

Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira (R)

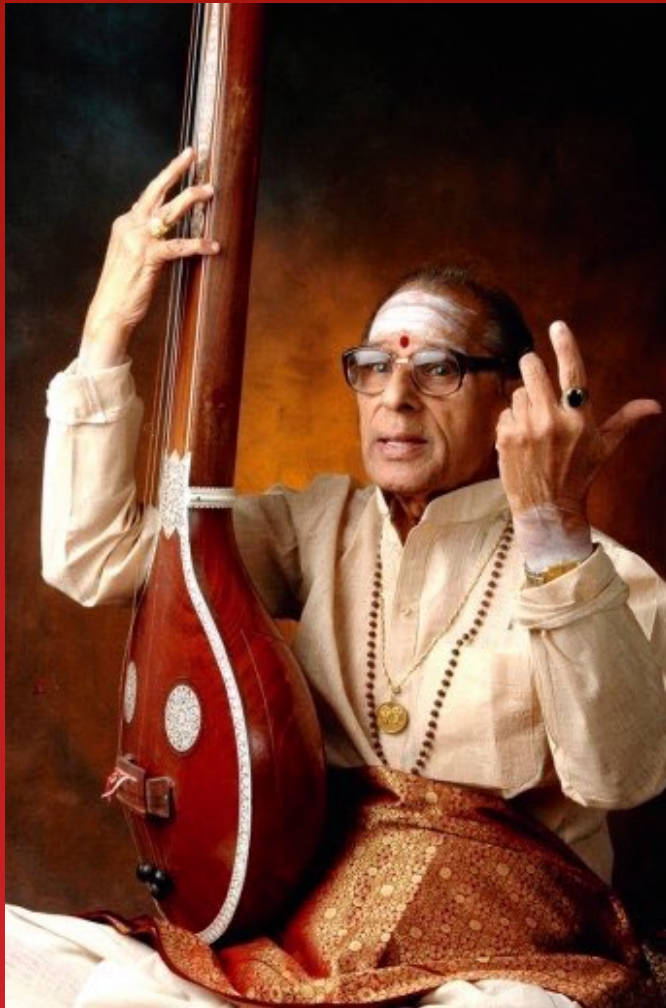
(Distinguished Service to Carnatic Music since 1955)

Lalitha Kala Tarangini

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Lalitha Kala Tarangaini Special issue on MS Subbulakshmi

Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira released a special issue of their magazine “Lalitha Kala Tarangini” completely dedicated to MS Subbulakshmi on her 98th birth day.

Violinist RK Shriramkumar and Shri. Tiru Swamy spoke on the occasion. Shri. Anand S, Editor of the magazine narrated the journey since the inception of the magazine. Senior musicians Neela Ramgopal, Radha Viswanathan graced the occasion. The jam packed audience enjoyed every moment of the concert by S Aishwarya, the great granddaughter of the legend MS Subbulakshmi.



From L to R - Shri. GV Krishnaprasad, Secretary SRLKM, Shri. RK Shriramkumar, Shri. Tiru Swamy, Anand S, Editor-Lalitha Kala Tarangini

January 2015

Dear Readers,

Sangitha Kalanidhi Nedunuri Krishnamurthy garu (1927-2014) reached the heavenly abode on 8th Dec 2014. It is rather unfortunate that we are robbed of several doyens of Karnatak music in the last two years that has disconnected us from the golden era of music. The great man used to say that music should be a blend of Sastra-Science and the Art. Sastra is the accumulation of knowledge and the art is the ability to present. His presentation of the Sahitya is considered a benchmark and he believed that music must convey the message of Vaggeyakara in all its glory.

Nedunuri garu and Voleti along with Lalgudi Jayaraman have given innumerable concerts that imprints their bhani moulded by Dr. Pinnagapani garu. It is also true that Lalgudi composed a few tillanas upon their request.

Nedunuri garu was a source of tradition and his music reflected the bhava and bhakti. His music was aesthetically the most beautiful. His contribution towards tuning and popularising the Annammacharya kritis stands out as a monumental work that is sure to have pleased Lord Venkatesha.

Our music has become poorer with the passing away of Mandolin U Srinivas (1969-2014) who creatively introduced an alien European instrument Mandolin in to our music. He has many firsts including the youngest to receive the padma award. He took the Karnatak music by storm as a child prodigy. The fact that he shared the stage with some of the maestros like Pandit Hariprasad Chaurasia, Zakir Husen, John

McLaughlin, Michael Brook and Nigel Kennedy speaks of his calibre. In the West Berlin Jazz festival of 1993, not only was he given additional one hour to perform but was asked to round off the festival with a composition to be played by all participants.

After MS Amma, he was the next to take our music to the global stage and became a perfect ambassador of music. He was an excellent human being, affectionate and a most humble person always attributing everything to the Almighty.

His father sitting by his side and his gentle smile on the stage are something that will be etched forever in our memories. Music world will look upon to his brother U Rajesh to carry forward the rich legacy U Srinivas has cultivated and nurtured over time.

We dedicate this issue of the magazine to the two great souls.

Anand S

Contributors and Photo courtesy:

We are thankful to Ranjani-Gayatri, Ranganatha Chakravarthi, Deepa Ganesh (Senior Associate, LKT), Rajashree Yogananda, AV Anand, CP Chikkanna, Mysore Prabha, Disciples of U Srinivas, SD Sridhar for contributing articles to this special edition.

We are thankful to Vani Satish for the photo archives of Shri. Venkateshachar. Our thanks are due to nedunuri.com for the cover photo. We are thankful to Ramprasad of Sri Rama Seva Mandali for photos of Nedunuri garu. Our thanks to The Hindu archives and Music Academy for the last Academy concert of U Srinivas. All other pictures-Mr. Paniraj.

Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira (SRLKM) founded by Shri. G Vedanta Iyengar in the year 1955 is rendering yeomen service in the field of music. In addition to music classes, music concerts are held all through the year. The significant festivals are 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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Lalitha Kala Tarangini - Inbox

Dear Sri Krishna Prasad,
I read through the above Issue (October 2013). I must congratulate you on the enormous efforts that must have been involved in collecting the various photographs and literature from many varied sources and bringing out this special issue. It is indeed a collector's copy on MSS and I am sure every Organisation connected in one way or the other with music and in particular Indian Music will preserve the above issue both as reference and in archives. Congratulations again on this yeoman service to Indian Music.

GS Gundu Rao, Banashankari II Stage, Bangalore

Sir,
I have been a regular reader of Lalitha Kala Tarangini from its very first edition. Your first year anniversary issue was brought out as a tribute to the legend of our times, the immortal MS Amma. The cover picture of the young MS playing on the Veena was very captivating and the articles that have been written for the magazine are very insightful. The editor has taken extensive effort to collect the articles about MS Amma from various sources and compile it, so that we can get to read about MS Amma in one issue. The rare photos of her are a treat to us. This edition is worth

preserving as a souvenir and going through it now and then. Thank you SRLKM for this wonderful edition and we hope there are many more to come.

Kanchan Sreekanth

The first anniversary edition of Lalitha Kala Tarangini dedicated to the memory of Bharat Ratna, Sangeetha Kalanidhi M.S. Subbulakshmi is a befitting tribute to the legend on her 98th birth anniversary. Accolades have been showered on her all through her illustrious career spanning over Seven decades from the Prime Minister of India to her innumerable unknown admirers. Blessed was she to be praised by her Guru Semangudi Mama who has said that she has that which is most difficult to achieve namely Soukhyam which was the hallmark of her singing. Each one of the photographs published brings back memories of her musical journey aiming at perfection in whatever she sang. As Vid. Neela Ramgopal has observed, MS became universal ambassador of Karnatak Music. The anniversary issue is worth preserving by all connoisseurs of Music.

N.S. Krishna Murthy, Ex Director, All India Radio

The Art and Science of Raga Alapana

Ranjini and Gayatri

Alap or Alapana means to speak, discourse and communicate. The fabric of Indian music is made of thousands of melodies, called ragas. A raga literally is a melodic framework sans rhythm, consisting of a given combination of notes or swaras arranged in a particular fashion. The swaras and their arrangement determine the outline and form of the raga. It is from the concept of raga that Indian classical music gets its melodic identity. When a musician develops and interprets a raga, it is called alapana.

At first glance it may appear that when one knows the notes and the way they combine in a raga, one can delineate an alapana. However, knowing the swaras is only the first step, very much like learning the alphabet and knowing a few basic words in the language. Just as a writer uses the building blocks of words to make phrases, sentences, sparkling prose and lyrical poetry, a musician has to master much more than the basic tenets of classical music to be able to conceive a raga alapana.

A raga cannot be merely understood or expressed through the syntax of swaras. To truly experience the beauty of a raga, one must get under its skin. Gamaka or the way a note is oscillated is one of the most important indicators of a raga's unique beauty. To intimately know a raga, one has to understand the subtle relationship between the swaras, their shades, tones and characteristic phrases that makes the raga distinct. Great compositions are spotlights which throw light on the beautiful facets of the raga and make the process of understanding a raga simpler. Can one try to understand Kambhoji without knowing a O Ranga Sayee or a Subramanyaaya Namaste?

Raga alapana is generally acknowledged to be one of the most difficult and challenging aspects of the classical art form. For it is here that the threads of discipline, training, and the creative

mind all come together. There are no props- of words, composition or tala (rhythm). It takes years of assimilating, learning, applying and meditating to conceive and deliver a raga alapana that breathes life into the notes and lifts it to an exalted plane. As the colloquial Tamil saying goes "Paada Paada Ragam!"

Generally speaking, there are two techniques of raga elaboration. One is the Veena technique, where the raga is explored using short, beautiful phrases and building up the picture of the raga with little, telling sangathis. As the sound is produced in the Veena using the meetu or pluck, the picture of the raga is painted using shorter phrases. The other style of rendering a raga is the Nadhaswaram style, where the artiste blows into the pipe to produce sound. Here, long kaarvais (long resting periods on the same note), and continuous flow of phrases make up the raga. The two styles represent the opposite ends of the spectrum - one is deliberate and spaced out, giving the raga a sedate and disciplined feel, while the other is eloquent and flowing, like a torrential river in spate!

There are some memorable raga alapanas that stand out in our memory. One is a Thodi by the great Nadhaswaram Vidwan Sri. T.N. Rajarathnam Pillai. Oh, what breathtaking leaps of imagination, what majesty in its sweep! Thodi remains incomplete without listening to this maestro's conception of it! Another unforgettable raga alapana is the Karaharapriya of the grand doyen of music Semmangudi Srinivasaiyer. The Kambhoji and Kalyani of Sri. GN Balasubramaniam is the stuff that legends are made of! The elusive charm of the Sahana, Begada and Bahudari of Ramnad Krishnan, and the adventurous yet timelessly beautiful Shanmukhapriya of S Kalyanaraman - all of this are rapturous examples of raga alapana. A brilliant alapana of Nattakurinji that our guru Sri. PS Narayanaswamy sang in a

chamber concert forever changed the way we looked at that raga.

What is magical about the alapanas of these great maestros and many other great artistes is that they extended and redefined the scope of a raga. A raga was not a static thing in their hands, something to be merely diligently learnt and conscientiously delivered. The raga flowered under their treatment, the boundaries extended. They raised the bar; widened horizons and their creative genius have influenced and inspired several future generations of students and musicians.

Rendering a raga well is the true test of the musicianship and maturity of the musician; it cannot be taught. Like poetry, raga alapana lives and breathes in the inspiration of a gifted artiste. Grammar and technique, as important and vital as they are, have to be so deeply internalised that they must operate at the sub-conscious level. For when one sings a raga, one has

to soar with it. This is possible only when being grounded in tradition and opening one's mind happens simultaneously. To us, a raga alapana is the ultimate music of freedom, and the most beautiful metaphor of life. It is the ultimate proof that pure music, without the aid of words or rhythm can touch you in a way that nothing else can.

A raga alapana can be the most intimate statement of an artiste's musical perspective. It lays bare his or her values and clarity of thought. Moods, emotions, thoughts - it expresses them all, and reflects the personal and musical journey of an artiste. Can one measure the joy that comes when one explores a raga with utter abandonment and when the artiste and the raga become one? Little wonder that it is said, music is a way of giving voice to the inexpressible. And an inspired alapana is the ultimate experience of that magic.

* * * * *

Tribute to U Srinivas

Lalgudi GJR Krishnan and Vijayalakshmi (Courtesy The Hindu)

When we talk of geniuses who mastered different instruments in Carnatic music, we rarely come across one like Shrinivas.

He has the singular achievement of having introduced a western instrument, the mandolin, into the repertoire of Carnatic Music and being a musical genius, both at once.

The innovations that he introduced in playing the instrument and his mastery over the instrument have earned him a unique place in the world of Carnatic music. Having occupied the performance stage as a prodigy at a very young age, Shrinivas was a pioneer who took our music to many prestigious arenas & festivals across the world.

Endowed with sensitive aesthetics & a keen sense of rhythm, this gentle colossus was shining bright as an artiste endowed with a rich repertoire as well as a composer. He shared a special relationship with both us and our guru

Lalgudi Jayaraman. No New Year day would dawn without a phone call from him to exchange greetings with us and take our father's blessings. He was an ardent fan of our guru and most of his concerts would have at least one composition by him.

Once while stepping into the elevator of a restaurant we were taken by surprise by the sweet strains of Shrinivas playing our guru's Yamunakalyani tillana. With a smile our guru stood there listening to this, not minding the elevator close and move to the next floor.

The ever-smiling, humble, and exemplary human being with amazing energy will be missed by fans all over the world.

In his passing away Carnatic music has lost an important ambassador and personally we have lost a dear friend and valuable artist whom we admired not only for his art but also for the person he had been. May his soul rest in peace.

Bellary M Venkateshachar

Ranganatha Chakravarthi, Senior Ghatam Vidwan

It is universally acknowledged truth that music has an ennobling and elevating influence on humankind. It has been known to provide solace and bliss to those who are blessed enough to fall within its embrace, and to heal the adverse effects of time and matter. This is all the more true of Carnatic Music. We know of great souls who have, over ages, embodied this reality. In honouring the savants of this hoary system from time to time, one pays tribute to this glorious heritage of ours. It behoves us to recognise their deeds and to learn from them. Therefore, it is our good fortune today to celebrate the towering qualities of an eminent musician who has lived and represented the noble values that we all cherish, Sri Bellary M Venkateshachar.



Sri. Bellary Venkateshachar in a concert

An illustrious scion of a long and admired lineage of musicians, teachers and composers, Sri Venkateshachar belongs to a rare and elite list

of exceptional artistes who have brought pride and glory to our state.

Even as it is a daunting task to attempt a portrayal of such a respected doyen of our times and do complete justice to his exalted stature, posterity would be well served in taking a leaf out of the book of his life.

Sri Venkateshachar was born in Bellary in 1931. His father, Vidwan Sri Mundarigi Raghavendrachar was a professor of music at Queen Mary's college, Madras. A violinist himself, he had trained numerous students in playing the flute, the Jala Tarang, the Veena and a few percussion instruments. He bequeathed these musical assets to his children when he unexpectedly breathed his last at the relatively young age of fifty. Sri Venkateshachar was just fourteen at the time, and his formal education in music almost ended then. His elder brother, Sri M Narasimha Murthy taught him for a little while thereafter, but he and his younger brother Sri M Seshagiriachar were in a hurry to learn more. Theirs is a classic example and an astounding fact that the brothers developed their knowledge and a chaste and pristinely classical style of singing on the strength of their ability to quickly grasp, reproduce and improvise upon what they heard, with the rather limited opportunities they had to do so. They reinforced their musical experience and creative ideas with the help of many different instruments that their father had left behind. It was thus that the Bellary Brothers, as they came to be well known later, mastered the nuances and won the adulation of the music world.

A turning point in their lives happened around the year 1955. It was a moment of good fortune for the world of Carnatic Music. Their maternal uncle, Sri Bheemasenachar who was a violinist of repute, initiated an association that turned out to be the friendship of a life time with the



Sri. Bellari Venkateshachar with MS Gopalakrishnan and UK Sivaraman. His disciple Kanakalakshmi on the Tambura

Mridangam maestro Sri TAS Mani, who convinced them to move to Bangalore to Pursue their musical ambitions. So began a famous relationship that went on to delight the community of music lovers for over three decades. Once in Bangalore, the Bellary brothers found new avenues to satisfy their insatiable thirst for learning, performing and teaching. They soon caught the attention of the learned as well as the laity, and established themselves as great artistes in the making. On one of their early visits to Bangalore, they were introduced to Prof. Sambamurthy at a chance meeting. He was greatly impressed by their music, and upon further inquiry, was immensely pleased to learn that they were the sons of his colleague at Queen Mary's College whom he held in high regard.

The Bellary Brothers, Sri M Venkateshachar and Sri. M Seshagiriachar, brought a new dimension and popularity to the duet format in Carnatic Music with the magic of their exhilaratingly zestful singing. For a golden period spanning over three decades, they cast a spell on listeners with their prowess and purity of rendering. Their music is an uncommon mix of intellectual and the soul-stirring, both in abundant measure. Endowed with great originality, it is the result of uncompromising rigour, unrelenting practice, unbridled enthusiasm and an uncannily cheerful view of the world at large. It is steeped in classicism, yet enriched by innovation. It is marked

by an intrinsic and faultless mastery of laya, yet full of Bhava. Be it the opening varnam, the delineation of ragas and tanam, the rendition of complex palace's the diction or the sahitya, every aspect is a thrilling experience for the listener even while it is in strict adherence to the tenets of Carnatic Music.

An outstanding contribution of Sri Venkateshachar has been as a teacher nonpareil. In an age when music education was not within the reach of every aspiring disciple, he walked miles and miles each day to make that gift of knowledge to those who sought, but had not wherewithal to acquire it. Perhaps his boyhood travails as an ardent student of music fortified his resolve to make the proverbial Vidya Dhanam, without discrimination, to anyone who needed it. He has so nobly demonstrated the joy of giving without asking for anything in return. He has devoted his time to teaching with missionary zeal, unmindful of inconvenience to himself. Besides imparting formal training in the conventional way, he has enhanced its value by providing deep insight into the finer aspects with great ease. The beneficiaries of his training are innumerable, although most of them have been content to stay away from the performing arena. They feel a deep sense of gratitude to him for his kindness.

In 1977, Sri Venkateshachar joined All India Radio, Mysore. In his fifteen years of service to the cause of music through this medium, he set a lofty example of discipline, commitment and hard ethic, serving diligently even until the last minute before his retirement. His invaluable contribution as an artiste, a composer, conductor of Orchestras, and an inspiration to other artistes is recounted by his colleagues, for whom he has been a role model. He has also earned the respect of likes of Sri Palghat Mani Iyer, Sri Lalgudi Jayaraman and Sri MS Gopalakrishnan who are among the long list of celebrities and stalwarts who have accompanied him.

Undoubtedly deserving of the highest recognition, Sri Venkateshachar has been the recipient of several honours. The JSS Sangeetha Sabha, Mysore conferred the title of Sangeetha Vidyanidhi on him in 1995. He was made Asthana Vidwan of Sri Avadhoota Datta Peetham of Sri Ganapathi Sachidananda Swamiji Ashram in 1998. The Government of Karnataka honoured him with an award and the title of “Karnataka Kalashri” in the year 2000. He was accorded the “Ananaya Puraskara” in 2008. He



Sri Venkateshachar as Purandaradasaru

presided over the fortieth annual conference of the Bangalore Gayana Samaja in 2008 and was conferred the title of “Sangeetha Kalaratna”.

Another symbol of his service to music has been the Thyagaraja Aradhana which he organises every year. Beginning at the age of about fifteen and continuing until this day, he has earned the blessings of the saint with his unflinching tribute.

Sri Venkateshachar has practiced and advocated a broad-minded approach to other systems and forms of music, encouraging his children to do so as well. It is therefore not surprising that his son Sri Bellary M Raghavendra and daughter Smt. Vaani Sateesh, while being established Carnatic musicians are also adept at rendering Bhavageethae compositions. They have both done him proud by their exploits in the music field, as has his second son Sri Bellary M Gururaj, an expert Morsing player and Mridangam Vidwan.

Sri Venkateshachar's two other daughters Smt. Anasuya and Smt. Sudha are also well trained in music. This remarkable family of musicians includes Sri Mysore Sateesh, his son-in-law, an able violinist who has envisioned and steered Visheshha Fine Arts admirably.

An epitome of an unfathomable inner spiritual strength and unshakeable faith in Supreme, Sri Venkateshachar has been a pillar of strength to his family that has looked up to him at all times. The world of music owes a debt of gratitude to his beloved wife Smt. Varada Bai, who stood by him through thick and thin, and has been his pillar of strength. He avers that it is beyond the power of words to describe his indebtedness to her for her caring and compassion.

Sri Venkateshachar's life is a story of grit, determination, ethics, endurance, faith and self-fulfilment. It is a story of selfless service carved on an edifice of unalloyed affection and moving humanity, and exemplary respect for all artistes and fellow human beings. His persona is marked by poise and purpose, dignity and devotion, Balanced thinking and benevolence. A true example of principle Acharati iti Acharyah.

The Sultana of Music

Deepa Ganesh (Courtesy The Hindu, Bangalore edition)



Begum Parveen Sultana continues to be the diva she was. Her voice and passion remain undiminished, finds DEEPA GANESH

The huge auditorium in Bangalore was packed and overflowing. Old, middle-aged and the young had thronged the hall. When the diva of Hindustani classical music, the stunning Parveen Sultana occupied the stage, there was a thunderous clap. For the older crowd, they went a long way back with this musician who, with her remarkable voice and rendition, had etched a permanent place in their hearts. The young had heard many a story about how she drew thousands to her concert – she was not merely a breathtaking beauty but a musician who could make four octaves submit to her. After the first few minutes of rag Madhuvanti, the audience exchanged reassured looks, but after a few more minutes they just looked at each other, amazed. Into her sixties, the power of Parveen Sultana's voice remains the same and her musical exuberance intact. A picture of simplicity, poise and grace, Parveen Sultana spoke at length about her childhood and musical journey from a remote village in

You have to swim alone, you have to jump the pole alone and expect no help if you fail. Art is gruelling, emotionally and physically. The remarkable Parveen Sultana who continues to enthrall audiences, tells DEEPA GANESH that music has to be chased without a pause...

Assam to centre stage in Bombay. Excerpts from the interview:

You had very unusual parents who not only recognised your talent, but also wanted you to pursue it. In the later years, when they learnt that music was going to be your life, how did they react, coming from an orthodox Muslim background?

My father, Ikramul Mazid, was a musician himself. Our house was filled with music 24 hours in a day – my father's riyaz, fellow musicians coming to our house, so on and so forth. So in that sense, it was difficult to ignore music in our household.

I think being born in Assam also made a difference. The atmosphere in our village Nagaon was syncretic. There were no caste barriers, and people of all the religions stayed together. I remember my aunts used to wear the bindi and never found it interfering with the religion they practised. They were sure about its aesthetic value and the same passed on to me as well.

When I was a little girl, my father used to take great pains to inculcate seriousness in me. He would wake me up at 5 a.m., carry me and give

me a wash, make Ovaltin for me and would sit down for riyaz with me. But as the years went by, I began to love music so much that I needed no one to tell me to dedicate time to it. When I was 11 years old, I started giving small concerts, won several prizes, and step by step, with my parents standing firmly beside me, I moved on. In fact, when I decided to pursue music seriously, my mother, Maroofa, told my father, 'I will take care of the household, you take care of her.' They started looking for a guru, and finally it was decided that I was going to learn from the scholar Chinmoy Lahiri in Kolkata who was known to my father. Every Friday I used to go from Nagaon to Kolkata for my lessons. The only advice my parents gave me was this, 'Dress well, speak well. Mistakes are human, be brave to admit it and don't lie to us. We are here to help you in everything.' I was fortunate to have such parents, they were wonderful. Their engagement with me was complete.



In those days, Kolkata had many an Ustad. Why did you choose to go to Chinmoy Lahiriji?

I was too young to decide who my guru had to be. My father was of the opinion that I should learn from a scholar, and not a professional, performing musician. 'He is a man who has made many musicians. You learn from him,' my father said. However, my father had to deal with Muslim orthodoxy. 'Why are you teaching her music?', 'Don't give daughters so much importance. Just get her married', 'Why are you taking her to a Pandit being a Muslim?' and more. But my

father was a very progressive person. He brushed everything aside firmly and left me in my guru's care.

My guru took me into his fold like I were his daughter. I used to stay at his house, eat and rest there. He had immense patience and explained everything in great detail. This would not have been possible if I went to an Ustad. I could speak only Assamese and knew no Hindi. I studied in a missionary school so I knew English. How would I communicate with an Ustad? And I was someone who asked a thousand questions. I was fortunate to learn from my guru.

Your first full-fledged performance was at the age of 12 in Kolkata...

That concert was organised by my Gurujī at the Sadarang Sangeet Sammelan. Kolkata, as you said, was full of top class musicians in those days. My gurujī was a revered scholar in the music circles, and on his word Pandit Ravi Shankar, Salamat Ali Khan saab, Bade Ghulam Ali Khan saab, Samta Prasad and a whole lot of luminaries had turned up. I hadn't the slightest clue about their greatness. Before I went on to the stage, my father said, 'Sing like you are the Maharani of music. Nothing but your music should matter to you.' I was a daredevil and knew no fear. After the concert, each of them came and blessed me, and my concert became the talk of the town. The happiness of my guru and my parents knew no bounds. But today, when I think of that concert my feet go cold and I feel nervous. Even Bharat Ratna cannot match what I got from all those greats of music that day.

What I miss immensely now is that atmosphere. Young or veteran, every musician and organiser deemed it as his duty to be present, listen and encourage them. But today, everyone is after stars. You have to encourage youngsters. I too was young and inexperienced at one point. But my gurus, parents, fellow musicians, and listeners have made me what I am. They say that you have to take a thousand births before you are born as a musician. I am very fortunate. God has

showed me this path. Every day I pray to him, 'Don't take music away from me...'

Begum Parveen Sultana is a deeply religious person. This is something that was passed on to her by her parents. She attributes the highs and lows, the twists and turns of her life to God, and believes that without divine grace life wouldn't have been the same. 'My parents taught me and my siblings to respect every religious faith and we deeply revere all forms of prayer. You can respect other religions only when you respect yours,' she says.

The journey of music is not merely about relentless sadhana, it is also about making tough choices. So riyaz is only one part of the musical struggle. Can you recall the hurdles you had to cross in this journey?

Much of the hardships of the real world were taken care of by my parents. Their support was so solid that difficulties that came my way did not seem so daunting. Of course, they were very strict with me in the formative years. Unlike now, there were no cds and cassettes, no internet and youtube making music easily accessible. In my village there was no electricity either. All the music one got to listen to was by the ustads who came home. Later, we did get a radio at home, and my father closely monitored who I was listening to. Film music was a strict no-no. 'You can listen to Lata Mangeshkar and no other film musician,' he had ordered. I took it all seriously, because over the years, music, within my own self, was becoming the most important force. After the initial years, my father made it clear that it was up to me to swim and reach the shore. 'As far as music is concerned you have to help yourself. I have shown you the way, it is upto you to make the leap,' he said. There were times when I felt I was taking part in a high jump and the pole so high that I could not jump over it. I struggled with perseverance and god gave me the power. I found many answers in this gruelling period called sadhana. I believed that being truthful was the most important aspect of a musician's persona. I think with my *atma* first, and brain later. Prayer always protects.

Dilshad Khan *saab* as your guru who later became your husband. Do you continue to share that guru-shishya relationship?

Ours is a complex relationship. He is my guru who became my husband, and I have always seen a fatherly figure in him. In the later years of my life, he replaced my father and took great care about my music. In fact, when my father was dying, he held my hand and said, 'I am relieved that there is a person in your life who will not only take care of you but also your music.' Music was a divine presence in my father and he saw that in Dilshad Khan *saab*. He is a thinking musician. He breathes and lives music all the time. He is 72 now, but there is not a single day that he doesn't do his riyaz or not teach. To this day, if I want to sing a new bandish, he makes sure that I have it on time and master it. Over the years our relationship has evolved and we relate to each other like friends.

The two of you sang jugalbandi which was something that happened accidentally in a concert in Afghanistan. It was a pioneering effort. Do you think you both are temperamentally similar as far as music is concerned?

Jugalbandis are meant for people who know each other well. By this I don't just mean knowing each other's music but the complete emotional landscape. You can go through the history of music and see that great jugalbandis have always been produced by people who have spent their lives together. **The Marwa that Amir Khan *saab* and Gangubai Hangal have**



rendered is breathtaking. The Marwa that you both sang is also perhaps the best among all your jugalbandis...

A lot of people think so. Many times I feel that Marwa is too intimidating, given its range and depth. Without him, maybe I wouldn't have been to sing it.

The earlier women musicians had fought many a battle with the conservative and male-dominated music scene. They made things easier for musicians of your generation.

Yes, that's true. I too faced a bit of it, but it was minimal.

I was a very beautiful young woman. And that became very difficult for me. My mother would always advise me about how to conduct myself in this male world. Hone your personality with grace and dignity she would say. She always told me that if I did not consciously tackle with it, my music would be wasted. And I did follow every bit of her advice. But once you know, and you are clear in telling the world around you that nothing matters to you more than your art most of the battle is won. Art is a transcending

medium. It helps you forget all your sadness and difficulties. Every human being comes with his share of sorrows, but do not let it interfere with your *sadhana* or your performance. Leave that to God and give yourself to your art. Really, before music everything else seems trivial and insignificant. There is not a single day that I don't practice, wherever I am. I have always believed that to be a good musician you have to be a good human being and *riyaz* is relentless.

But even with tireless *riyaz*, in Indian classical music a superlative performance is not something a musician can take for granted.

Absolutely. Many things have to come together at a particular moment. For that you also need to be fortunate. Having said that, the greater problem is to deal with insensitive audience and organisers. You cannot reserve front seats for musically ignorant VVIPs who walk in as they please with a whole retinue behind them. You are trying to unravel the *shadja* in Marwa and there is huge chaos in the front rows. Art is very sensitive, there is no place for insensitive people in our world.

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Release of rare recording of MS Subbulakshmi

Releasing of rare archival recording of Bharata Ratna M.S. Subbulakshmi on 24th January 2015 at Bangalore Gayana Samaja at 5.30 p.m. followed by grand vocal concert by S.Aishwarya (great grand daughter of Bharata Ratna M.S. Subbulakshmi) accompanied on violin by C.N. Chandrashekar and on Mridangam by Sangeetha Kalanidhi Dr.T.K. Murthy, and Sri B.C. Manjunath.

Tributes to MS Amma

Rajashree Yogananda

Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira had arranged for a unique music concert on Friday 19th of September to mark the first anniversary of its quarterly magazine Lalitha Kala Tarangini. This special edition of the magazine was a tribute to the Legend of Carnatic music with her ever-green voice-Bharat Ratna M.S.Subbulakshmi. Hence it was very apt that the release of the



magazine- “Lalitha Kala Tarangini-MS special” was followed by a wonderful concert given by her great grand daughter-Kumari Aishwarya S. who upheld the tradition of her great grand mother and her grand mother Smt. Radha Vishwanathan, daughter and only disciple of MS Subbulakshmi, with great aplomb.

SRLKM had chosen Sri Jaya Rama Seva Mandali situated in 8th block Jayanagar as the venue. The evening had the audience attending in large numbers. The Secretary of SRLKM Sri GV Krishna Prasad had the far sightedness to make additional seating arrangements with TV screen downstairs for people to view the release of the magazine and also the concert which was held in the first floor auditorium. The entire programme was web cast on Shaale live to reach out to a wider audience across the globe.

It was a day where we also lost the Mandolin wizard U.Srinivas. He with his absolute mastery over the instrument had scaled dizzy heights and held a world-wide appeal and fan following through his music. SRLKM began the evening's programme on a sombre note by observing a minute's silence as a tribute to this legend of Carnatic classical music. He would have undoubtedly contributed much more to the music world, but the Divine had other designs on him, wanting to listen to him up there.

The honour of releasing the special edition of the quarterly magazine was done by Vidwan RK Sriramkumar in the august presence



of Shri Tiru Swamiji, Director, Sri Ramanuja Seva Trust & Director, Sri Krishna Kalakshetra, Iskcon, Bangalore and the editor of SRLKM's Lalitha Kala Tarangini Sri. Anand S. The very first copy of the magazine was received by Smt. Radha Vishwanathan, daughter of Smt. Subbulakshmi.

Vidwan RK Sriramkumar shared little known facts about MS and the lofty ideals upheld by her. It was because he had literally grown up in their house and the fact that MS amma had sung for his mother's seemantham!!! was testi-

mony to the close rapport shared between the two families. All those who were present at the concert got an opportunity to see the two tambooras of MS, Lakshmi and Saraswathi. MS was always with these two tambooras which she carried to all her concerts and now being used by her great grand daughter Aishwarya. He also stressed how MS amma used to have the tambooras playing for sometime before the start of the concert and got the audience tuned to listen and enjoy the concert.

The evening's concert by Aishwarya was steeped in tradition. Her rendition of kritis with shruthi shuddam and vak shuddam and her

overall presentation showed her sincere commitment. This was met with approval and gentle smiles by her grand mother Radha Vishwanathan. She delighted the audience by her perfect rendering of bhajans and devara namas made popular by MS. This youngster is definitely a rising star and is set for greater achievements. The accompanying artistes RK Sriramkumar, HS Sudhindra and S Srishailan supported the concert well and encouraged young Aishwarya.

Any programme about MS is bound to mesmerise and elicit such positive response that by paying a tribute to MS, SRLKM was only favouring all of us.

SRLKM Awards Announced

Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira has announced the G. Vedantha Iyengar Memorial award for the year 2015. Internationally acclaimed Vocalist Bombay Jayashree Ramnath is the recipient of the award for the year 2015. The recipient of the award till this year are Dr. M Balamuralikrishna, Dr. RK Srikantan, Dr. Sudha Raghunathan and Mysore Nagaraj and Dr. Manjunath.



The title of "Sangeetha Vedantha Dhureena" will be conferred on Bombay Jayashree Ramnath with a cash award of one lakh rupees along with a citation and a silver medal on 01st Feb 2015 during the Spring Music Festival.

SRLKM has also instituted two more awards called "Raga Laya Prabha" in memory of their Chief founder Karnataka Kalashree, Gana Saraswathi late Smt. GV. Ranganayakamma and her sister and patron late Dr. GV Vijayalakshmi to youngsters from Karnataka who have established themselves in vocal and instrumental music. These awards will be given every year.

HM Smitha a violinist, will be presented "Raga Laya Prabha" and a cash award of Twenty Five



Thousand rupees in the name of the Chief founder Karnataka Kalashree, Gana Saraswathi late Smt. GV Ranganayakamma.

Vidwan BC Manjunath a mridangist, will also be presented with "Raga Laya Prabha" and a cash award of Twenty Five Thousand rupees in the name of another founder late Dr. GV Vijayalakshmi,



Veena Artist.

While Bombay Jayashree Ramnath will be awarded the "Sangeetha Vedantha Dhureena" during the Spring festival, the "Raga Laya Prabha" for HM Smitha and BC Manjunath will be given away during the course of the year.

Pioneer who moulded Mandolin to CM

Ranjani Govind (Courtesy The Hindu, Bangalore edition)

U. Shrinivas was a trailblazer who not only adapted the mandolin for the Carnatic genre, he gradually criss-crossed all genres on this foreign instrument for his global audiences on world music platforms.

It is unfortunate that Bangaloreans had just missed his concert slated to be held at Sri Venugopala Krishna Temple at Malleswaram on Thursday. It was cancelled a week back due to his ill health, said the Temple authorities who conduct the 18-day Gokulashtami Cultural series every year.

Born February 28, 1969, Mandolin U. Shrinivas, who hailed from Palakol in Andhra Pradesh, was living in Chennai. As a toddler, he would tap incessantly on his father Sathanarayana's mandolin at home. Taking the cue, Sathanarayana had started teaching him. "I never had formal lessons, while my father's guru Rudraraju Subbaraju sang a song, I used to simultaneously produce it on my mandolin. It was something pleasurable for me to discover the instrument day after day. I changed the strings and gradually switched to an electric mandolin," U. Shrinivas had once told this writer.

Who will fill the void

Said vainika Suma Sudhindra, who was constantly in touch with Shrinivas over the years, Mandolin Shrinivas was to inaugurate one of the ongoing series in the Bangalore International

Arts Fest but he had said the dates clashed as he had already accepted the Venugopalaswamy Temple call. "I will inaugurate your Fest in 2015 surely," he had told Ms. Suma. "I can't believe this, it sounds unreal and unfair to the world of music," she added.

Two years ago when he played at the Delhi International Arts Fest with just a drummer and bass guitarist, audiences were astonished to see how effortlessly he singlehandedly led the world music presentation. She said, "He has done some pathbreaking work with his instrument, who will fill the void?"

This evening (Friday), during the BIAF-Chowdiah Cultural programme, musicians and music

aficionados will hold a one-minute silence at 6-30 p.m. to pay homage, tribute and affection to the young mandolin expert, she said.

Invented mandolin afresh

Says senior musicologist Prof. Mysore V. Subramanya, he invented the mandolin afresh to suit Carnatic music and that trailblazing effort shall be etched in music history. "Who could have imagined that the mandolin would occupy such a prime place

on Carnatic platforms? Mr. Subramanya spoke of Mandolin Shrinivas' command over the instrument, his impeccable laya-gnana, the swara-prathara where the audience would join in, clapping en masse, in tandem with his music.

"His Mandolin had a voice that could be manoeuvred to any style, what can you forget



about this man whose humbleness was as pristine as his music," he said.

From Barcelona to Kanyakumari

Art consultant Usha R.K. says, from Barcelona to Kanyakumari, he was the first Indian musician to be part of Olympics Arts Fest in Barcelona. "I remember he was excited about being invited to the fest," she said. Mandolin Shrinivas not just straddled genres, he was the only one to have played at every occasion, be it playing for several dignitaries including Bill Clinton.

Usha recalls that the eight-year-old mandolin expert had once received a standing ovation at the Chowdiah Memorial Hall when Karnataka's veteran vainika Doraswamy Iyengar heard him. "You are a musical adult in the garb of a young boy!" he had exclaimed.

Kids, youth and the old came together for his concerts

Mandolin Shrinivas was a regular at the Chamarajpet Ram Seva Mandali's Ramanavami series. "For nearly 35 years we had Mandolin Shrinivas on our Ramanavami concert dais. It is most unfortunate that he will not be there for us in 2015," said an emotional S.N. Varadaraj of the Mandali. "Even this year during the Ramothsava Shrinivas had requested for a good hotel where he would get the right kind of food for his sensitive stomach.

"Can we ever have a more humble artiste than Shrinivas, he never charged a pie for all his concerts here. He said his *cutcheries* were his prayers to Lord Rama!" he said.

Bangalore Team makes us proud



The team of Aishwarya Vidya Raghunath (Vocal), Vittala Rangan (Violin), Ranganji Venkatesh (Mridangam) made us proud at the Madras Music Academy recently. They were awarded the best team prize for the

1145 am slot (Junior Vocal category) allotted for the upcoming artistes.



Another young musician from Bangalore, HM Smitha bagged the best violinist prize in the same category. Sriranjani Santanagopalan was adjudged the best vocalist one another time and Mridangist Akshay Ananthapadmanabhan who has relocated to Chennai from US recently bagged the best Mridangist in the same Category.

The team of Sandeep Narayanan (Vocal), B Ananthakrishnan (Violin), SJ Arjun Ganesh



(Mridangam) bagged the best team prize for the 1.30 pm slot (Sub-Senior category).

In the same category, Ramakrishnan Murthy (Vocal) bagged the best Vocalist prize. The best violinist went to B Ananthakrishnan and SJ Arjun Ganesh was adjudged the best mridangist.

Another Bangalore youngster BS Prashanth received the best Mridangist prize for his performance in the Spirit of Youth festival conducted by the Music Academy earlier.



The awards were given away during the annual sadas of the Music Academy on 01 Jan 2015.

This is a partial list of prizes and excludes the senior category prizes.

Tribute to U Srinivas

Mysore Prabha

“U. Srinivas passed away” was the breaking news on TV. It was heart-breaking news for us.

Though Lalgudi Krishnan had already given us the shocking news, my mind just refused to accept the fact. How could this happen? Though we knew that he was ailing, we never doubted his recovery. But fate snatched U. Srinivas away from amidst us. To put it in renowned novelist and writer R. K. Narayan’s words, “He jumped the queue”. U. Srinivas has moved on to another world, leaving behind his prodigious, melodious, soul-stirring music for us to enjoy.

There is probably no other musician from India who attained national and international acclaim at such young age as U. Srinivas did. He was recognized as a child-prodigy when he started performing at a very young age of 8-10 years. He continued to be a prodigy even in his 40s, because, no other musician produced such wonderful music on the mandolin (the supposedly ill-suited instrument for carnatic classical music) like Srinivas did. It is to Srinivas’ credit that he has greatly popularized Indian music in western countries. He was always a crowd puller whenever and wherever he performed in India or abroad. His music always pleased the connoisseur and the layman alike.

My family’s association with U. Srinivas dates back to 1984. It was on 10.4.84 that Srinivas first visited our home, “Parvati”, in Mysore, to perform during the annual Ramanavami music festival conducted by my father, K. Srikantiah. He was a small-built lad and I remember the shy boy sitting on the carpet

with his mandolin next to him, gazing and touching his mandolin continuously, as if afraid someone would snatch it away from him. He had no eyes for anything or anyone else, and spoke only in monosyllables. The pandal next to our house and the roads surrounding it were jam-packed with music lovers waiting to listen to the highly acclaimed child-prodigy. The little boy timidly got on to the stage – and then! The audience was transported to a heavenly world of music emanating from his magical fingers! Starting then, he gave about 8 to 10 concerts for us spread over two and a half decades. Surprisingly, despite all his name, fame and glory, he was still the same, child-like, humble Srinivas when he performed for our K. Puttu Rao music festival (Inaugural concert) in 2011. Little did we know that it would be his last concert for us, and also in Mysore. It was our privilege to honour Srinivas during our Silver Jubilee year Ramanavami festival in 1994. It warmed our hearts when Srinivas said in his speech that he considered himself one in our family.



U. Srinivas has left us after leading a highly worthy life in his short life-span. He has achieved in about three decades what probably would take three births for others to achieve. The country and the Carnatic music world have lost one of its rarest gems. The Indian music world will forever be proud of its prodigious son- Mandolin Srinivas. There cannot be another Mandolin Srinivas.

My family and I pray that Lord Rama blesses Srinivas’ soul with eternal peace.

The Mandolin Virtuoso

CP Chikkanna



On his return from the December music festival at Madras in 1981, Ghatam Vidwan the Late KS Manjunath informed me about the sensational debut of a tiny tot producing mesmerising pure Carnatic Music on a small western instrument MANDOLIN.

Out of curiosity, I went to Madras for a concert to hear Srinivas's recital. I was awe struck by the ease and grace he produced soul stirring melody bringing out the effect of Veena and the lilting/Oscillating gamakas crowning each raga. His instrument simply sang the songs.

He started with the Hamsadwani composition of GNB "Vara Vallaba Ramana" and from there onwards, it was a flood of melody comparable to a river in spate. He displayed great maturity, verve and remarkable assurance. There was never a dull moment in the entire session. He kept the accompanists on their toes by his lightening birkas, variegated kalpana swaras in different ragas and gathis. Each raga was rendered in its pristine pure form bringing out the

quintessence in ample measure which only a maestro of long experience was capable of.

On my suggestion, my friend Mr. Bharadwaj who is a great patron and connoisseur of music besides the president of Sri Rama Seva Samithi (Shimoga), agreed to hoist the Srinivas's concert in his Ramanavami festival. Noted violinist Coimbatore Dakshina Murthy, Ella Venkateswara Rao's mrudangam and TH Vinayakram Ghatam were fixed up.

This raised the eyebrows of some of the office bearers who openly dissented wondering whether the risk is worth taking suspecting the capability of the lad to extract work from the accompanying giants! I assured Mr. Bharadwaj that I will take up the responsibility for the success of the concert and offered to bear the cost of the concert in the event it flopped.

Thanks to wide publicity, there was a large turnout of connoisseurs and lay listeners in great anticipation and expectation. The concert



U Srinivas with the SRLKM Management team

started on time. A thunderous applause greeted the lad who ascended the dais with his father and bowed his head to the vast assembly with his customary smile. After paying his respects to the accompaniments, he mesmerised the audience by his artistry. There was pin drop silence and each item he dished out carried the stamp of authenticity, originality and was in regular format.

His selection of ragas, both time honoured and an occasional rare gem in between, his sense of proportion in the chosen phrase for niraval, kalpana swaras and his imaginary skills in various nadais and in reverse order, matching response from accompanying wizards carried the listeners to ecstasy.

After the mangalam, he was crowded with each and everyone vying to have a close look at their hero and shake hands with him. Some of them passed over to him whatever money they had in their pocket in sheer joy admiring his performance. Touched by this spontaneous response, the samithi doubled the remuneration! This was U Srinivas's maiden concert in Karnataka!

Uppalappu is a tiny hamlet near Bhimavaram in West Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh, where the Mandolin conjurer was born as the eldest son of Sri. Satyanarayana (Probably a nadaswaram player). He brought his son a Man-

dolin on which the lad practiced telugu film songs accurately with precision and caught the attention of the listeners.

R Subbaraju is a disciple of Chambai Vaidyanatha Bhagavathar and was an AIR staff artist in Madras. He visited Bhimavaram on a Rural Broadcasting assignment. He was introduced to Satyanarayana and his prodigious son. After hearing him play, Subbaraju advised Satyanarayana to shift to Madras and offered to teach the lad. With quick grasping, dedication and arduous practice, and constant listening to past maestro's recordings, Srinivas acquired proficiency and stormed the Carnatic music arena as a colossus.

He was inseparately associated with Mandolin. His artistry has an evocative beauty of its own and associated with all the halo of a prodigy. It has an entirely new dimension, depth and wholesome form. It came out with ease, facilitated and exhibited from the beginning a surprising technique and form. Very early in his career, Srinivas made a considerable impact in his concert. To have a firm footing in the field, he was obliged to play to the gallery in the company of a battery of accompanying maestros like Sikkil Bhaskaran on Violin, Valangaimaan Shanmugasundaram on Tavil, Tanjore Upendran on Mridangam, TH Vinayakaram on Ghatam etc.

Since then he never looked back and blazed through different places in India and abroad. The Musical recipe he planned and dished out satisfied every section of the audience with an overall appeal. His creative impulse was in full measure. Each melodic phrase, whether in freely flowing swaras or in compositions carried the salient features. More than all, the sentiment and the aesthetic beauty of raga.

Once I asked him the secret and the source of his vast imaginary in his spacious ragaalapana. "It is very simple. It originated from Thyagaraja swami's compositions. Is it ever possible to bring out the entire contour/swaropaa in full measure ragas like Kalyani, Karaharapriya etc. in a solitary piece? It is therefore that the saint has distributed various facets of these ragas in his numerous compositions."

In a TV interview Veena maestro the late S Balachander described Srinivas as a born genius who produced the effect of Veena on the Mandolin, where as many vainikas play the instrument how it should not be played!

According to Veena Doreswamy Iyengar, Srinivas is a reincarnation of a maestro of the past generation, who left this world mid-way without fulfilling his tasks and objectives in Music.

In the words of Dr. MS Subbulakshmi, both Chitraveena Ravikiran and Mandolin Srinivas are "Deiva Kolandaigal" (children of almighty). When Srinivas came face to face with Dr. ML Vasanthakumari, in the marriage of Sikkil Maala and Subbulakshmi's grandson Chandrasekar, he prostrated before her in reverence. MLV affectionately hugged him and smilingly uttered "Maa chella bidda" (my pet child) setting his disturbed hairs in order. This incident is deeply etched in my memory.

Awards and rewards were generously showered on U Srinivas from all over the globe. He is the youngest recipient of Padma award by the President of India. He was the true embodiment and emissary of Indian Culture. The entire world was his dais. He left an indelible impression wherever he performed. Ego and pride never went into his head. He remained humble till he breathed his last.

God has been very kind and generous and bestowed upon Srinivas all that one aspires to achieve in life. He came, he conquered and he left when the Carnatic Music is yet to recover from the passing away of several maestros. Now it is over to his younger brother Rajesh to carry forward the rich legacy Srinivas has left behind.

Sankranti Music Festival 2015



On 2nd Jan, Shri. KA Dayananda, Director Kannada and Culture Dept. inaugurated the Sankranti Music festival 2015 at the Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira open air auditorium. It was marked by the lighting of the lamp.

L to R - Shri. KA Dayananda, Dr. Yogananda, Vidwan Thyagarajan, Vidwan Arjun Kumar, Vidwan Tarananthan, Shri. GV Krishnaprasad, Hon Secretary SRLKM

Immortal Nedunuri garu

CP Chikkanna

The death of Sangitha Kalanidhi Dr. Nedunuri Krishnamurthy has robbed us of a great performer, an outstanding teacher (Guru) and a scholar par excellence. A glorious innings has ended.

Popularly known as Nedunuri in Music Circle, he brought glory to his place by prefixing it to his name by his achievement and high attainments! His service to music is immeasurable. He was an ocean of knowledge.

His death has brought back nostalgic memories of his numerous concerts that I have heard and enjoyed. The first time I heard him was in mid 1960's at the Malleswaram Sangitha Sabha. He was accompanied by the legendary Violinist Lalgudi Jayaraman and Palghat Raghu on Mridangam.

Major concerts, be it in sabha or important festivals in the golden days were generally of 4 to

4.5 hrs duration. It was a prestigious issue and testing time for the performers that demanded judicious planning, adequate home work and precise presentation retaining/detaining the audiences interest through the session.

The late Nedunuri was always a strict follower of sampradaya (tradition). He treated his concerts with great respect and utmost seriousness. Those days it was customary to start the concert with a varnam in three to five speeds setting the concert on a lively pace. Later RTP too should be sung in the same raga as that of the varnam!

After the varna, he would present two more songs in quick succession in well known ragas (generally rakti ragas in shudda madhyama swaras). A time honoured raga was chosen for a short outline and a kriti with well knitted neraval and kalpana swaras embellished it. This gen-



erally consumed about 45 minutes duration was very crucial, decisive and laid a firm/solid foundation for the rich music feast to follow.

His items included compositions of musical trinities, Bhadrachala Ramadas, Annammacharya, Papanasanam Sivan, Purandaradasa etc. and the list was vast and his repertoire was like a treasury! At any given time, he could respond with precision and satisfied his audiences demand in



Nedunuri with Lalgudi Jayaraman and Vellore Ramabadrar at the Sri Rama Seva Mandali

which ever language the kriti be. He was blessed with an astonishing memory. He never referred to books or piece of paper on the dais while performing. Each and every song received full justice and conveyed the message of the composer in chaste/unique bhani with his trade mark.

After attaining the cutcheri tempo, his portrayal of major Shudha madhyama ragas like Shankarabarana, Todi, Kamboji, Karaharapriya etc. and his Prati madhyama ragas like Kalyani, Vachaspathi, Simmendara Madhyamam were highly educative to his students and a feast to the listeners. In those ragas, his manodharma was in full display, either in the well established/rare kritis or Raga, Tana and Pallavi.

The post pallavi session included soul stirring ragamalika slokas, his audience requests, devotional kritis, Annammacharya kritis, Javalis, Tillanas and so on...

Bhadrachala Ramadas's Kamboji piece "Emayya Rama" and the kriti "Janaki Ramana" in the enchanting Kapi raga attained an accuracy of form

when rendered by Nedunuri which were always a must in his concerts in Bangalore without which he was not allowed to sing Mangalam. Another kriti that recurs to my mind is his rendering of Purandaradasa keerthana "Rama Mantrava Japiso" in the raga Jonpuri. It appeared that these songs were composed and meant to be rendered by the one and only Nedunuri. That is the kind of impact these songs created on the audience and left a lingering memory.

His greatest contribution to music is his tuning the compositions of Talappakam Annammacharya under TTD sponsored project. While replying to the felicitations on being conferred the SV Narayana Swamy Rao's national award for outstanding service to music under the aegis of Bangalore Shree Rama Seva Mandali, he recalled how the LORD OF THE SEVEN Hills blessed him to fulfil the onerous task/responsibility he was to fulfil.

After studying the lyrics of each song and the sentiment, the ragas flashed like lightening to his mind! These ragas perfectly matched/Suited the chosen song!

His efforts were greatly honoured/admired and flowed by the performers and they created an universal appeal aesthetically and emotionally.

Yet another project he was involved was setting to music the compositions of Kaivara Narayanappa (Tatayya), the saint of Karnataka sponsored by MS Ramaiah charities. These are available in the form of numerous CD's.

He was highly respected in the music circle. His speeches were always erudite and thought provoking with a fervent appeal to the present generation to safeguard and enlarge the rich cultural heritage we have been bequeathed with. His Gurubhakti and reverence to his senior musicians deserve emulation.

He has trained a number of musicians. Among them, mention could be made of the Malladi Brothers, both seniors and juniors. Although the maestro has left his memory immortal, music was his penance. He breathed music, lived for music and attained salvation through music.

Vidwan Chowdiah - Karnataka's pride

Vidwan AV Anand

Well-built and clad in a starched dhoti and veshti, Sangeeta Ratna Vidwan Mysore T Chowdiah appeared to be very strict. And he was. His was a majestic presence on the stage with a distinct daub of vibhuti on his forehead. Tough, unremitting and one who loved exacting standards, the musician was equally affectionate and



caring while dealing with fellow-musicians and youngsters. He would heartily encourage prodigies on and off stage.

I was fortunate to interact with the musician from the time I was nine years old. He was about 50 years old then and had achieved success and fame unmatched till date. My 20-year-old professional engagement with the violin maestro gained personal equations over time. Chowdiah played the violin with seven strings, a practice that saw a decline in later years. His

understanding of the music and an engaging – and passionate, if I could say – bow-play on the instrument had to be savoured firsthand. He used to play uninterrupted for hours like a man possessed, stopped only by fleeting pauses as if to recollect his thoughts.

Our family came in contact with Vidwan Chowdiah in 1946-47, and the credit goes to my revered guruji and ghatam exponent KS Manjunathan. My father, late A Venkobachar, took me to Manjunathan Sir in the early 1940s to learn the mridangam. He was a disciplinarian with a deep reserve of teaching techniques. An excellent mridangam player, Manjunathan, in a quirk, decided to take up the ghatam as his primary percussion instrument and mastered it in just one year, around 1947. His versatility was such that Vidwan Chowdiah started enlisting him as his accompanist. Of course, there's a lot to write about Manjunathan Sir. Let me restrict my focus to Vidwan Chowdiah at this moment.

There's another reason why Vidwan Chowdiah was almost part of our family. My father, who had a keen interest in percussions, and Manjunathan Sir had started learning the mridangam under Palghat Srinivasa Iyer. This led to a formidable friendship between my father and my guruji. Whenever Chowdiah came to Bangalore, he used to stay in Malabar Lodge on 3rd Main of Chamarajpet. During his frequent visits to Bangalore, Chowdiah used to stop over at our house and no visit to our house was complete without my parents, Venkobachar and Nagamma, treating guests to mouth-watering dishes. So Vidwan Chowdiah would aptly call my mother 'Annapoornamma'!

Year 1947. We were celebrating Ananthapadmanabha Vrata on a grand scale at our Chamarajpet residence. In the evening, Vidwan Chowdiah came home and enquired about the pooja. After my parents explained the festival's signifi-

cance, Vidwan Chowdiah overcame with a desire to hold a concert there. He called out for Manjunathan Sir to accompany him on the ghatam.

I rushed out to the neighbourhood where Manjunathan Sir used to stay in a room on the premises of Rameshwara temple. Manjunathan Sir asked Vidwan Chowdiah whether he should call in Sri ML Veerabhadraiah, a mainstay on the mridangam. The renowned violinist replied: "We've Anand here. You say he's been performing at concerts. Let's try him out."

What followed was pure ecstasy. Vidwan Chowdiah, in a trance, transported the nearly two-hour concert to an unseen level. The soothing strains of music on a festive day attracted neighbours and passersby to our house. After the concert, Vidwan Chowdiah told Manjunathan Sir: "Anand plays very well. Ask him to accompany me from now on."

My first public performance with Vidwan Chowdiah was at a wedding in the family of then Mysore education minister Shankare Gowda in 1948. Vidwan Chowdiah, after the concert, patted me on my back.

There was no looking back after that. Whenever the first choice for mridangam, ML Veerabhadraiah, was preoccupied, I would land the

assignment. I had the fortune of playing for Vidwan Chowdiah from 1947-48 until his death in 1967. His love, affection, encouragement and appreciation largely helped me to become what I am today.

Chowdiah's family members, too, became close to us. For instance, Chandramma, said to be in the maestro's inner circle, would come home along with her children during her Bangalore visits. In 1948, Vidwan Chowdiah set off on a tour of South India along with Manjunathan Sir, ML Veerabhadraiah and myself. I was put in Chandramma's care. We performed at Kanyakumari, Madurai, Tiruchirapalli and Palani, among many other places.

We left Bangalore in a hired van and reached Kanyakumari by 4pm. The temple administration allowed all of us into the sanctum sanctorum. We offered prayers a few yards from the deity. Vidwan Chowdiah was moved into silence by the deity, the eye-catching decoration, and the sparkling nose-stud. Out of the blue, Vidwan Chowdiah expressed desire to play the violin there. In an hour, the temple officials made all arrangements and sent a word through towncriers about the concert. For the next two and a half hours, Vidwan Chowdiah lost himself in a flood of emotions, strumming away blissfully. It's



Chowdiah accompanying GN Sir. Palani Subramanya Pillai on Mridangam and Kalyanaraman on Tambura

my privilege to be part of that concert, and I remember every bit of that day.

I'd like to recall a couple of instances to underscore Vidwan Chowdiah's understanding of fellow-musicians' capabilities was beyond argument. In Palani, legendary GN Balasubramaniam was to perform along with Vidwan Chowdiah (violin), Palani Subramaniam Pillai (mridangam) and Alangudi Ramachandran (ghatam). But Vidwan Chowdiah strongly felt that Manjunathan Sir must also be there on the stage with the ghatam. This led to intense deliberations among the top musicians. GNB felt that the concert could have a second ghatam, and Palani Subrahmanya Pillai, too, felt likewise. The legends acquiesced to Vidwan Chowdiah's request only out of respect for his strong judgment. The organisers were informed about the change in the ensemble. Manjunathan Sir stormed his way through, casting a lasting impression. If any proof was needed of Chowdiah's sound musical judgment, here it was.

The next morning, Vidwan Chowdiah wanted to play the violin before the deity atop the Palani hills. I was to accompany the vidwan on the mridangam. As we were about to take a winding flight of steps to the hilltop, Palani Subramaniam Pillai indicated he would like to play the mridangam. Vidwan Chowdiah readily agreed and asked me to offer support on tala. It was my privilege that I was given the tala assignment in presence of Palani god.

It's not an overstatement that Vidwan Chowdiah had earned enormous respect and goodwill among musicians, event organisers and aficionados. Some musicians who preferred Chowdiah were senior by several years – Bidaram Krishnappa, Mysore Vasudevachar, Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer, Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar, Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavata, Musiri Suramania Iyer, GNB, Madurai Mani Iyer, Alathur brothers and TR Mahalingam, among many others. The violin legend knew how to reach the audience without forsaking the pristine qualities of music. In today's postmodern parlance, he was a crowd puller. Here, I'm listing some anec-

dotes for their musical significance and hugely cultural context of those times.

When India was pursuing the left-of-the-centre political formulation in the early years of Independence, then Soviet Union's leaders Nikita Khrushchev and Nikolai Alexandrovich Bulganin were on a friendly visit to the country in the 1950s. Then Mysore government had hosted a reception for the duo at Bangalore's Lalbagh, illuminating every single plant and tree with dazzling lights. As part of cultural programmes, the government had invited Vidwan Chowdiah to perform that evening. He was accompanied by V Doreswamy Iyengar (veena), ML Veerabhadraiah (mridangam) and Manjunathan (ghatam). My guruji had taken me along.

After a rapturous concert, Mysore Jamachamarajendra Wadiyar introduced the artistes to Khrushchev and Bulganin, who effusively praised the musicians. Wadiyar said of Chowdiah: "We are very proud of Vidwan Chowdiah. He's the nation's most-treasured asset."

This episode brings me to another Lalbagh concert held in the same decade, this time in presence of UN secretary-general Dag Hammarskjöld (also a distinguished Swedish writer and diplomat) and India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. They were in Bangalore to attend a summit of the now-defunct Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East. Vidwan Chowdiah had been invited to perform along with Doreswamy Iyengar (veena), P Bhuvaneshwaraiah (violin), Arunchalappa (harmonium), Manjunathan (ghatam) and I was on the mridangam. As the concert drew to a close, hundreds of dignitaries from the Asian subcontinent gave the musicians a standing ovation. Nehru and Hammarskjöld appreciated Chowdiah, who had brought laurels to the country by performing to a select gathering of the world's who's who of the politics.

Circa 1952, the first Governor-General of India, C Rajagopalachari, had come to Bangalore and was staying at the palatial Carlton House. Rajaji, as he was popularly called, learnt that Vidwan Chowdiah was in Bangalore at that moment. He asked his staff to set up a concert at Carlton

House. All of us were ferried to the guesthouse. As soon as Vidwan Chowdiah got down from the vehicle, Rajaji received the legend with a handshake. Despite fervent pleas to take the high seat set aside for him, Rajaji chose sit close to the stage among the commoners. Such was Rajaji's love and appreciation for music, and Vidwan Chowdiah's gentle bow-play on the violin had him in thrall.

Here's an incident that holds mirror to Vidwan Chowdiah's ability to spot talent. It was a 1962 concert organised by Sri Rama Seva Mandali at a pandal erected on the premises of the City Institute in Chamarajpet. Legend Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavata was scheduled to perform in that event. After Chowdiah's strong recommendation, Chembai agreed to sign me on as the mridangam accompanist. Vidwan Chowdiah had chosen a front-row seat to witness the concert. Vidwan MS Gopalakrishnan was on the violin and my guruji was on the ghatam. As was the practice, Chembai started off with 'Vaataapi Ganapatim Bhajeham', and lapsed into detailed exposition of swara and nerval. Then he sang a keertana. Between fleeting gaps, he would encourage me with 'bhale, bhale'. After the end of two kritis, he addressed Vidwan Chowdiah from the podium in Tamil: "As you said, this boy plays very well. Palani, too, used to perform with me at a very young age. He will become popular like Palani." Chowdiah replied: "You are a senior artist. Please bless him." After the concert ended, Chowdiah told me to meet Chembai and seek his blessings. I did likewise. This was an unforgettable incident in my life.

All musicians have a quirky side to their persona, and Vidwan Chowdiah had a particular weakness for rundown cars. He would always love to drive down to the concert in his rickety car or the one dusted up from his garage or

one borrowed from friends. The vidwan, my guruji and I were scheduled to perform at a concert in T Narasipur, near Mysore. We set off from Bangalore around 1pm for the 6.30pm concert. Near Srirangapatna, the car broke down. Vidwan Chowdiah rushed to the bonnet, opened its hood and meddled with cables to restart the car. As we were cruising towards T Narasipur – a picturesque town located at the confluence of the Cauvery and Kapila rivers – the car broke down again, this time irretrievably. The clock had struck 7.30 pm. Exasperated at the long and fruitless wait, hundreds of fans of Chowdiah who had gathered at the concert venue were marching home, assuming the event had been called off for unspecified reasons. Just then, they saw us struggling with an incorrigible car that would stubbornly spurn all restart attempts. They informed the organisers that we were stranded on the Kapila bridge and sent out the town criers to inform the people who were patiently waiting at the venue to stay on for the concert. We were ferried in a chartered vehicle.

The organisers offered us mouth-watering dosa and coffee before we could start the concert. As it was already 9 pm by then, Vidwan Chowdiah waved aside the snacks offer and launched into the concert with gusto. The concert went on till 1.30 am. After a back-breaking journey and soul-stirring concert, we could dig into the by-now-cold dosa and coffee in the wee hours of the day. Still green in my memory is Vidwan Chowdiah's continuing fascination for automobiles despite the hiccups they threw up.

When I look back on my relationship with the legend, I am consoled – and equally encouraged – by the fact that I was fortunate to work with him for decades. It's my privilege. He was one of his kind, and it may take centuries for another second Chowdiah.



Vidwan AV Anand is a senior percussionist of Karnataka. He was taught to play Mridangam by Ghatam Vidwan KS Manjunathan from a very young age and has performed with maestros like Mysore Chowdiah, TR Malalingam, MD Ramanathan, S Balachandar etc. He was awarded Sangeetha Kala Ratna by the Bangalore Gayana Samaja in October 2009.

He awakens the power within...

Deepa Ganesh (courtesy The Hindu, Bangalore Edition)



One of the finest gurus of Carnatic music, P.S. Narayana Swamy says that the best part of his life were the years that he stayed with his guru, Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer. Learning was a continuous affair, every moment of the day, he says.

Born to P.N. Subramaniam, a doctor father in Aanandathaandavapuram, PSN could have ended up as one too. But the radio wrote his destiny differently. As a little boy PSN was enamoured by Papanasam Sivan's compositions that was played on the radio. He could sing them so well that his father, who was a connoisseur of Carnatic music, realised that he had to fuel his son's interest. At around the age of seven, he began to learn music from Panju Bhagavathar, at Konerirajapuram, where his father settled down for his medical practice. "After 2-3 years, my guru suggested that I learn from Tiruppambaram Somasundaram Pillai in Thiruveezhimizhalai. We went to the great nadaswaram master and my father requested him to teach me. When he agreed, my father found a house and left me and my grandmother there."

Name some of the finest artistes in the field of Carnatic music today, and you will find that a good number of them are disciples of the great guru, P.S. Narayana Swamy. Abhishek Raghuram, Ranjani-Gayatri, Trichur Brothers, Gayatri Venkataraghavan, Kunnakudi Balamuralikrishna, Kalavathi Avadhooth, T.V. Ramprasad down to the youngest of the lot, Sunil Gargyan, the recipient of The Hindu MS award recently... the list can go on. "Let me clear that misconception right away," says PSN, cutting me short. "I teach sincerely. I don't believe in short cuts. That's my method. But all these musicians who have trained under me, have not been made top-ranking musicians by me, it is because of their own merit. They have worked very hard, and are dedicated. I am equally fortunate to have such disciples, else it would have remained a one-sided toil," he says in a manner most unassuming. PSN was in Bangalore recently to receive the Swaramurthy V.N. Rao Memorial national award.

PSN's house was about a kilometre away from his school. After school he came home, quickly ate something and ran off to his guru's house. Somasundaram Pillai had three students at that time. Their lessons would begin at 6 p.m. and ended at 10 p.m. They would sleep at their guru's house and at 4 a.m. their practice would resume. "With coffee at 6.30 a.m. our practice would end and then we ran back home, got ready and left for school. This rigorous discipline helped me immensely."



This went on for four to five years. Somasundaram Pillai was impressed with the progress PSN was making and advised him to learn from a vocal musician. “My grandfather was very close to Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer. Once Semmangudi came to Kumbhakonam for a concert, and they made me sing before him. He was pleased with what I sang and asked my grandfather to send me with him. My parents were consulted and with their permission I left with Semmangudi to Tiruvananthapuram,” narrates PSN.

PSN, a boy of 14 years at that time, never missed his family. His guru’s wife was so kind and caring that she became a mother figure to him. Semmanagudi too, was very loving and would look after him with affection. ‘Have you eaten? If you don’t eat well, even I won’t...’, PSN remembers his guru saying this to him and tears fill his eyes. Except when they travelled, PSN was assigned chores like washing his guru’s clothes etc, but back at home he was not expected to do anything. The kind Semmangudi transformed into a terror when it came to music. He would spit fire if his students made mistakes. ‘Go around with the barber’s kit; that is what you are good for!’ he would give them a shelling. “He would sing a composition once or twice, and he expected us to listen to it with full attention. Students would have to then no-

tate the song, and show it to him in writing. Suppose you sang looking at the sahyam that was the end of it. In a concert of thousand-odd people he would announce: ‘This boy needs a piece of paper to aid his music. Imagine what kind of a musician he may become in future!’ That was enough to embarrass us.”

Staying in his guru’s house was a very big boon PSN says. Semmangudi was constantly thinking of music. In fact, music was such a 24-hour affair that there was no need to sit down formally for a class. He was either singing a kriti, or doing neraval or swaraprastharam, or talking about musical concepts. “There was something about the way he sang at home. His concerts could never match up to the music he produced at home. If I felt like that you can imagine how great his music must have been in informal circumstances! It was perhaps because there was no audience at home, and he sang for his self satisfaction. He would go on improving and perfecting his music. Full of ideas, he tried many things at home. For instance, Narayana Goula in a kutcheri is sung for five mins, but at home he would sing it for 30 minutes! Similarly, Nayaki. His manodharma was phenomenal. A concert space was probably a more self-conscious one... he was extraordinary,” says PSN, saying that gurukulavasa was a blessing. “The amount of learning, imbibing and nurturing that hap-

pened is unimaginable – of music and more.” Even though practice was every minute’s affair at Semmangudi’s house, what he was going to sing at the evening’s kutcheri was unpredictable. “He never rejected public request. And he allowed his disciples to explore. In fact, he would say don’t sing like me. ‘I sing in a nasal tone because I have a problem, why are you producing that tone?’ he would reprimand. Now, no such gurus or students...,” PSN was nostalgic.

After about five years, Semmangudi had to move to Madras when he got a job in All India Radio. PSN moved along with him, and in the meanwhile even got married. “I continued my lessons with him. I moved to Madras in 1954 and have lived there ever since. Till the last moments of my guru I was with him....” PSN gradually started taking tuitions, got a concert once in a while at marriages or in one of the few sabhas of those times. “My life became steady when I got a job with AIR Vadya Vrinda. I worked with exceptional people like Emani Shankar Shastri, Gopalakrishnan and others. I used to enjoy my job thoroughly,” says PSN, explaining the nature of his work.

If radio was something that changed the course of his life, his father’s unconditional support was another major factor. “How much my father supported me! I decided to quit school when I was in the eighth standard. He didn’t force me to study. I was interested only in music. But I didn’t have an idea that I would become a musician. Not once, did he come in my way. My father and my guru are god’s boons to my life... I owe all my respect and credibility to them...” Learning from a nadaswaram vidwan Somasundaram Pillai gave great felicity to his voice. But wasn’t caste a problem for PSN who came from the upper echelons of society? “This is not true as far as music practice is concerned. How many great masters – Swaminathan Pillai, Raja-

manickyam Pillai, Rajarathnam Pillai... there were never such feelings. Young and old, irrespective of caste, people would fall at the feet of Swaminathan Pillai, he was such an extraordinary musician.” If there were differences, PSN says, it was only in the lifestyle practices. Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar and Rajamanickyam Pillai were great friends, so were Chembai and Chowdiah. They would discuss music, and spent a lot of time with each other, but would eat separately. This, he adds, was shaped out of their own personal will and never enforced. “In fact,

The kind Semmangudi transformed into a terror when it came to music. He would spit fire if his students made mistakes

all these upper caste musicians sang for the weddings in the families of Palani Subramanya Pillai, Rajarathnam Pillai and others. They had utmost respect for each other. There are any number of such stories... caste never came in the way of music or their interpersonal relationships,” he says categorically.

PSN is modest and down to earth. There is not a trace of his mastery when he speaks, it is marked with a genuine simplicity and purity of thought. With music, he is unbending. “Knowledge is inborn. To a certain extent, it ensures good music. With interest, you can set a man-odharma but in that kind of music there is no improvement. So, interest and talent are two different things. But for either, hardwork is no substitute. My guru used to say great music should shine with transparency of emotion and complexity of thought. If you sing Devagandhari, it should become known in the very first note. Bhaavam is the most important element in music...”

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Guru Vandana

From disciples of U Srinivas

Arvind Bhargav, Chennai

Shrinivas Uncle for me was not only my guru, but a fatherly figure, guiding light and a source of eternal inspiration. He would always extol me to work hard and never bother about the results.

I have been blessed enough to be one of those privileged souls who have not only enjoyed a long association, but also had the honour of learning the nuances and intricacies of the wonderful mandolin from him.

It's actually quite painful to address uncle in the past tense, when it feels like just yesterday he said he was proud of the little I have achieved which was all due to his benevolent grace and guidance.

Other fellow Shisyas call him 'annaya', but from the age of 6, I have been calling him uncle. He never minded that. (He would, in later years tease me about it)

No words can express the loss and hollow feeling I get whenever I think of him, when I hear his godly music. There will never be another person like him.

As our guru, he was most patient, yet firm. Most fun loving, yet serious when teaching.

There are many incidents which are now most precious memories. They bring both a smile and a pang.

Once he was teaching us Kaligiyunte, a Keeravani composition of Shri. Thyagaraja. Other students perfectly understood the kriti, but I couldn't understand the charanam. He patiently sat with me from morning 10 am till 2 in the afternoon toiling to make me understand!!! Such passion and dedication to both teaching and music is something that always awed and inspired me!



He consistently said (particularly every Vijayadashami), "The best guru dakshina for me is when you make me proud as a guru with your performances!"

An exemplary artist...

A sweet and loving Guru...

And above all, an extraordinary human being...

Though you will be sorely missed in the coming years, your spirit lives on in your music and hopefully pray that you will be happy with ours..

Akshay V, Bangalore

Guru Brahma Gurur Vishnu Guru Devo Maheshwaraha

Guru Saakshat Para Brahma Tasmai Sree Gurave Namaha

I distinctly remember my very first encounter with my Guru. It was in the month of October, 2004. My mom, aunt and I had just arrived at the abode of one of the greatest musicians there ever was. I was seated in a hall filled with awards, mementos, medals and photos all around me. From inside a room came this man dressed in a very simple attire, an infectious smile on his face that could lighten anyone's mood and a *pranam* gesture with his hands to greet us. It was the one and only Mandolin Mae-

stro U Shrinivas. I had only seen him and been mesmerised by his music from a distance at his concerts. Like any other teenager, I was extremely excited to stand in such close proximity and have a conversation with a celebrity. But my excitement hit its pinnacle when he agreed to teach me to play the mandolin. I could not believe it! I was left dumbfounded by the fact that I was going to learn directly from the musical genius who introduced this instrument into the carnatic world.

All the way back home, I remember pinching myself and pestering my mom and aunt to reassure me that all that had happened was true! Along with the thrills that I experienced the entire day, I was equally nervous. Thoughts kept running through my mind. This person was a world renowned musician, a prodigy who had scaled greatest of heights. To learn from him would definitely be extremely challenging and difficult. With his busy schedule, he would be a strict and rigid teacher and would have lot of expectations on the students when it came to learning. But with every interaction I had with him from then on for 10 years, either at class or otherwise, I was proved wrong, time and again.

My Guru was such an amicable person. He was an epitome of simplicity and humbleness. Whoever it was, if my Guru was approached in person or over the phone for anything at all, he would attend to each of them with a genuine interest and fervour, inspite of his tight schedule. He was very soft spoken but had an amazing sense of humour. It was a blissful and divine feeling just to be around him. Every class with my Guru was special. It was not just

music that I would learn, but lessons for life. There was so much to learn just by looking at the way he carried out himself. There was always some reason behind whatever he did or said. He treated everyone with respect and was always calm and composed. If we are able to incorporate a small portion of atleast one of his qualities, I think our lives would be so much better. His school, Shrinivas Institute Of World Musique, was his dream and teaching was also his passion, apart from performing. He loved tutoring all his students, especially the small kids. He used to descend to their levels, become a kid himself and take immense happiness in teaching them. He knew each of his students inside out, our strengths, weaknesses and had a unique style of teaching each one of us. However complex a piece was, he simplified it for us. Honestly, we never learnt anything on our own. He infused it into us, somehow. Not once has he raised his voice or got tired of our mistakes. Instead, he would take pains to correct it and would patiently probe us till we got it right.

My Guru was so punctual that one could set the clock looking at him. If he was in Chennai on the weekends, he was up and ready by 9 AM to conduct classes, come what may. There have been instances where he would have just arrived from abroad after a tour and still insist on teaching us. While waiting for us, he would sit down caressing the mandolin, running his fingers up and down the fret-board. As we entered the room, he would start talking to us, but his fingers would continue working their way, flawlessly. It was a magical sight indeed.

He used to say, "Noth-



ing comes easy. Keep practicing. Do your duty and never have any expectations. Things will turn out well". Even though I have heard similar quotes before, such statements coming from him gave it so much more credibility as he was a living example. Even the smallest of advices that he gave me was motivational. Whenever I have had a concert, however big or small, his wishes made me feel confident. After all, it is only because of his blessings that I or any of his students can hold the instrument and strike a note, let alone play an entire concert. A kriti by Saint Thyagaraja aptly says it all

"Guruleka etuvanti guniki deliyaga bodu" (Without the grace of the Guru, no one, however virtuous he may be, will know)

For every 'Mandolin U Shrinivas Kutcheri' in Bangalore, there was a festive environment at home and my entire family would head out to experience and enjoy his music. For me, It was yet another chance to just be around my Guru, witness his dexterity over the instrument, try to imbibe his music, maintain my *talam* without slipping atleast for one whole song and of-course, have my jaws dropped. Each concert of his was like a recharge for the soul, leaving me eagerly waiting for the next one.

He loved our country and was proud of our culture, values and traditions. He was an ardent devotee of Sri Sai Baba and Kanchi Maha Periyavar. He always attributed everything that he did to God, saying that it was all "Gods Grace", without taking any credit for himself. He was the youngest person to have received the 'Padmashree', along with many more prestigious awards and titles under his belt. Whether it was his fast paced riffs in his swarakalpana or surprising changes in octaves during a raga elaboration, whatever he played could strike a chord in any person and get their hearts racing. Yet he would remain seated as if nothing had happened, staying grounded at all times. How can there be a person with such humility and almost no ego at all? I have always been in awe of this quality of my Guru. There was no doubt that he was a divine being.

September 19th, 2014. The day when music, as I knew it, was frozen in time. The world cried and the mandolin wept. He was lying in a box and his fingers were lifeless. It was unexpected and hard to believe that I can never see him in person again. I can never expect him to be at class nor can I see him play live on stage. That day, just like for everyone else, a part of me was lost, leaving behind a void that can never be filled. He was my mentor, inspiration, guide and god. Looking back, I feel very fortunate, blessed and honoured to have been his student. Each moment that I spent with him carries poignant memories which I shall cherish. I believe that they would be my guiding light for all my life. I am sure that those who knew him share the same sentiment. There can never be a teacher, musician and human being like him. There was and always will be only one U. Shrinivas. Even though we cannot physically see him, he and his music will live in our hearts for eternity.

Vishnu Venkatesh, Bangalore



He was a great musician but a greater human being.

He always used to tell me to play confidently and happily.

Srinivas sir told me that "Music is greater than Slokam (Prayer to god) and it must be played with utter devotion to god and thus there should not be any compromise when playing" as told by Kanchi Maha Periyava to him.

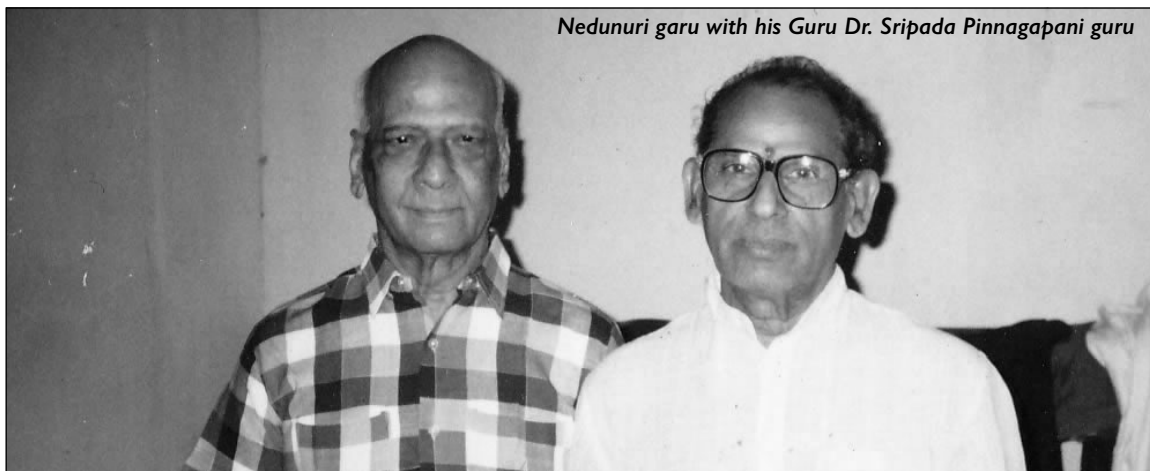
He used to teach all of the students with equal importance and care whether the student was a beginner or learning advanced music.

He always used to bring a lot of curiosity by playing many complicated notes on the instrument, this made me to learn and achieve more in this field.

He personally came to Bangalore along with Sri U Rajesh Sir and blessed me on the occasion of my Arangetram.

The music can be got from anywhere through his albums and concert recordings, but the person can't be got back, this is a very great loss to the music fraternity.

Tyagaraja, vital for Concert's Success



Nedunuri garu with his Guru Dr. Sripada Pinnagapani guru

In his acceptance speech after receiving 'Sri Tyagaraja Seva Ratnam' award at Sri Krishna Gana Sabha, Nedunuri Krishnamurthy made a pertinent point. To quote him: "It is sad Sri Tyagaraja's kirtanas are not in circulation in today's concerts." Coming as it does from a top-ranking musician with six decades of experience behind him, his words carry weight and deserve respectful introspection. The sentiment was not expressed to suit the occasion.

Nedunuri's is not a lone voice in this respect. We have CDs of live concerts of veteran vidwans of an earlier era. We can hear for ourselves the contents of their performances and the place they assigned to the songs of the saint. All of them cannot be dubbed blinkered vidwans routinely rendering Tyagaraja's compositions without taking in their programmes the items of other vaggeyakaras. They did include a few songs. But if the primacy was given to the bard of Tiruvaiyaru it was born out (of their

firm conviction that it was Tyagaraja who conferred on their concerts the lordly stature which they were able to maintain for five decades and more.

The supreme objective of every artist is the achievement of success in his/her effort. So they frame the programme with this end in view. Today there is widespread concern about dilution of standards with contemporary fads and novelties exerting a baneful influence on the minds of musicians. Each one strives to be one-up in this race. While in one respect the glory of classical Carnatic music is holding the attention of the world, it has also fallen a prey to the lure of world music eroding the pure classicism of Carnatic music's unique identity. Will the anguish of Nedunuri Krishnamurthy, speaking on behalf of great vidwans who are no more with us, fall only on deaf ears?

(Courtesy The Hindu and nedunuri.com)

Tribute to U Srinivas

SD Sridhar, Senior Violinist

I am deeply moved to write about my little association with the Maestro U Shrinivasji and indeed honoured to be chosen for this assignment by the Editor of Lalitha Kala Tarangini, for its special edition dedicated to Mandolin Shrinivas

It was indeed a treat to watch Shrinivas play the instrument onstage as he bent over his mandolin and looked up to smile with pleasure at the music, at his accompanists and at the audience. It was a symbol of 'admanandam.'

More than a musical genius, Shrinivas was an uncompromising bhakthiman, a true devotee of God.

He had all the deities living with him in his mandolin box. Yes he had the pictures of all the deities in his mandolin box he sought to worship with sincerity. The box was his temple. And when you complimented Shrinivas after a fine concert he used to say "it was all His Grace. I know nothing."

His perception of the Creator was absolutely clear in his mind. I had the privilege of traveling with him on many concert tours and wherever we went visiting, temples were Shrinivas's priority.

Even at this age one could call him a Karma Yogi or Nada Yogi. He normally woke up from a small nap around 2.30 pm and started his practice session, which would go on for long hours. And he made it a point to say his prayers before his concerts. These qualities made him stand apart. He took a keen layman's interest in the Ramayana and Mahabharata too, wondering at the portrayal of the characters of these epics and, their points of entry and exit.

His concerts were well planned and he took each concert seriously. He wanted all his con-



certs to be at their best right from the word go. His watchword was janaranjakam--- reaching all.

He took the world by storm and was able to generate rasikas in every nook and corner of the world. He was indeed blessed to be so. Most of us especially his family members thought that Almighty might rid him of his ailment and he would sooner or later resume normal life. We were all expecting the miracle his Bhakthi deserved.

He had in last few years of his life, begun to descend deeper into the art, and it was showing in his performances. His old style was there, but every now and then, a hitherto unseen wisdom came to the fore.

Fate has been very cruel in snatching away such a loveable human being from us so early, at the peak of his fame.

Interview with Nedunuri garu - Excepts

Shri. BRC Iyengar (*Courtesy nedunuri.com*)

Nedunuri Krishnamurthy, Carnatic vocalist from Andhra Pradesh, presided over the 65th annual conference of music academy of Madras in Dec 1991 and received the Sangeeta Kalanidhi title that goes with the honour. BRC Iyengar interviewed him prior to the conference.

There are three types of reactions from a recipient of an award (like Sangeeta Kalanidhi title). One extremely happy because it was not expected; two happy alright because it was expected and there is no surprise; and three, it is too late and there is no charm in it. Now what is your reaction?

I feel extremely happy because I did not expect this honour.

Can you recall some of your experiences in concerts which you consider memorable?

The most memorable experience I had was at the Music Academy in Madras. KR Sundaram Iyer, the then president of the Academy, hearing me sing Entani ne, Thyagaraja's song in Mukhari, shed tears of joy; he was very much moved by its rasa bhava. I'd like to reveal another unforgettable experience, if my indulgence would not be mistaken. This was at Sri Krishna Gana Sabha. I gave an elaborate and elegant treatment of

Kafi (Andhra people pronounce it as Kafi while those in Tamil Nadu pronounce it as Kapi). Lalgudi Jayaraman played the violin for me in that concert. He did not choose to take his turn after finished my Kafi. He wanted me to continue and sing the kriti. I was surprised at his suggestion. Immediately after the concert, I asked him to disclose the reason for his not playing his turn. He said and I quote "... you had exhausted the raga". Then he called Yagnaraman (Secretary of the sabha) and said; "Here is a great artiste". My joy knew no bounds on receiving such a compliment from a very great vidwan like Lalgudi. I had many such experiences in my concert career...

I was hardly 20 year old when I enjoyed the following experience. It was at the Saraswathi Gana Sabha in Kakinada. Mali was scheduled for a concert. Due to an accident, the train was held up at Ongole. He could not reach Kakinada. I happened to be in the audience. The audiences requested me to engage the audience till Mali could come. He did come later during my performance. In the mean while the audience heard me with such rapt attention as they would have given Mali. In fact Mali also heard me for some time. I fondly remember this incident.

Some say that the alapana should reflect the basic bhava or mood of the kriti that will be taken up. However, since an alapana is based on manodharma, the singer may get wonderful ideas at the moment. Should he go ahead and give expression to them, irrespective of the song to follow, or avoid those ideas that do not fit the particular image of the raga being developed?

No, the alapana must be in keeping with the song that follows. Also the singer should not indulge in alapana disproportionately. If it is a brief alapana, he must yet come up with the best he can offer. This was the greatness of Ariyakudi.

If the concept of Raga music is accepted and respected, the image of a chosen raga should be developed through proper combination of raga alapana, kriti, neraval, and swara kalpana. In this, the kriti should be the framework for the manodharma aspects, no?

I believe only the chauka kala (slow tempo) swara kalpana brings out the raga bhava because it is the swara's that bring out the beauty of the raga. So it is a must to practice alapana, neraval, and swara kalpana in slow tempo to develop raga bhava. One should take examples from the compositions of Muthuswamy Dikshi-

tar and pada's of Kshetrayya and practice in slow tempo.

But only knowledgeable people look for raga music. Nowadays, the listeners typically want only compositions, a number of songs, because they are familiar with them. If the musician sings a song with which they are familiar, they are satisfied.

Much has been talked about Kanakku and Sarvalaghu in Swara kalpana. In your case you seem to give more importance to sarvalaghu and relatively less to kanakku. Do you believe there is greater sukha in sarvalaghu?

Yes. Even if there is kanakku, it should be one with sarvalaghu and should not be presented as a separate entity. It is sarvalaghu. There should not be any deergha (extended) or janta swara's. Even in sarvalaghu, there must be a pattern (demonstrates). Swara singing should be confined to half avartha's in the beginning. This was the greatness of Ariyakudi. One can make beautiful combinations in half avartha's. What is required is vocabulary and fluency.

Where the sidemen override the main artistes?

In that event, there is no choice except to put accompanist concerned in his place by singing an item, or doing vyavaharam in which he can not play mischief.

Ranjani-Gayatri at BGS Conference

Deepa Ganesh, Senior Associate of SRLKM

The Carnatic kutcheri format has certainly changed. There is a lot more fluidity in the format and every musician brings to it his own bit of amendment. Some make it dramatic and some subtle, but the Carnatic music landscape is full of unanticipated moments. Most musicians have done away with the varna and now you don't necessarily have to wait till the end of the concert for the devaranama. In this Ranjani-Gayatri concert, organised recently by Bangalore Gayana Samaja, it felt good to hear the varna that one seldom does these days, and the devaranama came rather early in the concert.

They opened with "Saami Ninne Nammi Naapai" Pantuvarali varna composed by Shatkala Narasayya. Pantuvarali, a raga that otherwise invokes the sombre, or the melancholic, generated a good momentum, particularly with its two-speed rendition. Ranjani-Gayatri sang it with clarity and perfection.

The concert surprisingly had two allied ragas Gambheera Nattai and Chala Nattai. The lovely Mysore Vasudevacharya composition "Girija Ramana" reminded one of the Mallari, recreating the celebration of the temple atmosphere.

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This kriti, set to adi tala, was soon followed by Koteshwara Iyer's "Edayya Gathi" in Chala Nat-tai, which offered a complete contrast because of the nature of its composition. A beautiful piece, it invoked the Hindustani raga Jog.

Despite singing in unison, the individual musical temperaments of Ranjani and Gayatri are distinct and recognised. The co-ordination, the complementary approaches which eventually led to the same emotional plane, came from a great deal of rigour and rehearsal. They sang the lovely raga Saranga with uninhibited imagination, investing much into its development. This melodious raga is the janya raga of Kalyani, and the sisters brought out its most soulful aspects. B.K. Raghu was equally brilliant on the violin; you feel he is almost reaching Kalyani but makes a wonderful departure to the notes of Saranga from there. But after such a detailed rendition, to sing a devaranama came as a bit of disappointment. They sang Purandaradasa's "Ee pariya sobagu" (khanda chaapu) which was made popular in raga Hamsanandi by the maestro M Balamuralikrishna.

The masterpiece of Tyagaraja "Ksheenamai" in raga Mukhari came with an elaborate alapana. The very nature of this raga is such that it makes way for a whole range of emotions, and the sisters who are known to exploit every possibility of a raga, did that amply well. Elaborate neraval and svaraprastara came at "Edi jesina jagannathudu"; however, after a detailed and ornate alapana, the neraval sounded repeti-

tive and stretched. This is perhaps inherent to the structure of Mukhari itself—its aesthetic values are preserved only when it is explored with restraint.

The piece de resistance was the RTP dedicated to the memory of Mandolin U. Shrinivas. They gave full expression to the raga Desh, in fact, an exquisite exposition. Though this raga is more a 'light' one, in strict classicist treatment, it does abide by the raga grammar. Nevertheless, its romantic temperament makes it possible for a musician to trespass into the boundaries of other related ragas. Since this is part of the architecture of the raga itself, in a way it is at once classical, and also strips itself of that rigidity. Ranjani-Gayatri made much of this freedom and beautifully wove in Madhukauns, Deepali and others. Overall, it was rather stunning, but the idiom inclined towards Hindustani. The pallavi composition "Bhaava raga tala sangeeta naadave, namma Deshada hirime" was an ordinary piece of poetry. What mattered perhaps was that it was a fitting tribute to U. Shrinivas, who himself had crossed boundaries and become a global icon.

B.K. Raghu was top class, though there were places you felt moderation could be exercised. H.S. Sudhindra, as usual, proved himself to be not just a sensitive mridangam accompanist, but also a musician who knows his art well. Mysore GS Ramanujan matched HS Sudhindra admirably well.

60th Year Anniversary

Begum Parveen Sultana took the risikas by storm performing for Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira on the occasion of their 60th anniversary founders day. Her music is getting divine with passing of time and she is adored by the musical fraternity. The charity concert drew over thousand connoisseurs who were thrilled by her magic.

Dr. Shalini Rajanish, Principal Secretary to Govt., Kannada and Culture Dept. honoured Begum with a shawl and presented a memento.



From L to R - Dr. Yogananda MR, Treasurer, GV Krishnaprasad, Hon. Secretary, Smt. GV Neela, Chief Founder, Begum Parveen Sulthana, Dr. Shalini Rajanish, Principle Secretary to Govt., Kannada and Culture Dept.

Forthcoming Programmes

Saint Thyagaraja and Purandaradasara Aradhane

26 January 2015, Monday 10.30 am at Devagiri Venkateshwara Temple

Spring Music Festival Programmes at Bangalore Gayana Samaja

(daily at 5.45 pm)

01 February 2015, Sunday

Presentation of G Vedanta Iyengar Memorial Award to Bombay Jayashree. The award carries a citation, a silver medal and a purse of one lakh Rs. followed by a concert of Bombay Jayashree-Vocal, HN Bhaskar-Violin, VV Ramanamurthy-Mrudanga, Giridhar Udupa-Ghata.

02 February 2015, Monday

N Ravikiran-Chitravina, Ranjani Ramakrishnan-Violin, Patri Satish Kumar-Mrudanga, BS Arun Kumar-Morching.

03 February 2015, Tuesday

Sanjay Subramanyam-Vocal, Mysore M Nagaraj-Violin, KU Jayachandra Rao-Mrudanga, B Rajashekar-Morching.

04 February 2015, Wednesday

TM Krishna-Vocal, HK Venkatram-Violin, Arun Prakash K-Mrudanga, G Guruprasanna-Kanjari.

05 February 2015, Thursday

Bangalore Brothers (MB Hariharan and S Ashok), V Nalina Mohan-Violin, Anoor Ananthakrishna Sharma-Mridanga, UN Giridhar Udupa-Ghata.

06 February 2015, Friday

Abhishek Raghuram-Vocal, Charulatha Ramanujam-Violin, Anantha R Krishnan-Mrudanga, G Guruprasanna-Kanjari.

07 February 2015, Saturday

Mysore Dr. M Manjunath-Violin and Dr. Jayanthi Kumaresh-Veena, Arjun Kumar-Mrudanga, Anantha R Krishnan-Tabla.

08 February 2015, Sunday

Ranjani and Gayathri-Vocal, HN Bhaskar-Violin, Delhi S Sairam-Mrudanga, GS Ramanujam-Ghata.

08 March 2015, 6.00 pm, Sunday

Tribute to Mandolin U Srinivas. Programme at Sri Jaya Rama Seva Mandali, 8th Block, Jayanagar, Bangalore

U Rajesh-Mandolin, HK Venkatram-Violin, Arjun Kumar-Mridanga, G Guruprasanna-Kanjari.

25th and 26th April 2015, 6.00 pm

Musical Discourse by Smt. Visaka Hari accompanied by Charulatha Ramanujam-Violin, HS Sudhindra-Mridanga, Sukanya Ramgopal-Ghata.