

span of time was a big blow and Neela aunty and Krishnaprasad uncle channelised their grief and went about to set up an award "Raga Laya Prabha" given to promising youngsters from Karnataka in their memory. Infact, to celebrate 65 years of SRLKM, Neela aunty had proposed the plan of honouring 65 senior musicians. Plans were afoot to go about it from their own personal funds and now in her memory Krishnaprasad uncle is all set to fulfil her wishes.

There are many moments spent with aunty which I cherish very much. Together, we would enjoy listening to monthly concerts at SRLKM hall and the Sankranthi and Spring music festivals or just spending time with them is something we have always liked doing. We would always celebrate all the festivals with aunty and uncle and it was joyful on those occasions, especially Gokulashtami. Now, her absence will be felt very much.

Aunty and uncle had a long standing desire to visit Srirangam temple. By His Grace we were blessed to have the darshan of Ranganathar very early in the morning when the temple doors opened with the elephant trumpeting and paying its obeisance to the Lord. Neela aunty would always remember it and I can say that it was one wonderful trip we all had together. Aunty would make sure that she taught my

daughter, who was also her student, very apt songs to sing whenever we visited any temple or for the invocations to Mandira's music festivals. Aunty would never be satisfied until she rendered it perfect. She wanted all the children in the family to carry on the music legacy and become good performers along with their academics.

Of late, aunty would express anxiety about her dwindling health and prayed that she be spared all the suffering. Many a times, she would have tete a tete with my husband about life and spirituality. She was the matriarch and both shared a very strong bonding. In the end, she got her prayers answered and left all of us bewildered and shell shocked by the suddenness of her demise.

Though she is no longer in our midst, the love and affection and her genuine interest in our well being as well as that of her students linger on and the best way to honour and pay the tribute would be to continue her legacy forward with all sincerity. All I can say is that aunty enriched SRLKM and Mandira will forever be grateful for that.

We would always tell her that we were just a phone call away and with a heavy heart know that it is one call too far away.

# Dulcet Voiced duo Radha Jayalakshmi

CP Chikkanna

In carnatic Music, G.N. Balasubramanyam was a modern in a field strongly dominated by tradition. By his birka laden speedy ragalapanas, songs, niravlas and kalpana swaras, he stormed the carnatic music world like a colossus. He was hailed as a prince of carnatic music who gave it a new depth and dimension, a revolutionary in multiple spheres as a film hero opposite MS Subbulakshmi, a performer par excellence, an outstanding teacher and a composer of merit. Whenever any composer approached Ramanuja Iyengar to present his songs in concert to popularise them, he directed him to GNB. He never sang his own compositions in concerts and his disciples popularised them. Some of his compositions are: “Neeapaadame gathi” in the raga Nalinakanthi, “Baarama e Balunibrova” in the raga Hamsanadam, “Ranjani Niranjani” in Raga Ranjani

etc. besides Varnas. They have been published under the name “ganabhaskara mani malai”. He was a BA Honours graduate, who chose music as his main avocation, defying his father’s ambition of pursuing a law degree for a lucrative career as an advocate. He was the Chief Producer of music in the Madras Station of All India Radio and later served as the principal of Swathi Tirunal College of Music in Trivandrum and died in his 55<sup>th</sup> year in 1965 while in service. His disciples and grand disciples followed in his footsteps and made a lot of name and fame in carnatic music. One such name is Radha Jayalakshmi, the dulcet voiced duo who dominated the music arena for over 4 decades with distinction between 1950’s and 1990’s.

The duo hailed from a family of music lovers. They are maternal cousins. Jayalakshmi is the



eldest and daughter of Late Rangachari, a practising advocate in Madras, where as Radha's father Late Doraiswamy Iyengar was a wealthy zamindar and an officer in Southern Railways. The duo received their basic lessons from Jayalakshmi's mother R.Pattammal an accomplished Veena player who was a niece of Veena Ranagaswamy Iyengar of yesteryears. Her Veena recitals were broadcast from AIR. Later they were trained by TR Balasubramanyam the principal disciple of GN Balasubramanyam, until his death in the early 1950. Later GNB honed their skill and guided them and laid a solid foundation for their highly accomplished music career. He affectionately referred to them as my "pethis" (grand daughters). GNB advised his disciples to adopt nathaswara type of raagalapana and to reveal the identity of the raga in the beginning to the listeners. He insisted upon them to develop their own style, originality, adequate planning, practising to perfection and present to make listening to their concerts an enjoyable experience.

The sisters received advance training in pallavis from famed Pallavi exponent Vidyala Narasimhalu Naidu of Chittoor (From whom Pallavi Chandrappa learnt the art of rendering Avadhana Pallavis). Naidu was blessed with a huge physique, sporting a big moustache and six foot tall with vibhuthi striped forehead resembled a wrestler. His pallavi classes in Madras evoked laughter and an enriching experience recalled the duo. At the instance of GNB, the sisters learnt a couple of Hindustani Bhajans from Ustad Bade Gulam Alikhan during his visit to Madras on concert engagements. Thus after equipping with the entire concert formats the duo made a sensational debut in 1948 under the aegis of Malleshwaram Sangitha Sabha, Bangalore when the field was dominated and ruled by such masterly performers like Ramanuja Iyengar, Alathoor Brothers, Maduari Mani Iyer, Chambai Vydyanatha Bhagavathar, GNB, Semangudi Srinivasa Iyer, MS Subbulakshmi, Pattammal, KB Sundarambal and ML Vasanthakumari, besides Flute Maali, Dwaram Vekataswamy Naidu, Mysore Chowdaiah etc. Noted Violinist MS Gopalakrishnan provided them violin accompaniment in their maiden concert at Bangalore according to Late TB Narasimhachar, the then secretary of the Sabha. That particular concert resulted in a number of concert opportunities to the duo from all over south India.

There are lot of similarities between Alathoor brothers and Radha Jayalakshmi. Unlike Shivasubramanya Iyer, Jayalakshmi was blessed with a powerful and sweet voice which traversed all the three octaves with ease and grace. Unlike Srinivasa Iyer, Radha's voice too was a bit husky and both the voices blended musically creating great aural pleasure in their duets. The brothers's recitals were mainly laya oriented where as the sister's duets were a combination of laya and melody creating an immediate impact on listeners. Unlike the brothers, these cousins also attained the kutcheri tempo in the beginning of the concert and maintained it throughout the session. After the death of Shivasubramanya Iyer in 1965, they were in the fore front of singing in tandem in the highest echelons of carnatic music. The main advantage of any vocal duet is that one assists the other and each performer will have adequate rest in concert.

I first heard their vocal duet under the aegis of Seshadripuram Ramotsava Samithi in the year 1961 when I was studying in Seshadripuram high school. On that day, I was deeply impressed by the speedy rendering of Veena type of sparkling tanam by Jayalakshmi which was bequeathed from her mother that drew repeated applause from the vast gathering and from then onwards I began to listen to carnatic music in festivals, sabhas and radio. In 1968, Indian Express group of publications started Kannada Prabha and invited write-ups and articles from prospective writers for the Sunday's magazine edition which stimulated me to present a profile of them who were highly popular. This blossomed into cordial relationship between us when I was approached by my friends and organisers for arranging their music concerts in various places in Karnataka which were always a grand success. Until my involvement with them on concert matters, they were particular and choosy, insisting on their own team of accompanists from Madras. It was on my request





File photo with MS Gopalakrishnan on Violin and Palghat Mani Iyer on Mridangam

they agreed to have local prominent accompanists S Seshagiri Rao and MS Govindaswamy on the violin, ML Veerabhadraiah and Praveen, TAS Mani, AV Anand etc. on the mridangam. It is me who introduced teenaged ghatam player Sukhanya to Bangaloreans in their vocal duet in 1978 Sri Ramanavami festival that resulted in Kanjeera player HP Ramachar withdrawing from the concert in protest as he was not consulted for accommodating an upcoming girl sharing the dais with him in the concert! Sukhanya made the best use of the opportunity and scored brilliantly. Senior left hand mridanga vidwan Kuttalam Vishwantha Iyer enthused and encouraged her for a lively thani avartanam that won her adulations from the audience. Pleased by her performance, the organisers blessed her with a bonus! It is an irony that the very same Ramachar was after the organisers to promote his daughter Latha's Kanjeera accompaniment and later became the director of sthree thala tarang, an ensemble of women percussionists in which Sukhanya was the main performer on the ghatam !

Four important factors are mainly responsible for the success of Radha Jayalakshmi. First is their good look, attiring with expensive Kanjeevaram pure zeri sarees/ornamentation which was the main attraction for the women folk who always gathered in large numbers for their recitals. Second is their sweet and melodious voice with the pitch G(5) and in some record-

ings it is 5-1/2), which according to them was by the grace of God. Third, is their breezy style and speedy rendering of ragaalapanas, kritis, neravals and kalpana swaras, emulating GNB. Lastly, their clear-cut pronunciation of lyrics, irrespective of the language of the song. When I sought the secret behind this, they said, it is their knowledge of Sanskrit which helped them to master the compositions of Muthuswamy Dikshithar and others. The correct lyrics of the song is taken down in Sanskrit (which is so vast in lyrics, hymns and poetry that it require several generations to study and understand), learn the meaning of the lyrics from scholars and acquaint ourselves with the technical and rhetorical beauties, master the correct pronunciation to embellish in concerts with appropriate bhava conveying the message to the listeners in its original tuning set by the composer.

Their concerts were always well planned and marked by their usual high potential and competence. In the earlier part of their career, there was more prominence to manodharma sangeetha as the concert session was generally 4 hours with ragam, tanam and pallavi being a must. The post pallavi session consisted of ragamalika shlokas, Devarnamas, audiences's requests, tillanas and javalis. The main reason that they are so well known for their highly enjoyable raga delineation is that they mentally carried phrases from several compositions they plan to present in their duet which is a unique



source of raga material. Another high point of their duet is the presentation of apoorva ragas and rare kritis. Their long time violinist Prof. MS Anantaraman was full of praise for the detailed elaboration of rare ragas like Nalinakanthi, Bindhumalini, Bhavapriya, Suryakantam etc. by Jayalakshmi, while Radha excelled in exploration of rakthi ragas like Begade, Natakuranji, Arabhi and Shudda Saveri etc. These ragas attained an accurate form in their duets and remain deep in the memory of listeners. According to mridangam maestro Guruvayur Dorai, they never discussed/disclosed complicated/tough pallavis with their accompanists and gave them lot of brain work! Their only grouse is that they were denied solo turns (Thani avartana) in right time.

Answering my query with regard to the qualities of a good concert, they maintained that every performance should be treated with utmost respect and devotion without taking the audience for granted who are the real judges. First the performers should be swaanubhavis (self relishing). The concert should be educative and entertaining one and cover all the sections of the audience. The performers should be highly alert to the audience's expectations and build up an adequate bank of various compositions in different languages by different composers. There should be a sense of proportion in shuddha and prati madhyama ragas and kritis in different thalas.. The stage should be very close to the audience so that we can study and derive inspiration from their reactions. In this connection they mentioned Sree Rama Mandira Auditorium, Malleshwaram, Bangalore in the olden days as an ideal hall with the stage facing the sanctum sanctorum and also the stage specially erected in the thatched pandal at the Seshadripuram high school premises.

Coming to the role of accompanists, they said, the success of any concert largely depends upon the co-operation of large hearted accompanists. We had the support of well known accompanists in various disciplines to whom we owe a lot. They are: Violinists MS Anantaraman and his younger brother MS Gopalakrishnan, M Chandrashekar, Alagiri Swamy, T Rukmini, Dwaram Managatayaru etc., senior mridangists:

Kalpathi Ramanathan (contemporary of Palghat Mani Iyer), MN Kandaswamy, Palghat Kunjumani, Guruvayur Dorai, Tanjore Upendran, Karaikudi Mani etc., beside a number of players on ghatam, kanjeera and morsing.

In their long career, the duo has cut a number of Gramophone records and large number of Cassette tapes. "Vinyaka" in Hamsadhwani of Veena Kuppier was the first gramophone record and Muthuswamy Dikshithar's "Vallabhanayakasya", Tyagaraja's "Neevenakuladhanamu", in the raga Begade, "Dharini Telusukonti" in Shudda Saveri etc. were part of early recordings followed by over one dozen LP discs for HMV. They were among the five top leading performers of the company. Their L.P. Record of Purandardasa's songs is a unique gift to Kannada speaking audience. Each composition was preceded by a matching Ugabhoga and carried listeners to ecstasy. I arranged the release of this L.P in 1977 which was a hit and their popularity in Karnataka reached its peak! On that occasion, in a specially prepared write-up published in Kannada Prabha (translated from English), they have discussed in detail how Purandardasa had preached Bhakthi and Sanmarga as the solutions to various problems human beings encounter in their daily lives, as a propagator of nava vidha bhakthi by quoting different examples of his compositions that was emulated later by Saint Tyagaraja, the existence of only 32 asampoorna mela ragas during his time, choosing the raga Maya malava Gowla to start the music lessons for beginners and that he was a contemporary of Kanakadasa and Tallapakam Annamacharya etc. They considered Karnataka and especially Bangalore as their second home and said that it gives them immense pleasure to perform to the knowledgeable audience in this state. In the peak of their career, their popularity was so intense that a transport operator in Erode district of Tamil Nadu had named his vehicles after them that resulted in the duo receiving compliments/inquiries about this new venture from their friends and close acquaintances, they recounted with a hearty laugh when I pointed out the name Jayalakshmi paint-



Vid. Radha and Vid. Jayalakshmi are seen receiving the Sangeet Natak Academy Award for 1981 from the Chairperson of the Academy, Smt. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay

ed on one of the passing vehicles during our journey to Kollur in South Canara.

They were invited to give exclusive rendering of Kanakadasa's compositions by the Bangalore station of AIR in 1965 to mark his 500<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary celebration and also that of Purandardasa in 1985.

Besides possessing a treasury of songs, they were always busy learning/ practicing new compositions. During one of our meetings, they requested me for some songs on Saint Raghavendra. I collected few keertanas from Harikatha exponent TK Venugopaladas and Raja Gururajachar (Composer of Tunga Teera Virajam), tuned and rendered by A Subba Rao in his concert and handed them over the tape which they presented in concerts in the same tuning. They expressed their deep gratitude to Veena maestro Mysore Doraiswamy Iyengar for directing their rendering of Purandardasa's compositions for the early morning Geetharadhana broadcast and other Kannada light songs when he was the chief producer of music in AIR, Bangalore. As a

prelude to the song "*Pillangovia cheluvakrishnana*", he got a short sketch of raga Kaapi played on the flute by Dindigul SP Natarajan that gave a special effect to the song. When they presented this in a live broadcast from Madras AIR, the doyenne MS Subbulakshmi and flutist N Ramani congratulated them over phone and sought the lyrics of the song which they gladly obliged, they recounted.

When I sought their advice to upcoming musicians and students, they said one should involve 100 percent and be firm in their practice to perfection what is taught by their Guru. (Noted film actor Late Uday Kumar told me that young Radha Jayalakshmi's early morning practice session at 4 am was his alarm to get ready for shooting schedule when he was their neighbour in Tirumala Pillai Street in T.Nagar). They must attend concerts of senior musicians, grasp and absorb as much as they can, the highlights of the concert and adopt the plus points in their daily practice. They should develop their imaginative skill to sing raga alapana by learning as many compositions as possible in a single raga since it

is not possible to project the entire raga swaroopa in a single composition. They should not aim at instantaneous success over night as music is a penance and God's grace. They wished all the best to aspiring musicians and said that they have no time even to think of training students on account of their busy concert schedule beside private/AIR recordings and concert related journeys. When I drew their attention to some upcoming vocal duo claiming as their disciples, they showed me their news paper advertisement denying it. This reminds me of a Madras AIR Violinist hailing from Andhra Pradesh prefixing his name with Lalgudi after a brief stint with the maestro creating controversy which died down after the prefix was removed. Besides all over India, they have extensively performed in Colombo and Jaffna in Sri Lanka, London, USA, and participated in numerous National Programmes of Music, Radio Sangeetha Sammelan concerts, AIR achieves and in Rashtrapati Bhavan before the then president Dr. Radhakrishnan.

Although they were born and brought up in Tamil Nadu, Tamil being their mother tongue, rendered numerous Tamil songs in their long career and in films, cutting a long playing record of famed Tamil composer Paspanasham Shivan's songs, one is at a loss to understand why they were not invited the Tamil Isai Sangam the sole premier major organisation in Chennai championing the cause of protecting/promoting Tamil Isai movement. However the DMK Party's cultural wing honoured them by conferring its annual award along with thespian drama/film actor Shivaji Ganesan for their contribution to Tamil culture.

Radha and Jayalakshmi were the recipients of numerous awards and rewards in their distinguished career. Some of them are: Kalaimaamani from the Tamil Nadu State Govt., Central Sangeetha Natak Akademi award, TTK award by the Madras Music Academy besides special Temple honour by HH Sushameendra Swamiji of Sri Raghavendra mutt, Mantralaya etc. Their vocal duet was arranged during the Purvaradhana festival in the early 1990's. Due to heavy inflow of devotees forming long queue and some of

them performing anga pradakshina, the concert stage was shifted outside the temple precincts, where a number of temporary stalls resembling a village shandy were erected. Performing there was highly embarrassing and as good as a market Kutcheri! The temple officials expressed their helplessness to shift the dais to the platform in front of the Pontiff's abode, overlooking the sanctum sanctorum. Two hours before the concert, rain and gale created chaos resulting in shifting the stage as suggested. The duo attributed this to the Saint, whom they prayed to save them from the embarrassment. A sea of devotees were treated to a feast of soul stirring melodious devotional songs by them.

In their long career they were highly sensitive and never tolerated an iota of adverse comments. Once I arranged their duet under the aegis of Tarangini Lalitha Kala Sangha, Shimoga. In his confirmatory letter, the secretary had mentioned that the audience were disappointed by them last time. This had upset them and almost brought the concert to cancellation. They sent me a copy of the letter and their reply. I pacified them that the secretary's letter lacks diplomacy and does not reflect the opinion/regards of the citizens of Shimoga and to take it as friendly. An office bearer during his visit to Madras met them and resolved the issue. In that concert, Jayalakshmi presented an explosive Kambodhi ragaalapana in all its majesty reaching the thara sthaayi shadja followed by Dikshithar's "Sri Subramanyaya Namaste" in all its grandeur with neraval and swara prasthara in their authentic style that consumed 75 minutes acknowledged by audience's long applause that appeared as if it is their reply to the secretary's letter. There after they were regularly invited during Sri Rama Navami and Vinayaka festival. The same year, I was delighted by the spacious exploration of Shanakarabarana bringing out the quintessence of the raga in ample measure covering its entire contour followed by the song "Muddu Kumarayyane" of Ramaswamy Shivan in Chatusra Rupaka thala in the famed Shanmukananda auditorium in Mumbai during Diwali Sangeethotsav. Likewise the audience have enjoyed their presentation of Tyagaraja's utsava

Sampradhaya kritis and various other songs in different categories.

From mid 1950's to 1960, they have rendered many songs for films, most of them by Jayalakshmi (solo and duet with A.M.Raja, TM Soundara Rajan and PB Srinivas) in the name of Radha Jayalakshmi including many Kannada films like Kacha Devayani, Rana Dheera Kanterava, Bhudana, Sankalpa etc. It is in the film Bhudhana produced and directed by veteran GV Iyer in 1960's, Jayalakshmi has sung Purandaradasa's song "*Bhagyada Lakshmi Baramma*", for which the music was scored by GK Venkatesh which became a hit and found a place as an important Kannada canticle in music concerts including in that of the doyen Pandit Bhimsen Joshi.

From 1986 onwards their career started downward trend due to Radha's voice gradually losing its timbre and the entire concert responsibility fell on Jayalakshmi who retained her voice for a long time, that resulted in changing the concert pattern by presenting either a viruttam or a hymn/ugabhoga in the chosen raga in the beginning, reducing the length of ragavisthara and duration of concerts to 150 minutes. Secondly they were reluctant to the demand for sponsoring their own music concerts in December music festival in Madras for an award/title as a pre condition by the Sabhas and organisations (purchasing). They asserted: We would rather prefer to donate either to an orphanage or to any other charitable/social organisation for helping those in distress and like to see smile on their faces instead of complying with this demand when our conversation turned to sponsoring concerts. They retired from active concerts due to age from 2000 onwards and preferred to stay aloof from music field and were almost untraceable after changing their Saidapet residence in Madras. During my long acquaintance of over 40 years, they were highly dignified on and off the stage and never spoke ill of others. It was Jayalakshmi with fluent English who always attended and officiated in their professional matters as Radha Jayalakshmi. She was on the panel of senior musicians to elevate performers to "A" Top grade by All India Radio/Doordarshan. Throughout their

career, they remained humble with humility and their hospitality and courteous treatment of visitors were of the highest order. Jayalakshmi passed away in May 2014 bringing to an end a glorious chapter in the history of carnatic music.

## Sangeet Natak Akademi Awards 2016

SRLKM congratulates the following artistes for being selected for the prestigious "Sangeet Natak Akademi honours" in the Carnatic Music Category. Sangeet Natak Akademi represents India's National Academy of Music, Dance & Drama and is also the highest recognition given to Indian practicing artistes. The awards will be presented by the president of India in Delhi.

The awards carry a purse of ₹3 Lakhs for Fellow, ₹1 lakh for Academy award along with a tamrapatra and an angavastram. The Yuva Puraskar carries a purse of ₹ 25,000.

- 1) R Vedavalli, Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellow (Akademi Ratna)
- 2) Pappu Venugopal Rao for (Contribution/Scholarship to performing arts)
- 3) Sangita Kala Acharya Neela Ramgopal (Vocal)
- 4) K Omanakutty (Vocal)
- 5) Mysore Manjunath (Violin)
- 6) J Vaidyanathan (Mridangam)
- 7) Ashwin Anand - Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar Award for Veena
- 8) Krishna Mohan and Ramkumar Mohan (Trichur Brothers) Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar Award for Vocal
- 9) Sai Giridhar - Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar Award for Mridangam
- 10) B Shree Sundar Kumar - Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar Award for Kanjira



# Evolution of Kanjira

CP Chikkanna

(Translated from 'Dhruva Nakshatrangal written by Lalitha Ram)

In the court of King Ramachandra Thondaiman of Pudukkottai, palace vidwans Nannumiya and Chotumiya were singing and playing dholak themselves. Their voice perfectly synchronised with the shruti of Dholak. While concluding the song, they played a lightening mukhthiyam. A lantern employee as a token of appreciation exclaimed "Ahaa". Every one turned towards him. Someone said "Look, here is a lantern Vidwan!" sending a roar of laughter. The king ordered for the continuation of the concert.

When everyone was busy listening to the concert, the lantern man by name Manpundiya Pillai went into deep thinking whether the son of a lantern employee was not eligible to learn music? Does music belong to a particular parampara/hereditary? Is there no relationship between me and music? Are the concerts in palace alone is music? Every year, during Holi festival we are witnessing dramas and lavanis on the streets which we are all rejoicing. Are these not music? For the past four years, am I not playing Tape (A folk instrument) during the Holi festival? Be it in the palace court or on the street, is laya not the same? After the palace concert was over, one of the palace employees taunted the lantern man Manpundiya Pillai to resign his job and try to become a musician, if he could. This came as a heavenly advice to Manpundiya Pillai. He straight away went to noted Tavildar, Pudukkottai Maariappa Pillai and prostrated before him and told about his deep interest in learning music and requested to accept him as his disciple under Gurukula vasa. In turn Maariappa Pillai told Manpundi about the difficulty the student has to face in the future after learning, since no nadaswaram Player would accept an outsider as his tavil accompanist, whatever be his calibre and skill, mathematics, knowledge of laya etc. Playing tavil in concerts was considered inferior in those days.

"Ayyaa, I do not have the intention of competing with any tavil player of any nadaswaram party. I am deeply interested in learning the art after listening to numerous concerts both in the palace and outside. Please do not disappoint me" begged Manpundiya Pillai. After long pause, Maariappa Pillai advised the disciple not to resign the palace job and come to him after the working hours to learn. By virtue of his expertise in playing the tape in the palace, his quick grasping and deep interest in laya matters, Manpundiya Pillai acquired high degree of proficiency in playing tavil and became an expert layakarar. The Guru Maariappa Pillai having been satisfied with his disciple's progress suggested him to resign his job in the palace and practice on the one handed instrument Tape what all he learnt from him and his own improvised laya patterns to play in concerts by suitably modifying that instrument as there were only mridangam and ghatam, percussive instruments in those days, since no nagaswara group would be willing to admit the new entrant.

Manpundiya Pillai could not understand the head and tail of this suggestion. He took this advice seriously and began to think as to how to alter and adopt his instrument to vocal concerts. He tried various types of wood for the outer body, different combinations of skin unlike in mridangam and also reduced the size of the Tape. Finally, the skin of wild lizard (uda) met the skin requirement. When a little bit of water was sprinkled on the leather, the quality of timbre increased and was pleasing to the ears. Unlike the usage of metallic powder for the right hand side of the mridangam called "valanthalai", Manpundiya Pillai fixed metallic coins to his newly designed instrument. While playing some shollus, due to vibration, the coins produced melodic sound to the satisfaction of the inventor. He named this instrument "Kanjeera". He

showed this instrument to his guru Maariappa Pillai who was immensely happy and told his disciple that this is what he expected and blessed him.

On the kanjeera, Manpundia Pillai practiced speedy farhan, various nadais, mohara and korvais, new ideas that came to his imagination in a style of his own. Those who heard his Kanjeera play compared his invention to saint Tyagaraja who revealed the beauty of Ragas, while Pillai revealed the vast ocean of laya. At that time, Tanjore Narayanaswamiappa was the leading laya exponent. If only I could get his approval, I can play it in vocal recitals thought Pillai and went to Tanjore and after introducing himself showed him his instrument. Narayanaswamiappa asked Pillai to stay in his house for the night and play the next day (Friday) during the evening bhajan. Pillai occupied a seat in a corner on the stage in the bhajan. After aligning the mrudangam to the thambura shruthi, Narayanaswamiappa started playing. Pillai started thinking whether his instrument without any shruthi alignment to be played on only one hand could match the mridangam which is played on both the hands and tested it by tapping it close to his ears. He closed his eyes, prayed to Lord Muruga to bless him in his test and gave a “dheem” stroke on his instrument.

Every one was surprised by this Dhimkaaram. Narayanaswamiappa asked Pillai to play with him for the keertanas. Pillai followed the mridangist's nadai like a shadow in a soft manner. Narayanaswamiappa told Pillai to freely play to his imagination without any hesitation. On that day what all Pillai played, be it the mohras, korvais, nadais and teermanams, his embellishment of the songs, the audience had never heard them before! Moved by the sholkattus of Pillai, the mrudangist remarked “Thambi, I feel there is no need for the song before your instrument! Is there provision for playing the thani”? During his turn Pillai played all that korvais in the main song and changed the chatusra nadai which consists of 4 matras to one akshara. The person assisting on the tala was confused and started grumbling. The ‘takadimi takadimi’ nadai was converted into ‘Takita Takita’. This is opposed to

tradition commented one listener who missed the thala's accuracy. Many among the audience supported him. Narayanaswamiappa continued with his thala accurately and signalled them to stop commenting. Absolute silence prevailed in response as the audience had great respect towards him. The tani avartanam continued. In each avartanas new ideas emerged from the kanjeera. After some time, lightening sholkattus followed. After playing several nadais and nicely woven korvais, Pillai completed the tani avartanam. Untill then it was Narayanaswamiappa alone who was assisting on the thala.

“If this is the type of Kanjeera play in one hand, there is no need for the mridangam. What an imagination!” Commented Narayanaswamiappa while addressing the gathering. What all he played today is within the tradition. As we have not heard this type of play previously, it is but natural to feel so. Thambi, hereafter I will recommend you to all the leading Vidvans I know. Let your artistry shine in all those concerts”. He honoured Pillai and gave him a warm send off. There after Pillai came to Kumbakonam and met another doyen laya maestro Shivakolandu Nayanar who arranged a concert in Thirupalanam Panchapakesha Shastri Mutt the following day. There also Pillai earned the respect and honours of the Samsathanam and emerged highly successful in his new instrument.

Amongst his disciples, Pudukkottai Dakshinamurthi Pillai, Pudukkottai Ramaiah Pillai, Tiruchendur Ramaiah Pillai, Ramanathapuram Chitsabai Shervai (father of CS Murugabhupathy), Sattur Pandiya Thevar, dramatist Swamy Shankaradas were prominent. After attaining high degree of success in the music field, Pillai attained sanyasam at the age of 62 and was known as Murugananda Swami. He installed “vel” the weapon of Lord Muruga in his house and lead a simple life. He was born on 14<sup>th</sup> December 1859 and on 17<sup>th</sup> January 1922, he attained Samadhi listening to his disciples' Thirupugazh.

# Eulogy, GV Neela

*Sangeetha Kala Acharya Neela Ramgopal*



My dear friend Smt Neela, was born into a family of music lovers. She learnt carnatic music from great gurus and spread the music to a number of students. She had dedicated her full life to the service of music. When we first met in her flat in Tata Silk Farm she was teaching her students music. The remarkable thing was whenever I went to see her, she was always teaching someone or the other.

Neela used to accompany her late sister Ranganayamma on violin, and they made a nice pair on stage. It was her father late Sri G Vedantha Iyengar's dream to establish an institution for carnatic music and to have a suitable space to arrange music concerts. He established Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira in 1955. After his demise, the GV siblings Sri Krishna Prasad, Smt Neela and Smt Ranganayamma worked tirelessly to pursue their father's dream and today the sabha stands tall in the music scenario of Bangalore. Over the years, they continued im-

parting training in music and preparing students to take up music examinations. It is interesting to note that some of today's famous musicians are from this Kala Mandira only.

The music festivals and concerts arranged by this Kala Mandira is something both the artist and the rasikas look forward to. Every year, she arranged concerts of senior musicians and honoured them with a grand title 'Sangita Vedantha Dhureena' to salute their life long achievements in the field of music, these concerts always drew packed houses. Apart from this, Smt Neela also used to encourage young upcoming talents by giving them opportunities to perform and giving them awards.

Personally, I have lost a genuine friend, who was sincere, soft spoken, always talked of home and was dedicated and focused on her music. I pray to God, that her soul attains Moksha. Om Shanti!

# Purandara Darshana

Editor



'Purandara Darshana' Inauguration From L to R : Shri. Raghavan (Naadasurabhi), Anantharamaiah (BTM Cultural Academy), Dr. Raghavendra (Ananya), Shri. Satish (Vishesha Fine Arts), Shri. Krishnaprasad (Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira), RR Ravishankar (Sama Gana Sabha), Dr. Deepti Navaratna (Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, Gol, MRV Prasad (The Bangalore Gayana Samaja)

Karnataka Fine Arts Council (KFAC), a confederation of ten organisations promoting classical music concluded a three day festival on Purandaradasa called "Purandara Darshana" at Sri Karanji Anjaneya Swamy Temple, Basavanagudi, Bengaluru. The festival featured 42 concerts with over 100 eminent artistes performing and it is possibly worlds highest congregation of people to celebrate Purandaradasa Aradana. The effort has the potential to set a new identity to Bangalore in line with the Saint Thyagaraja Aradana at Thiruvaiyaru as this will be a recurring event.

The festival featured MS Sheela, Vinayak Torvi, TS Satyavathi, Venkatesh Kumar, Kalavathy Avadoot, Pravin Godkhindi, DV Nagaraj, A Kanyakumari, MG Venkataraghavan, Geetha Bhat, HS Vengopal, Nagavalli Nagaraj, Parameshwar Hegde, RS Ramakanth, Aralumallige Parthasarathy,

Rudrapatnam Brothers, Nagaraj Rao Havaladar, Vani Satish, Sangeetha Katti, Neyveli Santhanagopalan, RK Padmanabha, Neela Ramgopal, D Balakrishna, Suma Sudhindhira, Sreekantham Nagendra Sastry, MA Meera, HK Narasimhamurthy, Bellary Raghavendra, Sukanya Prabhakar, Vidyabhushana, Kaivalya Kumar, Bangalore S Shankar, Jayaeertha Mevundi and Kathak dancers Nirupama, Rajendra and B Bhanumathi.

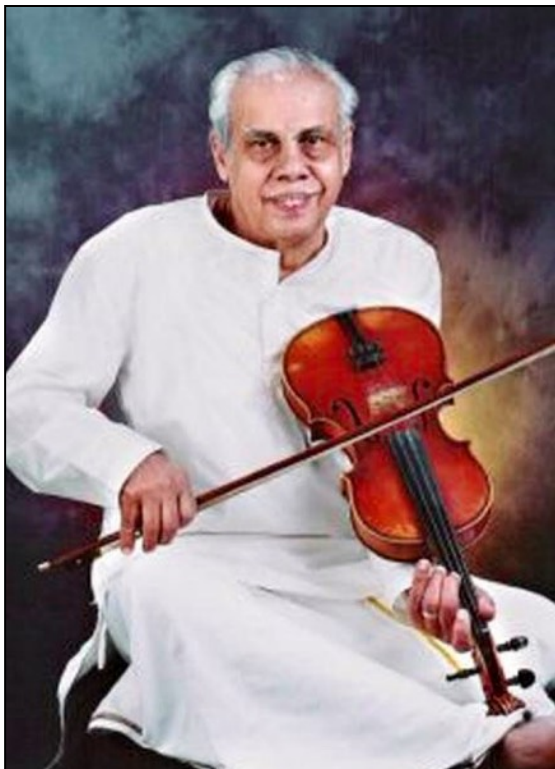
On 09 July, Sunday Karnataka Gana Kala Parishat presented a goshti gana covering the nine gems of Purandaradasa lead by RK Padmanabha that was telecast live on DD.

The response to the concerts were outstanding with over thousand people attending every day with even the afternoon sessions being houseful shows.



# Prof. HV Krishnamurthy Sangita Parampara

Ashwin Anand, Senior student of Vijaya College of Music



As I entered the hallowed precincts of Vijaya College of Music (VCM) each day, to a kid keen to take in every bit of music in the air – it was like visiting Disneyland! *Meshtu* always sat in the central hall, his attire as impeccable as ever, his eyes sparkling with excitement as he tried to unravel the mysteries of music to every student that crossed the threshold. That was pretty much his only expectation from us – to cross the threshold and enter the premises. The magic of VCM took care of everything else. To the young and old, to the budding artiste and to the casual dilettante, he taught with the same

zest and made us all believe that the sky was the limit!

The great soul who founded and ran this sacred temple of music as its Principal (fondly known to us as *Meshtu*) was the great musician, *Guru*, musicologist, visionary thinker and leader, *Sangita Kalaratna* Professor H V Krishnamurthy. He has left behind a proud legacy of music, both with his family and his disciples. His illustrious son and leading violinist, H K Venkatram is now carrying on the mantle of running the great institution with the same spirit and vision. Waiting in the wings and making rapid strides as an upcoming vocalist is his prodigiously talented grand-daughter Bhargavi Venkatram.

Having been closely associated with this great *gurukula* for nearly 30 years, firstly as a student of *Meshtu* for over 25 years and as a junior partner to Sri Venkatram in several concerts, I will try to highlight as succinctly as possible, the contributions, ideals and achievements of one of the great and unique musical *paramparas* of Karnataka that continues to serve Carnatic music selflessly to this day.

## **Sangita Kalaratna Prof H V Krishnamurthy – a brief biography**

Prof H V Krishnamurthy was born in 1926 to a family steeped in musical tradition that had several musicians, the most famous among them being his maternal uncle, Sri LS Narayaswami Bhagavathar (a disciple of Kanchipuram Sri Naina Pillai) who was well versed in violin and vocal and Sri LS Seshagiri Rao, a percussionist and violinist of repute.

An inborn inclination and passion towards music resulted in Sri HV Krishnamurthy making rapid strides in the field of music. He performed



HV Krishnamurthy, A. Veerabhadraiah, Anoor S. Ramakrishna with Palghat Mani Iyer and Bangalore K Venkatram

on stage for the first time in 1943 at the N R Colony Rama Mandira, Bangalore, along with his Gurus. From then on, he performed consistently with his Gurus and other famous artistes, both from Karnataka and elsewhere.

#### **An innovative performer – Violin trio**

Sri HVK teamed up with Ganakala Bhushana A Veerabhadraiah and Sri Anoor S Ramakrishna to form the famous Violin Trio. The trio was the first of its nature in Carnatic music and music lovers across the state and outside lapped it up. They were regularly accompanied by percussion stalwarts like Vidwan Palghat Mani Iyer, Vidwan Palghat Raghu, Vidwan Umayalapuram Sivaraman and others.

#### **An academican par excellence and zoology professor**

With a Master's degree in Zoology and a Bachelor's degree in education, Sri HVK pursued his professional career with passion and great success. He taught as a Professor of Zoology at the Bangalore Medical College and later as a Principal of the Kolar Medical College. He had an equal passion for medicine as he did for music. He was a voracious reader and would often quote famous texts, give parallels from various other domains whilst teaching music. He had a tremendous inclination towards English Literature and would quote Shakespeare many a time during the class!

#### **A visionary Guru**

*Meshtru* had tremendous zeal for teaching and devoted almost all his time towards teaching. He had a keen eye for identifying and nurturing individual talent, giving it direction and bringing

the prodigious talent to fruition. Many who came under his tutelage have gone on to establish themselves in the field of Carnatic Music – be it vocalists, violinists, flutists or *vainikas*. Several of them had no previous background in music. Although he was known to the music fraternity as a renowned violinist, Prof HVK was an expert *vainika* as well.

He laid special emphasis on the adherence to *sampradaya sangeetha* and enabled students to gain a deeper understanding of the finer aspects of Carnatic music. Apart from equipping his students with a treasure trove of *kritis* – hundreds of which he painstakingly notated by hand over the years, he specialised in teaching the nuances of *manodharma sangeetha*.

#### **Building a dynamic and vibrant music institution**

The Vijaya College of Music was founded in 1953 by Sri LS Narayanawamy Bhagavathar. When Prof HVK took over as the Principal, he

HV Krishnamurthy with his Guru LS Narayanasamy Bhagavathar





HV Krishnamurthy with HK Venkatram, HK Raghavendra and HK Ganesh

expanded its activities and took a novel, holistic approach towards imparting musical education which was truly trendsetting at the time. Apart from the one-to-one classes, a number of other activities supplemented the student's learning experience.

During concert days, the main hall and the smaller rooms of the music college that were used for teaching, magically transformed into one large concert hall with stage, mics and speakers and every possible vantage point available for an eager rasika. Lecture demonstrations, thematic concerts, monthly concerts from stalwarts and budding artistes, weekly Bhajans, yearly celebrations of Muthuswamy Dikshitar Day, Thyagaraja Aradhana and Purandara Dasa Punya Dina, Ganesh Chaturthi, Shivarathri – the list was endless! All events would have something for everyone – the upcoming students, their parents, the ardent rasikas, the connoisseurs and for the established musicians.

### **A musicologist of repute**

*Meshtu* studied the theoretical aspects of music deeply. He gave several lecture-demonstrations at the music college, decoding difficult theoretical aspects with simple practical examples. Once, to demonstrate the concept of 22 shrutis, he de-fretted a Veena and made it into a temporary gottuvadyam to illustrate the concept! He also authored several papers. Some of these include “*The Fiddle – its origin and place in music concerts*”, “*Ragas in Carnatic and Hindustani styles of music*”, and “*Vocal chords and voice culture*”.

### **A multi-faceted creative genius**

Prof HVK orchestrated many musical works. One such was a musical feature on *Srimad Ra-*

*mayana*. With select shlokas tuned to music by his Guru Sri LS Narayyaswamy Bhagavathar, Prof HVK supplemented them with preluding *swarams* and orchestrated the musical opera with the students of the college performing along with lead vocalists such as Sangita Kalanidhi RK Srikantan, Vidwan RK Padmanabha, and others. The musical production was released as an audio cassette as well.

He coordinated many such group programs that gave ample concert experience and the right exposure to future concert artists.

He turned into a playwright of sorts when he conceptualised and staged a play on Muthuswami Dikshitar. This play commanded packed audiences and is being performed even today by Ganakala Bhushana Sri R K Padmanabha, one of Sri HVK's leading disciples.

### **Some reminisces of his father/Guru by Sri HK Venkatram (His son)**

**On his teaching** - “He had a knack of teaching the most subtle and complex aspects with brevity. He would beautifully demonstrate the subtle differences of *latangi* vs *kalyani* showing the salient points of the *raga bhava*. He taught us aspects of *pakkavadya dharma*. He was never one to impose his methods. He gave ample opportunity and space to the student to infer and imbibe various aspects of music organically”.

**On his tremendous multi-tasking ability** - “Whilst he was Principal of Kolar Medical College, a typical day would start with early morning music lessons, followed by a rather arduous bus or train journey to Kolar. He would spend his commute perusing musical texts such as the *Sangita Sampradaya Pradarshini*. After a long day's work, he would return to Bangalore and resume his music lessons and violin trio practice until late in the night! This schedule was repeated day in and day out. His energy was almost limitless!”

**On his expectations set towards his children** - “He was never one to pressurise his children into performing. He emphasised on providing a holistic education for us all – be it academic or musical and let us choose our individual paths





*HK Venkatram accompanying Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer supported by Palai Ramachandran. UK Sivaraman on Mridangam and HP Ramachar on Kanjira*

in life. His passion for music was purely out of the joy it brought him and he instilled the same quality in his children and in his students”.

**On his singular vision for imparting music knowledge** - “His main objective was to make Carnatic music accessible to everyone. Vijaya College of Music was not an institution that focused only on training the most gifted musicians and moulding them into professionals, which it accomplished amply anyway. When I once travelled across the US for a concert tour that spanned at least 10 different states, I was staggered when a *rasika* from each of the concert venues came up to me and mentioned that he/she had learnt under *HVK Meshtru*! I felt immensely proud and humbled by how many lives he had touched across the world as a *Guru*.”

### **HK Venkatram – the prodigious violinist and engineer**

The adage “chip off the old block” is rather clichéd. However, it cannot be truer than in the case of Vidwan H K Venkatram. A proud inheritor of the great lineage of Sangita Kalaratna Prof H V Krishnamurthy, Sri Venkatram has followed his great father-Guru’s footsteps. His achievements in a stellar career in music spanning over four decades, have been and continue to be a source of inspiration to aspiring musicians.

The second son of Prof HVK, Venkatram is known for his deep understanding of nuances of Carnatic Music and adherence to classicism. His playing is characterised by depth, knowledge, sincerity and maturity.

He works as the Senior Director of the Client Computing Group at Intel Corporation. With experience spanning 25+ years, he is credited to have built a world class System Engineering Research and Development team at Intel Corporation, India.

As an engineer and violinist par excellence, Venkatram has the unique distinction of pursuing two careers in parallel and reaching great heights in both!

### **A stellar career in music**

Venkatram has travelled extensively and has given solo and accompaniment performances at prestigious sabhas in the country and abroad for close to four decades. He has performed several violin duet concerts with his elder brother Sri HK Ragahvendra. His instrumental performances have been accompanied by stalwarts like Palghat Raghu, Umayalpuram Sivaraman, TK Moorthy, Vellore Ramabhadran, Karaikudi Mani and others. He has accompanied many top-ranking musicians including Sriyuths Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, Dr. M Balamuralikrishna, Dr. RK Srikanthan, KV Narayanaswamy,





*Bhargavi Venkatram with her mother Triveni and aunt Kavita (Popularly called Saralya Sisters)*

DK Pattammal, Dr M L Vasanthakumari, Kadri Gopalnath, Dr N Ramani, TN Seshagopalan, TV Sankaranarayanan, Mandolin U. Srinivas, Sanjay Subrahmanayam, TM Krishna and others. Venkatram has also performed several jugalbandi concerts with leading Hindustani musicians including Pandit Vishwamohan Bhat, Pandit Hariprasad Chaurasia, Ustad Murad Ali Khan and others.

He has won several "Best Violinist" awards in the Annual Conference of the prestigious Madras Music Academy including the "Parur Sundaram Iyer Award for Senior Violinist". Other honours include Ganakala Shree, Gaanavaridhi, Satyashree and Asthana Vidwan of Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam, Kanchipuram.

Venkatram also conceptualised the Violin-Venu-Veena trio and teamed up with fellow students of Shri HVK – G Ravikiran (flute) and myself (Veena) that has been a successful partnership going strong for over 12 years.

To us, his junior fellow-artistes, he has been a great mentor, friend and encourager. For those of us who grew up at the Vijaya College of Music, the presence of a great *Guru* notwithstanding, we didn't have to look far for a role model that we all wanted to emulate!

### **Music, career – a tough balancing act!**

Those of us trying to pursue dual careers are constantly waging a battle within ourselves – it is the engineer vs the musician, the pressures of busy corporate careers vs the passion for music. It is a path fraught with challenges. A concert in the evening cannot be an excuse for slacking off from a day's work. An all-day technical seminar cannot be an excuse for coming up short at the evening's concert. An overnight journey from a concert venue cannot excuse one from being less attentive on a Monday morning at work. A jet-lagged return from a week long official tour to the US and straight back to the concert hall from the airport? Well, it's all in a day's work for Venkatram!

How Vidwan Venkatram has overcome these obstacles and excelled in all fronts is a lesson in discipline, hard work, perseverance and passion. A large part of it is surely inherited from his illustrious father – who seemed to have the same limitless energy and drive in whatever he did. He acknowledges the huge support that his family, in particular his wife Vidushi Smt Triveni Venkatram has provided in this remarkable journey, much like how his mother, Smt Sarala Krishnamurthy stood as a beacon of strength to Sri HV Krishnamurthy! It is remarkable that

lineage is associated not only with music, but holds true to various other facets of life as well!

### ***An innovator - conjunction of technology and music***

It is difficult to separate Venkatram the engineer from the musician. As a youngster, he reminisces his college days - "I had an equal passion for electronics as I did for music. During my spare time, I would hook up my own electronic designs. This same passion has driven me at the work place as well for the past 25+ years". Few people know that he designed an electronic tambura prototype in the early 90s!

His involvement in Information Technology has helped Venkatram to make the best use of those technologies in the field of Carnatic Music. In 1999, Venkatram released a multimedia CD on Tyagaraja's Ghana Raga Pancharatnam during the Tyagaraja Festival held in Cleveland, USA. The CD featured multimedia presentation on Life and Times of Saint Tyagaraja as well as audio tracks of the *Panchratna kritis* with music notation and translation.

To this end, he had converted one of the rooms in the music college into what one would call in Silicon Valley as a "garage" - an engineering *startup* that made a new product from the bottom-up. With the help of a few engineers who were students of the music college, he developed a highly attractive multimedia CD that was way ahead of its time in concept! Remembering those days, he says "It was tough work. I would be up until 3 am to finish the work on the CD and leave for the office at 7am and do my regular office work. But it was a new idea that I was determined to take to completion". He also draws a staggering parallel to what his own father had done a decade previously - where he had used transparency slides on the projector to present aspects of music to a captivated audience at the Vijaya College of Music!

### **At the helm of VCM**

After the passing of Prof HV Krishnamurthy, who steered the institution through a momentous half-a-century and more, the mantle has passed on to Sri HK Venkatram. Despite his

commitments at work and busy concert schedules, Venkatram finds time to train scores of students on the violin.

As the current Principal of VCM, he has a clear vision of carrying forward the musical college to greater heights. He has executed quite a few novel activities at the music college already, with the support of his wife Vidushi Triveni, sister-in-law Vidushi Kavitha Saralaya and other senior staff and students.

Venkatram is passionate about popularising the Carnatic Music Art form using creative methods. He believes in making it fun and simple for rasikas to understand and students to learn. Apart from using technology to achieve those objectives, he has started an initiative of the concept of 'Concert with a Difference' at Vijaya College of Music. He has included adding an introductory 30 min lecdem session to every concert given by the artiste of the day. This he says, would immensely help the students and rasikas. As an example, a programme was conducted with the first segment devoted to how students should practice and perfect gamakams while singing geethams. This was then followed by a regular concert where many of the relevant aspects were demonstrated.

### **Kumari Bhargavi Venkatram – prodigiously talented**

Pursuit of excellence seems to be norm in the HVK family. The past few years has seen the rise of young talented vocalist, Bhargavi, the daughter of Sri HK Venkatram and Smt Triveni Venkatram. Bhargavi has pretty much had music flowing through her from the mother's womb. At the tender age of two, she could identify several ragas and had a perfect sense of *Swaragnana*. Initially trained in vocal by her parents and aunt, Bhargavi is currently under the tutelage of renowned vocalist Vidwan Sri TM Krishna of Chennai.

It is no surprise therefore, that Bhargavi has performed at various prestigious events. She has won several prizes in many national, inter school, inter collegiate and state level Music competitions including the First prize — All



*Bhargavi Venkatram accompanied by HK Venkatram and Arun Prakash*

India Radio National Level Competition, Kishora Pratibhe award from the Department of Kannada and Culture, Pratibhakankshi award from the Shri Rama Seva Mandali, and many others. Bhargavi is a graded artiste (B) at All India Radio.

Bhargavi also shows a keen interest in Bharathanatyam, dance and is the disciple of Smt and Sri Anuradha Sridhar for the past 10 years. She has completed the Junior Dance exam with Distinction.

Staying true to the tag of 'multi-taskers' in the family, Bhargavi has also excelled in her academic pursuits and is currently pursuing her Engineering in Computer Science from a reputed college in Bangalore.

Despite the pull of the family tradition, Bhargavi has done well to forge her own path.

**On choosing vocal over violin and her Guru -** "When I was 6 years old, it so happened that I got an opportunity to listen to Shri T M Krishna perform in Singapore and I was immediately drawn towards his music. I instinctively requested him to teach me. He advised me to learn the basics and get back to him. I began my tutelage under him when I was in the 9th standard"

**On the influence and support of her family -** "The firm grounding I have received by learning numerous krithis from my mother and aunt, and

intricate aspects on raga based music from my father, have played a pivotal role in my musical journey".

**On the influence of her grandfather Sri HVK -** "What will inspire me forever is his eternal thirst for learning. He was a lifelong student of music which is something I will strive to be as well".

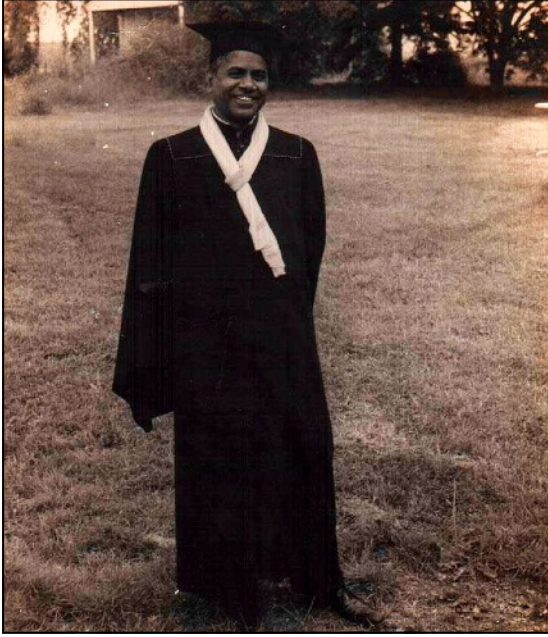
**Venkatram says, of Bhargavi's musical talent -** "Bhargavi showed innate talent in music from a very young age. However, we as parents did not want to pressurise her into taking up music. We let her choose her path on her own". He fully understands the pressures and expectations that come with being a budding artiste from a reputed musical family. The words of Meshtu seem to echo when he says, "I have no expectations except that she learns music the correct way, practices with sincerity and dedication. Opportunities and success will naturally follow hard-work and passion", is his advice.

Passion, hard work and success are indeed the hallmarks of this great musical lineage of Vidwan HV Krishnamurthy. Long may it continue and flourish! This quote from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow seems to ring true indeed – "The heights by great men reached and kept were not attained by sudden flight, but they, while their companions slept, were toiling upward in the night".



# Dorakuna ituvanti - raga, bhava, sahitya, sangita

Prof.V Aravinda Hebbar, Udupi



Way back in 1980s I remember to have listened to 'Dorakuna Ituvantiseva' of Saint Tyagaraja with all serenity at Music Academy, Madras to a house full concert. It was from a saint-looking bearded 'Bhishma Pitamaha' with his characteristic paraphrases, cut short by his shorter pieces of breaths! No acrobatics. No somersaults in the raga elaboration. Neat, tidy, and heart touching. So much absorbing at the nerval point that 'Rama Brahma Tanayudou' became a patent for the singer. Everyone became sublime with his absolute Music, only to exclaim at his music as - "Dorakuna Ituvanti raga, bhaava, saahitya, and sangeetha". He was Dr S Ramanathan, an extremely simple and a scholarly 'Maharshi' from Annamalai. He became known to many at his fifties-sixties! He had no time to present himself before the audience as he was totally absorbed into his own world of learning, teaching, researching on music. He was childlike

and could spend time with children, students and the like-minded people for any length of time.

## A brief biography of Dr. Ramanathan

Birth: April 8th, 1917 at Tirukoilur (Velavanur)

Parents: Subramania Shastri & Pattammal

Initial tutelage: At age 7 from Tirukoilur Ramudu Bhagavatar & Manalurpettai Subramania Dikshitar

Gurus: Tanjavur Ponniah Pillai, Tiruvaiyar Sabhesa Iyer, Sattur Krishna Iyengar, Madurai Subramania Iyer, Tiger Varadachariar

Advanced Learning: Valadi Krishna Iyer, Devakottai Narayana Iyengar for Veena

Education: Sangita Bhooshanam from Annamalai University; Ph.D. (Ethnomusicology) from Wesleyan University, Middletown, Connecticut, USA for his dissertation work on Silappadikaram (1972).

Noted scholar, researcher and teacher. Author of several papers, treatises and monographs. Associated with B Rajam Iyer in the Tamil production of Sangita Sampradaya Pradarshini. Dean, Visiting Professor, Principal and Research Director in various Institutions

Proficient vainika, vocalist, researcher, teacher and learner

Concerts and music marked by bhava, deep understanding of sahitya. Emphasis on classicism and chastity of original music and lyrics.

Titles: Sangita Kalanidhi (1985), Isai Perarignar (1981), Sangita Kala Sagara (1987), Swati Tilakam (1984) and so on.

Sishya Parampara: S Sowmya, P Unnikrishnan, Savitri Satyamurthy, Geetha Ramanathan Bennett, Seetha Narayanan, Vasumathi Nagarajan,



Sukanya Raghunathan (Veena), Banumathy Raghuraman, Singapore (Veena/vocal), Vidya Hariharan (Veena and vocal), Vanathy Raghuraman, Latha Radhakrishnan (violin and vocal), Padma Gadiyar (Veena), Thyagarajan/Raju, Sucharithra, Lavanya, and Kalpana (Pavithra) etc.

Passed away on March 19th, 1988 at Chennai

Ramanathan had his training though in a University [Annamalai University], he had an affectionate folds of stalwarts like Tiruvaiyar Sabhesh Iyer, Tiger Varadachariar, Tanjavur Ponnaiah Pillai, Sattur Krishna Iyengar and a host of others in a 'Gurukula' system of teaching. Tiger Varadachariar used to take him along with him to Mysore and other places always. Ramanathan accumulated a vast repertoire of songs and ragas from gurus and self study. After a long career as professor of Musicology at The Central College of Carnatic Music in Madras, he went to Wesleyan University, USA (1964). Dr. Ramanathan returned to India and became the Professor at the Music College in Madras. In the 1970s he moved to Madurai to serve at the Sadguru Sangeetha Samajam. Later he also served as the Director of Research at Tamil Isai Sangam.

Dr. SR spent his younger days more in foreign countries- such as US, Malaysia and Taiwan. At the Wesleyan University he did his doctoral thesis and along with Prof Jagannathachari did research on music on Silappadikkaram, the classic work of the Sangam age. He was awarded a Doctorate for this work, a rare example of a diploma holder qualifying for a PhD!



*A junior slot had been given in Music Academy in 1951 for young and upcoming musicians. Maharajapuram Santhanam, DKJ, Nedunuri were given this slot then. In 1954, RK Srikanthan, SR Janakiraman were given the Junior slot (at 2.30pm). After 1958 a Sub-Senior slot was created at 3.30 p.m., where S. Ramanathan, MD Ramanathan, and Voletti were given the chance.*

His research on the use of 22 srutis in Karnatic music devising a 'Sruti Veena' with 23 strings (made by the instrument maker Ramanathan of Tiruchi) was very unique and opened vistas on the subtleties of some ragas and kritis. The researches on Kudumiyamalai inscription, won him much praise. He has done a vast survey and Research on the folk songs of Tamil Nadu like Kavadi Chindu. Other than many papers, books and monographs, Dr SR has worked with B. Rajam Iyer to translate the Magnum Opus - 'Sangeeta Sampradaya Pradarshini' of Subbarama Dikshitar to Tamil. His teachings, discourses and renderings had a telling effect on any lay listener and the connoisseur alike, highly convincing for a ready approval. His lec-dems on 'A Day with Tyagaraja' were House-Full phenomenon. He has given many chamber concerts while in the US and was also given the unique opportunity to perform on World Human Rights Day at the United Nations in New York in 1964.

Ramanathan's scholarship was admired and admitted by all. Everybody respected him for his encyclopaedic knowledge and memory. He would delve into the deepest fathoms of Ragas and excavate their most natural colour from them. His teachings on students like S. Sowmya and Unnikrishnan made a tremendous impact not only on themselves but also on their audience listeners. The softness, the execution of subtle and pure form of gamakas without an overpowered 'hatha yoga' exercises, well embellished bhava- laden sahitya phrases, an endless flow of sarva laghu patterns of swara kalpana in an appropriate kalapramana, were the high lights from their Guru.

"Dr S. Ramanathan was a musician and musicologist, a walking encyclopaedia of information on Carnatic Music. He had served as the last court of appeal on all theoretical doubts for years, attracting young and old with his clear and riveting demonstrations." - The Hindu, wrote.

His penchant to learn more and more made him more like a thirsty student. He never became a professional. Perhaps this made him to come to the forefront of the concert platform very late in his life. It was Palghat T S Mani Iyer who introduced him on to the stage in his fifties!.

Once he had an offer for a concert from the Government of India for a National Cultural Festival. The official secretary asked for the expected remuneration from Dr. SR. It was quite unexpected to Dr SR. He said, he had not asked for any remuneration from anybody so far. The answer was quite unexpected to the secretary!. He thought the 'fellow' would be an unfit for the situation. SR did not get the concert!. In spite of an urgent need of money due to poverty in his family, he had not asked for any money. This made him 'unfit' to the situation. Ramanathan remained silent for this commercial world. He remained 'unfit' all through his life time to respond to such 'money bargains.' He did not become popular; perhaps he had no time to worry for it also!. He firmly believed that Serene music could not compete with popular music, where its potentiality was unlimited.

Though people respected him as a venerable soul, less that they urged for his concerts. He was more revered as a pedagogue than a performer. It is really regrettable to note that except for some free lance writings from very few people like Geetha Bennett, no single exclusive Biography is available on him by any authors. Except for about half a dozen of good old snaps, not anything much of his photos are also available. Perhaps all the nine planets (Nava grahas) had a different 'favour' towards him making him to remain mostly unknown to the public as a 'fragrant jasmine of the forest'. He got succumbed to cancer of lungs at his end. He re-

*I remember Dr. S Ramanathan's visit to Udupi MGM College in 1977/79. He sang Bhairavi, Mukhari and Maanji in that concert. He had a serious panel discussion with the Yakshagana stalwarts like Dr. Shivarama Karanth, Ku. Shi. Haridasa Bhatta, Neelavara Ramakrishnayya, and others. He had expressed his joy, for having preserved some rare tala ( ti tti ttai) and raga forms such as ghanta, deshakshi, jukahuli, dhvalaara, mechali, etc. in Yakshagana. (Those audio-video clippings are available in MGM College).*

fused to take any medicine; "but I am prepared to take another form of medicine-music", he said. During such moments, when his daughter Geetha Bennett was playing Veena in front of him 'Ika naina na,' in ragam "Pushpalathika," without knowing the composer's name, in that semi-conscious condition, he would whisper, in a very feeble voice "Tirupati Narayanaswamy."! Before going to coma he had asked his daughter Geetha Bennett to sing Dikshitar's Navaavarana kriti in Sahana (of sarva rogahara chakra) 'Kamalaambikayaam'. His soul left his body after listening to his own composition 'Aadum arase' in ragam Suruti sung by another daughter, Dr. Vanathy Raghuraman. "As she continued singing, at one point of time gently he opened his eyes and asked his daughter to sing nishaada correctly! He went in to a deep sleep and never got up. He was 71 complete when he died in 1988.

Sangeeta Kalanidhi Dr S Ramanathan's Birth Centenary celebration Committee organised an event at Chennai "Vani Mahal on 8th April 2017 to mark his birth centenary. Geetha Bennett, vainika and vocalist and daughter of Dr. S Ramanathan was on a mission and published on YouTube at least 100 of the songs rendered by her father. Considering the fact that Geetha is a cancer survivor since past 22 years, this is a stupendous task as her tribute to her affectionate father and Guru. During the event Sowmya and Unnikrishna his disciples gave a nostalgic concert that contained their Guru's teachings.

# Geetha Ramanand at SRLKM

*Shubha Srikanth, disciple of Geetha Ramanand*

Swarabhushini Vid. Geetha Ramanand a Veena exponent belonging to Mysore Veena school gave a concert on 2nd April. She was ably supported by Vid. Adamyia Ramanand and Vid. G Omkar Rao on Mrudanga and Ghata respectively. Her disciple Kum. Surabhi Gopal accompanied her on second Veena.

Vidhushi Geetha Ramanand commenced her recital with a very popular ata taala varna 'veeriboni' in raaga Bhairavi. It was followed by a Haridasa composition 'Nammamma Sharade' in Mohana which was a welcome change in the concert platforms. The Next krithi was 'Bhajana seyave o manasa', in raga Kedara, composed by Anai Ayya brothers. She impressed the audience by playing a rare raga Megha Ranjini. The rare kriti of Muttu Swami Deekshitar 'Venkateshwara Yadava Bhupathim ashrayeham' was presented with lilting swaraprastara. Kriti 'sri Rajarajeshwari' in raga Prabhupriya composed by Veena Venkatagiriappa was played next. It was a pleasant surprise when she took raga Varaali for

elaborate alaapana and followed it by 'eti janmamidi', with commendable neraval and swarakalpana. 'Lalithambe shrimathe', a melodious composition of veene Venkatagiriappa, in the raga Bhuvana Gaandhaari was presented before going on to the main piece Raga, Taana and Pallavi in Kambhoji. After the detailed alaapana, she played raagamaalika taana in which ragas Bhowli, Kalyani and Hindola were presented beautifully along with Kambhoji. The pallavi was set to vilamba Adi thala and starts after six counts. lyric was 'Hare Rama Govinda Mukunda Muraare' which included thrikaala. The pallavi presentation was followed by a brilliant and impressive Tani avartana, presented by Vid. Adamyia and Vid. Omkar Rao. Kumari Surabhi Gopal supported very well and shared the honours.

The concert concluded with a tillana of Veena Sheshanna in the raaaga Jinjhuti and a couple of Dasara Padas. The concert was a treat for the audience who thoroughly enjoyed it.



# Neela aunty, as I saw her...

*Sindhu Gopinath, student of SRLKM and GV Neela*

I wish I had been closer to Neela aunty in the last few years, visited her often, and most of all learnt music from her. But looking back, I have innumerable memories of her from the seventeen years I learnt from her, Vocal and Veena. I wish to make this article a very personal one, in the sense, I shall discuss about Neela aunty as a teacher, and, as a person I was fortunate to interact with for almost twenty years.

## **Neela aunty, as a teacher...**

Every session with Neela aunty included much more than the lesson in progress. Right from the first class, she made it clear that attitude and posture are important in music; she insisted that a student must sit erect while singing, sing with an open voice, come prepared to every single class, and, she made sure that I implemented all these points every time I practised. She insisted that the set of audience one sings to should make little or no difference in the practice. The songs being sung may vary, but the diligence remains the same; be it a practice session or a performance. She said that I had to be very serious at practice, even if I was singing to my grandmother.

Her relationship with a student extended beyond the class. Neela aunty and I spoke over phone last month. We talked about my four month old son, and my life in general. I know how genuinely happy she felt knowing that I am doing well. She asked me to share photographs of my son at the earliest. I wish she had seen him too.

## **Neela aunty, as a person...**

Neela aunty was always young. Always energetic and enthusiastic to learn a new song. I remember her giving me the notes of a new song that she wished to learn and saying, "Sindhu, could you make a fair copy of this song, let us learn it

together." I often got the vibe that, between us, she was the teen!

Another reason I feel so is because she was very happy to teach young children. I wondered as to how someone who had been teaching for more than fifty years, could be enthusiastic about teaching Sarale Varase. But she surely was. She would often mention about a new student who surprised her, and her plans to harness the talent of that student to the fullest. Actually, this is a trait common to all the teachers of Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira. They believe in teaching the basics thoroughly, and they also believe in encouraging young artists to make their mark. Everyone who knows the institution shall definitely agree with me on this point.

Neela aunty always looked very presentable. Whether it was at eight in the morning, or nine in the night, there no difference in the way she looked. I liked this quality about her; dressing neatly is a reflection of the enthusiasm within.

She loved and respected her family members, and for sure, her teachers. She would often mention her dad, and his relentless effort in getting his children to learn music; his idea behind including the word 'Lalitha' in the name of the institution: As a student, one must aim at overall empowerment, that is, one has to accumulate knowledge and try to be skilled at all fine arts (ಎಲಿತ ಕಲೆಗಳು). Similarly, Neela aunty recollected and cherished some important qualities about her mother. She mentioned that her mother was a kind lady who ensured that no one who came to their house left with an empty stomach.

She recollected several qualities about her siblings, and especially when it came to Ranganayaki aunty, she had a special bonding with her. She used to say that it is not easy for two equally talented artists to sail along harmoniously for



long, but that it fortunately happened with Rangu aunty and her.

She truly appreciated Rangu aunty's effort and sacrifices, and her determination in propelling the institution forward. The two of them loved each other's company. I had some wonderful opportunities when the two of them taught me together. Those sessions were amazing; I could see how they celebrated their similarities and appreciated the differences.

Neela aunty adored Krishna Prasad uncle. When you saw the two of them during their daily routine, this feeling was not obvious though. Because I think he was the one person she took total liberty with. The breakfast he served would go back at least thrice, for corrections! And, he would make the corrections patiently and with absolutely no change in his temperament. But when she recollected anything about him in his absence, she had the nicest things to say. She often said that their family, and in turn, she, was gifted to have a person like Krishna Prasad uncle amongst them.

She respected her guru, and mentioned how his policies helped them shape their career and become good teachers themselves. As I mention this, I happen to remember another fact. Neela aunty was brilliant and had the flair for music, even as a child. She told us how most of her initial learning was by simply listening to the classes Rangu aunty took from her teacher. It was amazing to hear that.

### **Neela aunty and I**

I think I can write much more about her. But it is somehow very painful to continue. Though there are thousands of people, family members, friends, students, people who know her well, or just had her acquaintance, I believe I had a beautiful and unique relationship with her. She is the person I saw the most, after my close family. I was there at the institution, every Tuesday and Thursday, (even the class days remained the same for all those years!) for seventeen years in a row, for my vocal and Veena lessons, both of which she taught herself. I believe I know not just her traits as a teacher, but her nuances as a person. This makes me say that she was simply

too important for me to lose. I cannot really substantiate how, but, my liking for her grew stronger when I moved away. (moved to California, to join my husband after marriage and set on a whole new voyage!)

I called her over phone soon after the move, and with a lot of skepticism about how she would receive my question, I asked her, "Aunty, do you think I can teach music?" She immediately answered, "Why not? Go ahead! Start at the earliest." I was very happy to hear that from her. Because her confidence in me means a lot to me.

I have been teaching for three years now, and I have to say that I developed the deepest adoration for her when I started teaching. Since then there have been moments, a lot of them, when I felt strongly to say a thank you or a sorry to her. The feeling was so overwhelming that I called her each time I felt so, however ended up having just a normal conversation. Now that she is no more, I really wish I had mentioned those sorry's and thank you's!

### **Sangita Vedantha Dhureena for Vishaka Hari**

*Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira hosted a programme to commemorate the millennium year of Saint Sri Ramanujacharya. On this occasion, Smt. Vishaka Hari was conferred with the award 'Sangita Vedantha Dhureena'. The award carries a citation, a silver medal and a purse of rupees one lakh. The programme was held at Kuvempu Kalakshetra Auditorium on Saturday, April 29th 2017.*



# A Tribute to my Teacher - Vid. GV Neela

Anita Mahabaleshwara, Senior student of SRLKM and GV Neela

ಅಧಿಗತ್ಯ ಗುರೋಃ ಜ್ಞಾನಂ ಛಾತ್ರೇಭ್ಯೋ ವಿತರಂತಿ ಯೋ |  
ವಿದ್ಯಾಂ ವಾತ್ಸಲ್ಯನಿಧಯಃ ಶಿಕ್ಷಕಾ ಮಮ ದೈವತಮ್ ||

(The teachers who distribute knowledge among the student after getting it from their gurus and who are store houses of love and knowledge are indeed like God to me)

Smt. GV Neela was a great musician and music teacher par excellence. I was very fortunate to have been under her tutelage for about 18 years learning Veena from her at SRLK Mandira. She along with her elder sister Vidushi Smt. Ranganayakamma and brother Vidwan Sri GV Krishna Prasad established this great institution totally dedicated to the service of music in the year 1955, as per the guidelines laid down by their father and educationist Sri G. Vedanta lyengar. It was due to her that I had the opportunity of not only listening to great music but also getting to personally meet/see the great artist of Karnatak music at such close quarters, when they came to pay their respect to her.

But beyond being a great musician and dedicated teacher, she was a wonderful human being for whom I have developed such love and affection that I could not imagine she would pass out of my life, so quickly and silently. She always greeted me with a smile (or for the matter any

person with whom she came into contact) enquired about my health, family etc., participating in all my joys with her blessings and affection. For the past 3 years since I was very busy at my personal life I could not continue the music lessons. But we kept in touch by phone or I would visit her regularly. The last time I met her was the Monday few days before she passed away. We finished our usual conversation after which she took music lessons for 2 young girls in her usual organised systematic manner, correcting them and encouraging them. It was getting late and left after the class came to a close never for once imagining that I would not have the fortune of meeting her again the next time I visited SRLKM.

I truly miss her presence in my life, her music classes, her love and affection, her smile and our conversations together. I am grateful to the almighty that she was my teacher, enriching my life every way as is rightly said.

ನ ಗುರೋರಧಿಕಂ ತತ್ತ್ವಂ ನ ಗುರೋರಧಿಕಂ ತಪಃ |  
ನ ಗುರೋರಧಿಕಂ ಜ್ಞಾನಂ ತಸ್ಯೈ ಶ್ರೀ ಗುರವೇ ನಮಃ ||

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## Obituary



GV Varadarajan (93) Rtd., Senior Assistant Director of Public Instruction passed away peacefully on 10 July 2017. He leaves behind his wife, four daughters and grand children. GV Varadarajan is the brother of Shri. GV Krishna Prasad, Hon. Secretary of Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira.

## ಗುರು ನೀಳಾರವರಿಗೆ ನುಡಿ ನಮನ

- ಶ್ರೀಮತಿ ಉಮಾ ರಾಮಮೂರ್ತಿ,  
- ಶ್ರೀರಾಮ ಲಲಿತ ಕಲಾ ಮಂದಿರದ ಪ್ರಪಂಚಮ ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿನಿ

"ಸಂಗೀತವೇ ಜ್ಞಾನ, ಸಂಗೀತವೇ ಮಾನ, ಸಂಗೀತವೇ ಮೋಕ್ಷಕ್ಕೆ ಸೋಪಾನ" ಎಂಬ ನಾಣ್ಣಡಿಯನ್ನು ಕಾರ್ಯಗತಮಾಡಿ ಅರ್ಪಿಸಿದುದು "ಶ್ರೀ ರಾಮ ಲಲಿತ ಕಲಾ ಮಂದಿರ"ದ ಸ್ಥಾಪಕ ರೂವಾರಿಗಳು. ಸುಮಾರು 1954ನೇ ಇಸವಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಹಾಡುಗಾರಿಕೆ ಮತ್ತು ವೀಣೆ ಕಲಿಕೆಗೆ ಪ್ರಪಂಚಮ ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿನಿಯಾಗಿ ಕಲಾಮಂದಿರಕ್ಕೆ ಸೇರ್ಪಡೆಯಾದದ್ದು ನನ್ನ ಸೌಭಾಗ್ಯ. ಹಾಗೆಯೇ ಅವರ ಕುಟುಂಬದವರಲ್ಲಿ ಒಬ್ಬಳಾಗಿದ್ದೇನೆ ಇಂದಿನವರೆವಿಗೂ.

ಕಳೆದ ತಿಂಗಳು ಹಠಾತ್ತನೆ ನನ್ನ ಗುರು ವಿಧುಷಿ ನೀಳಾ ಇನ್ನಿಲ್ಲ ಎನ್ನುವ ವಾರ್ತೆ ಭರಿಸಲಾರದ ದುಃಖದ ಸಂಗತಿಯಾಯಿತು. ಅವರ ಬಗ್ಗೆ ನನ್ನ ಮನಸ್ಸಿನಂಗಳದಲ್ಲಿ ಬೆಳೆದ ಪುಷ್ಪಗಳನ್ನು ಅವರಿಗೆ ಈ ಲೇಖನಿಯ ಮೂಲಕ ಸಮರ್ಪಿಸಲು ಪ್ರಯತ್ನ ಮಾಡುತ್ತಿದ್ದೇನೆ.

ದಿ|| ಶ್ರೀ ವೇದಾಂತ ಅಯ್ಯಂಗಾರ್ ಮತ್ತು ಶ್ರೀಮತಿ ಲಕ್ಷ್ಮಿ ದಂಪತಿಗಳ ಪುತ್ರಿಯಾಗಿ 1935ನೇ ಇಸವಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಮೈಸೂರು ಪ್ರಾಂತದ ಕಿಕ್ಕೇರಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಜನಿಸಿದರು. ಶ್ರೀಮತಿ ನೀಳಾರವರು ಅಯ್ಯಂಗಾರರ ಅಮಿಭಕ್ತ ಕುಟುಂಬದಲ್ಲಿ 4 ಮಂದಿ ಸಹೋದರಿಯರು, ಇಬ್ಬರು ಸಹೋದರರೊಂದಿಗಿನ ಒಡನಾಟ. ಚಿಕ್ಕ ವಯಸ್ಸಿನಿಂದಲೇ ಆ ಕುಟುಂಬದಲ್ಲಿ ಸಂಗೀತವು ರಕ್ತಗತವಾಗಿ ಹರಿದು ಬಂದ ವಿದ್ಯೆ. ಇವರ ಹಿರಿಯ ಸಹೋದರಿ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಕಲಾಶ್ರೀ ಶ್ರೀಮತಿ ರಂಗನಾಯಕಿರವರೊಂದಿಗೆ ಯುಗಳ ಗಾಯನವನ್ನು ಹಾಡಿ ಶ್ಲೋಕಗಳ ಮೆಚ್ಚುಗೆ ಗಳಿಸಿದವರು ನೀಳಾರವರು. ಕೇವಲ ಹಾಡುಗಾರಿಕೆ ಅಲ್ಲದೆ ವೀಣೆ ಮತ್ತು ಪಿಟೀಲು ವಾದನದಲ್ಲಿ ಸಾಕಷ್ಟು ಪರಿಣಿತರಾಗಿದ್ದು ಅವರ ಸಹೋದರ ಶ್ರೀ ಜಿ.ವಿ. ಕೃಷ್ಣಪ್ರಸಾದ್ ರವರೂ ಸಹ ಮೃದಂಗ ವಾದನದಲ್ಲಿ ಹೆಸರು ಗಳಿಸಿದವರು. ಒಟ್ಟಿನಲ್ಲಿ ಒಂದು ಕಚೇರಿಗೆ ಪಕ್ಕವಾದ್ಯ ಎಲ್ಲದರಲ್ಲೂ ಕುಟುಂಬದವರೇ ಇದ್ದಿದ್ದು ವಿಶೇಷವೇ ಸರಿ ಎಂದರೇ ತಪ್ಪಾಗಲಾರದು. ನನ್ನ ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿ ದಿಸೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಸಾಕಷ್ಟು ಪಾಠವಾಗಿದ್ದುದರಿಂದ ನನ್ನ ಗುರುದ್ವಯರ ಕಚೇರಿಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ತಂಬೂರಿ ಶೃತಿಯನ್ನು ನುಡಿಸಿ ಕೆಲವೊಮ್ಮೆ ಹಾಡಲು ಅನುವು ಮಾಡಿಕೊಡುತ್ತಿದ್ದುದು ನನ್ನ ಪುಣ್ಯವೇ ಸರಿ.

ನೀಳಾರವರು ಪ್ರಾಥಮಿಕ ವಿದ್ಯಾಭ್ಯಾಸದಿಂದ ಇಂಟರ್‌ಮೀಡಿಯೇಟ್‌ವರೆಗೆ ವಿದ್ಯಾಭ್ಯಾಸದ ನಂತರ ಅವರಿಗೆ ಹೆಚ್ಚು ಇಷ್ಟವಾದ ಸಂಗೀತ ಕಚೇರಿಗೆ ಹೆಚ್ಚಿನ ಆಸಕ್ತಿಯನ್ನು ತೋರಿ ವಿದ್ವತ್ ಪರೀಕ್ಷೆ ಆದ ನಂತರ ಕೆಲವು ದಿವಸಗಳು ಹಾಸನದ ಸರ್ಕಾರಿ ಮಹಿಳಾ ಪ್ರೌಢಶಾಲೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಸಂಗೀತ ಶಿಕ್ಷಕಿಯಾಗಿ ಸೇವೆಯನ್ನು ಸಲ್ಲಿಸಿದರು. ಆ ಸಮಯದಲ್ಲಿ ಇವರ ಮೆಚ್ಚಿನ ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿನಿಯಾಗಿ ಸಂಗೀತ ನೃತ್ಯ ಅಕಾಡೆಮಿಯ ಛೇರ್ಮನ್ ಆಗಿದ್ದ ಪ್ರಮುಖ ಗಮಕಿ ಶ್ರೀಮತಿ ಗಂಗಮ್ಮ ಕೇಶವಮೂರ್ತಿಯವರು ಕೂಡ ಒಬ್ಬರು. ಗಂಗಮ್ಮನವರೇ ಹಲವಾರು ಬಾರಿ ನನ್ನ ಸಂಗೀತ ಗುರುಗಳು ವಿಧುಷಿ ನೀಳಾರವರು ಎಂದು ಹೇಳುತ್ತಿದ್ದುದನ್ನು ಇಲ್ಲಿ ಸ್ಮರಿಸಬಹುದು.

1954ರಲ್ಲಿ ತಂದೆಯ ಕುಟುಂಬದವರಲ್ಲ ಬೆಂಗಳೂರಿಗೆ ಬಂದು ನೆಲೆಸಿದ್ದು, ತಂದೆಯವರ ಇಷ್ಟದಂತೆ ಸಂಗೀತ ಶಾಲೆಯನ್ನು ತೆರೆದು ಕಲಾಸೇವೆಗಾಗಿ ಒಂದು ವೇದಿಕೆಯನ್ನು ಹುಟ್ಟು ಹಾಕುವ ಗುರಿಯನ್ನು ಅವರ ಮಕ್ಕಳು ತಂದೆಯ ನುಡಿಯಂತೆ ನಡೆದು ಕಾರ್ಯಗತ ಮಾಡಿದ ಅಯ್ಯಂಗಾರ್‌ರವರ ಕುಟುಂಬ ವರ್ಗದವರಿಗೆ ಸಂದಿದ ಹೆಮ್ಮೆಯ ವಿಷಯ. ಶ್ರೀರಾಮ ಲಲಿತ ಕಲಾ ಮಂದಿರದ ಸ್ಥಾಪಕ ರೂವಾರಿಯಾಗಿ ನೀಳಾರವರು ತಮ್ಮನ್ನು ತಾವೇ ಸದಾ ಕಾಲ ತೊಡಗಿಸಿಕೊಂಡು ವಿಶೇಷತೆಯನ್ನು ನಾವು ಈಗಲೂ ಕಾಣಬಹುದು. ವಿಧುಷಿ ನೀಳಾರವರು ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಗಳಿಗೆ ಬಲು ಶಿಸ್ತಿನಿಂದ ಪಾಠವನ್ನು ಕಲಿಸುತ್ತಿದ್ದರು. ನಾನೂ ಸಹ ಪ್ರಾರಂಭಿಕ ವೀಣೆಯ ಪಾಠವನ್ನು ಅವರಿಂದ ಕಲಿಯುವ ಅವಕಾಶವು ದೊರೆಯಿತು. ಅವರ ಪಾಠ ಕ್ರಮದಲ್ಲಿ ರಾಗ, ಭಾವ, ತಾಳಗಳನ್ನೊಳಗೊಂಡ ಶಿಕ್ಷಣದಲ್ಲಿ ಹಿಂದಿನ ದಿನದ ಪಾಠವನ್ನು ಸರಿಯಾಗಿ ಕಲಿತ ನಂತರವೇ ಮುಂದುವರಿಸುತ್ತಿದ್ದುದು ವಿಶೇಷವೇ ಕಾಣಬಹುದಾಗಿತ್ತು. ವೇದಾಂತ ಅಯ್ಯಂಗಾರ್‌ರವರ ಕುಟುಂಬದ ಸದಸ್ಯರೆಲ್ಲರೂ ಸಂಗೀತ ಕಲಾವಿದರು. ಅವರ ಅಕ್ಕ ರಂಗನಾಯಕಿಯವರು ಹಾಡುಗಾರಿಕೆ ಮತ್ತು ವೀಣಾ ವಾದನದಲ್ಲಿ ಪ್ರಾವೀಣ್ಯತೆ ಇದ್ದರೆ ಹಿರಿಯ ಅಕ್ಕನ ಮಕ್ಕಳಾದ ಸಂಗೀತ ವಿಧುಷಿ ಜಿ.ಎಸ್. ಕಮಲ ಮತ್ತು ವಿಧುಷಿ ಜಿ.ಎಸ್. ರಾಜಲಕ್ಷ್ಮಿಯವರು ಯುಗಳ ಗಾಯನದಲ್ಲಿ ಸುಪ್ರಸಿದ್ಧ ಕಲಾವಿದರು. ಅವರೂ ಸಹ ಕಲಾಮಂದಿರದ ಶಿಷ್ಯೆಯರು. ಇವರ ತಮ್ಮ ಜಿ.ಎಸ್. ರಾಮಾನುಜಂ ಅವರು ಮೃದಂಗ ಹಾಗೂ ಘಟಂ ವಾದನದಲ್ಲಿ ಪ್ರವೀಣರು. ಮತ್ತೊಬ್ಬ ಹಿರಿಯ ಅಕ್ಕನ ಮಗಳು ಜಯಶ್ರೀ ವರದರಾಜನ್ ನೃತ್ಯ ಮತ್ತು ಹಾಡುಗಾರಿಕೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಹೆಸರು ಮಾಡಿ

ಅನೇಕ ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಗಳಿಗೆ ಸಂಗೀತವನ್ನು ಕಲಿಸುತ್ತಿದ್ದಾರೆ. ಶ್ರೀಮತಿ ಜಯಶ್ರೀ ವರದರಾಜನ್ ಅವರು ಅಮೇರಿಕಾದಲ್ಲಿ ಸಂಗೀತದ ಕಲಾವಂತಿಕೆಯನ್ನು ಪಸರಿಸಿದ್ದಾರೆ ಅದು ನಮ್ಮ ಕಲಾಮಂದಿರಕ್ಕೆ ಮತ್ತೊಂದು ಗರಿ ಸಿಕ್ಕಿದಂತಾಗಿದೆ.

ಸುಮಾರು 60ರ ದಶಕದಲ್ಲಿ ನೀಳಾರವರ ಉಸ್ತುವಾರಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಅನೇಕ ಪ್ರಸಿದ್ಧ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮಗಳನ್ನು ರೂಪಿಸಿದವರು. ಮುಖ್ಯವಾಗಿ ಬೆಂಗಳೂರಿನ ಎಸ್.ಜೆ. ಪಾಲಿಟೆಕ್ನಿಕ್ ಇನ್ಸ್ಟಿಟ್ಯೂಟ್‌ನ ನೂತನ ಕಟ್ಟಡದ ಪ್ರಾರಂಭೋತ್ಸವ ಹಾಗೂ ವಾರ್ಷಿಕ ದಿನಾಚರಣೆಯ ಅಂಗವಾಗಿ ಶ್ರೀ ಜಯಚಾಮರಾಜೇಂದ್ರ ಒಡೆಯರ್‌ರವರ ಸಮ್ಮುಖದಲ್ಲಿ ಪಂಚವೀಣಾವಾದನವನ್ನು ನಿರ್ದೇಶಿಸಿ ನುಡಿಸಲು ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಗಳೊಂದಿಗೆ ಅನುವು ಮಾಡಿಕೊಟ್ಟರು. ಆ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮದಲ್ಲಿ ನನಗೂ ನುಡಿಸಲು ಅವಕಾಶವು ದೊರೆತಿದ್ದು ನನ್ನ ಅದೃಷ್ಟವೆಂದು ಭಾವಿಸುತ್ತೇನೆ. ಅಂದಿನ ಮುಖ್ಯ ಸಮಾರಂಭಕ್ಕೆ ಶ್ರೀ ಶ್ರೀ ಜಯಚಾಮರಾಜೇಂದ್ರ ಒಡೆಯರ್ ಅಲ್ಲದೆ ಅಂದಿನ ಮುಖ್ಯಮಂತ್ರಿ ಕಡಿದಾಳ್ ಮಂಜಪ್ಪನವರು, ಸರ್ ಎಂ. ವಿಶ್ವೇಶ್ವರಯ್ಯನವರು ಉಪಸ್ಥಿತರಿದ್ದು, ಪಂಚವೀಣಾ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮವನ್ನು ನೋಡಿ ಬಹಳ ಪ್ರಶಂಸಿಸಿದರು. ಅಂದಿನ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮದ ಸವಿನೆನಪು ಇನ್ನೂ ಹೆಸರಾಗಿದೆ. ಹಲವಾರು ಕಡೆ ನಡೆಯುತ್ತಿದ್ದ ಸಂಗೀತ ಸ್ಪರ್ಧೆಗೆ ಕಲಾಮಂದಿರದ ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಗಳನ್ನು ಪ್ರೋತ್ಸಾಹಿಸಿ ಕಳುಹಿಸುತ್ತಿದ್ದರು. ಸ್ಪರ್ಧೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ವಿಜೇತರಾದವರಲ್ಲಿ ನಾನೂ ಒಬ್ಬಳಾಗಿದ್ದೆ. ಪ್ರತಿ ವರ್ಷವೂ ನಮ್ಮ ಕಲಾಮಂದಿರದ ವಾರ್ಷಿಕೋತ್ಸವವನ್ನು ಬಹಳ ಕಲಾತ್ಮಕವಾಗಿ ವಿಜೃಂಭಣೆಯಿಂದ ವಿಡುಷಿ ನೀಳಾ ಮತ್ತು ವಿಡುಷಿ ರಂಗನಾಯಕಿಯವರ ನೇತೃತ್ವದಲ್ಲಿ ನಡೆಯುತ್ತಿತ್ತು. ಕಲಾಮಂದಿರದ 25ನೇ ವರ್ಷದ ವಾರ್ಷಿಕೋತ್ಸವದಲ್ಲಿ 25 ವಾದ್ಯಗಳನ್ನೊಳಗೊಂಡ ವಾದ್ಯ ವೃಂದವನ್ನು ಪ್ರಪಂಚದಾದ್ಯಂತ ಬಾರಿಗೆ ಸರ್ ಪುಟ್ಟಣ್ಣ ಚೆಟ್ಟಿ ಪುರಭವನದಲ್ಲಿ ಹಾಗೂ ಕನ್ನಡ ಸಾಹಿತ್ಯ ಪರಿಷತ್ತಿನ ಸಭಾಂಗಣದಲ್ಲಿ ನಡೆಸಿದ್ದು ವಿಶೇಷವಾದ ಮನ್ನಣೆ ದೊರಕಿತು. ಯಾವುದೇ ಸಂದರ್ಭದ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮವಾಗಲೀ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸಂಗೀತದ ಚೌಕಟ್ಟಿನಲ್ಲಿಯೇ ಇರುವಂತೆ ಸಂಗೀತದ ಮಟ್ಟವನ್ನು ಕಾಪಾಡಿಕೊಂಡು ಬಂದವರು. ಸಂಸ್ಥೆಯ ಎಷ್ಟೋ ಮುಖ್ಯವಾದ ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮದಲ್ಲಿ ಖ್ಯಾತ ಹಿರಿಯ ವೀಣಾ ವಿದ್ವಾಂಸರಾಗಿದ್ದ ಎಲ್. ರಾಜಾರಾವ್ ರವರು ಮುಖ್ಯ ಅತಿಥಿಗಳಾಗಿ ಭಾಗವಹಿಸಿ ಸಂಸ್ಥೆಯ ಚಟುವಟಿಕೆಗಳನ್ನು ನೋಡಿ ಬಹಳ ಸಂತೋಷ ಪಟ್ಟಿದ್ದಾರೆ. ಗಾಂಧಿಜಯಂತಿ ಮತ್ತು ಸರ್ವೋದಯ ದಿನಾಚರಣೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ವೈಷ್ಣವ ಜನತೆ ಮತ್ತು ರಘುಪತಿ ರಾಘವ ರಾಜಾರಾಂ ಕೃತಿಗಳನ್ನು ತಪ್ಪದೇ ಮಹಾತ್ಮ ಗಾಂಧೀರವರ ಪ್ರತಿಮೆ ಇರುವ ಆವರಣದಲ್ಲಿ ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು ನಗರ ಪಾಲಿಕೆಯವರು ನಡೆಸುತ್ತಿದ್ದ ಸಮಾರಂಭಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ತಪ್ಪದೇ ಹಲವಾರು ವರ್ಷಗಳು ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮವನ್ನು ನಡೆಸಿಕೊಟ್ಟಿದ್ದಾರೆ. ನನ್ನ ಗುರುದ್ವಯರ ಈ ರೀತಿಯ ಸಂಗೀತ ಸೇವೆ ಹಲವಾರು ದಶಕಗಳು ನಡೆದು ಬಂದ ಹೆಗ್ಗಳಿಕೆ ಇವರದ್ದಾಯಿತು.

ನೀಳಾ ಸಹೋದರಿಯವರು ಅನೇಕ ವೈವಿಧ್ಯಮಯ ಸಂಗೀತ ಕೈಂಕರ್ಯಗಳನ್ನು ಸಮಾಜಕ್ಕೆ ನೀಡಿ ಇತರರ ಜೀವನದ ಸಾರ್ಥಕತೆಗೆ ದಾರಿದೀಪರಾದವರು. ಅವರ ಸ್ಮರಣೆ ಸದಾ ಚಿರನೂತನ. ಅವರ ಆತ್ಮಕ್ಕೆ ಶಾಂತಿ ಕೋರುತ್ತಾ ಕಲಾಮಂದಿರದ ವಿದ್ಯಾರ್ಥಿಗಳೊಡಗೂಡಿ ಹೃತ್ಪೂರ್ವಕವಾದ ನಮನವನ್ನು ಈ ಲೇಖನಿಯ ಬರಹದ ಮೂಲಕ ಅರ್ಪಿಸಿ ನನ್ನ ನುಡಿನಮನಕ್ಕೆ ವಿದಾಯ ಹೇಳಬಯಸುತ್ತೇನೆ.

ಉಮಾಮೂರ್ತಿ

Entry to all the concerts of SRLKM is FREE. We do welcome music patrons to come forward and extend financial contributions/sponsorships voluntarily and liberally, so that all music lovers can utilise the valuable opportunity to enjoy classical music. These donations carry exemption as per 80G of IT Act, 1961.



# An evening of enthrallment

Anagha Yoganand

Sri Rama Lalita kala Mandira organised a concert of Vidushi Padmavati Saranathan on the 25<sup>th</sup> of June. This gifted artist was accompanied by extremely gifted musicians Vid. Charulatha Ramanujam on Violin, and Vid. HS Sudhindra on the mridangam and Vid. Sukhanya Ramgopal on the ghatam. The concert was a tribute to Vid. GV Neela, Chief Founder, SRLKM's who attained the lord's feet recently.

The evening began with a hymn from the last verse of the Vishnu sahasranama, '*Kaayena Vaacha*', a shloka of complete surrender to lord Narayana. This was sung in Saveri and was followed by the tana varnam '*Sarasuda*' where the charanam was embellished with swaram. Dikshitar's '*Ganapathe Mahamathe*' in Kalyani followed this that included a quick nerval and kalpana swaram. Saint Tyagaraja's, '*callere rama*' in raga Ahiri was then rendered next. After an expansive raga alapana of '*Simhendramadhyama*', which was expertly dealt by both the vocalist and the violinist, '*natajana paripalakana*' was presented. The neraval was sung at '*sruti moralida leda*' for which an engaging volley of kalpana

swarams followed that mesmerised the audience. This was succeeded by a brisk rendition of '*Nenarunchinanu*' (Malavi).

A composition very close to Vid. GV Neela's heart, '*O Rangashayi*' in Kamboji was the main piece. The raga alapana which preceded the composition, along with credits to the violinist too, certainly left the audience spellbound. The neraval and swaraprasthara were equally well rendered. The tani that followed added to the supreme feeling of the audience. After this, a short Ragam-Tanam-Pallavi was presented. The Pallavi, '*Sagara Samana Nada Vihara Tyagaraja Palaya Sada*' was in praise of saint Tyagaraja, composed by vidushi Padmavathi herself. It was set in three raga - Vasanta, Bhairavi and Vasanta Bhairavi, set to Tishra Triputa tala in Mishra Nadai. The pallavi was beautifully constructed and the ragams Anandabhairavi, Bhoga Vasantam, Salaga Bhairavi, Kalyana Vasantam and Sindhubhairavi were incorporated in the kalpana Swaras. The concert concluded with a Meera Bhajan '*hey govinda hey gopala*'.



# Lalitha Kala Suma

Sri Rama Lalitha Kala mandira is honouring artistes with the title “LALITHA KALA SUMA” who have made valuable contribution to the society in propagating Karnatak music. The honours are in memory of chief founders Karnataka Kalashree GV Ranganayakamma, Vid.GV Neela and Chief Patron Dr.GV Vijayalakshmi. The 68 artistes to be honoured are as below.

## Vocal

1. N. Ananthapadmanabha Rao
2. Bhagyalakshmi Ramanna
3. Geetha Satyamurthy
4. Geetha Murthy
5. G.R. Jaya
6. G.A. Kumaraswamy
7. Kanakaswamy
8. M.A. Meera
9. M.A. Mythili
10. Dr. S.V. Meenakshi Ravi
11. Malathi Singlachar
12. D.V. Nagarajan
13. B.S. Narayana Iyengar
14. Neela Narahari
15. Padma Gurudutt
16. Padma Srinivasan
17. Dr. Padma Murthy
18. Rupa Shridhar
19. R.S. Ramakantha
20. T.S. Ramaa
21. P. Ramaa
22. Radhika Krishnaswamy
23. Shaila Subramanyam
24. Seetha Sathyanarayana
25. T. Sharada
26. Dr.T. Shachidevi
27. D. Shashikala

28. M.T. Selvanarayana
29. Seetha Ramachandra
30. Shantha Narasimhan
31. Swarna Shankar
32. Tirumale Srinivas
33. Uma Gopalaswamy
34. Usha Kesari
35. T.S. Vasundhara
36. Dr. K. Varadarangan

## Veena

37. Bhagyalakshmi Chandrashekar
38. D. Balakrishna
39. Geetha Ramanan
40. Revathi Murthy
41. Sudha Vadiraj
42. M.R. Shashikanth
43. Jaya Iyengar
44. L. Leela
45. Y.G. Parimala

## Gotu Vadya

46. Usha Ramamurthy

## Flute

47. Dwarki Krishnaswamy
48. M.K. Pranesh

49. S.A. Shashidhar
50. T.R. Srinath

## Violin

51. C.N. Chandrashekar
52. M.S. Govinda Swamy
53. Lalgudi Rajalakshmi
54. B. Raghuram
55. S. Sheshagiri Rao
56. D. Surya Prabha
57. J.K. Sridhar
58. C.S. Usha

## Mridanga

59. Arjun
60. B. Dhruvaraj
61. M.T. Rajakesari
62. N.G. Ravi
63. R. Sathyakumar
64. B.R. Sridhar
65. Ullur Nagendra Udupa
66. N. Vasudev
67. M. Vasudeva Rao

## Ghata

68. Dayananda Mohite

## SRLKM 2018 Awards

Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira has announced the awards for 2018. These awards are in memory of the founding members of the institute. Vocalists Ranjani and Gayathri will be conferred with the title ‘Sangeetha Vedantha Dhureena’ on the concluding day of the Spring Festival which is 11 February 2017.

The title carries a purse of Rs. One Lakh, a silver medal and a citation. This award is instituted in memory of the founder Shri. G Vedantha Iyengar who started the institution 62 years ago.

‘Raaga Laya Prabha’ award will be conferred on BK Raghu (Violin) in memory of Dr.GV Vijayalakshmi, Akshay Anand (Mridangam) in memory of Vid.GV Neela and Aditi B. Prahalad (Vocal) in memory of Karnataka Kalashree GV Ranganayakamma.

‘Raaga Laya Prabha’ title carries a purse of Rs. Twenty Five Thousand and a citation. This awards will be conferred on the young artistes during founders day celebration in May 2018.

# Raaga Laya Prabha Award

Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira awarded “Raaga Laya Prabha” to Madhu Kashyap (Vocal) and Amith A. Nadig (Flute), two upcoming youngsters from Bangalore on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2017.

This award is to commemorate the memory of the Founder-Director, Karnataka Kalashree GV Ranganayakamma and her Sister, Founder-patron and Veena artiste Dr. GVVijayalakshmi. The award carries a cash prize of Rs. Twenty Five Thousand and a citation.

The award function was followed by a concert of Sangitha Kalanidhi A. Kanyakumari supported by Vittal Rangan, K.V. Prasad (Mridanga), Bangalore N Amrith (Khanjira) in front of a capacity crowd.



*L to R - Dr. Yoganand, Hon. Secretary Shri. GV Krishnaprasad, Madhu Kashyap, Vid. A Kanyakumari, Amit A Nadig, President Shri. DR Srikantaiah, Vice President Shri. HR Yathiraj*

# **Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira (Regd.)**

9th Main, Banashankari II Stage, Bangalore - 560070. eMail - srlkmandira@gmail.com,  
Website: www.srlkmandira.org, Hon. Secretary - (M) 7760907939

We request your gracious presence for the Programme  
in memory of its chief founders Karnataka Kalashree GV Ranganayakamma and  
Vidushi GV Neela and their sister & chief patron Dr. GVVijayalakshmi where sixty  
eight artistes from Bengaluru will be honoured with the title

## **“LALITHA KALA SUMA”**

With a purse of rupees Ten Thousand  
On Wednesday, August 23rd, 2017 at  
**The Bangalore Gayana Samaja Auditorium**

Sri DV Gundappa in his poem "Vana Suma" mentions that there are many flowers  
in the forest which blossom and give out sweet fragrance without any expectations,  
but find joy in the work they are ordained to do. SRLKM humbly wants  
to recognise these "lalitha Kala Sumas" and honour them.

The function will be graced by  
**His Holiness Sri Sri Yadugiri Yathiraja Narayana Ramanuja  
Jeeyar of Yathiraja Mutt**

The honours will be presented by  
**Shri NS Krishna Murthy**  
Former Station Director of All India Radio, Bangalore.

### **4.30 pm - “Nadanjali”**

Musical tribute in memory of Smt. GV Neela by Kum. Anagha Yoganand,  
great grand daughter of SRLKM founder Late G Vedantha Iyengar and also a senior  
disciple of Late GV Neela. She will be accompanied by Shankar Rajan on Violin  
and Phanindra Bhaskara on Mridangam.

### **5.30 pm - Presentation of honours**

68 artistes from Bangalore will be felicitated with the title  
**“Lalitha Kala Suma”.**