



Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira (R)

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Lalitha Kala Tharangini

Quarterly Music Magazine

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1st Anniversary Edition



***Our humble tribute to the legend
on her 98th birth anniversary***

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SRLKM releases DVD on Pazhani Subramanya Pillai

Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira released a DVD on Maha Vidwan Pazhani Subramanya Pillai titled “The Pole Star of Laya Universe” on 4th July 2014. This follows a successful release of the same at Chennai few months back. The DVD is produced by Swathi Sanskriti.

Senior mrudangist Shri. AV Anand received the first DVD from Shri. NS Krishnamurthy, Director, AIR (Retd.). Shri. TAS Mani senior mrudangist and Mr. Lalitha Ram the author of book on Pazhani titled “Dhruva Nakshatram” also participated. Their speeches on Pazhani Subramanya Pillai and work done by Vidwan KS Kalidas towards the DVD were very well appreciated by the audience.



October 2014

Dear Readers,

Sangeetha Kalanidhi and Bharat Ratna Madurai Shanmukhavadiyu Subbulakshimi (1916-2004) is the greatest gift God has bestowed on us the mankind in recent times. While her music rose to the heights of Everest, her humility and principles, all through her life stood taller than that. On the occasion of her 98th birthday on 16th Sept, SRLKM salutes her contribution to the music world and applauds what she did for mankind. We dedicate this special edition of the magazine to the great soul.

There are not many who gave away their earnings and wealth to charitable and religious causes. If MS has done this, the credit goes to T Sadasivam, who stood by her side like a guide/guru all through her life.

Her involvement and sincerity in everything she did manifests itself multi folds whether it is her role in Meera or Venkatesha Suprabhatam or Vishnu Sahasranamam. These are perfect efforts that have no parallel.

Her kriti rendering is considered picture perfect and she never deviated from the way the composers designed the kritis unlike some of the current day musicians who employ manodharmam for kalpita sangeetha. The vital role played by Sangeetha Kalanidhi Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer deserves special mention in this regard.

MS's music is never complete without Radha. She was like Lakshmana following and supporting MS from a very young age. They complemented and cherished each others music. Highly talented Radha with extraordinary memory was the key ingredient of every success.

Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira 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.

Lalitha Kala Tarangini 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 the great Indian fine art.

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For MS, music was like God meant to be worshipped. Her music was Bhakti and divinity personified. It went beyond the senses and reached the soul and transported the audience to the place of worship. Her commitment to music was so tall that she was able to bring in front of the people, great composers and saints during her rendering. It goes without saying that people saw Meera or Kanakadasa or Purandaradasa or Surdas in her.

The Nightingale of India is probably the only musician who influenced the people world over. Her music will live for hundreds of years to come and will be a reference point for students of music. She is a perfect role model for youngsters aspiring to excel in music.

A unique Ragam-Thanam-Pallavi workshop conducted by Ranjani and Gayathri was a huge success with over 50 students from various states attending. It was heartening to see youngsters grasping and reproducing it instantly.

SRLKM released a DVD on Pazhani Subramanya Pillai. Senior Percussionists attended the function.

Anand S

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Magazine Committee

Editor - Anand S

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

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Lalitha Kala Tharangini - Inbox

Thank you for sending me the PDF versions of the SRLKM Newsletter. I was pleasantly surprised to see this new publication, which very appropriately captures the spirit of the initiatives of Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira.

The Mandira has become a synonym for good quality musical programmes presented in South Bangalore with a good frequency and by a mix of seasoned artistes and new-comers. Similarly your newsletter has a good mix of well-researched articles on interesting themes like special compositions, instruments, and famous musicians. The issues on Khanjira maestro Hari Shankar and legend RK Srikantan were particularly good.

The coverage of recent festivals has been good. The concert reviews written by young musicians is a very innovative idea.

I am sure your newsletter will go a long way in establishing a closer connect for SRLKM with the Carnatic rasikas.

As it is, the print production quality is of a high order. By adding more white spaces and a more artistic layout, the newsletter will become top class.
- Sachi R. Sachidananda, Bangalore

I sincerely thank the Editor of Lalitha Kala Tharangini for handing over a copy of their 3rd issue to me - it was rich in information and I liked reading all the articles, particularly the Srirangam Pacharatna Kritis of Sadguru Thyagaraja written by Bharati Ramasubban.
- Swaminathan, Chennai

Dear Sir, these days we wait to receive the copy of the Lalitha Kala Tharangini - soft copy or the magazine - very professionally done, I particularly liked the pictorial and filled with perspective - history and evolution of audio recording in India, collaborated by Mr. R T Chari and Vikram Sampath.
- K Ananthasubramanian, Trivandrum

Dear Sir - it is indeed nice to see a young talent - which we were not aware of - being brought to the rasikas - Ramana Balachandra - Amrutha Venkatesh's account of the concert is inspiring and it is nice to see that such talent is being discovered....we would like to see more concert reviews featured in Lalitha Kala Tharangini.....
- Rajam Mani, Bangalore

MS - Bhuvanada Bhagya

Dr. Shailaja and Shri.Venugopal, Mysore

The abbreviation MSS, is understood by the world as Madurai Shanmukhavadiyu Subbulakshmi, but to all music lovers and to the world of music it is Master of Sruti because as Bade Gulam Ali Khan once said, she is 'Suswaralakshmi Subbulakshmi.' She had a non dual relationship with sruti. She never went off note nor did her sruti waver, even when she was 80. The journey from being Madurai Shanmukhavadiyu Subbulakshmi to Bharat Ratna MS was an arduous as well as a complex process. She was shaped by the tumultuous times in which she lived. She became what she was not only by her own choices but also by the choices of others and especially T. Sadasivam, her husband. These choices did make a difference and Bharat Ratna MS was born.



MS with Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan

MS appeared on the musical scene when the Indian Subcontinent was undergoing a tremendous change. Varieties of value systems – Eastern v/s Western, male v/s female, religious v/s secular etc - were in a serious clash. Education was slowly opening up to women and of course to the elite women in terms of both caste and class. Values propounded by colonial education and the freedom movement were making a deep impact on the Indian thinking. The concept of classicism was also undergoing a change. These things initiated a number of socio-cultural changes throughout India. In addition to these the concept of morality was also undergoing a drastic change by the turn of 19th century. These changes affected the devadasis the most. These devadasis were an integral

part of this society and were revered as the preservers of classical arts especially dance and music. They were in fact the treasure house of ragas and compositions of great composers. Due to the changes that were rapidly taking place in matters of morality, they were begun to be treated with contempt. Once they were women of pride but now they were being treated as prostitutes and nautch (dancing) girls.

As a result of all these developments a strong movement to ban this practice of devadasis or nautch girls began. The anti-nautch movement insisted on withdrawing patronage of temples to these women. It was the main source of their livelihood. With this ban the devadasis moved from plenty to poverty. Music was gradually moving from religious spaces to secular public places. Sabha culture was gradually flourishing. Very concept of classical music was being reconstructed and a concert pattern was being evolved. The constitution of listeners also underwent a change. The world of music and dance, which was hitherto closed to the respectable women, was now open to them. They entered this field in a big way.

At this juncture the women, who had nurtured music and dance all along were in for a very hard time. They had lost the support of the kings, temples and also feudal lords. Only a few options were left to them. They had to pursue a career in the film industry or take to singing for gramophone companies or had to marry someone and settle down to become good homemakers. It was at this transitional moment of history that MS Subbulakshmi appeared on the Carnatic music scene.



Madurai Shanmukhavadiyu

She was born into the family of Madurai Shanmukhavadiyu as the second child on September 16, 1916. Shanmukhavadiyu was a Devadasi in the service of the Madurai Temple. She

was a renowned Veena artiste and a vocalist. She was respected by all her contemporaries. The family lived on frugality. Though it was poor in terms of material wealth, it was rich in music. The house always reverberated with the music of great stalwarts like Dakshinamurthy Pillai, Karaikudi Sambashiva Iyer and such others. Those who came home also taught one or two kritis to this little girl who was fondly called Kunjamma. Elder brother Shaktivel played Mridangam while sister Vadiva played Veena. Shaktivel taught Subbulakshmi not only the aesthetics of mridangam but even mridangam playing.

MS in fact breathed sruti. So perfect and immaculate was her sruti alignment that even at 80 she never went off note. Even as a child, she was fascinated by the drone of the tambura. She didn't play with any other toy but tambura. She deeply meditated sruti. Her concentration and grasp were astonishing. She could repeat anything that was taught to her just once. This never made her complacent. She sang them again and again till it was completely refined and became a part of her music memory so that she could sing it with total involvement without a scrap of paper. Perhaps it was because of this total absorption that she could not only emote but also pass on that experience completely to the listeners.

Like any other woman from the devadasi family, MS in fact began her career by singing to the gramophone companies. It was a major breakthrough, because people came to know of her because of this. The real breakthrough came when she got an opportunity to sing at the Mahamaham in Kumbhakonam. Soon after that, in 1933 she was officially invited by the Madras Music Academy to present a concert. Perhaps she was the first woman to be invited so by the academy. Chembai was so moved by her raga delineation that he stood up in the middle of the concert and

told, "One can get such a sweet voice if only one worships god with milk and honey." On listening to her during the Mahamaham, K Subrahmanyam, the noted film director decided to cast her in his movies. It was during 1938.

Key aspect of MS's perfection

"When she recorded Kamban's Ramayana verses, Tamil scholar Justice MM Ismail was consulted before she embarked on the project, as also before the actual recording. Notably, none of these recordings saw her hold the written text in her hand. Learning by heart was vital to truly knowing the words and melody, to flawless delivery in performance."

The career in films in fact changed her life as well as her singing. As all the reputed film critics point out, it brought a sea of change in the way she sang. Singing in the movies taught her to modulate her voice to express even the most subtle feeling.

No other Carnatic classical singer modulated voice as MS did. Her association with films especially 'Meera' brought her great fame. She was transformed into a saint. Devotion (Bhakti) became the hallmark of her music. All the great national leaders like Gandhi, Nehru, Rajaji and others became very fond of her singing. Gandhiji relished her music so much that he preferred rather to hear her speak the bhajan 'Hari tum Haro' than hear others sing it. He felt that she sang from the depths of her heart, soaked in devotion. It was in fact because of the movie Meera that MS attained a national stature and got involved in freedom struggle in her own way. She became very intimate with all the national leaders of that time. Subbulakshmi gave a number of concerts to collect money for the Kasturba Trust. That in fact was the beginning of her life of charity. The 'Master of Sruti' also turned out to be the 'Server of mankind'. In fact, the charity that she has done cannot be measured. Whatever she has done in public can be kept track of but what she has done in private very few people knew. In one of the private interviews Vidwan Karaikudi Mani said that an old family servant had come to invite the Sadasivam couple to the marriage of his granddaughter. He tells them that he was in great difficulty. Immediately Sadasivam asks MS to give her jewels to that old man. Without second thought MS removed all her expensive jewels and gave it to him. There were such innumerable oc-

casions. She could easily be called the 'Danachintamani'

MS was very humane, affectionate and motherly in her attitude and disposition. Vidwan Karaikudi Mani shared his very personal experience in an interview. He had played for MS Amma for a number of years. When he was around 26 or so MS like any other mother wanted to find a nice bride for him. In one of the concerts in Coimbatore an alliance for Mani had been identified. When the girl in view came to the greenroom Karaikudi Mani tells, "MS amma who was so great and famous, sat with girl like any ordinary woman and engaged her in a conversation, which was very touching." All great people are perhaps great because of their simplicity, which is true of MS too.

In a way Subbulakshmi was the first musician to make South Indian music pan Indian in the true sense and also the first Carnatic classical musician to take our music to the international scene. She included bhajans and songs from different Indian languages in her concerts. Her music overcame the barriers language, culture, race and countries. She toured the European world and presented many concerts. Everywhere people listened to her spellbound. In 1988, MS performed in Festival of India in Russia. In the middle of the concert a lady moved towards the stage with flowers in her hand and stood before MS. She first touched her eyes and then her heart to express her overflowing emotions.

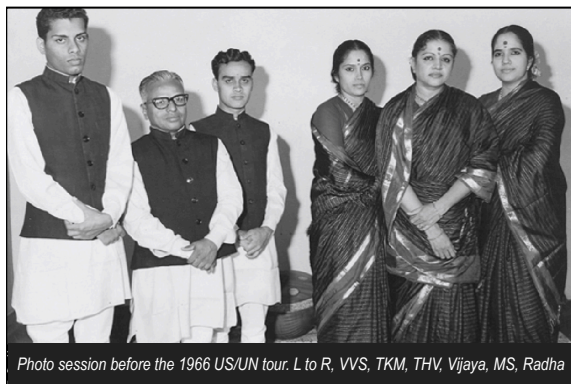


Photo session before the 1966 US/UN tour. L to R, VVS, TKM, THV, Vijaya, MS, Radha

The post mahamaham period was extremely turbulent in the life of Subbulakshmi. The soft spoken, mild and hesitant girl had to take a very firm

and unpalatable decision in her life. This in fact is symbolic of the strength of will she had. Shanmukhavadiu did not want her daughter to act in films, as it would spoil her career in music. It was also the time when T. Sadasivam had become more intimate with Subbulakshmi. Shanmukhavadiu was not very favourably disposed towards this intimacy, because Sadasivam was already married and poor. In view of these developments her mother wanted to settle her life with a rich person from Ramnad royal family. This was a real trying situation in Subbulakshmi's life. She had to choose between affluence, comforts and a life of her choice. She left her home at midnight and walked into the house of Sadasivam. She stayed there for two years and later on got married to him in 1940.



MS with T Sadasivam

Much has been said and written on the role Sadasivam played in the life of MS. As the noted biographer T.J.S. George comments, they had filled each other's life in a very different and meaningful way. They complimented each others life in a unique way. It is also often said that he literally made her. Of course there is truth in that. That is only one half of the truth while there is other half too. That is the extraordinary talent, grasp and the golden voice Subbulakshmi had. Without these, Sadasivam wouldn't have been successful in his effort.

MS lived and flourished at a time when all time great maestros reigned the male world of Carnatic music. She created history by successfully swarming into that male bastion. She was respected and appreciated by her contemporaries. Different aspects of her music were appreciated by her contemporaries. Palghat Mani Iyer who is known for his curt nature commented, "The only natural full throated singers of this generation are Ariyakudi, Chembai and MS Subbulakshmi. The coming of the mike was inconsequential as they continued to sing with the same power, vigour and zest as before – straight to the audience."

Among all the female vocalists, perhaps MS was the only one who had an enormous range both in terms of voice as well as repertoire. Her voice traversed with great ease in all the three octaves. This in fact expanded the range of her singing. It was most pleasant to listen to her when she touched the Gandhara in the higher octave. Once when she was singing Shankarabharanam and had lodged very comfortably in the tara gandhara and basking in its pleasure, Semmangudi who was among the audience was so thrilled that he stood up and called out “Gandhara Lakshmi stay there, don’t come down.” Niraval was her strong forte. As Indira Menon recognises, “with the exception of Musiri Subrahmanya Iyer and KV Narayanswami her niravals have remained unparalleled. They are an exercise in pure aesthetics and the raga springs to life from the sahitya.” Semmangudi tells that of all the women singers the tana of MS was the best. She was adept at singing tana.

Very often there is a feeling that Subbulakshmi is not very strong in laya related matters. There doesn’t seem to be even an iota of truth in it. MS had to present RTP in the academy. Alattoor brothers who were considered to be experts in rendering Raga Tana and Pallavi came to MS and asked her which pallavi she was going to sing. Then MS, humility personified tells them that it was Begada pallavi. It was very ordinary, simple and not at all a complex one. After the concert they compliment MS and tell, “It is true, the framework of the pallavi is very simple but the way you handled it is very complex and intricate.” She not only knew the aesthetics of mridangam but she had even learnt playing mridangam from her brother Shaktivel. K.V. Prasad, the renowned mridangam player says, “MS Amma understood mridangam very well. In case I played a nice or different stroke or played a distinct sangati she would turn towards me and express her appreciation. Her kalapramanam was unparalleled. During tani avartanams she maintained tala with great ease and comfort.” A similar view was expressed by Vidwan TK Murthy who had played for MS for more than five decades. He said, “Show me one person who can keep the tala like MS Subbulakshmi. She always maintained a perfect rhythm. Her tala never wavered. She knew all the

intricacies of laya, but she did not want to exhibit it before the audience because very few can understand and appreciate it.”



Semmangudi, who was her mentor points out “She had everything needed for vidwath and appeal. He (Sadasivam) opted for the latter. Control is not good, but who can say? She would never have reached the peaks but for him, we all know that. Who comes to hear MS? Nehru, Gandhi, Rajaji, Indira Gandhi. There is a crowd to hear MS and how to keep these crowds involved? Mind you, not that vidwath went missing but Bhakti took over”.

The real talent, genius and excellence of MS and also the unspoken injustice she has suffered are succinctly summed up by TM Krishna, “MS Subbulakshmi was not incapable of presenting the tough aspects, but actually did present them in numerous concerts. She rendered complex pallavis, sang rare and difficult compositions and presented all the ‘male’ aspects of the music with striking effect. Why is it that no one remembers this? To transform herself from an alluring devadasi musician to a respectable Brahmin musician, MS immersed herself in Bhakti. She did this by focusing on the religious aspects of the lyrics, a dasi became Meera. Since neither her Bhakti nor her Sringara music was part of what was perceived as serious and rigorous, her Carnatic musicality was undervalued. But a great musician lost out on both counts, for neither part presented her in the truest light of Carnatic music.”

(Dr. Shailaja teaches English at Govt. College in Nanjanagud and Shri. Venugopal is a professor of Statistics at Maharani Science College, Mysore)

Tiruvottiyur Pancharatna Kritis of Sadguru Tyagaraja

Dr Rajshri Sripathy, Asst. Prof., Dept. of Indian Music, University of Madras

Raga is the basis of Indian Music and composition (kriti, kirthana...) is the embodiment of raga. If a student of music has to learn or elaborate a raga, first a kriti in that raga is sought and learnt to understand the nuances of that raga. A composer who composed both the music and the lyrics is a Vaggeyakara, "Vak" stands for the literary content and "Geya" denotes the musical setting, Thyagaraja was a Saint Composer who was influenced by the Bhajana Paddhati and in more than one song he refers to Rama as the treasure of his family. His formal initiation in Rama-nama-japa was probably given by the Sanyasin Ramakrishnananda whom he salutes in his Nauka Charithram.

While Rama remained his favourite deity, Tyagaraja also sang on Siva and Vishnu in different manifestations and on Devi and Kumara with the same fer-

vour. His Rama is the God praised by Siva, and Siva is worshipped by Rama, Devi is Rama's sister and Kumara, his nephew. In Bhaktuni Charitramu in Begada, he says Siva madhave bhedamu jeyagaradu i.e there is no difference between Siva and Madhava. Nivanti Deivamu Shadanana, Todi, which says-It is difficult to find another God like Kumara where he refers to Kumara at Sirgazhi.

In South Indian Karnatik music history, many composers are known to have composed group kritis. To name a few, Muthuswamy Dikshitar has composed Panchalinga Sthala Krithis, Navagraha Kritis, Navavarna Krithis..., Shyama Shastri has composed Navarathna Malika krithis, Swathi Thi-

runal has composed Navarathri Kirthanas, Veena Kuppiar has composed Kalahasthi Pancharathnam and Venkatesha Pancharathnam.

Thyagaraja has composed the Ghana raga Pancharatnam in Natta, Gaula, Arabhi, Varali and Sri raga. Thyagaraja has composed in most of the 72 mela ragas. Deriving inspiration from him, composers like Pallavi Seshayyar belonging to the sishya parampara of Thyagaraja also composed in all the 72 ragas. Thyagaraja has given life to many rare ragas like Bahudari, Chenchukambhoji, Dileep-

pakam, Devamrithavarshini, etc. Like the Tevaram composers, whenever he visited a shrine in the course of his pilgrimage he composed kritis, usually five in number in praise of the local deity. His Kovur Pancharathnam, Tiruvottiyur Pancharathnam, Srirangam Pancharathnam, etc. are well known examples.



Over 1000 year old Tiruvottiyur Thyagarajaswamy Temple

South Indian Devotional music has been enriched by his Divyanama kirthanas and Utsava Sampradaya kirthanas in Samskritha and Telugu. Thyagaraja has also composed three Samkshepa Ramayana Kritis, Vinayamu nannu in Saurashtra raga, Sri-rama Jayarama in Yadukulaambhoji raga and Sri-raghukula in Hamsadhvani raga. Thyagaraja has composed three Geyanatakas, Sitarama Vijayam, Prahlada Bhakti Vijayam and Nauka Caritram.

At the invitation of his disciple Veena Kuppiar, Thyagaraja came to Madras from Tirupati and stayed as guest to Kovur Sundara Mudaliar. Kovur Sundara Mudaliar was a disciple of Upanishad Brahman of Kanchipuram and he also patronised

Veena Kuppiar. It was during this period that Thyagaraja visited Kovur and composed the Kovur Pancharathnam. Again at the request of Veena Kuppiar, Thyagaraja also visited Tiruvottiyur, a holy place six miles to the north of Madras. This place has been hallowed by the visits of Adi Sankaracharya in the 7th century, followed by Thirujnanasambandar, Appar, Sundaramurthi Nayanar and Pattinattar.

The Tiruvottiyur Thyagaraja temple is also called as Vadivudai Amman temple (this temple has a separate shrine for goddess Vadivudai amman i.e. Tripurasundari), is dedicated to the Hindu God Shiva. This temple has been in existence since the Pallava times of 7th Century and was widely expanded by the Chola kings during the 11th century. The temple has a seven tiered gateway tower, a tank, with the overall temple area covering one acre. This temple is somewhat similar to the Thyagaraja temple in Tiruvarur as both these temples were expanded by Rajendra Chola and both have the same dance poses of Shiva. The main sanctum of the temple houses Lord Shiva in three forms, the first form is Agni, fire or light which is not visible to the human eye. As this is referred to as the first temple in the world, it is known as Adipureeswarar. The second form of Shiva is in the form of a snake pit, swayambu lingam, that which is formed naturally. The Shivalingam is always covered by a kavacham and it is removed only on full moon day in the month of Krittika. The third form of Shiva is indescribable who is present inside the snake pit, who cannot be touched. He is called as Padampakkanathar. So you can feel all these three forms of Shiva in the same sanctum.

Apart from the above, there is a small shrine for

lord Shiva named as Jagannath. The shrine also houses the idols of Ganesha and Jagadambikai. There is an idol of Nandi opposite this shrine and there is another shrine for Shiva named as Amrudakadeswarar (in the form of a big Shivalinga). The other deities found here are Lord Ganesha, Sun God (Surya), Moovar (the three shiva devotees) and Sundarar with his consort, Sangili Nachiar, Sahasra Linga, the Shiva linga with a thousand eyes. Shiva Linga - Ekambara Nathar, Ramalingaswamy, Pola Pillayar, Sekizhar, the 63 Nayanamars, Kaliya Nayanar, as he was associated with this temple, another Ganesha, Dakshinamoorthy, Vishnu, Bramha, Durga, Chandikeshwarar, Ekapadamorthy idol which is a combination of Brahma, Shiva and Vishnu with one leg, and many more deities.

The story of this temple goes thus: When the entire Universe was getting destroyed, Brahma prayed to Lord Shiva so that he would get the power to create the Universe again. Shiva appeared in the form of Yoga Agni and granted the required power to Brahma. The Agni kund became the temple and the Agni became the Lord of the temple – Adi Pureeswarar. The site was exempted from getting destroyed and hence got the name Tiruvottiyur.

Tripurasundari

Though one finds many deities in this temple, Tyagaraja has composed all the five compositions in praise of Tripurasundari. The five compositions are as follows:

1. Sundari ni divya, Kalyani, Adi
2. Sundarinannindarilo, Begada, Rupakam
3. Darini Telusukonti, Suddha Saveri, Adi
4. Sundari ninnu varnimpa, Arabhi, Misra Chapu
5. Kanna Talli, Saveri, Adi



Tiruvottiyur Vadivudai amman

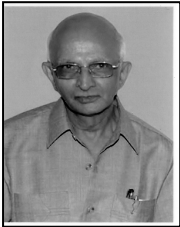
In the first composition in Kalyani Tyagaraja pleads with Tripurasundari to bestow her grace. Thyagaraja feels very blessed by the darshan of the Goddess. In the second composition he pleads with Mother Tripurasundari and requests her to regard him as one of her million disciples and redeem him. In this composition the sthala mudra appears as Adipura which refers to Tiruvottiyur. In the third composition Thyagaraja says that the only way to salvation is to seek refuge in Tripurasundari. He says he is privileged to witness the Friday worship which is due to his good karma in his past life. In the fourth composition in Begada, Thyagaraja says that the beauty of the Goddess is indescribable, to be able to meditate at her feet and Thyagaraja cherishes this as his treasure. The tone of the composition in Saveri is totally different. Thyagaraja describes her as his mother, and he says that with her by his side, he dare not think of any other God as she will take complete care of him as a mother would take care of her child.

Among the five Darini Telusukonti in the raga Suddha Saveri is a popular composition, it is set in

2 kalai Adi talam hence the composition is fairly elaborate in terms of the exhaustive treatment of the raga. The Pallavi of the composition contains many sangatis. The old version set in Adi tala 2 kalai of Sundari ni divya was very elaborate and exhaustive but the present version in Adi tala one kalai is fast paced, and the text does not have many vowel extensions like the old version. A very fine rendition of the above five gems have been documented in the audio format by the Bombay Sisters (Smt.C.Saroja and Smt.C.Lalitha)

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New Office Bearers for Karnataka Fine Arts Council

Karnataka Fine Arts Council (KFAC) which is the consortium of 10 reputed music sabhas of Bangalore has elected **Shri GV Krishna Prasad** as the new Chairman. **Shri. Aravind Brahmakal** is the Honorary Secretary and **Shri. Mysore Satish** is the Honorary Treasurer.



SRLKM congratulates **Vidwan Bangalore S Shankar** and **Vidhushi Suma Sudhindra** for having been elected as the president of "The Bangalore Gayana Samaja" and "Karnataka Ganakala Parishattu" music conferences respectively. The title "**Sangeetha Kala Ratna**" will be conferred on Vidwan S Shankar by The Bangalore Gayana Samaja and the title "**Gana Kala Bhushana**" will be

conferred on Vidhushi Suma Sudhindra by the Karnataka Ganakala Parishattu respectively at the conclusion of their conferences.

The Guru on his Shishya

Courtesy Gowri Ramnarayan from "The Hindu" archive dated December 13, 2004

LIFE LONG BONDS: Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, M. S. Subbulakshmi and her husband T Sadasivam.



MS with her Guru SSI

THOUGH M.S. Subbulakshmi assimilated her vast repertoire from many sources, she always acknowledged the late Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer as her guru. He infused depth and grandeur to Subbulakshmi's music, strengthened her alapa, niraval, and

swara, and taught her majestic compositions. Semmangudi's acquaintance with M.S.' husband, T. Sadasivam, began with their serving as judges in the 'khadi' section of the swadeshi exhibition during the Mahamakham festival at Kumbakonam in 1933. Semmangudi claimed not only M.S. but also Sadasivam as his disciple, having taught him to play cards. At times he even joined M.S.' concert tours - as Sadasivam's rummy crony. Semmangudi shared his thoughts on M.S. with Gowri Ramnarayan in 1986.

Excerpts:

Subbulakshmi's mother Shanmukhavadiyu was not just a good Veena player, she knew her theory (varjaavarjakramas, lakshanas) and could play with feeling. A woman of few words and dignity. I had heard about her, but heard her for the first time, with young Subbulakshmi's vocal accompaniment, in Kumbakonam. The daughter was around 12 or 13. Voice and Veena made an agreeable blend. I didn't

know them well, though I did visit their home whenever I went to Madurai, to pay my respects to the senior artiste.

Initially I think Subbulakshmi's brother Saktivel accompanied her on the mridangam, and Sankaranarayana Iyer on the fiddle. Later, other accompanists replaced them.

M.S. became popular after cutting records with HMV. [N.C.] Vasantakokilam who died young, had a voice similar to Subbulakshmi's. People often mistook one for the other. Can't weigh them on scales and say which voice was better. But I can say that right from the start Subbulakshmi had a good, pleasing voice. It had clarity, sharpness, sruti alignment, and the rare attribute of sounding strong and clear from close quarters as well as from a distance.

She is a gnaanasti (cognoscenti) who relishes what she sings. Later she went into the bhakti track, that's what her husband wanted. That's what the whole world loved. But now as then, she is capable of high-serious classicism, second to none. She kept swara singing at a premium, and rightly. Aggressive swaras are distasteful in women, and ruins the voice. Subbulakshmi allotted the right time and energy to it.

Technique-wise I'd say that among the women of her times, she is the best tanam exponent. Naturally. Isn't hers a vainika vamsham (Veena heritage)? Mind you, tanam is not easy for women, it needs strong, powerful enunciation. She has it. Her chowka kala (slow) niraval is excellent. Both T. Brinda and M.S. have unusual reach in the mandara (lower) sthayi. Her vak suddham (pure diction) is rare among



MS receiving an award from SSI at the Music Academy. T Sadasivam and S Ramanathan are seen at the background

musicians. It is not acquired through effort but is a gift from Devi. Though we musicians accepted only Dhanammal as a musician's musician, all musicians, even those who are envious of her fame, enjoy listening to M.S.

Subbulakshmi has that which is most difficult to reach - sowkhyam (tranquillity). No, it does not come through effort or feeling. It goes beyond the 'good' and the 'fine.' Very few possess a voice that intoxicates you as soon as

you hear it. She did. Have you heard her in the film Sakuntalai? Delightful! The other day as I was playing cards with Sadasivam, I overheard her rehearsing Bhavayami gopalabalam in Yamunakalyani. Can't tell you how it moved me. Yes I have heard Krishna nee begane in the same raga from Bala-saraswati. That glow came from the entire school and tradition of Veenai Dhanammal. Subbulakshmi's music is her own.

How to explain how butter melts into ghee? Subbulakshmi's voice merges into the sruti insepara-

bly - can there be any higher joy? Those who say that her raga alapana lacks originality are largely prompted by envy. I have heard her sing Sankarabharanam, Khamboji and Todi with an ex-

pansiveness second to none. Where she pauses, what she touches, when she connects ... all reflect continuity of thought and form. I have wanted her to stay in the higher octave sancharas and never come down. There are women more beautiful than Subbulakshmi, but

their singing has not drawn the same crowds. No music can last unless it has worth and is touched by the divine.

True, Sadasivam controlled her in every way and control is not easy on creativity. But he was a very intelligent man. He ensured that M.S. reached the peak and stayed there, not in popularity or social status alone, but in dignity, elegance and bhakti.

Nehru's Tribute

"I am a mere Prime Minister, but you are a queen, Queen of song", said Jawaharlal Nehru while paying tribute to MS Subbulakshmi after a charity recital in New Delhi on November 29, 1953"

The Hindu - Select Letter to the editor

(Courtesy - The Hindu)

Sir, — Whenever she was in Delhi, MS visited my father, musicologist T.S. Parthasarathy. On one such occasion, my two-year-old daughter was present. M.S. casually asked her what she wanted. Spontaneously my daughter asked her to sing Sambho Mahadeva. A smiling M.S. sang the whole song for her. That must have been perhaps the only occasion when M.S., who performed for thousands, sang for a single-person audience of two years.

Sir, — T.R. Srinivasan, a music teacher, narrated to me the following incident about M.S. The Karnataka Government had organised the 400th Purandara Jayanti at the Purandara Mantap on the banks of the Tungabhadra in Hampi. MS was to inaugurate the concert in the evening. On the morning of the concert, a few women near the riverbank were talking among themselves in Tamil, wondering whether they would get a darshan of MS at the same time, a group of Tamil women was walking towards the river to have a holy dip. The women walked up to those seated and inquired about their welfare. On learning about their desire, a middle-aged woman instantaneously squatted on the sands and sang Dasana madiko enna swami, Elliruvano Ranga emba samshaya beda and Enduro mahanubhavulu! TRS who was present there was so overwhelmed by the bhakti that he fell prostrate before the great MS "Every rasika is a Purandara-Kanaka-Tyagaraja and other saint composers to me. So a rasika's wish is a command to be obeyed at once," she told him. G.T. Narayana Rao, Tiruchi, T.N

Inseparable MS and Radha

Courtesy Gowri Ramnarayan, "The Hindu" dated February 25, 2005

Never allowing an intrusive moment, the voices of M.S. and Radha sounded like one. GOWRI RAMNARAYAN writes on the deep and abiding bond the two shared.

"SHE HAD no disciples," people shake their heads in regret. Others wonder, "Why didn't she train someone to carry on her bani?" But Carnatic vocalist Madurai Shanmukhavadivu Subbulakshmi (1916-2004) did have someone who not only imbibed her style - and knew her entire repertoire - but was also a flawless accompanist on the stage, giving invaluable support in life. From the day MS entered their household, Sadasivam's daughter Radha (then four years old), developed a special bond for the woman who was to become mother and guru to her. Their mutual attachment was deep and abiding.

Right from the start the child sat next to the performer on the stage and joined in the tailpieces. "No one taught or told me to sing, no one stopped me either," Radha recalls. MS beamed fondly at the little girl, and so did the entire audience. On one occasion, when a song failed to draw the customary ovation, the child mimed, "Why no applause?" To everyone's delight, the hall thundered loud and long.

They were inseparable. MS had Radha with her in Calcutta during the shooting of "Savitri" where the child nursed her through fever and fatigue. In the next film Radha played Bharata to her mother's Sakuntalai, and was later to be the winsome child Meera in the film which made MS a national cult figure.



MS and Radha - In perfect unison

The musically precocious girl rehearsed the orchestra before MS came to record her songs, and picked out Hindi bhajans for the tunes of the original songs in the Tamil version of the movie.

One day Musiri Subramania Iyer caught the child on the swing, singing her mother's "Anandamen solvene" from "Sakuntalai". When he asked, "Can you sing a kriti?" Radha burst into "Sudhamayi" in Amritavarshini. At Musiri's instigation she began formal training, first with T. R. Balu, then Mayavaram Krishna Iyer and

Ramnad Krishnan. "Mother was my guru really". She did teach me, but I learnt more by listening, remembers Radha. Soon the young girl became indispensable to the seasoned performer. It was her computer memory that absorbed, filed and recalled everything that mother and daughter learnt together from a whole range of gurus through the decades - from Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, K. S. Narayanaswami and T. Brinda to Dilip Kumar Roy and Siddheshwari Devi.

Trained by guru Vazhuvoor Ramaiah Pillai, young Radha had the privilege of MS singing for her Bharatanatyam recitals. Her most memorable performance was in Birla House, New Delhi, before a desolate Mahatma Gandhi when he was fasting against the Partition. As Radha danced to her mother's lilting "Ghanshyam ayaari," describing Krishna's sportive play, a smile appeared on Babu's face. The ashramites thanked the child for making Gandhiji forget his cares for a few minutes. "Babu then took me on a walk. Gandhiji's hand on my shoulder! I thought it was a dream!"

At another time, when Radha came down to take Pandit Nehru's autograph during the interval of her Bharatanatyam recital, C. Rajagopalachari took the book and drew a dancing figure beside the Prime Minister's signature.

Why did she give up dancing? Radha doesn't say. You suspect that music was the greater love. Certainly she recalls a rare solo recital in Bombay's NCPA with yearning, and the fact that the reclusive artiste Annapurna (Allauddin Khan's daughter and Pandit Ravi Shankar's first wife) surprised everyone by attending it. What did she say? "Nothing to me. She told Amma Your daughter is very good." Didn't Radha want to give more recitals on her own? "I did" she admits. "But father wanted me to be always there for Amma" Fortunately husband Viswanathan proved most understanding, as did sons Chandrasekhar and Srinivasan. Any regrets? Radha's answer is a smile.

Certainly she has performed with MS at prestigious occasions and venues, for national leaders, royals, statesmen, scientists, artistes and international celebrities of every kind. Her autograph book has signatures from Helen Keller and Marshall Tito.

Radha was a crucial contributor to MS's concerts at the United Nations and Carnegie Hall. Her

retentive focus was even more essential at home, as when they rendered the imposing "Koniyadi," or the 72 mela ragamalika at the Madras Music Academy, and in recordings of the Venkatesa Suprabhatam, Vishnu Sahasranamam, Annamacharya lyrics... Never an intrusive moment, the two voices always sounded like one. "Once DK Jayaraman told me, 'You are the best vocal accompanist I've heard.' Years later his disciple Vijaya Siva said the same thing," she laughs.

What did her mother say? Chuckling even more Radha replies, "She always insisted innum nannaa paadanum" (must do better). Until illness compelled her to slowly bow out of the stage no one had ever seen MS perform without Radha by her side. Radha's first CD double album brought out this year by Jass, has the navagraha kritis sung by her at a family function with a sruti box, to which violin (R. K. Shriramkumar) and mridangam (K. V. Prasad) have been added. The selection includes Banturiti (Hamsanadam), Sri Rajagopala (Saveri), Taye Tripurasundari (Suddha Saveri). E natinomu (Bhairavi) and a ragamalika viruttam.

"Before she passed away Amma took the tape in her hands and blessed me."

Alathur Brothers on MS

It was with more than the usual trepidation that MS faced a distinguished audience of needle-sharp rasikas and fellow musicians at the Music Academy in Chennai one evening in the 1950s. She was about to present a pallavi in raga Begada, "Kailasapate, pasupate, umapate, namostute," across the Aditala cycle. This was a challenge to her virtuosity in rhythm-charged ragam-tanam-pallavi-techniques. Star-singer though she already was, she was not particularly known for pallavi pyrotechnics. What followed was no different from the typical Subbulakshmi concert - thunderous applause greeted her at every stage of the unfolding.

The pallavi piece had been the idea of musician-friend and mentor Musiri Subramania Iyer. MS had enthusiastically rehearsed it with the active encouragement of violinist Tiruvalangadu Sundaresa Iyer, whose tuft-waving shouts of "bhesh, bhesh!" had punctuated the practice sessions.

The Alathur brothers, known to be masters of laya and pallavi exposition, were to call on MS the next day and offer their congratulations. "We have no words to describe the beauty and balance of your presentation. What anchored every part firmly to a finished whole was the accent on the raga and the bhava you brought to it. This is what makes your music so enchanting, so durable.

MSS, the One and only...



There is not a tinge of doubt that M S Subbulakshmi was one of the most beautiful artistes to ever adorn the world music scene. Beautiful in all senses of the term...

It is often said that beauty is in the eyes of the beholder but she was an artiste whose beauty transcended relativity. Because it was a beauty that she was not merely born with, nor was it solely dependent on resplendent jewellery or attire.

This was beauty she enhanced every day, every hour and minute that she lived, through her thoughts, words and deeds.

And of course, through her music – impeccable and inimitable.

One can analyse and micro-analyse her music and career for years but still not find all the reasons for her stupendous success that others can only dream of.

She certainly was endowed with a voice that had most qualities required for weighty, classical Carnatic music. It was also a voice that could do her bidding when it came to light classical, devotional and film music. Her voice also possessed what I term as the 'ring of auspiciousness', a bell like quality that could make even a Kshetragna padam seem like Suprabhatam... But it was not merely this.

She was meticulous beyond measure to ensure that her music was not just attractive but also acceptable from any standpoint – be it the grammar of the raga, accuracy of tala, pronunciation

Chitravina N. Ravikiran, Courtesy "mstribute.org"

and more importantly, the correct accent as dictated by the language. But again, this does not complete the picture.

She was a model of assiduousness when it came to concert planning. A lot of us plan but never execute because we dream of the results without ever putting in the necessary effort. Today's busy professionals often end up with a glow about their scrupulous preparation if they have glanced at completely new song in an unfamiliar and odd tala a few hours before rendering it in a concert or recording! MSS never worried about the results but put in days of practise after learning a

song, which is what made her sing absolutely unfamiliar songs with such silken sheen that one could be forgiven for believing that these songs were part of the Carnatic repertoire for ages and had been polished by numerous maestros in the past. But again, this is not all.

Bapu's Tribute

In September 1947, All India Radio contacted Mr. T Sadasivam to enquire whether MS Subbulakshmi could sing a few bhajans on the occasion of Bapu's birthday, 2nd October. To everybody's surprise, Gandhiji insisted on Subbulakshmi rendering "Hari Thuma Haro", a Meera bhajan. Mr. Sadasivam humbly sent a message stating that MS Subbulakshmi was not familiar with that tune and had not learnt it well. But, Gandhiji sent word that it did not matter and that "He would rather hear it spoken by Subbulakshmi than sung by others"

People talk about the bhakti element in her singing and it was unquestionably a major factor in influencing millions of listeners. Not only did she possess true devotion but she could make her listeners experience what true bhakti was. Her bhakti was born from an outlook where simple faith ruled as opposed to intellectual cynicism.

Ever the perfectionist, she was not even conscious of stardom, let alone covet it. She possessed one of the greatest qualities required for growth – the attitude of a perpetual seeker. Even at her zenith, she constantly learned from maestros such as Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer and Brinda-Mukta to make sure that her repertoire had the stamp of authenticity.

In terms of consistency, she was almost Brad-mansque. One would hardly hear of about a concert by MSS that was less than excellent.

In terms of stage presence, few could match her. Off stage too, she was just as beautiful.

However great each of these attributes are, they still create a whole greater than the sum of its parts...

The truth is there was some invisible magic in her persona which has made her invincible. That is God's grace – not just given but earned...

This, in my opinion, is the biggest thing we can all learn from her. Without ever spelling it out, she has shown that if one possesses the other qualities she had, God's grace will naturally follow.

On a personal note, I have had a privileged relationship with her even before my 'conscious' years. My parents have always remembered with fondness the incredible reception for me that she hosted at her house soon after my debut as a two-year old, in 1969.

My first memory is when I gave a vocal concert at a wedding in Trichy when I was 5 or 6. MS amma was to sing the following day at the same wedding but she made it a point to come a day ahead and sat through the whole concert - even though I distinctly remember that I sang well below my standards and incurred the wrath of my father at the end of the day!

My mother – to whom MSS was like a goddess told me how fondly she had talked about my grandfather Gotuvadyam Narayana Iyengar and how she was convinced that I was his reincarnation. A true blessing indeed. However, I was too young to be aware of the significance of all this.

I had several interactions subsequently with her that I cherish very much. I will only share one here.

I had a disagreement with All India Radio and Doordarshan (about the name change of my instrument from gotuvadyam to chitravina) and had stopped performing for them for a couple of years. During this time, when I once went to MS amma's house, she gently chided me saying, "Yours was one of the few concerts I have always looked forward to on the Radio as I rarely venture out. If you stop this, where is the tonic for people like me in my old age?" Needless to say, I felt extremely humbled and resolved that I would resume playing for AIR again (who coincidentally agreed to my stipulation around the same time).

When I received an SMS from a friend about her demise around 4.30 am, I rushed to her house right away. There was absolutely no one there at that time except her family and I did indeed feel as much a part of the family as one could ever be. For, it is absolutely true that to me that this loss amounted to a shrinking of my own family...

The First Gramophone recording....

Recordings were another source of income and publicity. The gramophone companies had come to stay and were producing 'plates' that burst into music from a needlepoint on a winding machine. Kunja cut her first disc at age ten, the recording company yielding to Shanmukhavadiyu's persistent demands that they record her little girl's voice as well. No one thought that the child's shrill treble would be noticed, but Marakatavadiyum, a song in praise of the emerald-hued goddess Minakshi, in raga Senjurutti, with Oothukuzhiyinile, a siddhar padal (mystic verse), became a hit everywhere. Other young singers began to aim at the same high six-kattai pitch.

The sales of this first record must surely have surprised the company. Evarimata in Kambhoji, sung on both sides of the record, was released under the Twin label, with the song title in Telugu and Roman scripts, by "Miss. Subbulakshmi (Madura)". In those days a hit song was often prefixed to the name of the singer as in 'Marubalka Semmangudi' or 'Nagumomu Musiri'. Kunjamma too was called 'Evarimata Subbulakshmi'. As a grandmother, Subbulakshmi laughed heartily when a child imitated those shrill Kambhoji trills. She remarked, "That's how it was in those days. I went wherever my voice took me. We only learn restraint with age."

Pratama Rasigar (First Connoisseur)

Courtesy Kalki 22 Nov 1998, Translated to English by S Jagennathan, a senior rasika

It is nearly a year since Sri. Sadasivam passed away holding the hand of his wife (Nov. 21). While the almighty has the power to separate the inseparables, he bestows the capacity to withstand the loss also. Here Smt. MS Subbulakshmi shares some of the memories of the fifty seven years of married life with Sri. T Sadasivam.

There can not be another connoisseur of arts like him. His appreciation of good things will transcend in everything and not just the music. He would suggest when and where to plant in the garden, which flowers to plant and keep in touch as to when it will start flowering. He would feel very happy when it starts flowering in a riot of beautiful colours.

Though he would feel happy to see the spread of various colours, he would derive only spotless white and that too khadi. He would express his happiness when his dresses are arranged neatly in his travel kit by his daughters. When important concerts are arranged in new locations, he would enquire of the colour of the screen used as a backdrop and suggest suitable colour for the saree to be worn to suite the background.

It is the same in the case of food also. He would ask for second helping of the sweet dishes. In his younger days, he used to eat quite well but later as age advanced, he reduced his intake but maintained punctuality. Though his consumption was quite small, it should be tasty. Plantain and brinjal should be well boiled and well mixed.

Everybody knows how much he enjoyed music. I have not heard him singing Bharatiyar songs in the open but I have heard him sing for his grand chil-

dren with sufficient modulation to suite the meaning of the songs.

Formerly, he used to take scented tobacco along with pan. He used to purchase the necessary ingredients like supari, spices and mix them with saffron etc. for his consumption. But on Sri. Rajaji's behest, he stopped overnight the habit of consuming tobacco.

He was a strong willed person. As much as he liked good food, he used to observe fasting with the same seriousness. At times he has even skipped meals due to domestic tiffs.

It will be surprising for the whole world to know about

his anger/short temper. But his heart is like that of a crystal glass. The reason for losing his cool will be very just. At the same time his anger will vanish in a splash.

If you think back, you will find that he lost his temper in the interest of the others. When we started our family, his younger sister passed away leaving behind her two children Ambi and Than-gam, who were brought up by us in a joint family. It so happened that once the elders in the family had sent the boy Ambi to market place. I know that he will not like this as he had promised his sister that he will bring up the children with utmost care. When he could not find Ambi in the house when he came back, he got very furious. Fortunately Ambi returned back just then and his anger just disappeared giving raise to joy.

Just like this, while traveling, whether it is fellow traveller or friends or co-artistes, he expected that they shall be treated with equal respects. If otherwise he will be very critical.

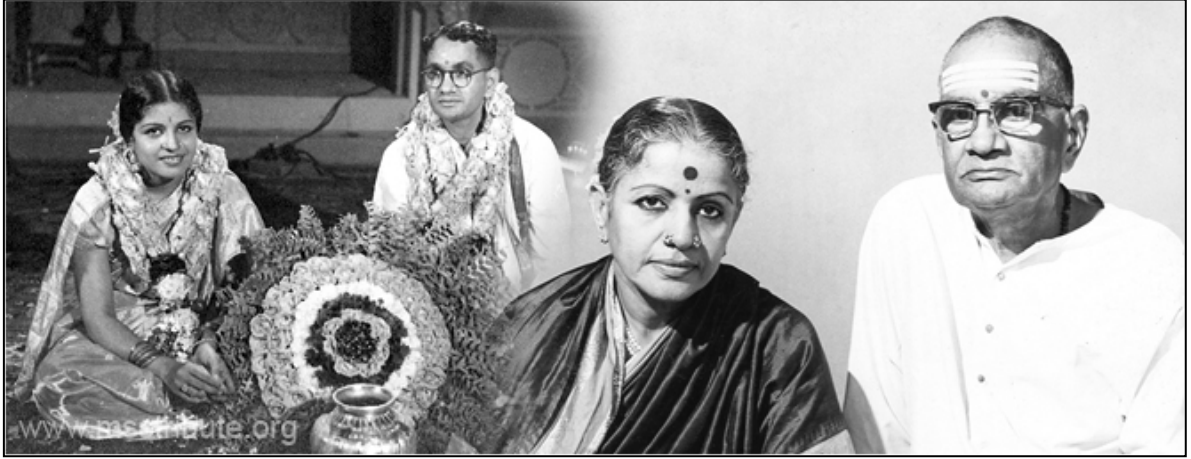
In course of time, his temper vanished and he became like a vedanthi.



He had lot of affection with the people of Kalki organisation. He wished that they should lead life without any hindrance. For several years we performed the feast for all the workers of Kalki at home. He insisted that I personally prepare and serve the payasam and ghee. For serving the ghee, we should use a big size spoon. He would

In his whole life, he lived for uplifting others. That is why when I started my life as an ordinary wife, one day he asked me that I should sing for dharma and for the benefit of others. Ultimately it turned out as he wished.

Once during a performance at Delhi during a war time, he sent a chit to me in the middle of the



follow me close behind and extend his hospitality to everyone and derive pleasure out of this.

Similarly he had great affection towards his friends. They would drop in for a game of cards to while away their time. Though participating in the game, his mind would be working on something. At the same time, there will be no dearth in looking after the needs of the friends. He would see that everyone was served with snacks as per their likes.

As he was very much involved in the Congress movement, I was thinking he might not be inclined to the path of God. But he had unshakable faith in the lord of seven hills (Perumal). He had lots of respect for the Seer of Kanchi and Baba who were his two eyes. However busy he was, he would arrange to perform "Ayudha Pooja" at Kalki office on a grand scale. I would also sing Bharathiyar songs like "Vellai thamarai Poovi Iru-paal" and "Nenjukku Nedhiyum".

After Independence, for few years, on the independence day he would make the foreman Rajapathar to hoist the national flag and sing patriotic songs.

concert. he had written that a person will address the gathering during the concert and after he concludes his speech, I should remove both my golden bangles I wore and hand them over to him. I did as I was told. The bangles were the ones presented to me with love by my children for our "Shastyabdhipoorthi (60 years ceremony)".

That concert was meant for raising funds for the war effort. When there was a call for such donation, he wanted us to lead from the front. His good intension was that if we do this, others might follow us. By words and deeds, he was helpful to others.

During his last days, he would listen to the "Veda" adhyayanam from the tape recorder, perform meditation. For about forty minutes, he will be listening to the slokam or music I had rendered.

Until his end, he never lost the sense of humour and had exalted life. I feel I am existing only because of his way of life and I am sure that thousands of people who were benefited by him will think the same.

Suswaralakshmi Subbulakshmi

Sangitha Kala Acharya Vid. Neela Ramgopal

When the editor of “Lalitha Kala Tarangini” asked to me write an article about MS on her birthday on 16th Sept, I felt thrilled and very happy. My thoughts went beyond 40 years, when we had the privilege to meet, the famous lady at the late Smt. Seethalakshmi Venkatesan’s residence in Shankarapuram.

We, the members of the Sadguru Sangeeta Committee, a group of 7 ladies, were introduced and interacted with her. We had the good fortune of learning 3 kritis from MS. The first kriti was “Jaya Jaya” in raga Manirang, a composition of Swathi Thirunal, the second was “Giri pai” in Sahana – a composition of Saint Thyagaraja, and third one was “Ghungharu bandh pag aaye Meera” in Sindhu Bharavi by Meera Bai herself. The sight of MS playing the tampura herself, while teaching us, is etched in our memory and is an unforgettable day in our lifetime.



MS as Meera Bai in the film “Meera”

When we think of Madurai, the thoughts that strikes one, is of Madurai Meenakshi Amman, Madurai Malligai, the sweetness of Madurai Tamil language and predominantly Madurai Shanmukhavdivu Subbulakshmi.

MS used to accompany her mother, Shanmukhavdivu, who was a Veena Vidushi, to lend vocal support in her performances.

When MS was 9 years old, she was asked to sing for a cycle shop function, which was well received, by the audience. The next opportunity she received was, when she was invited by a talent spotter to record for his HMV recordings. At the end of the song MS introduced herself stating, “I am Madurai Subbulakshmi”.

The 3rd occasion, was to sing at the Mahamaham at Kumbakonam, where her music flowed, in front a large audience, with no semblance of stage fear or hesitation. The HMV recordings and the Mahamaham concerts became so famous that MS rose to great heights to make Shanmukhavdivu’s dream come true.

The overwhelmingly enthusiastic reports reached the Madras Music Academy, and in 1932, MS was invited to sing at the Music Academy, with Shanmukhavdivu playing the tampura beside her. She was the youngest woman to perform at the Academy then.

At the Music Academy, great stalwarts like Tiger Varadachariar, Muthiah Bhagavathar, Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavathar, Karaikudi Sambasiva Iyer paid hearty tributes to her. Sambasiva Iyer, in fact remarked, “Child, you carry the Veena in your throat”.

T Sadasivam entered MS’s life and they got married in 1940. MS was very affectionate with Sadasivam’s two daughters and treated them affectionately like her own children.

If music was MS’s career, MS became the career of Sadasivam. Never did a husband and wife owe to each other, as MS and Sadasivam.

MS also acted in 3 movies “Sevasadanam”, “Shakuntalai” with GNB, and “Meera” in Tamil and Hindi. In the last movie “Meera”, she was a personification of Meera herself; thus her fame spread all over India.

To know how music transcends all barriers, we should hear MS sing. Her melodious voice, her reach, her control over the nuances of classical music, her clear diction, and above all her emo-

tional and aesthetic appeal with bhakti oriented music have held the rasikas spell bound.

MS sang for many charitable causes too. In one such occasion, where our late prime minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was in the audience, he complimented her stating "Who am I? A mere Prime Minister before the queen of songs (music)".

MS performed at some of the most prestigious concert venues like the Edinburgh Music Festival, the coast to coast tour of the US. London's Albert Hall and the "Festivals of India" held in Paris and Moscow.

MS became an universal ambassador of Carnatic Music. It was not a small achievement. Her achievement of an "iconic status" in the field of

classical music, specially on the basis of her concerts for charitable causes made her great. Her

music was legendary, and so was her humility, despite having won the "Ramon Magsaysay" award and the "Bharat Ratna".

MS recorded the Venkatesa Suprabatham and Vishnu Sahasranamam and donated the entire proceeds to the Tirupathi Devasthanam.

When she recorded the

72 Melakarta ragas, the Kanchi Paramacharya heard the CD and blessed her saying that her achievement would shine so long as the sun and moon shine in the sky.

True to the Kanchi Paramacharya's blessings, even today MS's songs are played in every temple and places of worship, and she remains in our mind for ever.



MS and T Sadasivam with the founders of SRLKM
(File photo of 1973)

"That evening, at the Sree Narayana Centenary Hall (Calicut), I listened as only an ignoramus in Carnatic music could. But I listened. Towards the end of the performance, when the sun was about to set, she started singing a song by Bharatiyar on Muruga. Or was it some other composer? As she sang calling out repeatedly to Muruga and the song reached a crescendo, the temple bells next door started ringing. She stopped. She bowed her head. She raised her hands in prayer and then continued. It electrified the audience. There was a silence such as I have never heard before. Tears ran down the faces of many of the listeners. If ever I felt that there was a divine presence in the universe, it was at that magical moment. (Radha Padmanabhan, New Sunday Express, Dec 19th, 2004)".

"Her voice breaks and tears stream down her eyes even before she starts speaking. Of all her contemporaries, nobody could have understood the milieu in which MS Subbulakshmi lived as does DK Pattammal. Seventy years ago these two women had breached a rigid male bastion and now, only the 85-year-old Pattammal lives to tell the story. "It was unthinkable for a woman to even attempt to sing on stage then. Even my father was opposed to my taking to music professionally. It was only after the two of us came on the scene and succeeded that the taboo was broken," she told Express with some understandable pride, breaking into her melancholy mood".

"Delightedly surrendering her title "The Nightingale of India" to MS, Sarojini Naidu introduced her in the film Meera's first reel. A slender MS with downcast eyes, corkscrew curls blowing, hands twisting her pallav, is overwhelmed as Naidu heaps tributes with this prophecy to her countrymen, "You will be proud that India in this generation has produced so supreme an artist."

Travel with “Lakshmi” and “Saraswathi”

RK Shriramkumar (Originally written for Kalki and reproduced here with permission)



‘Unakku Nidu Charana pankaja paadama? (Have you learnt Nidu Charana pankaja?) Delhi le romba paada ketturkka (They have been requesting me a lot to sing at Delhi). Nee daane vare (Are you the

one who is coming?)’ Amma would ask in a caring tone. ‘Aduttadu Delhi porom. Adukkule analum thayaar aayidu!’ (Next we are going to Delhi, get ready before that). Mama would enthusiastically inform me a month in advance. Amma’s concern would be about my learning the kalyani kriti and mama would constantly urge me to learn the game of cards so as to join his company atleast on the twin night train travel to Delhi.

Traveling with the Sadasivam's was always most welcome and an enjoyable event. Be it a car drive to Kanchipuram or the trans country train journey to the capital of India (of course, I haven't had the good fortune of travelling with them outside the country but I have heard so much from their senior accompanists how enjoyable it always was) it was an event that I always looked forward to. It was not just the artist in amma that was traveling with her mentor in mama. It was like a whole family traveling together on a joyous occasion. The well coordinated efforts of Atma mama, their ‘soul like’ secretary, would be like a role model travel plan worth patenting!! Mama was always particular

that all of us traveled together, stayed together and returned together. This trait of togetherness was one of mama’s and amma’s innumerable virtues.

As their car would enter the portico of the vintage British structure of the Madras Central station, the station manager would respectfully receive the couple. The mahavidushi, draped in the arakku bordered ‘ms-blue’ Kanchipuram silk with the fragrant jathi flowers adding value to her traditional kondai hairstyle, would walk behind the great svatantra tyagi attired in a sparkling white khaddar pancha kaccham and kurta matching his inimitable mark of vibhuti. I would walk behind them with my violin case in hand. A sense of elation of being with such an unparalleled icon of Carnatic music would pervade my constitution. As I heard the whispers of surprise that ran across the sprawling hall of the busy station and noticed every other person invariably taking a step backward to have a second glance at the god like glowing couple, the feeling of being blessed with

such an association was inexplicable.

We would wait at the platform amidst a trolley load of suitcases and bedrolls for the train to arrive. Though seated under a dim light on the platform, ‘Lakshmi’ and ‘Saraswathi’, the two lifeline tamburas of Amma, would ‘invite’ a few passers by to seek an autograph from Amma. ‘Avar kitta modalla vaangikk-ongo’ (get it from him first), saying thus she would direct them to get it from mama first. The

First Concert at Music Academy, Chennai - MS fills in for an ailing Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar.

"Of her debut at the Madras Music Academy when she was 17, a connoisseur wrote: "When she, with her mother by her side (who played the tambura for the daughter), as a winsome girl in her teens, ascended the dais in 1934 and burst into classical songs, experienced musicians of the top rank vied with one another in expressing their delight in this new find." Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavatar came forward with loud hyperboles. Tiger Varadachariar nodded approval. Karaikudi Sambasiva Iyer was to say later: "Child, you carry the Veena in your throat."

exclamation 'Paavam aashaya kekkara' (they are requesting with interest) would complete her signing of the autograph happily. After loading the bags on to the train and tucking in both the tam-buras on to an upper berth in the two tier air-conditioned coach, amma and mama would settle down in adjacent cubicles.

As the rays of the morning sun would sneak into the compartment, amma would be ready for coffee, her most favourite beverage. Vishalam, her personal aide would be on her toes and as the morning coffee session would be in progress, amma would deplore at my dislike for the south Indian speciality. At major stations breakfast and lunch, specially ordered and prepared for us would arrive. Once done with lunch, mama would gear up for his favourite pastime. A makeshift table using the suitcases and a bedspread would appear

in the aisle in mama's cubicle and the card game would commence with Prasad Anna, Nagarajan mama and sometimes Radha Akka constituting the group along with mama. Mama would remember his instruction to me a month back and would ask me again if I would join. I would excuse myself for not having learnt the game and mama, lamenting yet another time would say 'enda ammakku pakkavadyam vashikkare. Enakku pakkavadyam vashikka kudada?' (You play pakkavadyam for amma. Can you not play the pakkavadyam for me?) I would smile and say 'mama, next time'. The game would go on and on. Mama would rule the roost each session and his cross-legged sukhāsana position would remain intact until evening!

Amma would rarely nap in the afternoon. She would share most of her experiences both on stage and off stage and one would be awestruck to hear these memorable experiences. The topics

would range from sangitam to social issues. She would recollect how her mother groomed her, the rigorous practices that she used to do of the akaras and the varisais to keep her divine voice in good shape, her initial concert experiences with her mother accompanying her on the Veena, and later her concerts for many a vidvat sadas, her migrating to Madras, her training under the doyens of the music world such as Musiri mama, Semmangudi mama (infact, he was amma's paatu vadyar (amma's music teacher) and mama's cheetu vadyar! (mamas cards teacher!)), Brinda amma and a host of others, her acting skills in movies, especially 'Meera', the accolades and recognition from all over the globe, the philanthropic mind of mama and her, and her blessed experiences with the Sage of Kanchi Shri Chandrashekarendra Saraswathi and Bhagavan Shri Satya Sai Baba.



RK Shriramkumar performing with MS and Radha amma

One would feel so inspired and rejuvenated to listen to her narrations. While talking about one of her cherished concerts for the Music Academy, when she sang a pallavi in the raga Begada, learnt under Musiri mama's guidance with Shri Tiruvalangadu Sundaresa Iyer accompanying her on the violin, amma recollected how amidst the great vidvat sadas assembled for her concert, the mahavidvan Shri Karaikudi Sambasiva Iyer came up to the stage and complimented amma saying 'Subbulakshmi, nee veenaya kanthaththulaye vechindu irukke' (you have a Veena in your throat). While she learnt a few tumris along with Radha akka from Smt Siddheshwari Devi, amma would demonstrate how both of them had to keep singing the raga scale in different kalams until Smt Devi finished counting her rosary during her japam!

Amma would cite innumerable instances of how her dedication to the divine art gained her much

recognition from the pamaras and the panditas alike. Ultimately she owed all of what she was to Goddess Meenakshi. It was at that hallowed shrine, she reminisced once, when she had been there with her mother and sister as a small little girl, she was singled out from the crowd by a wandering sadhu and he declared in a divine trance that she would attain great heights. Never would she fail to mention how much mama had contributed to her life. 'But for him I would not be what I am today' she would say in all reverence soaked with emotion.

Her penchant for glass bangles, perfumes and flowers was something unique. Every time I mentioned that I would be going to Madurai for a concert, amma would tell me in all excitement as to how one could get excellent glass bangles at the entrance of the Meenakshi shrine. She would feel immensely happy if somebody got her the glass bangles, specially the dark red and green shades. Similarly she was extremely fond of good perfumes and flowers, jasmine in particular. Amma

would talk about how a family should function, especially the womenfolk. She would accept the dynamic woman of Bharatiyar's poetry but at the same time would advise that she be in line with the ways of her husband. It was really amazing that, even as such great celebrities, their life style was simple, lofty in ideal.

Amma and mama would then retire to bed early after dinner. Lying on my berth with the thoughts of the afternoon conversations with amma reverberating in my mind I would thank the Almighty from the bottom of my heart for having bestowed on me the blessed opportunity in life to be with amma and partake of her blissful music. After the splendid heart rendering niraval that amma sang at the line 'o jagajjanani', drenched in the nectar of Kalyani at the concert in Delhi, I was reminded of the king Parikshit who got his name because he saw the Lord while he was still in the womb. After all, I have also grown up with amma's music right from when I was in my mother's womb! She sang for my mother's seemantam !!!

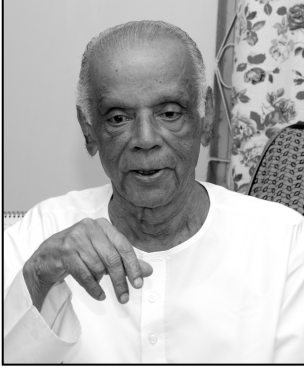
TM Krishna on MS

"Semmangudi Mama was a great teacher. He was very patient and never thought twice about teaching you something again or repeating something a number of times. If I said "Mama, can you sing that again" he would say "I will sing it even 10 times." That was the care he took when he taught. This also revealed his perfectionist attitude to music. He will never let you go to the next line till you sang the sangathi or gamakam perfectly. Here, I have to relate a story. I was learning Koluvaivunnade in Bhairavi from Mama and one afternoon, when I had just finished learning the kriti and was singing it when M.S. Amma (Smt M.S.Subbulakshmi) came to see Mama. When she realized that class was in progress, she asked us to continue so we started to sing the kriti again and M.S. Amma joined in. It was astounding to me that the patantharam was so intact, that every sangathi that M.S. Amma sang was identical to what Semmangudi mama had taught me. M.S. Amma would have learnt the kriti from Semmangudi mama at least 40 years before he taught me but the patanthara was the same. This was a real eye opener to me."

"Ikanainanaa a small kriti in a obscure raga called Pushpalathika. What can you do with this kriti? A very small kriti and a raga which hardly has any scope? Well if MS Subbulakshmi was with us today and singing you would have heard the answer from her. Her nereval at the line "Akalanka Neeve" took all of us to dizzy heights. Her nereval and swaraprasthara for Kriti's always had the right balance. There was never an excess in anything. Proportion is a very important aspect to the performance of music. M.S. amma had a perfect understanding of this. The Alapana length, kriti size and the amount of nereval and swaraprasthara always left you with a complete feeling".

Sunada Vinodini MS Subbulakshmi

Excerpts from the book by Shri S Krishnamurthi (Translated to English by Sachi R. Sachidananda)



Shri. S Krishnamurthy

Shri. S Krishnamurthy a well known musician and a writer (grandson of Mysore Vasudevacharyaru) authored a biography on MS titled "Sunada Vinodini-MS Subbulakshmi" in Kannada. The book captures her life, Music, personality and achievements faithfully. He has been magnani-

mous to share two snippets from his book for this edition. We thank him for sharing his original work.

Shri. Mysore Vasudevacharya's opinion on the styles of MS, MLV and DKP.

There is a special place of importance in the field of Carnatic music for the compositions of Sri Muthuswami Dikshitar. On the one hand, Sri Thyagaraja's compositions could be described as sentimental and devotional poetry in terms of form and content. On the other hand, Dikshitar's compositions have the structure of an epic poem. Thyagaraja's compositions are short in length, with easy flow, and have a sweet appeal. Dikshitar's compositions are expansive in structure, profound in flow and have a solid appeal. Thyagaraja's language is simple and gentle. Dikshitar's language is more scholarly, and has a multidimensional appeal to our ears.

Smt. D.K. Pattammal had worked incessantly to master the intricacies of Dikshitar compositions with their musical complexity and demanding melodic and laya structure. "Mamava Pattabhirama" in Manirangu, and "Ranganayakam Bhavaye" in Nayaki, are two examples of some Dikshitar compositions that shone really well the way Pattammal handled them and delivered in her deep and penetrating voice.

ML Vasanthakumari (MLV) was an attractive role model for young musical aspirants. Her madhyama kala renditions had the heady attractiveness of the GNB bani. She was gifted in rendering elaborate alapanas in rare ragas. She was an expert in presenting difficult pallavis, too (RTP).

Pattammal's appeal was mainly to the knowledgeable pundits, whereas MLV's mercurial music was a delight to young musicians. Staying in the middle of these two approaches, MS sang in a style that was a real feast for the cross-section of listeners from pundits to ordinary rasikas.

This wonderful triumvirate of MS, DKP and MLV will shine for ever in the annals of Carnatic music.

I had once asked my grandfather (Mysore Vasudevacharya), what was his opinion about the different styles of music presented by Subbulakshmi, Pattammal and Vasanthakumari. His reply was as follows:

"I have listened to, and enjoyed the music of, each one of them. Just as people are born inevitably with their unique differences, these vidushis' individual styles were naturally quite different from one another. Individual musical styles evolve based on the quality and nature of the singers' voices, their creative imagination and their musical training. For example, each of these styles were unique: Ariyakudi, GNB and MD Ramanathan. It is not appropriate to compare the individual styles. Each style has its own uniqueness and beauty. It is also equally true that the listeners differ in their varying musical tastes. Just as some people love sweets, while some others relish hot and spicy food!

"My guru (Sri Patnam Subrahmanya Iyer) had mastered the medium tempo. His tempo had a majestic gait. Sri Maha Vaidyanatha Iyer on the other hand had a galloping style. Thirukkodikaval Krishna Iyer had a delightful combination of both these styles.

“Pattammal’s style resembles a lot my guru’s style. MLV’s style reminds me of Maha Vaidyanatha Iyer’s. MS has, within her style, assimilated well both these styles, just as was the case with Thirukkodikaval Krishna Iyer. This is my view.”

MS at a Pondicherry concert

This happened in Pondicherry around 1972. At that time I was the director of Akashvani (All India Radio) there. Sri B. D. Jatti was the Lieutenant Governor of Pondicherry. A cultural festival was set up under the joint auspices of the state government and Akashvani. The first day’s performance was scheduled to be a vocal recital by Subbulakshmi.

At that period of time, for some reason, MS had boycotted Akashvani. I was aware of this issue and therefore had not planned any radio coverage of the scheduled MS concert. However, a close friend of mine pulled the trigger in the eleventh hour. He approached Sri. Sadasivam, and asked, “you have vowed that you will not enter Akashvani, but how come you have decided to perform in the concert organised by Pondicherry Akashvani?”

At once, Sri Sadasivam called me over the phone from Madras, and said, “Murthy, you must be aware that Subbulakshmi is not accepting invitations to perform over the radio these days? If you have any intention of broadcasting her concert over the air, we shall not come to perform the concert”.

“Sir, it is the Pondicherry government who have organised this concert. It is not the radio station. Only the other two concerts are being arranged by Akashvani. You know well that we will not do anything that causes any offence to you or Smt. Subbulakshmi.” After this explanation, they agreed to come and perform the concert.

As the honoured guests of the state government, the Sadasivam’s were going to be put up at Raj Bhavan on their arrival from Madras. Sri Jatti proposed that he would not be meeting the guests that day, considering their need to rest after travel, but that I convey to them his invitation to a

breakfast with the entire party the next day, on the morning of the concert.

When I met Sri Sadasivam and conveyed the governor’s invitation to breakfast, he replied, “Murthy, tomorrow, she has to perform. On the days of her concert, you know she does not wish to make any public appearance until the concert is over. She would like to be alone and spend her time in the puja room, engaged in musical communion. This is her discipline. I don’t wish to disturb that. Therefore kindly convey respectfully to the governor our situation. If he doesn’t mind, we would gratefully accept his invitation to join the breakfast on the morning after the concert, before we start back to Madras.”

On hearing this, Sri Jatti exclaimed, with moistened eyes, “without such tapas, could MS have attained such siddhi?”

Sri Sadasivam wished to check the concert arrangements the previous evening. The concert was to take place in the spacious Gandhi Maidan grounds next to the radio station, on the sea front. I took him over. There was moon light and we saw the dancing silvery waves. There was a refreshing cool breeze blowing from the sea. Sri Sadasivam was very pleased with the charming setting for the concert the next evening.

“One thing, though, Murthy. The first row is too far from the stage. Subbulakshmi doesn’t like that. She feels a sense of fulfilment when she performs with a closeness to the audience.” As per his wish, we rearranged the seating closer to the stage. As I was taking his leave after returning to Raj Bhavan, he said, “Murthy, do one thing. Prepare to have the concert recorded tomorrow. We shall see about the rest afterwards.”

The concert went off very well. It was nearly nine o’clock when it concluded. “Shall we listen to the recording once after dinner?” said Sri Sadasivam. “Oh sure, of course”, I replied.

After listening to the entire concert recording, Sri Sadasivam and Subbulakshmi showed their appreciation. “The recording has come out well”, they told the engineers. Then they turned to me, and

said, “We have no objection to your broadcasting this from your station!”

I was mightily pleased. “Sir, broadcasting it just from our station will not reach the audiences across the country. Lakhs of listeners will be delighted if you will kindly permit that we broadcast

the music from all the south Indian stations.” Sri Sadasivam nodded in agreement.

The higher authorities of Akashvani expressed great happiness that the former cordial relationship between Akashvani and MS had been restored so well.

NJ Nandini’s music is felicitous and expressive

Courtesy Deepa Ganesh and “The Hindu”



*NJ Nandini with Apoorva Krishna on Violin and
NC Bharadwaj on Mrudanga*

At 22, you are all starry eyed, the world looks happy, beautiful and you want to make the best of it. But NJ Nandini, the Carnatic vocalist from Tiruvananthapuram, is rearing to make it to the big Carnatic stage, has plenty of awards in her kitty, and has bagged the coveted Chembai Puraskaram.

She sang recently at the Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira with a dynamism that passionate singers bring to their music. NJ Nandini has a melodious voice -- though not all that powerful – which is bestowed with felicity and movement. She takes to her medium like a fish takes to water; this per-

haps comes with relentless practice coupled with talent.

Her rendition of Devamanohari was enthusiastic and brisk, followed by a competent exposition by Apoorva Krishna on the violin. Her rendition of Tyagaraja’s krithi “Evvarikai” was energetic and lively. Hamsanandi, which followed, received a very imaginative and intense treatment from Nandini. In her detailed alaapane, she even attempted a brief shruti bheda, brushing the contours of Hindola. Apoorva showed her prowess as a mature performer with a spacious alaap, building on the importance of silence in music. “Chetasri” in Dwijavanti at once brought all the great masters like Madurai Mani Iyer and Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer on to the canvas. It was short and lively.

The main raga of the evening was Shankarabharana. Nandini’s pliant voice brings out the best of gamakas never compromising on the emotions. She rendered “Shree Dakshinamurthy” with maturity; her kalpanaswaras and neraval was well laid out. Maybe she could have taken more time over her raga exposition. N.C. Bharadwaj is a serious accompanist and added value to the concert.

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

MS Amma - An immortal melodies

Swami Tiru Dasa, Director, Sri Krishna Kalakshetra/ISCON, Bangalore

Although MS Amma breathed her last in December 11th, 2004 peacefully in her sleep, she will be with us through her immortal melodies like Sri Venkatesha Suprabhatam, Bhaja Govindam etc.

Madhurai Shanmukhavadiyu Subbulakshmi – Our Dearest MS Amma – the Nightingale of India was born on the 16th September 1916 in the temple town of Madurai to Veena player Shanmukhavadiyu Ammal and Subramania Iyer. She started her musical journey with her mother.

MS formally started learning Carnatic music at a very early age under the tutelage of Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer and subsequently Hindustani music under Pandit Narayana Rao Vyas. Her musical interests were also shaped by regular interactions with Karaikudi Sambasiva Iyer, Mazhavaranendal Subbarama Bhagavathar and Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar.

She gave her first performance at the age of 11 in the year 1927 in the 100 pillar hall inside the Rockfort Temple in Tiruchirapalli with Mysore Chowdaiah on Violin and Dakshinamurthy Pillai on Mridangam. By 17, MS was already a renowned & flourished among the music circles and never turned back.

First musician to be awarded with India's highest civilian honour "Bharat Ratna" in 1998 and first Indian Musician to receive the so called Asia's Nobel Prize "Ramon Mag-saysay" Award. She was the first woman to be honoured with "Sangeetha Kalanidhi" by Madras Music Academy in 1968.

Very soon in 1929, MS shook the Kumbakonam town by storm by her concert in Mahamaham festival which gave

her the entry into coveted Music Academy in Madras. Thus at the age of 13, she gave her first performance at Madras Music Academy. The Academy known for its discriminating selection process broke the tradition by inviting her as a key performer and her performance was described as "spellbinding" and earned her many admirers and moniker of musical genius from critics. In 1938, MS acted for the first time in a Tamil movie "Sevasadanam" followed by Shakuntalai in which she played a lead role teaming with GN Balasubramaniam the most "attractive intellect" of that time.

It was at this time, she met Thiagarajan Sadasivam – a freedom fighter, fairly well known in Chennai political scene as a protégé of the Late C Rajagopalachari – Rajaji. They got married in Thirunelmalai near Madras in 1940. In 1941, Sadasivam took her to meet Mahatma Gandhi for whom she sang Bhajans. Three years later she performed five concerts to raise funds for Kasturba Gandhi Memorial Trust.

In 1947, she rendered a concert on All India Radio on the occasion of Mahatma Gandhi's birthday with Meera Bhajans, Tulsidas and Kabirdas kirtans. AIR played her Bhajan "Hari Thumo Haro" after Gandhiji's death which she had sent to him earlier. MS maintained her image as a glamour queen until release of Meera in 1943 both in Hindi and Tamil. It created a wave of appreciation that gave her an all India status as a musician.

She immortalised many songs including "Vaishnava Janatho" a favourite of Mahatma Gandhi, Meera Bhajans, Annamacharya Kirtans. Certain Raagas like Shankarabharanam & Kambhoji bore her "Unmistakable Stamp". Kurai on-drum Illai often evoked sighs and



MS receiving the Bharat Ratna Award from President KR Narayanan

tears when MS rendered it as a concluding piece in every concert.

She never referred to notes when she sang on stage. MS stopped giving public concerts after her husband's death in 1997.

MS was known for her social contributions. She donated her entire Prize money of Ramon Mag-saysay award to several welfare schemes. MS has given more than 200 charity concerts and raised over Rs.10,000,000. She donated many of her royalties of her best seller albums including her ever popular Venkatesha Suprabhatham to TTD.

Between 1963 and 1987, she travelled across the globe to give performances in coveted places like Edinburgh International Festival of Music and Dance, Carnegie Hall in New York, UN General Assembly in 1966, Royal Albert Hall in London in 1982, Festival of India in Moscow in 1987 and so on...

Let me end this endless article with a small note on her humility;

MS was to be awarded as the FIRST Asthana Vidwan by Tiruma Tirupathi Devasthanam a day after

her 3 hour concert during the visit of the then Prime Minister Shri. Lal Bahadur Sastri. She politely declined to receive the honour saying that it would not be appropriate for her to accept it when three eminent stalwarts, much senior to her, were in the field – Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar, Musiri Subramania Iyer and Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer – all Sangeetha Kalanidhis by then. The best part was TTD agreed to honour all of them including the local eminent musician Sangeetha Kalanidhi Chittoor Subramania Pillai.

The quality of MS's inestimable musical expression reminded one of the words of Congreve, a music critic, who said – "Her music has the power to soothe a savage beast, soften rocks and bend a knotted tree".

The core of classical Carnatic Music is DEVOTION. Without any contradiction, it is the easiest path to lead a life of detachment, without being a slave to material and terrestrial needs. MS lived such a life with the Motto – EARN TO GIVE....

A life of musical moments

Deepa Ganesh, Senior Associate "Lalitha Kala Tharangini"

Talking to S. Krishnamurthy is like opening the floodgates to a golden past, and this is a flood in which you feel fortunate to be washed away. At 92, his memory is razor sharp, and picks up even tiny details from as far as eight decades old. This musician, who is retired Station Director of All India Radio, is also an author of the treasure-of-a-book Sangeeta Samaya and the more recent ones on T. Chowdiah and M.S. Subbulakshmi. Most importantly, he is the grandson of the greatest vaggeyakaras of Karnataka, Mysore Vasudevacharya, who was hailed as Abhinava Tyagaraja.

Invariably, any conversation with S.K. revolves around Vasudevacharya, the legend who shaped his life and music. The overwhelming presence of his grandfather in S.K. comes as no surprise considering what a tall figure he was, not just to the music fraternity, but to

all connoisseurs of art in the Southern cosmos. In fact, for the Shraddhanjali gathering of Vasudevacharya (who passed away at 96 years on May 17, 1961), at the Adyar Kalakshetra in Chennai, there was a veritable galaxy who came to pay their tribute. Of them were Rajaji, T.L. Venkatarama Iyer, retired Justice of the Supreme Court and noted musicologist, musicians Musiri Subramania Iyer, Dwaram Venkataswami Naidu, Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer, K. Sankara Menon and Rukmini Devi. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, C.P. Ramaswami Iyer. Prof. P. Sambamurthy and Ariyakkudi Ramanuja Iyengar wrote glowing tributes to the legend.

The centre of S.K.'s universe is undoubtedly his grandfather. As he unfolds the story – which is at once the biography of Vasudevacharya as well as that of the

Mysore kingdom's deep commitment to the arts – you cannot miss the little boy who grew up into a young man and an insightful adult, soaking and absorbing the musical resonances that more or less came to him on a platter. You see in him a faithful storyteller, a pious practitioner, an ardent and grateful student of music, who refuses to let go nothing from his warm past.

Excerpts from the interview:

Your grandfather is among the brightest stars of Carnatic music. Your father practiced Hindustani music and pursued theatre. Your brother Rajaram, headed Kalakshetra. You are a student of Carnatic music, who also studied Western classical, but chose a non-performing career in AIR. So many different kinds of choices co-existed in a family that one would expect to be strictly Carnatic. Can you talk about the nurturing of these various temperaments?

S.K.: My answer to this will be slightly round-about. I first performed as a boy of nine. Bidaram Krishnappa and T. Chowdiah had given all their earnings to the construction of Prasanna Sitarama Mandira. Just before this happened the duo had toured entire Tamil Nadu giving concerts. Chowdiah had become a star and musicians were rushing to him with concert dates. My grandfather's home was the meeting point in those days. Practically every musician, both Hindustani and Carnatic, would drop by. For us, me and my brother, most learning happened by listening and watching these great musicians converse and sing to each other.

My initial lessons were under Channakeshavaihi my grandfather's student. I used to sing fairly well and had become quiet popular in school. Once when I was around 14, the school anniversary celebrations had been planned and I was asked to sing. But unfortunately around that time my voice

began to break. I went and told my headmaster, he immediately retorted: "Are voices made of glass that they should break? Don't give me lame excuses. You have 20 minutes, do what you want." I was in a serious problem. I thought I would play the Jal Tarang and went and told my father about it. He promptly went to senior artiste B. Devendrappa and brought his set for me. Devendrappa guided me how to manoeuvre the instrument and the next few days, night and day I did just that. By the end of it, I had developed fondness for the instrument. We ended up buying two sets for ourselves, and my brother and I began to seriously practice the instrument.



Mysore Vasudevacharya with His Highness Mysore Maharaja

We would wake up at 4 a.m., study for an hour, and from 5 a.m. onwards we practiced music. One morning it so happened that His Highness, Nalvadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar was passing our house. He came to know that we brothers had taken to Jal Tarang, and later sent his staff to fix our concert in the palace. It was on Sankranti to the full view of all the asthana vidwans and learned musicians. My brother and I were extremely nervous. But the

concert left the King so pleased that he immediately ordered that we be recruited in the Palace Orchestra. He told my grandfather that we both would do well to learn Western Music also and without any further delay got us enrolled in the Trinity College of Music, London. Mysore was the centre of exams.

My father, like my grandfather was a fine conversationalist, but short tempered. He was interested in theatre and had taken lessons in the mridangam. But later he expressed his desire to learn the tabla and went to Jalandhar on Palace scholarship. He came back and accompanied Hindustani musicians. That however was for a short period. He was once playing for a Hindustani musician,

and something happened during the concert. The vocalist looked daggers at my father. "Why are you staring at me? I am playing properly. You need to sing properly though," he immediately shot out in public. My grandfather, who was in the audience, cringed with embarrassment. On returning home that night he told my father, "Henceforth, play for the happiness of your soul and not in concerts. You stick to teaching, which is better for your temperament." That marked the end of my father's career as a performer.

Mysore was home to the best of musicians across genres. The Maharajas would often arrange Hindustani concerts and Ustad Vilayat Hussain Khan, Abdul Karim Khan and Barkatulla Khan were frequent visitors. They would come home and have extensive discussions with my grandfather. As a result, he even composed in several Hindustani ragas. My grandfather had such an open mind to music that he listened to film music also with great interest, and often remarked: 'Look how beautifully they have captured the essence of the raga in three minutes!' He loved the song "Bina Madhura" from the film "Rama Rajya" and I have played it for him repeatedly on the gramophone. He would sing ragas like Mand, Behag, and Bhoop in the Hindustani style and if you were to close your eyes and listen to him, you couldn't tell if you were listening to him or a Gawai! I often practiced the piano, and at those times, he would sit right in front of me and listen. He believed that all music came from the same source, and that is probably why so many different kinds of music flowered in our house. He was a gentle and generous human being.

How did your grandfather end up going to Tiruvaiyyaru to learn from the maestro Patnam Subramania Iyer? Did he ever get to meet his guru's guru, the legendary Poochi Srinivasa Iyengar?

My grandfather's story is one of relentless pursuit. Vasudevacharya's father was also an asthan vidwan in the court of the Mysore king Mummadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar. He was a scholar and expert in the puranas. But unfortunately, my grandfather lost his father at the age of 3, and his mother in the years to follow. The little boy had seen Pat-

nam Subramania Iyer perform in Mysore and had made up his mind that none other but he would be his guru. Of course, that he had no means to get to the great guru is another story altogether.

The King would visit the Chamundi Hills temple every Tuesday and Friday. My grandfather would invariably turn up there, and each time the king passed by, he would bow and greet him with folded hands. This went on for six months. Struck by curiosity, the King found out about this orphaned, young boy and summoned him to the palace. 'For the next few months you teach Sanskrit to the prince,' the King ordered. This went on. After several months, my grandfather expressed his desire to the King. True to the characteristic generosity of the Mysore kings, he immediately gave consent, granted a scholarship, bought him clothes and sent him off to Tiruvaiyyaru. The King not only wrote a letter to Patnam, but even sent him fees!

For six months, all my grandfather did at his guru's house was to bring water from the river, wash clothes, run errands and do things around the house. Patnam used to do "Sadhana" for two hours in the early morning and grandfather had to be present, playing on the thambura. Driven to tears, he begged his guru to start his lessons. 'Don't think I have wasted your time all these months,' Subramania Iyer explained to him. 'Listening is an important aspect of music. I was casting the foundation for your lessons,' he said, and started with Begade varna. The method of Subramania Iyer was meticulous and rigorous, and he taught a single varna for three long months. My grandfather used to say, 'If you heard my guru sing in madhayama kala, the majesty of the King elephant would come to mind. Such was his grace and style.'

Once grandfather went calling on Poochi. It was fairly early in the morning, but the lessons had already begun. There were about five to six students sitting before him, but lessons were being taught one at a time. He too believed that listening was a vital part of learning. My grandfather could see a huge plate of about 25 idlis, sambar and a large silver pot of coffee being readied in

the inner room. He assumed that Poochi would feed all his students. Soon it was placed before him. And within no time, Poochi had devoured it all, much to my grandfather's surprise! Much later, my grandfather had told me, 'A monstrous talent like him needs monstrous quantity of food!' After the classes, Poochi had apparently asked my grandfather to rate his students. With great trepidation, he had pointed out to a scrawny young lad in the corner. That turned out to be Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar – my grandfather had seen a legend in the making.

The other story that he would often narrate was that of the great violinist Tirukkodikaval Krishna Iyer. My grandfather was longing to attend his practice sessions, but he wouldn't let a single note escape his house. Krishna Iyer would lock all doors and windows, and begin his practice in the dead of the night. One night, my grandfather sat below his window, and was listening to him practice Kambodhi raga. He often recalled what a marvel his Kambodhi was. After a few hours had passed, Krishna Iyer opened the window to total darkness, and spat out his paan. And lo! It landed right on my grandfather's head. With fear, he tried to slink away, but Krishna Iyer saw him and called out. "I was dying to listen to you, so I did this..." my grandfather explained shivering. But Krishna Iyer was in a different mode – he was profusely apologising for what he had done. "Do not ask for forgiveness, today Saraswati herself has landed on my head!" my grandfather had replied.

When my grandfather finished his training and was returning to Mysore, Patnam had blessed him saying, "You are my contribution to the State of Mysore."

Can you recall some of the great musicians who vis-

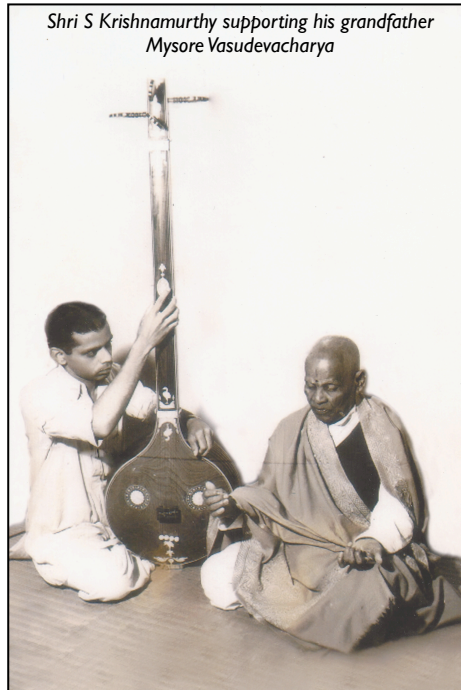
ited your grandfather during your childhood? Maybe some everlasting memory that they left in you...

I remember each one of them. And every time I think about it, I feel I am very fortunate. For instance, Tiger Varadachar and my grandfather were dear friends. He would often tell my grandfather, 'Why are you rotting in Mysore? I will take you to Madras and you will be seated in a palanquin and taken round in a procession!' This was a conver-

sation that took place between them often. Each time he raised this subject my grandfather would say, 'I am fine here. I am not coming anywhere.' Varadachar, for the humungous talent that he was, was an extremely simple person. I would often drop on him in the afternoon. 'Sir, what are you doing?' I would ask softly. And he would say, 'Lying like a log, just like that.' A minute or two later, 'Can you please sing Mukhari? I feel like listening...', I would ask. He would sit up and sing for me. What a glorious musician he was and so modest!! Madurai Mani Iyer used to be my favourite, none could excel him in svarakalpana. GNB came often to Mysore and what stunning

looks he had. He used to be dressed impeccably with those diamond ear studs sparkling in his ears! He was a man of great manners too. He would have turned up at the hall, and it would be thronging with people. Mani Iyer and Chowdiah would come after him. When the two arrived, he would stand up in reverence, and go on stage only after they had occupied their position. He was a gandharva personified!

These days even ordinary musicians have heavy pockets. But in those days even stalwarts didn't make enough money from music. Veene Seshanna used to walk with his veena on the streets of Mysore. If he saw any home decorated with mango



leaves, he would go up to them and ask if they needed music for the auspicious occasion. Those were different times...

Why did you take up a job in AIR and not choose being a performer?

I did my Master's in Economics, after which situation demanded that I took up a job. The Reserve Bank of India needed a research assistant. I decided to take up the job and was all set to leave for Bombay.

By this time, my grandfather was teaching His Highness Jayachamarajendra Wodeyar Carnatic music. Since the maharaja was trained in Western music, I used to accompany my grandfather to write down the kritis for him in western notations. My grandfather told him that I would be soon leaving for Bombay to take up a job. 'Why, aren't there any jobs for him in the Mysore province? He is not going anywhere,' the Maharaja said. A post was created for me in the then Mysore Akashavani in



1947. From one temple of music I entered another. I met the greatest of musicians, interacted and knew them very closely. I had some of the finest performers like Doreswamy Iyengar, R.K. Srikantan, Shelvapulle Iyengar and others. In this phase of my life, I became more a man of ideas and execution and less of a performer. I collaborated with great Kannada writers, composed operas and orchestras. In fact, I was called upon to direct the National Orchestra. From a performer I became a composer.

M.S. Subbulakshmi had great reverence for your grandfather...

Yes, Sadashivam and MS would come to our Mysore

home. The first time I saw her, it seemed like Goddess Parvathi had walked into our home from the Kailasa Parvatha.

She had come to take grandfather's permission and approval to cut "Brochevarevarura" for a gramophone company, and I remember that she learnt "Indira Ramana Govinda" as well. When they were leaving, they offered fruits to my grandfather along with a Rs. 100 note. My grandfather was hurt. "My compositions are not for sale. If

you sing it with bhakti that is enough for me," he said, returning the note.

Years later, my grandfather did get an opportunity to listen to her sing "Brochevarevarura". After the kutcheri, MS



Veena Sambasiva Iyer and Mysore Vasudevachariar
Photo: C. Nachiappan

came up to him and asked: "Did I render it to your satisfaction?" I cannot forget what my grandfather said: "When you give away your daughter in marriage and the next time you meet her you feel how lovely she looks, much more than what she was when she was with me – that is how I felt today. You have made it very beautiful!"

I met MS four months before her death. She was scattered. But she remembered my grandfather, Indira Ramana Govinda and other things. Suddenly, when the clock struck five, she began to say, "Naan kutcheriki ponume..." and started moving about restlessly. I returned very disturbed.

(Deepa Ganesh is a senior associate with "Lalitha Kala Tharangini". She writes regularly to "The Hindu". Her concert reviews on "The Hindu" is something the music rasikas eagerly wait to read)

Pallavi workshop by Ranjani and Gayatri

Priyanka Prakash - Vocalist and a participant

Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira had organised a Ragam Thanam Pallavi workshop by eminent musicians Vidushi Ranjani and Vidushi Gayathri on August 3rd, 2014. As we reached the venue, there was palpable excitement, with music students from Bangalore, Mysore, Udupi, Chennai and other places, including the US, who were attending this wonderful workshop.



Ranjani and Gayatri at the RTP Workshop

The workshop was truly enlightening, educative and nuanced – covering in entirety the subtlety of Raga and Thanam singing, Pallavis – and also included aspects such as voice culture, Grahabhedam, and concert presentation. In spite of being world-renowned stars, the approachable and friendly nature of the Vidushi's put everyone at ease, and lent us freedom to ask questions without being inhibited.

The group was divided into two, to facilitate individual attention, and to give all participants a chance to sing,

The group that I was part of was taught by Vid. Ranjani. She started off by explaining the tenets of raga singing and picked up raga Kalyani for elaboration. Her Kalyani raga phrases were rich in ragabhava and poignant with emotion. She then went on to Thanam singing, demonstrating different variations in thanam singing, including pace, syllables and intricate rhythmic progression. The Thanam that she sang to demonstrate how one can bring out the beauty of a single note through thanam, when she elaborated at the Panchamam,

was profound, and still rings in my ears. She next took up a Rakti raga for elaboration and sang Thanam in Begada.

Next on the agenda was pallavi exposition. Vid. Ranjani first took up a 4-Kalai pallavi, and explained concepts of Anulomam, Pratilomam, Tri-kalam, Tisram and Chatusra Tisram. We then took a 2-Kalai pallavi for elaboration.

In the other group, Vid Gayathri coincidentally also took up the same set of Ragas for elaboration. She then chose Shanmukhapriya Raga for singing a 4-Kalai Pallavi, that was brought down into 2-Kalai and 1-Kalai, with several rhythmic intricacies unobtrusively woven in. Participants who had attended that session couldn't stop talking about the glorious Kalyani and Shanmukhapriya that Vid. Gayathri sang.

Both the artistes also took us through Nadai Pallavis, Ragamalika Pallavis, and pallavis in relatively unconventional thalas for Pallavi singing, like Rupaka thalam.

In the evening, we had an exhilarating joint session for all the participants. In this session, Vidushi's Ranjani and Gayathri demonstrated a diverse array of spectacular Pallavis, including a raga mudra pallavi in Amir Kalyani, in the unique Trimukhi thalam, a chatur-raga pallavi in Kalyani, Valachi, Dhanyasi and Revati, a Dvi-nadai pallavi in Hamsanandi, and pallavis with creative lyrical instruments such as gopuchayathi, srotovahayathi and parvatiyati. The session ended with an open house where all of us were asked to compose Pallavi's using the line of lyric 'Ramachandraya Namaste, rajeeva lochanaya'. There were very interesting pallavi's including a Panchamukhi, khanda Nadai, tri-kalam pallavi etc.

Vidushi's Ranjani and Gayathri took us into a world of bliss through their music. We were awestruck by how complete their music is – a perfect blend of aesthetics, chaste classicism, rhythmic complexity and intricacies... and in perfect fidelity to Sruti, and beautiful vocalisations. This

was truly inspiring – and lit the fire of Sadhana in everyone!

All the participants of the workshop are truly very grateful to Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira for

providing this invaluable opportunity to be cherished for a long time.

Carnatic goes creative with Kids

Courtesy Deepa Ganesh, The Hindu July 30, 2014

Bhoomija's Carnatic Choir for Children is back, and this time the young maestro Abhishek Raghuram wields the baton.

A choir is a relatively new idea for the Carnatic music genre. Akashavani has popularized vadya vrinda, orchestra and others, while the great Tiruvaiyyaru tradition set in motion Goshti Gayanam. Bhoomija's Carnatic Choir for Children (CCC) directed by Bombay Jayashri in 2013 was not only a path-breaking idea, but a step further for Carnatic music.

For the children, it was a great exercise in togetherness - learning and nurturing their music collectively, and for the maestro, it was a greater challenge. It was not merely about a stupendous performance, but also about opening the hearts of these children to the vast skies of one of the highest art forms of human civilization, instilling in them the joy of aspiring for greater heights of learning.

The second in the season of CCC is the vibrant and dynamic Abhishek Raghuram, who is known in the Carnatic music circles as a child prodigy. This talented vocalist, who also played khanjira for several kutcheris before he decided to pursue vocal music singularly, feels this is among the most

important experiences of his musical life. A man of few words, Abhishek is visibly excited as he rehearses with the kids. He pushes their boundaries, and they, his; it leaves them both hungry for more and more improvisations.

How did he clear the ground and pave way for an altogether different kind of musical training in the kids? "If I had tried to do that, it may have been very difficult," says Abhishek, recognizing the fact that unlearning is not an easy process. Much of the music for this choir has been composed by Abhishek, while the compositions come from tra-

ditional source. For instance, he says, the opening piece is from Shankaracharya, but it has been set to music by him. Maybe it was the few strains of Hindolam I heard...

"Each day has been a huge learning experience for me. I have had to think of better ways of communication, and

even my music has benefitted from it. I was constantly exploring new avenues by which I could my teaching effective," explains Abhishek.

It is not enough to have a talented group of kids, but for them to perceive and understand this music which is highly creative and individualistic, is daunting.



Pushing boundaries - Abhishek and his students

Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira provided the perfect stage for designing and perfecting this program. Abhishek and his team would assemble and practice for several months. We are glad that all this will help the children inculcate our culture and there will be atleast a few who will excel in music in the days to come by virtue of this program.

The two towers of music world

Courtesy Kalki 09 Dec. 1990, Translated to English by S Jagennathan, a senior rasika

Once somebody asked Smt. Lata Mangeshkar as to how she came to be a musician. She replied that she does not know as to how to speak and that is how. But subsequently Smt. Lata Mangeshkar proved that she could also speak very well.

For "Fund raising" for the fourth time for "Sankara Netralaya", Smt. MS Subbulakshmi performed at The Madras Music Academy. On that occasion Smt. Lata Mangeshkar gave a very good extempore speech.

"I became a fan of MS Subbulakshmi during my young age. I became a devotee of Meera after seeing and hearing her in the movie "Meera". From that time onwards, my bhakti and respect for Smt. MS Subbulakshmi is continuing and growing.

In the proximity of my most respectful Smt. MS Subbulakshmi, I am a very young person. In everyone of the song she renders there is divinity; Everyone of these are surrendered to the al-

mighty. Major portion of her immense wealth generated by her music is given away by her to charities and good causes for the mankind. She manifests as a "yogi" performing a great "yagna" of music.

Advancing age, feeling tired, indifferent health - all these things vanish when once she takes the stage for a concert. Only music and melody becomes the predominant thing then. This becomes possible only because she has the full and complete blessings of "Saraswathi Devi".

What am I, a young person has to say anything about this great artiste...? She should live for hundred years and continue her musical yagna. We should all get the benefit of that effort - this is my only prayer to God"

People who were present on that occasion had the gift of seeing the two great towers of music world at the same time. With the cover picture on Kalki, we share that gift to our readers also.



Maestro Dakshinamurthy Pillai on MS

Kunjamma (as MS was known to those close to her), brought up with all the rigorous strictness that her mother could impose upon her training in art as in life, had sung at a wedding in the household of Dakshinamurthy Pillai, the venerable percussionist from Pudukkottai. The event had drawn a galaxy of artists - including the upcoming Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, Musiri Subramania Iyer, Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavathar, Rajamanickam Pillai, Rajaratnam Pillai, Palghat Mani Iyer, G.N. Balasubramanian and the Alathur brothers.

The next day, in the midst of this starry assembly, Dakshinamurti Pillai suddenly smote his head with vehemence. "Andavane!" (oh God!) How will you save your throats for a lifetime if you engage in vocal gymnastics? Leave all that to us drummers. Singers must emphasise the raga and the bhava so that you preserve your voice and let it gain in timbre. That little girl there, she knows this already. Didn't we hear her yesterday? Wasn't it satisfying? Touch our hearts?" At that public praise, Kunjamma shrank even more behind her mother in the corner

President's Tribute to MS

17 January, 2005: Rashtrapathi Bhavan, New Delhi (Courtesy Shri. Srinivasan Viswanathan)



Dear Children,

I will now talk to you about another Great Mother, The Mother of Carnatic Music MS Subbulakshmi. First time in the year 1950, I heard her when I was studying in the college at Trichy during Thiagaraja festival at Tiruvaiyar, which is conducted in January every year. I attended this festival with my close friend & music lover Santhanam. After Pancharatna Kriti, MS Subbulakshmi sang the famous Thyagaraja Keertana Endaro Mahaanubhavalu Andhariggi Vandanamulu. This song really entered into me and blossomed happiness in my body and soul. The meaning was so powerful; I was moved and became a lifetime fan of MS. I started liking her statement in the Music Academy, with regard to Bhakti in Music.

"Bhakti is nothing but the devotion we show to the divinity that resides within us. Once we regard the divinity within us with devotional fervour, we are bound to develop the same affection towards everything outside. The reason is that the same divine truth runs through all things. When the devotee has attained this state, service to the world becomes his creed."

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I used to meet MS in music concerts. It was a great joy for me when MS was honoured with Bharat Ratna in 1998 at Ashoka Hall in Rashtrapati Bhavan. I was sitting by her side. She touched my head and blessed. That was my greatest moment in my life. She gave one statement which I would like to recall. Any raga has the purpose of directing the minds of the listeners towards God and his manifestations. Further I have met this great soul many times when she was not well. When she passed away on 12 December 2004, I was there in her house, where I saw a spiritual peace.

My tribute to her read as follows:

*"You excelled in Sriragam,
And achieved great heights in Bhakti Sangeet*

*You Excelled in the Kirtanas of Annamacharya,
Purandaradasa and Trinity of Carnatic music.*

*Even though, you may have merged with time, Your
music with beautiful deeds will live for a long time to
come.*

*You were born in music, lived with music, And now
forever you are merged with divine music"*

(APJ Abdul Kalam – The President of India)

Her Pittsburgh concert in 1976 would be remembered by all those who attended it for two reasons. It was performed in the same old auditorium with packed and standing audience and was charged with genuine emotion. When MS was singing "Srinivasa Thiruvengatam Udaiyane" of Papanasam Sivan in Hamsanandhi, she lost herself and became so emotional that she broke down during singing "Thiruvadikku(u) Abhayam". Loosely translated the words mean (your feet are the only hope for me). Many in the audience felt the highly charged emotion and had moist eyes. Once again many have seen MS getting totally absorbed and getting so involved in her music. But to witness in person one of these events is a unique experience. She would not only feel intensely what ever bhava a song conveyed but had the unique capacity to take the listeners along with her to similar heights.

- TS Sarada

Partial list of awards & titles conferred upon MS

Courtesy "mstribute.org"



1940	Isai Vani, conferred by Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer and Rajamaanikkam Pillai.	1981	Member D'Honneur, the International Music Council.
1954	Padma Bhushan.	1981	Desikothama, Doctoral Degree, Viswa Bharathi University, Shanthiniketan.
1956	The President's Award	1986	Spirit of Freedom Award, VST Industries, Delhi
1968	Sangeetha Kalanidhi, The Music Academy, Madras	1987	Doctor of Literature, University of Madras
1970	Isai Perarignar, Tamil Isai Sangam, Madras.	1988	Tursteer for Indira Gandhi National Center for the Arts.
1971	Doctor of Letters, Sri Venkateswara University.	1988	Kaalidas Samman.
1973	Doctor of Letters, Delhi University.	1988	Ustaad Hafeez Ali Khan Award.
1974	The Ramon Magsaysay Award for national Service	1990	Indira Gandhi award for National Integration.
1975	Padma Vibhushan.	1991	Konarak Samman.
1975	Saptagiri Sangeetha Vidwanmani, Sri Venkateswara Thyagarajaswami Festival, Tirupathi.	1996	The Rajah Sir Annamalai Chettiar birthday award on her 80th birthday.
1979	Doctor of Literature, Indira Kalaa Sangeeth, Viswavidyalaya, Madhya Pradesh	1996	The Rasika Ranjani Sabha conferred the title of "Kala Ratna" on MS Subbulakshmi, regarded as the Queen of Music
1979-80	Producer Emeritus, All India Radio and Doordarshan	1997	Chandrasekharendra Saraswathi award.
1980	Thanipperum Kalaingnar, Tamil Nadu Iyal Isai Naataka Manram.	1997	Swaralaya award.
1980	Doctor of Letters, Benares Hindu University.	1998	Bharat Rathna, India's highest civilian honour.

The Madras Music Academy Awards for 2014



Executive committee of the Madras Music Academy has unanimously selected eminent mridangist and vocalist Shri. TV Gopalakrishnan for the title of “Sangita Kalanidhi”. He will preside over the 88th annual conference of the Music Academy in December 2014. At the conclusion of the conference, he will be conferred the title at the sadas on 1st Jan 2015. He is a disciple of Carnatic Music doyen Shri. Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavathar.

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

“Sangeetha Kala Acharya Award”

Shri. Mangad K. Natesan (Vocalist)

Smt. Alamelu Mani (Vocalist)

“TTK Award”

Shri. Malladi Suribabu (Vocalist)

Udaiyalur Shri. Kalyanaraman (Nama Sankirtanam)

“Musicologist Award”

Dr. Padma Murthy

“Pappa Venkataramiah Award” for violin

Smt. Lalgudi Rajalakshmi

“Natya Kala Acharya Award”

Kum. Leela Samson

Karnataka Sangeetha Nrithya Academy Karnataka Kalashree Awards

2013-14

“Award of Eminence”

Pandit Ragunath Nakod (Tabla)

Smt. CV Srimathi (Gamaka)

“Annual Awards - Carnatic Music”

Shri. RS Ramakanth (Vocal)

Shri. Anantha Avadani (Vocal)

Shri. Kollegala S Gopalakrishna (Violin)

Shri. Tirumale Srinivasa (Composer)

“Annual Awards - Hindustani Music”

Shri. Mahabaleshwara Bhagavat (Vocal)

Prof. VG Mahapurusha (Sitar)

Shri. Kalappa Nagalingappa (Tabla)

2014-15

“Award of Eminence”

Shri. D Balakrishna (Veena)

Prof. Vijaya Marthanda (Dance)

“Annual Awards - Carnatic Music”

Shri. DV Nagarajan (Vocal)

Smt. Mysore S Rajalakshmi (Vocal)

Shri. MNP Ratnam (Saxophone)

“Annual Awards-Hindustani Music”

Pandit VM Nagaraj (Vocal)

Shri. Rajaguru Guruswamy (Vocal)

Shri. AS Vataru (Tabla)

Dr. Ashoka Huggannavar (Vocal)

Forthcoming Programmes

Programme to commemorate the 60th years of existence

14 September 2014, 5.30 pm
Dental College Auditorium, JP Nagar, Bangalore

Begum Parveen Sultana - Vocal, Pandit Vyasamurthy Katti - Harmonium, Pandit Vishwanath Nakod - Tabla

98th Birth Anniversary of Bharat Ratna "MS Subbulakshmi"

19 September 2014, 6.00 pm
Sri Jayarama Seva Mandali, 8th Block, Jayanagar, Bangalore

Release of the special edition of the magazine "Lalitha Kala Tharangini" on MS by RK Shriramkumar

Chief Guest - Shri Tiru Swamiji, Director, Iskcon, Bangalore.

Followed by a concert of Kum. S Aishwarya-Vocal (Great granddaughter of MS Subbulakshmi and granddaughter of Smt. Radha Viswanathan) and disciple of Smt. Jambu Kannan, RK Shriramkumar-Violin, HS Sudhindra-Mrudanga, S Srishailan-Ghata.

28 September 2014, 5.30 pm
Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira auditorium

Musical feature on "Neelothpala Krithis" of Shri Muthuswami Dikshitar

Direction-Smt. Neela Ramgopal

Participants-Geetha Murthy, Usha Kesari, Rama Ramaiah, Bargavi, Shubha Sampath, Dileep Simha, AK Jagadish, Dr. Shesha Prasad, BR Srinivas-Mrudanga, Dayanand Mohite-Ghata.

09 November 2014, at 530 pm
Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira auditorium

Tanmayee Krishnamurthy-Vocal, B Vittala Rangan-Violin, GS Ramanujam-Mrudanga, VS Ramesh-Morching.

Sankranti Festival (02-09, January 2015), at Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira open air theatre daily at 5.45 pm

02 January 2015, Friday

Rudrapatnam Brothers-Vocal, Mattur R Srinidhi-Violin, Arjun Kumar-Mrudanga.

03 January 2015, Saturday

Neela Ramgopal-Vocal, Charulatha Ramanujam-Violin, Palladam Ravi-Mrudanga, Sukanya Ramgopal-Ghata.

04 January 2015, Sunday

D Balakrishna-Veena, V Vamshidhar-Flute, KU Jayachandra Rao-Mrudanga, M Gururaj-Morching.

05 January 2015, Monday

JA Jayanth-Flute, HM Smitha-Violin, Anoor Ananthakrishna Sharma-Mrudanga.

06 January 2015, Tuesday

Swetha Venkatesh-Vocal, NN Ganesh Kumar-Violin, Sudarshan Chakravarthi-Mrudanga.

07 January 2015, Wednesday

TS Rama-Vocal, Sindhu Suchethan-Violin, A Renuka Prasad-Mrudanga, G Guru Prasanna-Kanjari.

08 January 2015, Thursday

Dr. Nagavalli Nagaraj-Vocal, Venkatesh Joyser-Violin, C Cheluvarej-Mrudanga, Bharadwaj R Sathavalli-Morching.

09 January 2015, Friday

M Lalitha and M Nandini-Violin duet, BC Manjunath-Mrudanga, Vyasa Vittala-Kanjira.

Saint Thyagaraja and Purandaradasara aradhane

26 January 2015, 10.30 am

Sri Thyagaraja and Sri Purandaradasa day programme at Devagiri Venkateshwara temple.

Spring Music Festival Programmes at the 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, Padma Shankar-Violin, Patri Satish Kumar-Mrudanga, 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

MS Sheela-Vocal, Nalina Mohan-Violin, Anoor Anantha Krishna Sharma-Mrudanga, 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. Janathi Kumaresh-Veena, Arjun Kumar-Mrudanga, Anantha R Krishnan-Tabla.

08 February 2015, Sunday

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

25, 26 April 2015, 5.45 pm

Musical discourse by Smt. Vishaka Hari, Charulatha Ramanujam-Violin, HS Sudhindra-Mrudanga, Sukanya Ramgopal-Ghata.

All Are Welcome