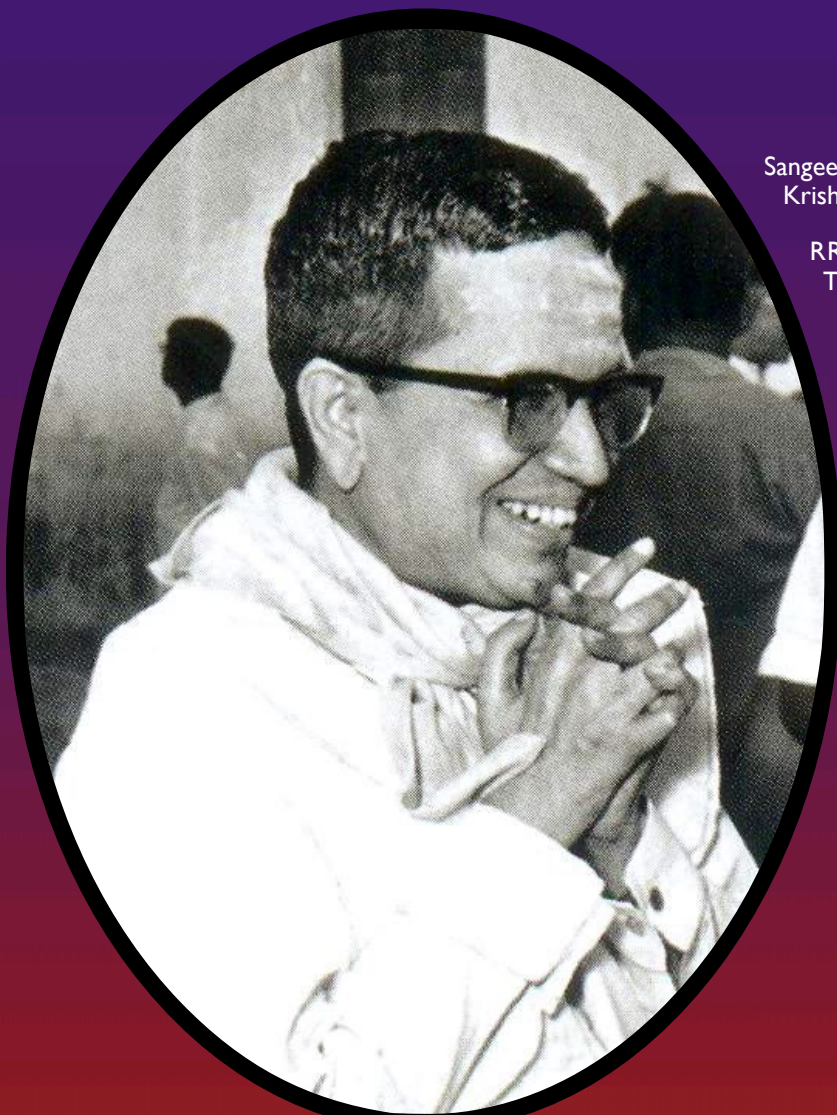


Lalitha Kala Tarangini

Premier Quarterly Music Magazine from
Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira

Volume 2018, Issue 2

June 2018



Sangeetha Kalarathna Titte
Krishna Iyengar

RR Keshavamurthy -
The Lion of Karnataka

DK Pattammal the
Immortal legend

Indian Music
Experience (IME)

Special Edition on Madurai Mani Iyer

Raga Laya Prabha award felicitation

Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira awarded “Raaga Laya Prabha” on 13th May 2018 to Aditi B Prahalad (Vocal), BK Raghu (Violin) and Akshay Anand (Mridangam) who are the upcoming youngsters from Bangalore.

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

The award function was followed by a concert of Abhishek Raghuram (Vocal). B Vittal Rangan (Violin), NC Bharadwaj (Mridanga) and Guruprasanna (Kanjira) in presence of a capacity crowd.



Left to Right Standing - Sri DR Srikantaiah - President, Akshay Anand, Sri GV Krishna Prasad - Hon. Secretary, Vidushi Neela Ramgopal, Vidwan Abhishek Raghuram, Aditi B Prahalad, BK Raghu

June 2018

Ganakaladhara Madurai Mani Iyer (MMI) shone like a jewel during the golden period of Karnatak music. He, along with GN Balasubramaniam (GN Sir) revolutionised karnatak music so much so that we talk about music in terms of before MMI, GN Sir and after MMI and GN Sir. What more can be attributed to a person about whom the greatest exponent of our time, Lalgudi Jayaraman said 'I am a Bhakta of MMI'.

He has left a legacy that practitioners of today would do well to follow by listening to his music as they grow musically. It is said that the youngsters learning should be complemented by listening to MMI and MSS (MS Subbulakshmi) as they represent a perfect style and tradition that the composers would have conceived the kirtis. His advice to the youngsters to practice sarali varasi, janta varasi very hard in the beginning stages of ones learning if they want to be anywhere near the way he used to render the Swaras is very appropriate.

He is considered an outstanding human being and a noble soul. He was a true Nadha Yogi and music was everything to him till he left this universe. His musical contribution and personality is a copybook that is very valuable for musicians to follow. We dedicate this edition of Lalitha Kala Tarangini to Madurai Mani Iyer.

Founders day event at Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira was celebrated at The Bangalore Gayana Samaja where three youngsters Aditi B Prahalad (Vocal), BK Raghu (Violin), Akshay Anand (Mridangam) were presented with 'Raga Laya Prabha' award followed by a concert of Abhishek Raghuram.

Continuing our coverage of the stalwarts of Karnataka, we are covering two prominent Vidwans from two generations

Titte Krishna Iyengar and RR Keshavamurthy. I am sure they will be an inspiration to the youngsters.

Music world celebrated the centenary year of DK Pattammal a doyen in her own right on March 19, 2019. Vice President of India, Shri M Venkaiah Naidu inaugurated the function in Chennai on the eve of her centenary, 18 March. Paying rich tribute to the legend DKP, Shri. Naidu said 'Smt. Pattammal's uncompromising adherence to tradition when values were fast changing, her dedication to the art, without aspiring for returns and her judicious selection of musical offerings in her concerts, made her an inspiring personality. He further said that she was an example of an empowered woman, passionate about music and dedicated to the values she deeply cherished. Smt. Pattammal carved out a path as a professional musician against all social odds and she was a self-taught musician with no formal gurukula training'

SRLKM in its own way is celebrating the centenary with an article by Vidushi Nityashree Mahadevan. The article makes a very interesting reading.

Anand S

Contributors - KS Kalidas, Nityashree Mahadevan, Rajani Arjun Shankar, Dr. Rama V Bennur, CP Chikkanna, Late BVK Sastry (republished article), Anagha Yoganand.

Photo Courtesy - Nazhal, The NGO archives, Ramaseva Mandali Achieves (Shri. SN Ramprasad), Photo archives of Madurai Mani Iyer fan club in Chennai, Paniraj, The Hindu archives, Personal collection of N Venkatesh, Photo archives from Indian Music Experience Trust, Personal collection from Dr. Rama V Bennur, Ganabharati (Shri. Venugopal) for the Layavadyotsava Inaugural function photo.

Visit us online @ www.srlkmandira.org and share your feedback at lkt_srlkm@yahoo.com

Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira (SRLKM) founded by Shri. G Vedanta Iyengar in the year 1955 is rendering yeomen service in the field of music. In addition to music classes, music concerts are held all through the year. The significant festivals are Sankaranti and Spring music festivals. Mandira also takes pride in conducting music awareness program, music workshops, Lecture demonstrations etc. Entry to all program conducted by the Mandira is free as the aim of the institution is to enable everyone to listen to the best of the music and to propagate Karnatak Classical Music. SRLKM is a Trustee of Karnataka Fine Arts Council (Regd.) which is a consortium of 10 sabhas in Bangalore.

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

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

Magazine Committee

Editor - Anand S

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

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



Madurai Mani Iyer in a concert with Palghat Mani Iyer

Content

- | | |
|---|--|
| 05 Madurai Mani Iyer - The People's Musician | 26 RR Keshavamurthy - The Lion of Karnataka |
| 10 DK Pattammal the Immortal Legend | 31 Layavadyotsava at Ganabharathi |
| 12 Sacred trees in the Kritis of Sri Muthuswamy Dikshitar | 33 Shri. Madurai Mani Iyer |
| 15 Sangeetha Kalarathna Titte Krishna Iyengar | 38 Indian Music Experience (IME) |
| 19 Madurai Mani Iyer - The Super Star | 41 An evening of Mellifluous Music |
| | 42 Madurai Mani Iyer - Radio interview in 1960 |

Lalitha Kala Tarangini - Inbox

To the Editor,

Your latest issue of the magazine was a collectors' item for its contents and style of presentation in respect of articles on Chembai, Veena Raja Rao, Sukanya Ramgopal, D Subbaramiah - just to mention a few. The articles have been well written incorporating minute details and retaining the readers' interest. The anecdotes on Chembai were very interesting and they revealed the larger than life personality of Chembai. Kudos to the team behind the task. I am just adding a couple of anecdotes - specifically with respect to his relationship with the Madras Music Academy.

Chembai and the Music Academy

Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavatar, born in 1896 was probably younger only to Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar when it came to the leading performers of his generation. In terms of seniority on the concert platform, he was probably 'older,' for his career had begun in 1904 when

he was nine while Ramanuja Iyengar's debut was only in 1913 at the age of twenty three.

By the early 1920s, Ariyakudi was the acknowledged monarch of Carnatic music and remained so for decades to come. So, when he was invited to preside over the Academy's annual conference in 1938 (the Sangita Kalanidhi title had not been instituted), everyone including Chembai applauded the decision. Chembai, perhaps, expected that the honour would be his next, for he was the senior-most in age after Ramanuja Iyengar. He was, therefore, upset, when in the following year Musiri Subramania Iyer was invited to preside over the Conference. But when he was asked to felicitate Musiri on his elevation, he could not control himself. Striding to the microphone, he wished the latter good luck and complimented the Academy on its choice. Not stopping with that, he added that the Academy would invite Musiri to preside the following year too and every year thereafter. He then

broke off all connections with the Academy for five years, during which time the honour went to others.

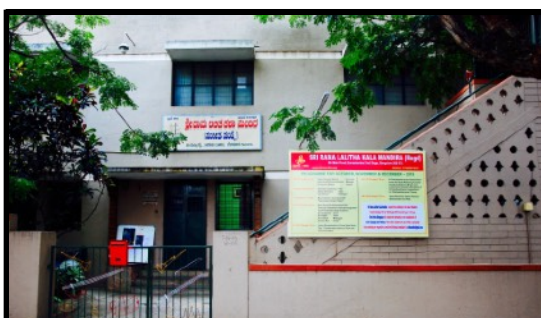
He reconciled with the Academy in 1945 and returned to perform, but the honour of presiding over the Conference, which had become synonymous with the Sangita Kalanidhi from January 1, 1943, came to him only in 1951, after honouring his juniors such as Semmangudi and Kumbakonam Rajamanickam Pillai. That it deeply hurt him became explicit when in one of his concerts, Musiri Subramania Iyer and Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer both got up in the middle and left, covering their faces with shawls. Having spotted them, he bellowed into the mike that the two Sangita Kalanidhis need not hide their faces and were free to come and go as they pleased.

During the 1950s and '60s, when the Academy struggled financially because it was building an auditorium, Chembai willingly sang for low fees. By then he had begun diverting his concert earnings to the Guruvayurappan Temple. The Academy's auditorium got completed in 1962 and by 1969, its loans were also almost repaid thanks to the efforts of industrialists and well wishers. On realising this, Chembai insisted on a hike in his fee. But the Academy would not give in. Its committee felt that it still had several commitments to fulfil. Chembai's response was that he would wait till it had become fully solvent and be able to pay his market rates. Till then, he said, he was better off not singing for it. His last performance at the Academy was in 1970. But that he harboured no ill will towards the institution and he readily consented to preside over the Sadas on January 1, 1973 and confer the Sangita Kalanidhi on Prof P Sambamoorthy. He passed away in the year 1974.

Regards,
Ramakrishnan C, Chennai

To the Editor,

It is indeed very nice of you to have presented a write-up on Ghatam Sukanya Ramgopal in the March 2018 issue of the magazine. In that article you have mentioned about Sukanya not being allowed to perform in a concert on account of the refusal of a senior and established mridangam player around 1991. Noted vocal duo of yesteryears Radha Jayalakshmi were always choosy and particular about accompanists and it was difficult for freshers to accompany them. During 1978 Sri Ramnavami celebrations under the aegis of Asthika Samaja, Venus Colony, Madras, I saw Sukanya accompanied them on Ghatam. I was impressed by her talent and obtained the consent of the duo to fix-up her Ghatam for their duet I arranged two days later at Bangalore's Shankarapuram Sri Rama Navami music festival. Leading Kanjira player HP Ramachar refused to play with



Our Upcoming Programmes

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| 07 July 2018
Saturday
05.30 pm | The Bangalore Gayana Samaja
Special programme on Saint Sri Purandara Dasa
RK Shriramkumar, Amrita Murali, Ramakrishnan Murthy and Bharathi Ramasubban (Vocal), Charulatha Ramanujam (Violin), K Arun Prakash (Mridanga), Anirudh Atreya (Kanjira) |
| 22 July 2018
Sunday
05.30 pm | SRLKM Auditorium
Rudrapatnam S Ramakanth (Vocal), Mysore V Srikanth (Violin), AV Anand (Mridangam), N Amrit (Khanjira) |
| 05 Aug 2018
Sunday
05.30 pm | SRLKM Auditorium
Kalyanapuram S Aravind (Vocal), R Raghul (Violin), Akshay Anand (Mridangam) |
| 09 Sep 2018
Sunday
04.00 pm | The Bangalore Gayana Samaja
"Lalitha Kala Suma Award" Function
(See back cover page) |
| 23 Sep 2018
Sunday
05.30 pm | SRLKM Auditorium
Dharini Veera Raghavan (Vocal), Achyuta Rao (Violin), A Radhesh (Mridanga) |
| 30 Sep 2018
Sunday
05.30 pm | SRLKM Auditorium
(Prog. Sponsored by Late WS Murthy and Fly.)
Ramakrishnan Murthy (Vocal), B Vittal Rangan (Violin), Akshay Anand (Mridanga), Anirudh Atreya (Khanjira) |
| 07 Oct 2018
Sunday
05.30 pm | SRLKM Auditorium
(Special Prog. on Devi Kritis)
Anjali Sriram (Vocal), BK Raghu (Violin), Tumkur Ravishankar (Mridanga), Omkar Rao (Ghata) |
| 11 Nov 2018
Sunday
05.30 pm | SRLKM Auditorium
Apoorva and Anahita (Vocal duet), Mattur Srinidhi (Violin), BS Prashanth (Mridangam), Sunaad Anoor (Kanjari) |

Sukanya playing with him despite our repeated requests to see and bless her talent as he would to his own daughter. He refused to budge even an inch and earned the wrath of the organisers and they stopped inviting him there after. Leading players like Vellore Ramabhadran, Karaikudi Mani, Tanjore Upendran have all spoken very high of Sukanya and her determination to emulate Patammal who broke the male domination in concerts during the last century. May her achievement guide other interested female players to shine on the Ghatam play.

Regards,
CP Chikkanna, Bangalore

To the Editor,

The latest special issue on Chembai is really fantastic as your magazine normally is. Your magazine is indeed a collector's item. It gives such interesting anecdotes and insight on any special topic covered which makes it a MUST read. Be it the aesthetics, or the content or the quality of printing. I can well imagine the efforts going into and the input of the editorial team to make this magazine stand apart..For us at Bangalore it is all the more interesting as you add in local flavour to make it truly comprehensive. You may like to add a small section on humour associated with music in your magazine..(my personal view Only).

Would like to wish the entire team that brings out this excellent magazine a long stint..as we continue to enjoy what we read..

With regards
A Sadasivam, Bangalore

To the Editor,

The article Chembai: The Godfather by Sri CP Chikkanna in March 2018 Tarangini is a great tribute to the Maestro who encouraged youngsters.

I myself witnessed this trait of Chembai in his last concert in 1974 at Chikkamavalli, Bangalore. In this concert, a youngster accompanied Chembai on violin and at one stage he had difficulty in following him perfectly.

To the surprise of the audience, Chembai turned his position to face this youngster and gently taught him step by step till he rendered that sangati perfectly. Then Chembai turned back facing audience and the concert went on as if nothing untoward had happened.

That is Chembai, the great teacher and Godfather of young musicians.

Regards,
Dr. KV Gayathri
Vice-President, The Bangalore Gayana Samaja

Announcement

SRLKM is happy to announce the following awards for the year 2018

Sangeetha Vedantha Dhurina

(The Award is instituted in the memory of the founder late Sri. G. Vedantha Iyengar with a purse of Rs. 1,00,000/- to each of the awardees, a silver medal and citation)

To

Vidwan Kumaresh and Vidwan Ganesh

(Felicitation - 10th February, 2019 at The Bangalore Gayana Samaja)



Raga Laya Prabha

(The award is to commemorate the memory of the Founder Director Vid. GV Ranganayakamma, Vid. GV Neela and Dr. GV Vijayalakshmi with a purse of Rs. 25,000/- and a citation)

To

Bhargavi Venkatram (Vocal), B Vittal Rangan (Violin), YG Srilatha (Veena)

(Felicitation - 05 May, 2019 at The Bangalore Gayana Samaja)



Madurai Mani Iyer - The People's Musician

Vid. KS Kalidas, Chennai



To innumerable music fans, Madurai Mani was 'Madhura Mani', the vidwan whose music was 'madhuram' – sweet. From the 1940s – 1960s, two great vidwans, Madurai Mani Iyer (hereinafter MMI) and GN Balasubramanian topped popularity charts although there were other great vidwans and vidushis like Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar, Musiri Subramania Iyer, Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer, Chembai Vaidhyanatha Bhagavathar, Alathur Brothers, MS Subbulakshmi, ML Vasanthakumari and DK Pattammal among others.

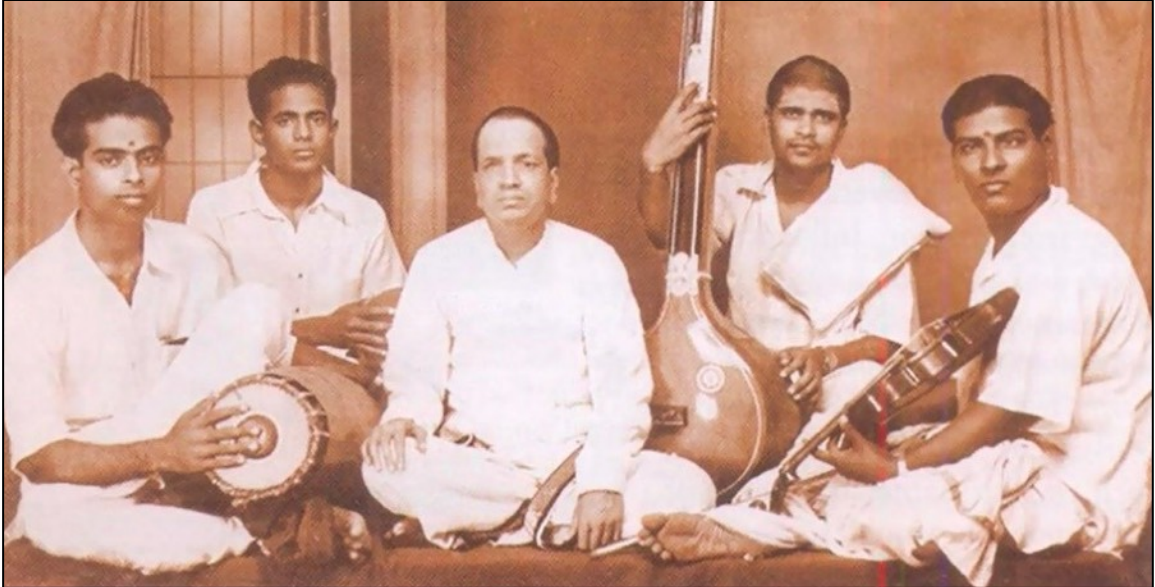
It is said that when MMI sang a concert, whether in a sabha or in a temple, there used to be innumerable bicycles parked all along the road, but when it was a GNB concert, one used

to find mostly cars parked all along the road. The inference was that MMI was a musician for the masses and GNB was for the elite. This perception was only partially true. Both vidwans attracted listeners from the whole spectrum of rasikas. With Madurai Mani, each rasika had a feeling that he was singing for the particular rasika. Thus, each rasika identified himself with Madurai Mani's music and it can certainly be said that he was a "people's musician".

All musicians have good and bad days and the success rate of their concerts would vary from 60 - 80 percent of their total number of concerts but Mani Iyer's concerts were almost always successful, with the success rate never dropping below 90 percent.

Many of Mani Iyer's concerts in temples used to excel his sabha concerts even if the payment in the former was much lower than the sabha concerts. Most of the sabha concerts used to last from three to four hours. There were even concerts lasting up to five and a half hours. Although Mani Iyer's health had never been very good, when he sat on the concert platform, he forgot all that and music poured out like a stream in the woodlands. In his concerts, he would try to sing any favourite kriti a rasika asked for, specifically in temple concerts where time was not a constraint.

The number of kritis in MMI's possession was very large indeed, whether from the view of composers, ragas, talas, language etc, but listeners often wanted him to sing the same set of songs that had been popularised by him, and for all practical purposes, the number of kritis that he sang got restricted to about fifty or Seventy five only. Even so, he used to sing one or two rare kritis in fairly unknown ragas such as valaji,



Madurai Mani Iyer performing with Tiruvalluvar Subramaniam on Violin, SVS Narayanan on Mridangam and Vembu Iyer on Tambura during early 1940s.

marga hindolam, sarasangi, hindola vasantham, pratapa varali, and vijayanagari, and Mani Iyer sang alapana and swaraprasthara in them as fluently as he would do in todī, kalyani or kamboji. In fact, Mani Iyer's speciality lay in his alapana and swaraprasthara with a cascade of swaras, serene and tugging the heart strings. His pallavis in the RTP suite used to be simple in construction but his ragamalika patterns in the kalpana swaras were very attractive, especially when he sang two of his favourite ragas like sindhubhairavi and Kanada. He chose for his pallavis very popular ragas like kamboji, todī, karaharipriya, mohanam, lathangi, shanmukhapriya, bhairavi, simmendra madhyamam, shankarabharanam, keeravani etc. Most pallavis were in adi tala or khanda jati tripura tala. He did not indulge in tri-kalam or anulomam/pratilomam.

MMI's style was his own and anyone copying his style would end up in ridicule. MMI used unusual syllables like 'ti', 'ta', 'la', etc. in raga alapana and swaraprasthara and anybody else using these syllables used to sound absurd. Rarely he even sang phrases in a falsetto voice in the 'ati-tara' stayi as only a few violinists like T Chowdiah and MSG did. The rasikas enjoyed all these and when Mani Iyer sang thus, none felt that he was non-traditional. They would not have tolerated another vidwan doing thus.

Mani Iyer's voice was not only melodious but it was extremely sruti-aligned. The tampoora for his

concerts was usually played by his brother-in-law and disciple TS Vembu Iyer or by Tiruvankadu Jayaraman, another prominent disciple. Tuning the tampoora was also done by them. Vembu Iyer took very good care of Mani Iyer's health and also managed his household affairs including finance. Mani Iyer remained unmarried.

Apart from the two disciples mentioned above, his own nephew TV Sankaranarayan (Vembu Iyer's son) was also his disciple and a senior disciple, Smt. Savitri Ganesan who was almost reaching star-status died in her thirties in a train accident. Dr. SAK Durga, musician and musicologist was also MMI's student. S Rajam, vidwan and a well-known painter was also a disciple although he learnt from others too. However the number of shishyas and grand shishyas of MMI was much less compared to that of Semmangudi, GNB, MLV (who herself was GNB's disciple) and Musiri Subramania Iyer. MMI held his seniors, Ariyakkudi Ramanuja Iyengar and Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer in great esteem. He was also thrilled whenever a youngster sang brightly and blessed him/her wholeheartedly.

He was the first vidwan to popularise many kritis of Harikesanallur Muthiah Bhagavathar who had started a music vidyalaya in Madurai. Some of the kritis became very popular during his lifetime and these are 'Jalandhara' (valaji), 'Meenalochani-Amba' (Todi) and 'Vijayambike' (Vi-



Madurai Mani Iyer performing with Kumbakonam Rajamanickam Pillai on Violin and Palani Subramania Pillai on Mridangam (File photo of 1954)

layanagari). Madurai TN Seshagopalan, a disciple of Madurai Sankara Siva Bhagavathar has now added quite a few other songs of Shri Muthiah Bhagavathar in his concerts. Sankarasiva Bhagavatar was a prominent disciple of Muthiah Bhagavatar.

Songs such as 'Sarasa sama dhana' (Kapinarayani), 'Vinata suta Vahana' (jayantasena), 'Vinanasakoni' (pratapa varali), 'Sahasrakara mandite' (vachaspati) and 'Kavava' (varali), were popularised by him. His other favourites were 'Kaappaali' (mohanam), Dikshitar's Kamalambika Navavarna kritis, Vaara kritis on the planets, the sun, moon etc., 'O Jagadamba' (anandabhairavi), 'Saroja dala netri' (sankarabharanam), 'Vathapi ganapatim bajeham' (hamsadhwani), 'Seethapathi' (khamas), 'Tiruvadi saranam' (kamboji), 'Thookiya tiruvadi' (sankarabharanam), 'Seve srikantham' (mohana kalyani), 'Sarasaksha paripalaya' (pantuvarali), 'Meenakshi memudam dehi' (poorvi kalyani), 'Aparamabhakti yento' (pantuvarali), 'Subramanyena rakshitoham' (suddha dhanyasi), 'Brochevarevarura' (kamas), 'Sri subramanyaya namaste' (kamboji), 'Cheta sri balakrishnam' (dwajavanti), 'Mariveretikku' (both latangi and shanmukhapriya), 'Andavaney' (shanmukhapriya), 'Sarasamukhi' (gowdamalhar), 'Valalabha nayakasya' (begada), 'Sri

Matrubhutam' (kannada) were a few of his favourites.

He performed all over India (in those days no musician went on a foreign trip – except Malaya, Burma and Ceylon which were not considered foreign!) and many recordings of his are available from many places he performed in - Calcutta, Jamshedpur, Bombay, Delhi, Bangalore, and many places in Tamil Nadu. In fact, reflecting his popularity, the largest number of concert recordings of past masters available with us today are those of MMI and GNB.

He was never very strict about the remuneration for his concerts. He left it to the capacity of the organisation to pay and for many concerts in temples, he was satisfied with the 'prasadam'. In common parlance, these were known as 'Thengai mudi' (split coconut) cutcheris. He was also generous about sharing his remuneration, if made in bulk to him, with his accompanists.

Tamil being his mother tongue, Tamil kritis sought an honourable place in his concerts. He sang many kritis of Papanasam Sivan, Gopalakrishna Bharati, Koteeswara Iyer, Periyasaamy Theoran and Guhan among others. He sang Thevaram songs and 'Kolaru Padhikam' of



Madurai Mani Iyer performing with Tiruvalangadu Sundaresa Iyer on Violin and Palani Subramania Pillai on Mridangam and Vembu Iyer on Tambura at Sri Nanrudayan Vinayakar Koil, Trichy in 1956

Tirugnana Sambhandhar as a viruthham and a Tiruppugazh at the end of the concert. Most concerts used to start with *Vatapi ganapathim* (Hamsadhvani) and instances of his singing varnams, javalis and tillanas were rare. According to my knowledge, he never sang padams.

MMI's laya sense was as good as his sruti sense but he did not indulge in arithmetical exercises. He never sang korvais but in a few concerts, he sang swaras in tistra nadai.

MMI's violin accompanists included Thiruvalangadu Sundaresa Iyer, Marungapuri Gopalakrishna Iyer, Mysore T Chowdiah, Kumbakonam Rajamanickam Pillai, TD Sankara Iyer, Mayavaram Govindaraja Pillai, VV Govindaswamy Naicker, Lalgudi Jayaraman, TN Krishnan and MS Gopalakrishnan. On the mridangam, his main accompanists included Kutralam Siva Vadivel Pillai, Palani Subramania Pillai, Palghat Mani Iyer, Ramanathapuram CS Murugabhoopathy, Coimbatore Ramaswamy, Madras A Kannan, Umayalpuram K Sivaraman, Palghat R Raghu, TK Murthy and last but not the least, Vellore Ramabhadran. The list of violinists and mridangists is obviously not complete.

He had great respect for the violin accompaniment by Sundaresa Iyer and the latter also reciprocated the same. A similar bond existed between MMI and Rajamanickam Pillai, TN Krishnan and Lalgudi Jayaraman.

On the mridangam, MMI's favourite was obviously Palani Subramania Pillai and one can say they were made for each other. Whenever Palani teamed with MMI, the concert made a new high in aesthetics and MMI would keep marvelling at Palani's gumkis, his sarvalaghu playing and the tani avartanam. In the lighter second half of the concert, when 'tukkadas' such as '*Kandan karunai*', '*Eppo varuvavo*', '*Vellai tamara*' etc. used to be sung, Palani's artistry would reach a new high and MMI would be mesmerised. Next to Palani, MMI preferred the accompaniment of CS Murugabhoopathy and towards the last years, it was mostly Vellore Ramabhadran who played for MMI.

The list of his accompanists is by no means complete.

In the year 2012, MMI's centenary celebrations were held in Chennai. In order to explain the breadth of MMI's laya expertise the author had given a demo, picking up from a few pieces MMI had sung. The first track pertains to observation of MMI regarding using 'kanakku' or arithmetical calculations in swara singing. The second relates to '*Erumayil*', a tiruppugazh in a fairly fast kalapramana with exhaustive and lightning like swara prastaras for the 'anagata' eduppu in Kanda chapu tala. The third one is the well known '*Sri subramanyaya namaste*' in kamboji where he has sung the pallavi in three speeds. The final one is '*Kaapali*' in mohanam wherein

he has spent a little time in singing kalpana swaras in Tisra nadai.

Those interested listen to the audio clipping on youtube by searching on the title or clicking the link below;

- 1) Observation of MMI regarding using 'kanakku' or arithmetical calculations in swara singing

Title

01_MMI Thoughts on Kanakku

URL

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9cAE-2nnk5o&feature=youtu.be>

- 2) 'Erumayil', a tiruppugazh in a fairly fast kalapramana with exhaustive and lightning like swara prastaras for the 'anagata' eduppu in Kanda chapu tala

Title

02_Erumayil-Lighting Swarams

URL

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W3epu-Yyxu74>

- 3) 'Sri subramanyaya namaste' in kamboji with the pallavi in three speeds

Title

03_Sri Subramanyaya-3 Speed pallavi

URL

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-rgRip-Z84Lw&feature=youtu.be>

- 4) 'Kaapali' in mohanam wherein he has spent a little time in singing kalpana swaras in Tisra nadai

Title

04_Kapali - Swaram in Tisram

URL

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T8_FMz-NeeBY&feature=youtu.be

(Vid. KS Kalidas is a direct disciple of Vid. Palani M Subramania Pillai who was the first choice mridangist for Madurai Mani Iyer. Vid. KS Kalidas has trained few students to display tradition and style of the legend Palani Subramania Pillai in its purest form)

SWARALAYASAMMELANA
An Exquisite Confluence of Melody and Rhythm

A unique musical presentation conceptualized, directed and led by
Mridangam Maestro Vidwan Arjun Kumar

WHEN : SATURDAY, 30TH JUNE 2018 AT 6.30PM
WHERE : JSS AUDITORIUM, 8TH BLOCK, JAYANAGAR, BANGALORE

FEATURING : Arjun Kumar on Mridangam and Dholak, Vivek Sadasivam and Vrinda Acharya on Vocals, Rajkamal on Flute, Adamya Ramanand on Mridangam and Khanjira, Adarsh Shenoy on Tabla, Vaibhav Ramani on Violin, G.S. Ramanujam on Ghatam and Vijay Gonahalu on Sitar.

Come and experience the real flavour of 'the Music of India' in its purest and most aesthetic form!!

DK Pattammal the Immortal legend

Nityashree Mahadevan, Chennai



It is my privilege to write about a rare musical phenomenon, an artiste par excellence, musical legend in the true sense, *marga darshi* or a trail blazer for female musicians, A revolutionary patriotic singer, a singer with a mind blowing repertoire and a talented *gayaki* with an unflinching adherence to classicism, flawless enunciation with clarity, endowed with a divine voice comparable to that of a temple bell, hailed as a queen of Pallavi, an embodiment of love and simplicity, my most respected Guru and Mentor and loving dear grand mother the Doyen of music gana Saraswathi Smt. DK Pattammal.

It is with utmost humility that I pay my tributes to this great musician whose centenary falls on March 19, 2019. A musician who has left an indelible mark on all spheres of this divine art form and created a unique bani for herself with a Shishya Parampara spread all over the world, and yet with her innocent unforgettable smile and feet well grounded which is what makes her even more Special.

Born into an Orthodox family on 19 March, 1919 to Krishnaswamy Dikshitar and Smt Rajammal, young Pattammal was initiated into music by her father who taught her Slokas like

Shyamala Dandakam, Mooka Panchashathi, Krishna Karnamrutham etc. which she rendered with extreme precision and stunning clarity. At the tender age of 8, She learnt a few Compositions from a local music teacher, later from Sri. Krishnaswamy Iyengar, Sri Vaidhyanathan, Tiruppugazh from Appadurai Achari and Pallavi Narasimhachari. She had the rare fortune of learning the Krithis of Papanasam Sivan and Koteeswara Iyer directly from the composers. She was introduced to the Samrajya of Dikshithar Krithis when Ambi Dikshithar listened to this little girl of 13 years render '*Subramanyaaya Namasthey*' with such deep understanding of the nuances. He personally taught her '*Balagopala*' in Bhairavi and '*Kanjadalaayataakshi*' in Kamala Manohari and asked his Prathama Sishya Sri. TL Venkatrama Iyer to teach her more and more Dikshithar Krithis which paved the way for Smt. DK Pattammal to introduce and popularise several Dikshithar krithis which remain immortal in the history of classical music.

She was inspired by the music of stalwarts Kanchipuram Naina Pillai and Ariyakudi R Ramanuja Iyengar who later praised her prowess in singing and regarded her as a worthy counterpart in the fairer sex.

If today female musicians from family background are able to perform on concert platforms with pride and dignity, it is only because of Smt DK Pattammal who broke all the social taboos and pre conceived notions against female musicians that existed during the early part of 20th century when the music field was dominated by the male bastion.

She was the female play back singer in Tamil films and as a policy she sang only patriotic or devotional numbers which were all great hits apart from innumerable 78 RPM records of classical and devotional numbers which were all extremely popular and had record sales in those days.

She excelled in rendering Ragam, Thanam and Pallavi in Rare Ragas like Jagan Mohini, Mani Rangu and Harikamboji in very complicated Thalam with extreme confidence and ease

which earned her a reputation as **Pallavi Pattammal**.

Her breadth taking vast repertoire comprising of the krithis of Trinity, Swati Tirunal, Purandaradasa, Tamil composers, contemporary composers, Padams, Javali, Tiruppugazh etc. make her one of the greatest musicians who will be remembered forever for her contributions and services to the field of Karnatak music.

Her patriotic numbers especially that of Mahakavi Subramania Bharathiyar with the verve and patriotic spirit in her majestic voice would arouse and kindle the desha bhakti in every listener.

She had the rare honour to have rendered the first song when India attained Independence at the gong of 12 midnight on 15 Aug, 1947 at the AIR Chennai when she rendered '*Aaduvome pallu Paaduvomey*'.

She was married to Sri Iswaran who was a pillar of support in her life and career. Her elder son Sri I Sivakumar is an accomplished mridangist who accompanied her on many concerts.

Her prime disciples include her younger brother a stalwart in his own right Sangeetha Kalanidhi Sri. DK Jayaraman, her daughter In law Smt. Lalitha Sivakumar who gave vocal support for many years, and many other prominent musicians who follow the DKP bani.

She was showered with awards and honours including the Padma Vibhushan from the Govt. of India and yet she remained humblest of humble. As her grand daughter I would say I would be in a dilemma if I were to answer for the million dollar question if she was the greatest musician of all times or a greater human being. She was a personification of love and affection. Her endearing personality, warmth and hospitality that she showered on her dears and nears, unconditional love, sweet genuine words of blessing, unassuming attitude, simple life style but great commitment to the chosen art form till her last breath make her 90 years a history to be recorded as a legend in music, a revolutionary woman and an extra ordinary human being.

Sacred trees in the Kritis of Sri Muthuswamy Dikshitar

Rajani Arjun Shankar, Chennai

All over this country, many plants are revered as sacred. Some plants are worshipped directly, while the leaves and flowers of some others are used in worship and in rituals. Trees like the Ashvattha (*Peepal*), Nyagrodha (*Banyan*) and Udumbara (*Cluster fig*) are mentioned in the Vedas as sacred, and others like the Palash (Flame of the Forest) are used in Vedic rites. Many plants have a pride of place in the worship of various Gods, providing their favourite leaves or flowers.

These trees form a very important part of descriptions found in many literary sources. While many Puranas talk about sacred plants, the forest scenes in the Valmiki Ramayana are filled with beautiful descriptions of many trees and their flowers. Poets like Kalidasa revel in describing them too, and the accurate descriptions of specific trees and their leaves, pods and flowers in Sangam poetry is nothing short of astounding. The Thevaram verses are also known for mentioning several trees that grow in the area around the temples they were composed in. Tyagaraja says that he uses Tulasi and Vilva leaves and Vakula (*Magizham*), Kurabaka (*Henna*), Champaka and Paatala flowers in worshipping his Lord. In one Kritis that extols the great beauty of Rama, he says that the lord wears a Vakula garland on his chest.

A prominent method of worshipping plants is by designating them as Sthala Vrksas (special sacred plant – mostly a tree but maybe even a shrub or a grass or a climber) in temples. They are usually worshipped by circumambulation and offerings, and are sometimes connected to the legends or festivals of the temple. One such instance is the story of Sundaramurti Nayanar's wedding to Sangili Nachiyar in Tiruvottiyur,

where the *Magizham* tree plays an important role. The wedding is re-enacted every year here, with the Lord seated under the same tree.

Sthala Vrksas are closely connected to the geography of the place, and are often species that are found abundantly there. The current reality in most places, sadly, is that the single instance found inside the temple is the lone survivor of the species in the vicinity. The sacred trees of temples are of special interest to naturalists and environmentalists, who use these historical and literary references to corroborate their studies. For instance, the Punnai tree (*the Alexandrian Laurel*) is known to grow well in saline and sandy soils and we find that several coastal temples like Mylapore and Tiruvudanthai have this tree as their Sthala Vriksha. There are multiple references to Punnai in the Tevarams of many seaside Sthalams like Vedaranyam.

The deities of Thiruvanaikka and Kanchipuram, viz. Jambukeshvara and Ekamranatha are in fact named after the trees there – the Jamun and Mango trees respectively.

In this context, it is interesting to look at the trees that Sri Muthuswamy Dikshitar has mentioned in his Kritis. Since visiting multiple Kshetras and composing Kritis on the Gods and Goddesses enshrined there has been his wont, he has in particular mentioned the Sthala Vrikshas (sacred trees) of many places. We shall now look at some of these references.

Kadamba tree – Kulithalai

(Botanical Name : *Neolamarckia cadamba*)

Kulithalai is known as Kadambanthurai in the Thevaram verses. According to the legend of the temple, the Lord appeared before the Devas under a Kadamba tree and is called



Ber tree in Kizhvelur

Kadamba-vaneshvara. In the Kedara Gaula Kriti of this Sthala, “*nllakanTham bhajEham*” Dikshitar uses the epithet “*Srl kadamba-vana-nAtham*”. He also mentions other unique aspects of the temple – the Lord facing North, the temple being right on the bank of the Akhanda Kaveri (the river at its widest) etc.

Kadamba, a tall and handsome tree, is also a favourite of Subrahmanya. Many Sangam works as well as later works like Tiruppugazh refer to Kadamba garlands adorning him. The orange-yellow fragrant flowers are unique in their spherical shape, quite like tennis balls!

Ber tree – Kizhvelur

(Botanical Name : *Ziziphus mauritiana*)

Dikshitar’s masterpiece “*akshayalinga vibhO*” was composed in this temple, which has a very beautiful Ber tree (*Ilandhai* or *Indian Jujube*) as its sacred tree. The Kriti refers to the Goddess as “*badarl vana mUla nAyika*”, the one under the cluster of Badari trees. Interestingly this phrase also alludes to the Tamil name of the Goddess, *Vanamulai Nayaki*.

Ber is a tree popular for its tiny sweet-and-sour fruits, and has characteristic droopy branches. Badrinath in the Himalayas too gets its name from the same tree, under which Nara and Narayana performed Tapas.

Trumpet flower tree – Tiruvarur

(Botanical Name: *Stereospermum suaveolens*)

The Paatala tree, called *Paadhiri* or *Paadhari* in South India, is a large and highly medicinal tree,

with very pretty, slender, pinkish-red trumpet shaped flowers. It is known as *Paarul* in Bengali, and celebrated as one of the heralds of the spring season in poetry such as those by Tagore. In the Tiruvarur temple, this tree is found in the Hatakesvara shrine, and finds mention in the Kriti “*hATakEshvara samrakSha*” in *Bilahari Raga*.

The flowers of this tree are described as one of the favourites of the Goddess, in the *Lalita Sahasranama*. She is called “*pATall-kusuma-priyA*” and the Dikshitar Kriti “*Srl madhurApurl vihAri-Ni*” also contains this name.

Arjuna tree – Tiruvidaimarudur

(Botanical Name: *Terminalia arjuna*)

Arjuna means white, and this tree with its pale, whitish bark is a very tall riparian tree. Its bark is an ancient medicine for cardiovascular diseases and the Tassar Silk moth feeds on its leaves.

Tiruvidaimarudur Kshetra gets its name from the tree and Dikshitar addresses the lord as “*madhyArjuna pura vAsam*” – the one living in the middle Arjuna abode (middle since there are two other Arjuna Kshetras to the north and south of this place). This is in the *Paraju* kriti ‘*cintayE mahAlingamUrtim*’.

Sandal tree – Srivanchiam

(Botanical Name: *Santalum album*)

The fragrant Sandalwood tree once thickly populated *Srivanchiam*, which is why Dikshitar describes the Lord here as “*Srl gandhAraNya kshEtraM*” (‘*Srl vAnchanAtham*’, *Surati Raga*), the



Paatali flowering in Tiruvarur

one who has the fragrant Sandal forest as his abode. Sandalwood paste is used in Pujas everywhere, but in this temple, the leaves of this tree are also used to worship the Lord, like Vilva leaves.

Sandal is a slow-growing tree, growing better in elevated areas than in the plains. It has also become an extremely rare species, being over-exploited for its fragrance and medicinal properties.

Champaka tree – Mannargudi (Botanical Name: *Magnolia champaka*)

One of the many flowers that are dear to Krishna (and to Devi who is called “*cAmpEya kusuma priya*” in the Lalita Sahasranama) is the Golden Champaka, with its heady perfume and delightful golden orange or pale yellow colour. It



Champaka flower

is called by names like Shenbagam or Sampige in South India. Champaka tree needs a moist climate to grow, and struggles in more arid areas.

Mannargudi was once known to be a forest of Champaka trees. Dikshitar refers to Krishna here as “*cAru campakAraNya dakshiNa dvArakA puri nilaya*” in his Saveri kriti composed in this Kshetra. An interesting twist is that a Punnai tree is now worshipped here as the sacred tree.

To sum up, the literary wealth of a region is influenced by many aspects found there – the temples, the legends, the customs and the spiritual ideals of the people living there etc. The water bodies, mountains, flora and fauna of the region are also part of the glorious tapestry, and in a way, lead us to the ideal of seeing the divine everywhere. So, paying attention to each of these facets could add to the appreciation and enjoyment of Sahitya and to the overall experience of music.

PS: Transliteration scheme has been followed only for the lyrics of the Kritis mentioned, given in quotation. Other Sanskrit words used follow general spellings.

(Rajani is a Sanskrit teacher based in Chennai, with a deep interest in Carnatic Music, particularly in the Kritis of Muthuswamy Dikshitar. She can be reached at rajani.shankar18@gmail.com)

Sangeetha Kalarathna Titte Krishna Iyengar

Dr. Rama V Bennur, Mysore



During 17th, 18th and 19th centuries in South India, few places like Mysuru, Tanjore and Trivandrum were the main cultural centres. Music and Dance, like any other fine art flourished under the patronage of the rulers who were not only interested in arts, but were themselves practitioners in music. It is not an exaggeration to say that as a result of their contribution, patronage and nurturing, the classical music, Dance, Drama and Katha kalakshepa have prospered.

Mysuru especially attracted many musicians from all over the country. Various art forms received the maximum support and encouragement from the Wodeyars and Mysuru achieved the fame as a centre of Music and

Dance. The various measures adopted by the Wodeyars like encouraging the court musicians to compose, learn different new instruments, introducing Palace Bands, encouraging musicians to widen their knowledge of other systems of music resulted in making Mysuru a flourishing centre. Performing during the famed Dasara Festival was a thing of prestige. The rich heritage of this city speaks volume of its legacy. Mummadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar, Chamaraja Wodeyar, Nalwadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar and Jayachamaraja Wodeyar were all great patrons of art and culture.

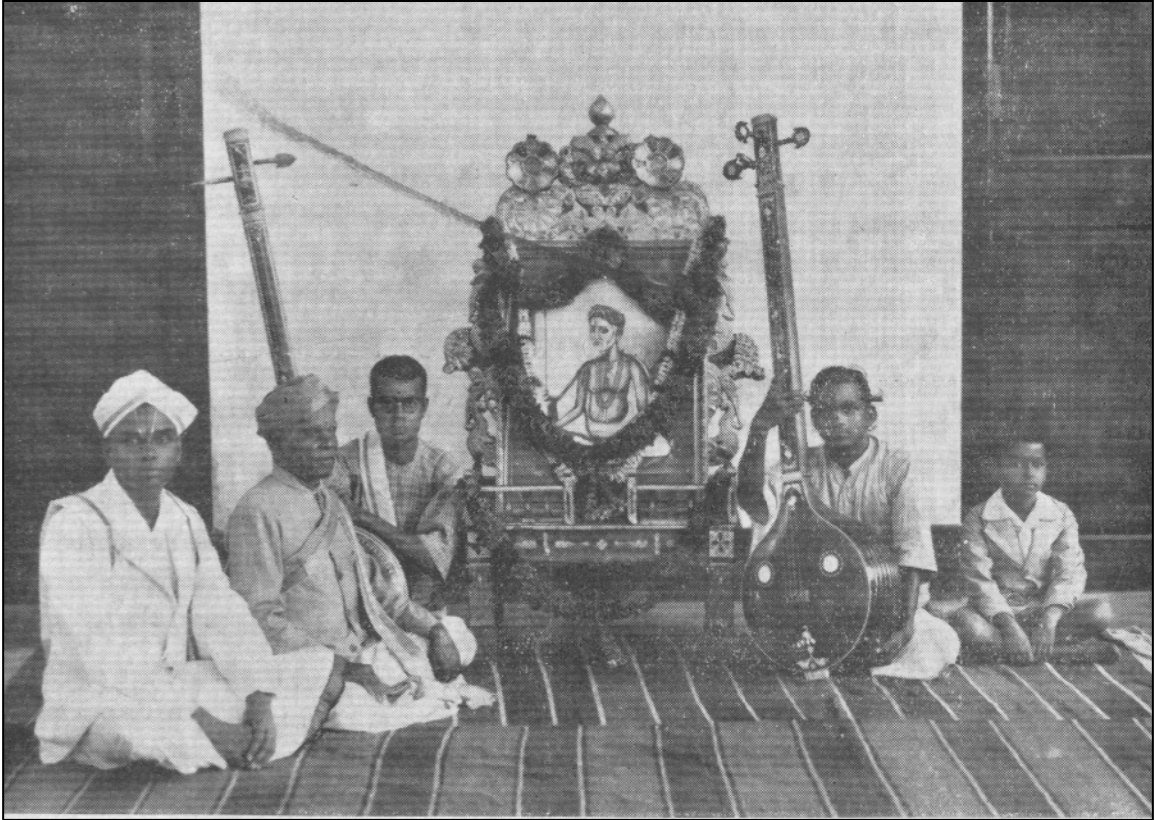
Tanjore on the other hand in Tamilnadu, breathed music and dance. It has sheltered and produced many great stalwarts in these fields. The rulers encouraged the artistes. A small village 11 kilometers from Tanjore and near Saint Tyagaraja's Thiruvaiyaru was 'Titte' or 'Thittai'. River Kaveri and 'Swayambhootheshwara-Ulaganayaki', the main deities sanctified this little village. A Sanskrit scholar who lived there was Rangacharya. He was fortunate to have heard the great Saint and become the disciple of one of his Shishya Thillaisthanam Rama Iyengar. He passed on his passion for music to his son too. His son Narayana Iyengar inherited all his father's knowledge of music and literature. Rangacharya migrated from Titte to Mysuru during the reign of Mummadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar. His Highness, who always welcomed good musicians made Acharya the 'Asthana Vidwan'. Next, Narayana Iyengar was honoured with 'Asthana Vidwan' or court musicianship by Nalwadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar. Though not much is known about these father-son duo, they are certainly responsible for a branch from 'Titte' to cherish in Mysuru.



Asthana Vidwan Ganavisharada Titte Krishna Iyengar in a concert with CS Murugabhoopathy on Mridangam and Asthana Vidwan Sangeetha Ratna T Chowdaiah on Violin.

Titte Krishna Iyengar was born in 1902 in Mysuru. He inherited both music and literature from his father Narayana Iyengar. That was the time when Mysuru was rich with its cultural and literary activities. It was the golden era of Sri Nalwadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar. Stalwarts like Veene Seshanna, Subbanna, Bidaram Krishnappa, Veene Shamanna and many more adorned the court of Mysuru palace. Krishna Iyengar was born during this golden era to absorb the rich legacy of music. He was naturally exposed to music not only at home, but also had the opportunity to listen to the masters of the time, who frequently visited Mysuru. This, sowed the seeds of respect to our traditional music that made him adhere to it all through his life. The young lad who showed tremendous 'Swara jnana' at a very early age, had his initial training from his father Narayana Iyengar. Later on he was guided by great musicians like Seshanna, Subbanna and Krishnappa. This listening of great masters along with disciplined teaching helped in shaping him as a good singer at a very early age. He was only 9 years when he sang for an hour at Thiruvaiyaru with Vidwan Papa Venkataramayya on the Violin and Vidwan Tanjore Vaidyanatha Iyer on the Mridanga for the pleasure of the listeners. This instantaneously brought recognition to the young Krishna Iyengar.

It did not take long for His Highness Nalwadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar to identify this young bundle of talent. Titte Krishna Iyengar was appointed as a court musician when he was barely 17 years old! Thus, the third generation in 'Titte' family adorned the court of Mysuru. Krishna Iyengar developed his own style of singing which emphasised on following the tradition. He had a powerful and rich voice that emerged from deep within. Much importance was given to the understanding the lyrics or Sahitya. That naturally enriched the bhava, intended by the composer. Krishna Iyengar was known specially for his repertoire of rare compositions of notable Vaggeyakara's of Karnataka. He developed a keen interest in the rendering of 'Thaana' and mastered the art. His lecture demonstrations on Thana was quite popular in music conferences. His talks on Thana has been recorded for posterity. His unique style of alapana and kalpana swaras that were dipped in classicism were the hallmark of his singing. His music was characterised by Shruthi shuddha and laya shuddha. He was good at playing musical instruments like Veena, Jalatarang, harmonium and Daljit an instrument that resembled Sarod. Thanks to Nalwadi, who encouraged musicians to learn many instruments.



File photo of 1941. Sri Tyagaraja Sangeetha Vidwath Sabha Aradhana Celebrations. L to R - Asthana Vidwan Ganavisharada Titte Krishna Iyengar, Hon. Secretary, Asthana Vidwan Padma Sri, Sangeetha Sastra Ratna K Vasudevachar, President, Vidwan K Nagesha Rao and Vidwan MK Sharma.

He served the palace for 28 years. His Highness Jayachamaraja Wodeyar honoured him with the title 'GaanaVisharada' in 1946. In 1965, Mysuru State Sangeetha Nataka Academy honoured him with its annual award. Karnataka government bestowed 'Rajyotsava Prashasthi' on him in 1972 during its annual celebrations. He was chosen to be the president of the 8th music conference of Bidaram Krishnappa's Prasanna SeethaRama Mandira in Mysuru and received the title 'Gana kalasindhu'. He was honoured with 'KanaKa-Purandara Prashasthi' from Government of Karnataka in 1991 and 'Sangeetha Kalarathna' from The Gayana Samaja of Bengaluru in 1972.

Krishna Iyengar was also a composer. He has composed Krithis in Kannada and Telugu languages. 'Sri Krishna' as his mudra, his compositions in different ragas like Vasantha Bhairavi, Udayaravichandrike, Rishabhapriya, Kunthalavarali are bright with raga bhava. He has showed his gratitude to his patron Sri Jayachamaraja Wodeyar in his Krithi 'Jaya Jaya Jaganmathe' in Vasanthabhairavi. He served as lecturer in music

in Mysuru Maharani's college for women. He was a member of expert committee of the Music Academy of Madras. His book 'Lakshya Lakshana Paddhathi' for Proficiency grade was published by the Education Department of Karnataka Government. 'Biography of Saint Tyagaraja', his another work gives a brief history of the Saint composer. 'Shri Tyagaraja swamigalavara charitre' in Kannada language was published as early as in 1935 from Asthana Sangeetha Vidwat sabha. 'Four Rare compositions of Veena Subbanna' is yet another book in Tamil, published by Music Academy of Madras. He was one of the speakers in the first music conference and Purandarotsava of 'Govinda Gana Sabha held at Subramanya in 1996. He spoke on the life and achievements of Bidaram Krishnappa and sang his compositions too.

Not many were aware of his other talent of being a Katha kalakshepa artiste. Titles he had received like 'Ganakatha Sudhakara', 'Keerthana Bhushana', 'Harikatha Visharada' and 'Harikatha Vidwan' confirm this. He was the founder of 'Sri

Tyagaraja Sangeetha Vidwath Sabha' which was started in 1941. Vidwan K Vasudevacharya was its first President and Vidwan V Venkatagiriappa was Vice president and Tittle Krishna lyengar, its honorary secretary. Tyagaraja and Purandaradasa Aradhana and music festival of this sabha attracted many musicians and rasikas. It celebrated its silver jubilee in 1966 with pomp and fervour.



He was a very good teacher. Never did he compromise with tradition, be it on the stage or in the class. As a passionate teacher, he has trained many students like Dr. Padma Murthy, Dr. Vedavalli, M Rukmini, MS Jayamma, NR Prashanth and many more. He always insisted them on 'not compromising' with the tradition or 'Sampradaya' and not to adulterate in the name of recreation. His disciple recalls the scene during his last years where he would be immersed in singing sitting in front of Tyagaraja's


photo with tears rolling down. He was tall and walked straight with dignity till the end. He lived a full life of 95 years and died on the 13th of March 1997.

Our Special thanks are due to Dr. Rama V Bennur for unearthing rare photos of Vid. Tittle Krishna lyengar. Our thanks are also due to Shri. BR Ravindra who helped in restoring the images through high resolution scanning.

About the author - Dr. Rama V Bennur is the daughter of Swaramurthy VN Rao and great granddaughter of Veena Sheshanna. She has written her thesis on Musical Instruments found in ancient Kannada Literature. She has been active in the Mysore Music groups and has been contributing to news papers and magazines for the last 25 years. She has presented many papers in Music Conferences.

Save the date
3 July, 2018
4:30 pm


SAMUDHAAYA FOUNDATION


MLV90

Her music lives forever

@ The Music Academy,
#168 TTK Road, Chennai 600 014

Celebrating the music of my respected Guru, the legendary
Dr. ML Vasanthakumari Amma

A tribute to the doyen by her disciples - an evening of music, dance and
humaneness, all reflecting and symbolizing the beautiful human being she was.

Hon'ble Minister for Defence, Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman
has kindly consented to be the Chief Guest


Organizing Committee
Murali. N
Kanyakumari. A
Vedanth Ramanujam
Janaki Ramakrishnan
Usha Dinesh
Sundar Ramachandran

Looking forward to your presence

Sudha Ragunathan

Event sponsor

Mutual Funds
 Aditya Birla Sun Life Mutual Fund


**ADITYA BIRLA
CAPITAL**

Madurai Mani Iyer - The Super Star

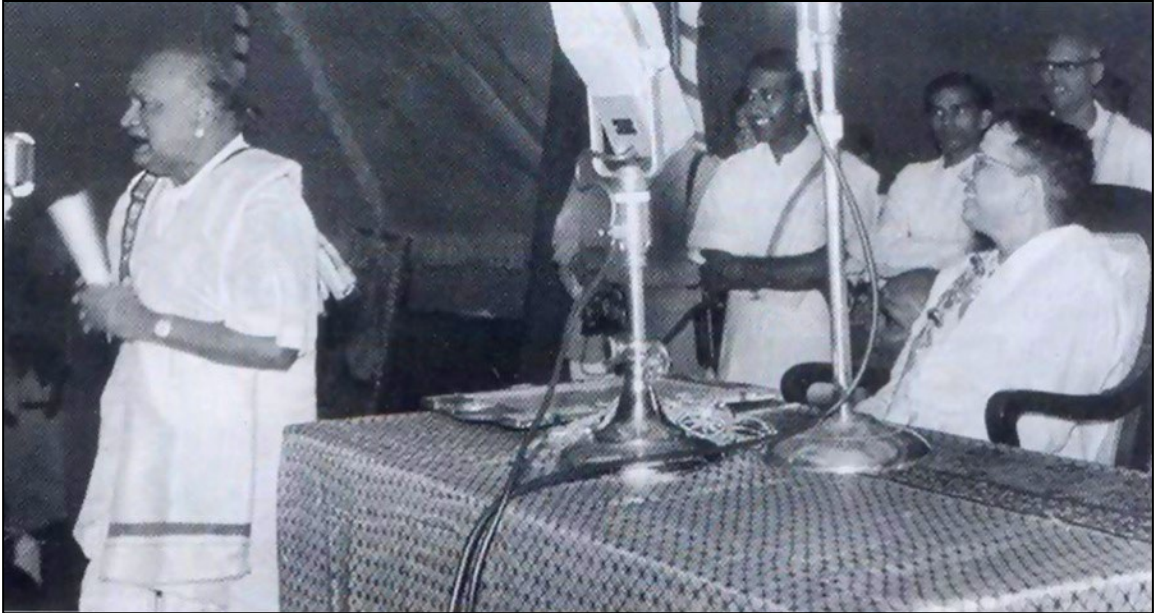
CP Chikkanna, Bangalore



20th century in Carnatic music is highly precious. A galaxy of star musicians both male and female who enriched our music belonged to this period. One such performer was Madurai Mani Iyer hailed as “Madura Mani” (melodic pearl). He along with Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer and GN Balasubramanyam were considered as Trimurthis of the golden era of Carnatic music. They held each other in high esteem, great admirers of their respective style and never missed attending each other’s concerts whenever they were free. Mani Iyer’s concerts always attracted huge audience. In my nascent stage of listening to music, two Mani Iyers always con-

fused me with regard to their identity. It was after attending Madurai Mani Iyer’s recital in 1962 at Bangalore Gayana Samaja, my confusion was cleared. His concerts appealed individually, collectively, aesthetically and emotionally. He carried listeners to ecstasy with his unique style of raga alapanas especially the unique syllable tarara, laa laa, avvee, neravals and kalpana swaras well knitted and nothing in excess. It is indeed a great responsibility and challenge for any performer to retain the audience’s interest throughout the 4 hours session with requests flooding during the mid and thukada session which he accomplished so gracefully. He planned his concerts to suit all moods, occasions and won the loyalty/attendance of passersby and ordinary rickshaw pullers who were so deeply engrossed in relishing his music that they refused to ferry customers until the concert was over!

He was born on October 25, 1912 in a family of music lovers. His original name was Subramanian, and his parents addressed him Mani which name brought him universal fame. His father Ramaswamy Iyer was the older brother of noted exponent of that era Madurai Pushpavanam and his mother Subbulakshmi was a good singer. Ramaswamy Iyer was a court clerk and a great connoisseur of music and was responsible for the stardom of his younger brother Pushpavanam. It is a great loss to Karnatak music that Pushpavanam passed away untimely at the age of 32 in the year 1916. Mani Iyer was put to studies up to high school (which he later discontinued) by his father and on account of his son’s deep inborn intuition in music, at the age of 9, he was sent to train under Rajam Bhagavathar, his neighbour. He was an expert in kalpana swaras which were entirely different from Mayamalavagowla scale based sarali and jante exercises! Mani Iyer was encouraged to



Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer felicitating Madurai Mani Iyer

practice numerous permutations and combinations of swaras in different talas and ragas like Shankarabharana, Harikamboji, Kalyani, Pantuvarali and also in several rakti ragas. These exercises helped Mani Iyer to acquire and master the swara sthanas accurately. Rajam Bhagavathar stressed the importance of Raga Bhava while singing swaras.

He was then introduced to rare ragas for the same type of swara exercises. The lad spent his entire time with his guru learning numerous songs under gurukulavasa. It was this arduous practice that helped Mani Iyer acquire mastery and confidence to handle any type of rare/apoorva ragas in detail with ease in his concerts. When he was in High School, noted composer and doyen Muthiah Bhagavathar started a music School in Madurai "Thyagaraja Vidyalaya" and appointed Rajam Bhagavathar as a teacher. Noticing young Mani Iyer's maturity in singing, Muthiah Bhagavathar took special care in shaping his voice and impressed upon him the importance of shruthi shuddha. He was also giving lectures about various aspects of music and ordered his students to attend music concerts of all the great maestros of the period who were regularly participating in various Temple festivals in and around Madurai that included nagaswaram maestro Rajarathnam Pillai, Nayana Pillai, Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer, Ramanuja Iyengar etc., which greatly helped in building Mani Iyer's career. He also learnt the lyrics and

meaning of various songs in different languages taught by Muthiah Bhagavathar. The greatest influence he had on Mani Iyer was the importance of shruthi! Sometimes, Bhagavathar used to have 3 to 4 tamburas perfectly aligned with his shruthi and effortlessly sang ragas and keertanas with subtle nuances. Even while explaining, he insisted upon thambura shruthi! Thus, Mani Iyer acquired perfect shruthi sense which became his hall mark. Bhagavathar's another forte was laya. He was an adept mridangam player and taught the intricacies of laya to young Mani with the importance of maintaining soukhaya and how to use, how much to use and when to use in concerts. Mani Iyer acquired all these skills within a short span of 18 months.

Mazhavarayanandal Subbarama Dikshithar was a land lord and considered as musicians' musician noted for his deep scholarship who did not give concerts regularly. His voice was husky and slow paced that attracted scholars and revered by one and all. He performed during important Temple festivals in and around Madurai. He declined the Royal invitation from the Maharaja of Ramanathapuram to be his asthana vidvan with all luxuries of life. He lead a simple life and excelled in rendering apoorva ragas like Malavi, Janaranjani, Manirangu, Rudrapriya etc. and kalpana swaras in these ragas without repetition. He avoided swara calculations which would affect the mood of the song and raga bhava. His leisurely swara prashtharas were



An artistes imagination of Madurai Mani Iyer reciting in front of Kanchipuram Paramacharyaar (Courtesy Shri. Keshav of The Hindu)

taught to Mani Iyer by Rajam Bhagavathar. Mani Iyer adopted sarvalaghu swara prastharas in all the talas and improved his creativity and mastery in kalpana swaras. Muthiah Bhagavathar advised his students to learn the compositions of Muthuswamy Dikshithar after gaining sufficient experience and knowledge/understanding the nuances of music. Noted performer Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer was one of the favourite musicians of Mani Iyer along with Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar. These two were responsible and played an important role in moulding Mani Iyer's career. One could notice the influence of Viswanatha Iyer's rendition of Mohana Raga in Mani Iyer's presentation especially in his favourite song Papanasam Shivam's "Kapali".

Mani Iyer's debut at a tender age of 12 is very surprising. Whenever his father visited his friends, he took his son along with him. During these visits, the friends would request Mani to sing few songs for them which the lad gladly obliged. During a visit to Avalakottai Temple near Sivagangai in 1924, Ramaswamy's friends without notice arranged Mani Iyer's concert during Kumbhabhishekam to the violin accom-

paniment by Nattam Seetarama Iyer and mridangam by Tiruvarur Rajagopala Iyer. At that time his pitch was 5-1/2. The concert lasted for 2 hours and acclaimed by the elite gathering. Thus a new star was born hailing him as the heir of Madurai Pushpavanam. This was followed by an invitation to perform before the Paramacharya of Kancheepuram in 1925 at Devakottai during the Seer's visit on the way to Rameswaram. From then onwards he became a great Devotee of the Kanchi Paramacharya and sang before him many times.

Another important incident in Mani Iyer's career was his participation in the first ever music conference under the aegis of Madras Music Academy in 1927 to mark the concluding session of Congress party's conference. While his father lectured about the 72 melakarta ragas, Mani Iyer sang and helped his father. Both of them drew the attention of scholars and from then onwards until 1967 Mani Iyer was regularly invited to perform during the annual music festival by the Music Academy, a unique record. Thereafter Mani Iyer started giving performances in various places in entire Tamil Nadu and acquired popularity. When he was 16, he



With Semmangudi Narayanaswamy Iyer (Violin), Madras Venu Naicker (Mridangam) and Papanasam Mani on Tambura during early 1940's.

lost his father and heavy responsibility of maintaining the family consisting of his mother, grandmother and two sisters fell on his shoulders. Due to family compulsion, he shifted to Madras and rented a house near Luz corner in Mylapore. Due to the threat of Madras city being targeted for bombing during the Second World War, Mani Iyer shifted to Mayavaram and stayed there for a considerable time. In 1944, Mani Iyer suffered from serious health problems forcing him to forego many concerts. He was taken to many places for treatment. Many of his fans were disappointed. He recovered gradually but lost his original pitch. He could not reach higher octaves as before and his shruthi dropped to 1-1/2 and his singing gained maturity. He spurned many offers for marriage with a firm message that he was already wedded to music which will be his consort for life. Mani Iyer won the respects and regards of all the leading accompanying giants of his time like Semmangudi Narayanaswamy Iyer, Malaikottai Govindaswamy Pillai, Marungapuri Gopalakrishna Iyer, Mysore T. Chowdaiah, Mridangists Alaganambhi Pillai, Pudukottai Dakshinamurthy Pil-

lai, Palani Subramania Pillai, Palghat Mani Iyer, CS Murugabhoopathy etc.

Another forte of Mani Iyer was his mastery of Muthuswamy Dikshithar's compositions for their rich raga interpretations, poetic and literary beauties like madhyamakala sahitya, phrases, yetis etc. He learnt many songs of Dikshithar from none other than Justice TL Venkatarama Iyer an authority on Muthuswamy Dikshithar's songs and a nephew of Muthiah Bhagavathar. Venkatarama Iyer in turn was trained by Dikshithar's grand nephew Ambhi Dikshithar. He invariably included several compositions of Dikshithar like Kamalambha Nava Varna kritis, rare gems like "*Mayethvam yaahi*" in the raga Tarangini, "*Tyagaraja Yoga Vaibhavam*" known for beautiful yethi patterns, "*Sri Ramam Ravikulabdhhi Somam*" in raga Narayanagaula and navagraha keertanas etc. He was a great admirer of Papanasham Sivan's compositions for their lyrical and structural beauty and learnt them from the maestro directly and popularised his many songs and also those of Subramania Bharathi, Neelakanta Sivan, Mayuram Viswanatha Sastry, Gopalkrishna Bharathi, Thiruvachakam, Thevarams and Javalis etc. His concerts invariably



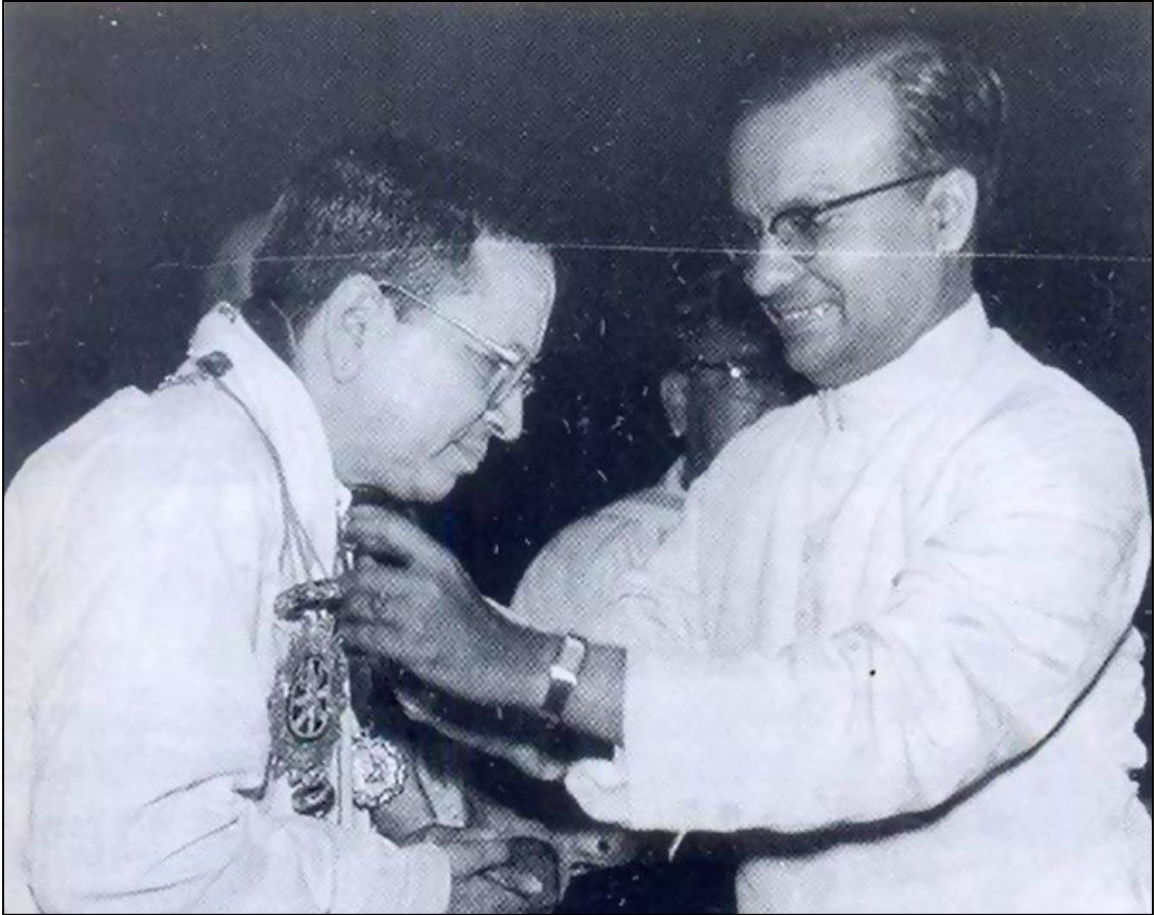
With Mysore T Chowdaiah (Violin), Palani M Subramania Pillai (Mridangam) at Ramaseva Mandali, Fort High School, Bangalore during 1957.

included Ghana ragas like Thodi, Kambhodhi, Kalyani, Shankarabarana, Shanmukapriya, Karaharapriya etc. besides a number of rare and apoorva ragas and kritis. He introduced many beautiful sangathis in these ragas. In many of his gramophone records, noted senior violinist TK Jayarama Iyer and Palghat Mani Iyer's guru Tanjore Vaidyanatha Iyer have provided accompaniment support.

In his career, he was never after money, highly cooperative and obliged organisers of Temple Utsavas and gave free concerts if they were short of money to pay his fees but ensured that his accompanists were paid suitably. He gave many concerts for charitable purposes and social causes during his life time. In 1965, he gave a memorable concert under the aegis of Seshadripuram Ramotsava Samiti in the company of Lalgudi Jayaraman on the violin and Vellore Ramabhadran on the mridangam. It was customary for the Samiti to garland the performers and thank them before mangalam. Due to the delay in receiving jasmine garlands, Mani Iyer rounded off with mangalam. When the mike operator came to disconnect the cables, I told him in Kannada to wait for the President's vote of thanks. Hearing this, Mani Iyer said in Tamil "Why vote of thanks? I have done my duty. I am

not performing here free!" I replied to him that by his soul stirring performance, all of us were carried over and hence the vote of thanks as an expression of audiences' gratitude. He smilingly nodded his head.

The very next week he gave another scintillating performance in the precincts of Sree Rama Seva Mandali, Chamarajapet, Bangalore accompanied by Mysore T Chowdaiah on the Violin and Palghat Mani Iyer on Mrudangam. He enthralled the audience in a 4 hours recital and concluded with Mayuram Viswanatha Sastry's "Jayathi Jayathi Bharatha Matha". My friend and I, after the concert went to the stage and conveyed our deep thanks for the nice time we spent admiring his concert. Chowdaiah who was waxing his bow too joined us and complimented him. Mani Iyer told Chowdaiah that he was enthused by the latter and sought his blessings. A youth of almost my age told Mani Iyer that he was deeply disappointed that not even a single song in Kannada was amongst the concert items. This was sufficient for Chowdaiah to lose his temper and cool. He took the youth to task by telling him that he is not worth the dust particle in the foot of the singer but still have the audacity/courage to confront him, without realising that music has no language and geo-



Madurai Mani Iyer receiving Sangita Kalanidhi award from JC Mathur (Director General, AIR) in the year 1959

graphical barriers!. He challenged him to sit on the dais and sing as many Kannada songs he knew and that he would accompany him or otherwise will tear him into pieces. Mani Iyer requested Chowdaiah to cool down as it is he who was at fault. Chowdaiah asked Mani Iyer to keep quiet and said unless such attitudes are snubbed at this stage, there is an imminent threat to music and musicians. Fearing Chowdaiah's wrath might target us, we moved out. These are few instances of his humility, high regards and esteem he commanded from his contemporary musicians.

Several anecdotes were attributed to Madurai Mani Iyer. After the death of Madurai Pushpavanam in 1916, Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer was a celebrity. Many of his concerts were held in Rockfort Temple's Nootrukul Mandapam (100 pillars mandapam) at Tiruchirapalli. In one concert, many fans of Viswanatha Iyer assembled in large numbers which always enthused him and a source of inspiration to give his best. Mani Iyer

too attended that concert. Some fans were precisely predicting the itineraries one after another that drew the curiosity of Mani Iyer. He inquired with them and learnt about this secret. He simply told them that he is a nephew of Madurai Pushpavanam besides an admirer of Muthiah Bhagavathar and not as musician when asked about his identity. These fans attended Mani Iyer's concert in the same venue some time later and were surprised after identifying him and their interactions during Viswanatha Iyer's concert, deeply impressed by his style, perfect shruthi alignment, touching the very nerve centre of each raga's jeeva swaras in his essays and they too became his fans. Thus Mani Iyer scaled the ladder of success and caught the attention of listeners which he maintained throughout his life time.

While he was living in Mayavaram, he accepted a concert in a nearby Temple festival. The organisers conveyed Chowdaiah's cancellation to accompany him and were deeply worried as there



File photo of Madurai Mani Iyer performing with Mysore T Chowdaiah at Sri Ramaseva Mandali Trust, Chamara-jpet, Bangalore. TS Vembu Iyer is on Tambura.

was short of time to engage a substitute violinist. Mani Iyer asked the organisers to bring the player in the neighbouring place who was regularly accompanying Harikatha. The violinist was nervous and politely conveyed his regrets at the suggestion of accompanying Mani Iyer. He was summoned by Mani Iyer and engaged in friendly conversation about what all he knows and requested him to simply play as he does in musical discourse. Generous amount of bhale, besh encouragement during the concert, warded off his fears. By midsession, the violinist was full of self confidence and rose to the expectations of Mani Iyer and the concert was a success. This is how Mani Iyer's sympathy/encouragement helped ordinary players.

Mani Iyer trained several students among whom mention could be made of his prime and principal disciple TS Vembu Iyer who served his master with deep care, dedication and devotion and later married Mani Iyer's sister. Noted musician TV Shankarnarayan is his son and regarded as the heir of Madurai Mani Iyer. Thiruvengadu A Jayaraman, S Rajam (Brother of Veena S Balachander) gained name and fame, besides GN Desikan and Sivanjmani who exactly replicated the nuances and style/syllable of Mani Iyer in

their recitals. In his illustrious career of 45 years, Mani Iyer was decorated with many honours and laurels. In 1944, the citizens of Tanjore in a grand function decorated him with the coveted title 'Ganakaladhara'. He presided over the Music Academy's annual conference in 1959 and was decorated with "Sangita Kalanidhi" from the hands of HH Jayendra Saraswathi, the seer of Kanchipuram in a sadas attended by all the luminaries of Karnatak music. The next year, he received Central Sangeet Natak Akademi's award, followed by 'Isai Perarignar' for his contribution to Tamil art and culture.

Apart from music, Mani Iyer's other interests were English books, English films (he was a fan of Charlie Chaplin, the silent comedian) and relished cricket commentaries over the radio. He was highly interested in National events like the Independence movement and was always attired with khadhi white garments, rendered many patriotic songs in public functions and concerts. He composed a Pallavi in praise of Mahatma Gandhi and rendered it in a concert! In 1964 he completely lost eye sight on account of his fragile weak health which was deteriorating over period of time and he was virtually carried to the stage by his disciples. Still he managed to perform despite his physical weakness and poured out his heart/feelings in his rendition of songs like "Eppo Varuvaro" in the raga Jonpuri, "Marivere gathi evaraiah Rama" in Shanmukhapriya and in ragas like Shubha Pantuvarali, Sindhu Bhairavi, Sahana, Saveri, Ranjani, Mukhari, Kanada, Suruti and in Raga maalavi Navagraha Stotras etc. which touched/melted the hearts of listeners and brought tears in their eyes. It was almost like an expression of pathos. He passed away on 8th June 1968. In a live broadcast from Bangalore AIR, expressing his deep sorrow at his death, chief producer of music, Veena maestro Doraiswamy Iyengar paid rich tributes to Mani Iyer and compared him to Rasa Rishi Narada who attained human form to entertain and enlighten us. The entire music world mourned this Gandharva purusha and although half a century has passed since his death, Mani Iyer lives in the memory of listeners eternally.

RR Keshavamurthy - The Lion of Karnataka

CP Chikkanna, Bangalore



The contribution of tiny hamlet Rudrapatna in Hassan district of Karnataka to Carnatic music is highly invaluable. A galaxy of musicians hailing from this place has elevated the status and pride of Karnataka in South Indian Music. One such name is Rudrapatna Ramaswamy Keshava Murthy who was a contemporary of Mysore T Chowdiah and he too played on the 7 strings violin. He was a leading violinist of his period, an outstanding teacher, an eminent author with large number of books related to music to his credit like Raga Lakshanas and Ragakosha. He was a great Sanskrit scholar, besides a person with generous attitude to teach music to inter-

ested students irrespective of the fact whether the student can pay his fee or not. He was so generous that he presented a thambura to one of his students for practice whose father could not buy her on account of poverty. He was a direct disciple of Bidaram Krishnappa.

His father Rudrapatna Ramaswamaiah was a Sankethi Brahmin, Sanskrit scholar and a musician. Music and Sanskrit were always in the genes of this immigrant community from Kerala several centuries ago and their dialect is not understandable to commoners. Along with primary education, children in the family were taught music, Vedas and Upanishads under the watchful eyes of elders. The teachings were so intense that whenever any visitor visited Ramaswamaiah, the children should precisely identify the swaras in the conversation of the visitor interacting with my father recounted Keshava Murthy for my profile on him for Kannada Prabha in 1976 when he presided over the annual music conference of Bangalore Gayana Samaja.

His father was a great friend of Bidaram Krishnappa. On his suggestion, the family migrated to Mysore and Keshava Murthy started learning first on 4 strings violin. The teaching method of Krishnappa was entirely different. He categorised his students according to their level of grasping and intelligence. He was an ocean of patience. He never rebuked weak learners and would give them more attention, different methods of teaching and brought them on par with bright pupils. Krishnappa always taught students individually and not in groups. Every student had to practice precisely a minimum of 10 Varnas in different ragas in 5 speeds. Until the learner acquired this perfection, no further lessons were taught by my guru said Keshava



Vidwan RR Keshavamurthy performing at Sri Ramaseva Mandali Trust, Chamarajpet, Bangalore

Murthy. Krishnappa was highly disciplined. At any given time he fed and sheltered 4 to 5 students in his house under gurukulavasa. It was mandatory for the senior students to watch the progress of their junior colleagues and correct them, whenever they committed any mistake. He sent his students to yoga classes under yogacharya Krishnamacharya who lived for 107 years. It was compulsory for senior students to accompany Krishnappa whenever he went on concert tours. The students were subjected to critical analysis of his concert, both the plus and minus points precisely without any fear! This was the method Krishnappa adapted to measure the student's progress and understanding.

Krishnappa took great interest in imparting concert experience to his students. It was compulsory for students to Participate in bhajan sessions. During important festivals, the students would be given 30 minutes to present a mini concert in his presence. This was gradually increased in due course. Later, Krishnappa

would recommend his students to organisers. I am also one such beneficiary recounted Keshava Murthy. After Chowdaiah succeeded on his 7 strings violin, I also developed a keen desire and my guru gave his consent for me to practice on 7 strings violin he averred.

In his long career, Keshava Murthy was a mountain of confidence and self esteem. He never tolerated ill treatment of accompanists by the main performers. Once, he was accompanying a popular musician about 10 to 15 years older to him in a festival concert. Even one hour after the commencement of the concert, the main performer never allowed him to play his version of raga elaboration and also starred at him. When the song was completed, the violinist started packing his instrument into the box to the utter embarrassment of the performer. Keshava Murthy openly told the organisers to first ensure whether the main performer would give an opportunity to his accompanists in concerts before engaging them or otherwise spare them



Vidwan RR Keshavamurthy receiving the Sri SV Narayanaswamy Rao National Award on May 17, 2003. He is being presented the award by Minister of Culture Smt. Rani Satish and Shri. Kasturirangan, Chairman, ISRO. Incidentally Vid. RR Keshavamurthy was the first musician to receive this award from Karnataka since it was initiated in 2001. The award is instituted by Sree Ramaseva Mandali Trust, Chamarajpet, in memory of founder Shri. SV Narayanaswamy Rao.

from such ill treatment! The performer profusely apologised for his gaffe and the concert continued.

In another concert, the main performer took up a small sketch of Narayanagaula and straight away began the song “Sri Ramam Raghukulabdi Somam”. Keshava Murthy requested the performer to give him just 2 minutes to play his version of the raga and when he was obliged, he presented the entire possible contours of Narayanagaula that destroyed the manodharma of the singer who became nervous after the audience started repeatedly jeering him for not allowing the violinist to play to his potential. This spread from mouth to mouth and the visiting musicians from neighbouring states thereafter never took us for granted and gave respect averred Keshava Murthy.

Answering my query whether he is satisfied with the present standard of Carnatic music, he

maintained that technological advantage has brought about revolutionary changes in our daily life. This applies to music also. In the olden days, music listening was the privilege of affluent sections of society. They celebrated important functions in their families by arranging concerts of popular artists before invitees. Common people could relish music during Temple festivals only where the entry was free. The invention of Radio, gramophone discs and tape recorders carried music to the living room of citizens. It is highly satisfying that the present generation of listeners have musically attained a stage and can easily identify which is good, how to relish good music and some listeners come to me seeking clarification of their doubts with regard to their experience after listening to a particular concert.

When I sought his opinion about film music, he argued that he never subscribed to the view that film music has spoiled Carnatic music. Such



RR Keshavamurthy supporting Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavathar. Young Bangalore TAS Mani seen accompanying on the Mridangam

a statement is an aberration of narrow minded persons. Creativity is the main ingredient of film music. A lot of preparations, experimenting with permutations and combinations of different swaras, mixing of north and south Indian music etc are possible in composing film music which is practically impossible in Carnatic music. One should never forget that the basic 7 notes are the very elements, essence and foundation of film music. Just as we prefer varieties of food in our daily life, so it is listening to music. Each film song is different and there is always freshness in film music. It is not static but like a river in flow. Whichever the branch you take, some of the 7 swaras are present in that type of music. We, musicians cannot dictate/compel listeners to attend only classical music and instead find out what is it that attract listeners to film music, light music, fusion, jazz etc, take and appreciate the plus points in them.

Answering my query with regard to make music more popular, he suggested parents to take children to music concerts they attend and expose them to classical music from young age. Like there are classes in primary level in painting, drawing, art works, music should also be introduced in primary level. Along with School prayers, few Devotional and Patriotic songs should be taught to children besides hosting music competition and giving prizes in school

anniversary celebrations. Those parents who can afford may appoint music teachers to train their children in classical music. This will sharpen the memory of children in their school studies which we have observed/experienced.

Apart from being a busy performer both as an accompanist and soloist, Keshava Murthy has excelled in teaching also. Noted violinists Anoor Ramakrishna, Bhuvaneshwaraiah, Shambulingappa (settled in UK), T Rukmini, BV Sitha, BS Chandrakala and internationally acclaimed Dr. Jyotsna Srikanth etc. are all his students. After my interview, he presented me some of his books containing the lakshanas of all the 72 melakarta ragas and their numerous derivatives. Some melakarta ragas' introduction is prefaced by a shloka in Sanskrit and I was puzzled how he sourced these hymns and their introduction to the readers of his book. It is the ready reckoner with lakshanas of 350 ragas for students and connoisseurs of music. Apart from these, he has composed and brought out 14 treatise on music, translated Saranga Deva's Sangitha Ratnakara into Kannada, the origin and history of violin in English, "An encyclopaedia of international music terms" were all authored by him. Apart from Kannada, he was highly proficient in Telugu, Tamil, and could easily converse in Sanskrit and brilliant English, all self learnt. He, Mysore T Chowdaiah and Harmonium

Arunachalappa were great friends and indulged in playing cards. At first sight, he looked grim faced and visitors were highly scared to talk to him. Once we started conversing with him, it gave a different experience and listening to his comments was as good as relishing a music concert.

He was the leading guide and spirit to several music organisations that included Karnataka Gana Kala Parishat, the one and the only forum of musicians. He was the chairperson of its board of experts to chalk out the deliberations of its annual music conference. He presided

over the music conference of Bangalore Gayana Samaja and recipient of hundreds of honours and awards by various institutions and Matadhipathis. He earned lot of money, ensured that all his children were well settled in life and spent generously for bringing out his various publications listed above as no publisher came forward to publish an alien subject like music. Keshava Murthy lived for over 90 years and passed away peacefully about a decade ago.

Lalitha Kala Suma - 2018

(3rd Award Function)

Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira is honouring artistes with the title “Lalitha Kala Suma” who have made valuable contribution to the society in propagating Karnatak music. The honours are in memory of chief founders Karnataka Kalashree GV Ranganayakamma, Vid.GV Neela and Chief Patron Dr.GV Vijayalakshmi. The 50 artistes to be honoured are as below;

Vocal

1. Dr. Manjula Shriram
2. Prof. Mysore Nagamani Srinath
3. Dr. Srikantham Nagendra Shastri
4. Dr. Hamsini Nagendra
5. Dr. Nagavalli Nagaraj
6. Chitra Bilvam
7. R Chandrika
8. BR Geetha
9. HN Meera
10. Anita Mahabaleshwar
11. Uma Ramamurthy
12. Rama K Murthy
13. Saraswathi Shankar
14. Sindhu Gopinath (USA)

Veena

1. Revathi Sadashivam
2. RK Shankar
3. Dr. Geetha R Bhat
4. Pushpa Kashinath

Violin

1. AD Zachariah
2. Charulatha Ramanujam

3. V Nalina Mohan
4. TS Krishna Murthy
5. Hosahalli K Venkataram
6. Mattur R Srinidhi
7. S Yashaswi
8. S Ananthasathyam (Violinist & Sculptor artist)

Flute

1. BK Anantharam
2. G Rajanarayan
3. HS Venugopal

Mridanga

1. C Cheluvvaraju
2. Dr. BK Chandramouli
3. Prof.V Krishna
4. HS Sudhindra
5. Bangalore V Praveen
6. TS Chandrashekar
7. KU Jayachandra Rao
8. Ramachandra Rao Nugi makki
9. MR Sainath
10. M Gururaj

11. MR Rangaswamy (Mridangist and Percussion instrument manufacturer)

Morsing

1. B Rajashekar
2. SV Balakrishna

Ghata

1. V Ranganatha Chakravarthi
2. S Srishyla

Kanjari

1. Bangalore N Amrit

Nagaswara

1. V Murali
2. SP Rajagopal

Dolu

1. Venkataswamy

Tambura

1. GA Sripada Rao
2. VN Gopinatha Rao

Layavadyotsava at Ganabharathi

S Anand, Editor



Layavadyotsava inauguration - (From left to right) Shri. GV Krishnaprasad, Hon. Secretary, Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira, Vidwan AV Anand, Vidwan KS Kalidas, Shri. HR Sundareshan, Vice President Ganabharathi, Mysore

22nd April goes down in the history as an unique and memorable day at Ganabharathi, Veene Sheshanna Bhavana, Mysore. Unique event showcased prominent laya vidwans of the state who had assembled to pay tribute to legend Maha Vidwan Palani M Subramania Pillai. The day long event included various aspects of Laya Universe where in young and senior laya vidwans shared their thoughts on a given topic. Never in the history of Mysore a full day programme was completely dedicated to Laya. As stated by Dr. Rama V Bennur, it was a proud moment for the Percussion artistes.

Dr. Rama V Bennur in her opening address said it is appropriate that this event was being held in memory of Palani M Subramania Pillai who is

one of the greatest percussionist that our music has ever produced and it is a great opportunity for all of us to pay our tribute. Laya instruments like Mridangam, Taval, Morsing, Kanjira, Konnakol, Ghatam were all under display under various topics.

The event was inaugurated by Vid. KS Kalidas, a direct disciple of the legend Palani, Vid. Bangalore AV Anand senior most percussionist of Karnataka and an avid admirer, a follower of Palani, Vid. GV Krishnaprasad, Hon. Secretary Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira and a percussionist himself and Shri. HR Sundareshan, Vice President of Ganabharathi.

Vid. KS Kalidas narrated how Indian culture was resurrected and integrated after the onslaught from the muslims and the contribution of Vijayanagar and Marata empire towards the same.

While Narayanaswamy Appa was the forefather of Mridangam, legends like laya brahma Sri Manpondia Pillai, Pudukkottai Dakshinamurthy Pillai, Muthiah Pillai created their own Pudukkottai bhani and propagated it. Palani Subramania Pillai son of Palani Muthiah Pillai was to be the torchbearer of the bhani in the days to come and became a legend said Vid. KS Kalidas. He further said that Palani provided a template that the current time percussionist follow even today.

L Subramanian and Akshay Anand, disciples of Vid. KS Kalidas performed a scintillating thani avarthanam (Aadi Talam, Sama eduppu) that was reminiscent of the great Pudukkoti bhani as propagated by Palani. It was very well received by the audience.

Vid. Bangalore AV Anand gave an excellent thani avarthanam that included improvisation of the Palani trade mark especially the tiara nadai that reminded people of the legend Palani.

Other interesting topics covered approach variation in the mridangam between Karnatak Music and Bharatanatyam lead by Vidwan Bhavani Shankar, 'Akanda Kanda' exploiting Kanda Nadai by Sai Shiv Lakshmi Keshav (Mridangam), Anoor Sunaad (Kanjira) and Somashekar Jois (Konakol), Taval by Puttaraju, Mridangam makers perspective by P Krishnakumar of Bangalore, Laya Vadhyas in different music by Shivashankara Swamy, Manamadurai Ghatam making and playing style by Sukanya Ramgopal, Morsing style by VS Ramesh.

Rest of the programmes in the evening was well attended and appreciated by one and all. Discussion on 'Future Challenges of percussion artistes' brought out deep feelings and personal experiences of the artistes. The event concluded with a grand Laya Vinyasam programme that included percussionists GS Ramanujam, HL Shivashankaraswamy, VS Ramesh, P Nataraj, MS Jayaram, MR Manjunath, R Dasappa, S Manjunath, Raghunandan Rao, P Shyam and A Radesh.



Announcement

(21st July, Saturday, 2018, at 5.30 p.m. @ Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira)

Sri Rama Kala Vedike, Bangalore, presents Classical Musical Evening in memory of Padma Vibhushan Smt. Dr. Gangubai Hangal on Saturday, 21st July 2018 at 5.30 p.m. at Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira, Bangalore - 70.

There will be a Hindustani Vocal Recital by Dr. Sulabha Datt Neralgi of Dharwad, accompanied on Harmonium by Umakanth Puranik and on Tabla by MS Kiran and another programme of Jugalbandi of Sitar (Hindustani) and Flute (Karnatak) by Ustad Chhoti Rahimat Khan, Goa, on Sitar and BK Anantharam on Flute. Kiran Godkindi will accompany on Tabla and BR Srinivas on Mridangam.

Shri. Madurai Mani Iyer

Late BVK Sastry of Bangalore



In his famous composition "Kaddanuvuriki" in Todi, Tyagaraja describes the ideal singer as one who discarding sleep, beautifully playing a Tambura with a pure mind and spotless tone (Suswara), without departing from tradition, sings of the Lord. . . .Possibly such singers were numerous in his day. But nearly a hundred years later time has certainly changed this aspect of Karnatak music. That devotee, who blending his deep voice with *Sruti*, singing with fervour and ecstasy has become rather the exception than the rule. The *Suswara* which is commonly met with in Hindustani concerts has become as rare in the South as the sight of twin tamburas flanking the vocalist.

The function of the tambura itself seems now to be more or less decorative and its subdued

tone and the gap separating it from the vocalist are significant. Considering the course of some concerts it seems more often than not an impediment - an indispensable nuisance - to the vocalist. In such circumstances, a singer with *Suswara* is as welcome as a cool shower to a parched field and this endowment by itself was enough to push Madurai Main Iyer into the limelight when he appeared on the scene in the early twenties.

Effortless Rise

Mani Iyer, it is true had an impressive background at home, in the tradition and in the eminence of his teachers. Still that *Sunaada*, that beauty of his tone, blending with the *Sruti* and combined with his sincerity of purpose, propelled him effortlessly into prominence. His voice certainly displays the good warmth and polish needed to lend colour and definition to the vocalist's ideas. His style of singing is sedate, effortless and redolent of the older Karnatak music, particularly that of the deeper South. His absorbed way of singing suggests a vocalist intent on not merely entertaining his listeners but also on his personal elevations.

The deterioration of voice standards in Karnatak music is a topic engaging him always and possibly one that even haunts him. Whatever the course of the conversation, it somehow turns to this theme. "Can there be good music without a good voice?" he asks. Mani Iyer deplores the current tendency to ignore this aspect and bring forward one excuse after another for the failure. On one such occasion I suggested that popular apathy might be responsible to some extent for the deterioration of voice culture in the South. Warming up immediately he rejoined "Who is responsible for that?". The voice after all is the vehicle of our musical expression. It is our duty to keep that vehicle well



File photo of late 50's - Madurai Mani Iyer at Ramaseva Mandali, Fort High School, Chamaraajpet, Bangalore. With him are seen Mysore T Chowdaiah and Palani M Subramania Pillai

cleaned and oiled in smooth order. If you are careless of this and take the public for a ride in a rusty and decrepit vehicle and then find they do not enjoy it much less thrilled by the experience, who is to be blamed for that? After all the voice is a natural gift and it is upto the musician to carefully cultivate and mould it to his needs as a pleasant and effective medium of expression. How can there be a good musician without good tone? I am unhappy to note that the present trend is towards carelessness of voice with a tendency to blame the bored listener for his apathy. "Let us forget the audience for a moment. Can there be a greater happiness to a musician than to blend his voice beautifully with *Sruti* translating his musical impulses and ideals through a steady and flexible tone and transporting himself in his flow of melody? Anyway such moments are my happiest in music. In light of this I say with all confidence; Enjoy

your music first. It will automatically infect the listener". "Then what do you consider the factor that has contributed most to the current deterioration of voice standards in this South" I asked: "Certainly, the faulty foundations" said Mani Iyer. "The preliminary lessons in music are not there merely to initiate. They lay the firm foundations of both musical knowledge and musical culture. Practiced according to the right and age old methods, they give strength and steadiness to the voice and transform it into a perfectly flexible and enjoyable medium of expression which lends clear definition to the ideas. But unfortunately the present practice seems to skip the early steps as a mere routine ignoring their vital aspects.

Remedies Proposed

"Naturally, the uncultured voices produced are unequal to the tasks of classical music and leave



During the concert of MMI at Nandrudayan Temple, Trichy. from L to R - Thiruvallangadu Sundaresa Iyer, Alathur Sivasubramania Iyer, Madurai Mani Iyer, Alathur Srinivasa Iyer, Palani Subramania Pillai

the interpretation anaemic and unappealing" said Mani Iyer. He expressed the same ideas in greater detail and proposed his remedies gently but firmly in his presidential address to the thirty third annual conference of the Madras Music Academy. Even in conversation he emphasises these points, though gently, for by nature he is shy and reticent in opening out his thoughts. He speaks as though his words as far as possible express his ideas but should never hurt. Modesty is writ large on his face. Despite marks of illness, his khadi-clad youthful figure with coal-black hair and pallid complexion belies the fact that Mani Iyer crossed the threshold of his fifties last month. He is not at all the grave, moody vocalist one might have imagined. On more intimate contact, he proves to be very cordial with a touch of subtle humour though careful with words. The keynote of his conversation will generally be: "Cultivate a good voice and adhere strictly to the gradation that has sustained the vitality and splendour of our music" and not without reason, for Mani Iyer is steeped in tradition. He is a product of the Dikshitar school and could be said to have been almost born in the middle of music. Besides his musically inclined father Ramaswamy Iyer Mani Iyer's uncle was the famous Pushpavanam Iyer.

Consequently with the music ringing in his ears and around him, he had initiation at home and after a period of training from Rajam Bhagavathar he came under the wings of the late Harikesanallur Muthiah Bhagavathar the eminent teacher and composer, a towering personality among musicians no less in the excellence of his scholarship than in the breadth of his vision. The influence of Muthiah Bhagavathar is very pronounced in his music and in his views on the subject. Though inclined towards tradition, his outlook, his music has nevertheless a touch of catholicity and appreciative of contemporary needs as well.

Modern Facilities

At a time when the question of amplifiers had generated much heat and controversy (between the purists and moderates of the South), Mani Iyer despite his firm belief that nothing could equal a good voice – a gift of nature – remarked to me "I see nothing wrong in adapting any facility whether ancient or modern to further the interest in classical music. The microphone diffuses music to a larger area and to a larger assembly. It also conveys the fine in addition to the subtle nuances which in earlier days were enjoyed and appreciated only by the few in the vicinity of the musician". "What if the micro-

phone also amplifies the faults?" I asked, "All the more reason for the musician to be careful about his voice and art" countered Mani Iyer.

He made his debut when he was twelve at a place called Alavokkottai near Madurai but got his first real break three years later at the music festival accompanying the All India Congress Session 1927. After three and a half decades since then, the debonair figure of Madurai Mani Iyer has been familiar to all concert-goers of the south. His music is considered to reflect the positive side of what is accepted as the classical tradition in Karnatak music today. Apart from his winning *Sruti-Suddha* voice and the *Suswara* of his singing, it exudes homely touch. In addition a strong undertone of feeling is here behind the expression. It is also notable that he has popularised a great number of indigenous compositions of Tamil Nadu both classical and devotional.

Conventional Plan

The programme of his concerts follows the conventional plan. It has some notable features. A judicious selection will be there of the songs of the trinity and of the other composers of the South; also a good number of Tamil Compositions. But the list will incline towards Thyagaraja and Dikshithar. "Without their compositions where is the living tradition of Karnatak Music?" asks Mani Iyer. Among Dikshithar's compositions, will be found each of the Navagraha and Navavarna series, the former propitiating the planet of the day and the latter connected with the esoteric Sri Chakra cult. Other significant pieces will be one of his guru Muthiah Bhagavathar. In recent times it is *Jalandhara* in Valaji a raga devised by the Bhagavathar and closely resembling Kalavathi of Hindustani music.

Among the lighter pieces used for rounding off-mostly by Tamil composers - will be found also an English Note a piece simulating a band tune. It is the faith and elegance of the interpretation that invests his songs with a direct musical appeal. A few years back it rested on '*Sarasasamadhana*' of Thyagaraja in a serpentine raga called Kapinarayani. The '*Nadathanumanisam*' by the same composer in Chittaranjani

claimed this kind of attention as did also '*Thayae Yasodha*' of Oothukkadu Venkatasubbier in Todi. In recent days it seems to have become the turn of '*Chakkanirajamargamu*' of Thyagaraja in Karaharapriya with a rich model scheme and stately movements ideally fitting the lofty import of the song.

Creative Facility

Whether it be in free flowing alapana or Impromptu Improvisation of passages in songs the abiding feature of his music is their manodharma or creative facility. The style he has developed ideally suits the modulations of his voice and he sings with ease and abandon. Often when presenting the variations, he seems to savour their beauty and sustaining a theme, draws it out with subtle and strong nuances in obedience of the mood. These nuances and phrases are imbued with the *rakthi* and rich essence of the raga lending a whole character to the scheme. On the other hand despite so many engaging features, his singing also displays occasional faults. Often his Impulsive articulations seem very inartistic. This is equally true of his habit of spinning out the terminal note in passages of the Swaraprasthara. Yet lapses like these are forgotten in the over-all graceful and unpretentious modal scheme.

He is popular especially for a distinct style of swaraprasthara (Sargam). Built around the nucleus of a single swara or a bunch of the gradually expanding cycles, these swaras flow out in impressive clusters, effortlessly and naturally, instead of tailored patterns. They seem to come sometimes at a slow pace and at a gallop at other times and appear to be ideally suited to the medium tempo.

Despite the rhythmic variations, it is rather the modal contours that are followed and the figures are alive with natural colour and informed with a mature aesthetic sense. Naturally whether it is a common raga like Shankarabharanam or such infrequent ones such as Kapinarayani, Purnachandrika, Saraswathimanohari or Umabharanam, their intricate and crooked contours maintain their natural beauty and unsophisticated charm in his Sargams. How did he

develop his individual and appealing style of Swaraprastara? "I do not claim credit for having devised any distinct style in raga alapana or swaraprasthara. I pay equal attention to them all" said Mani Iyer when asked which he considered his forte. "There is nothing unusual or exclusive in them. Other musicians have presented such swara designs in plenty with livelier and more diversified arrangements coming in earlier. Principal among them may be mentioned in the late Mazhavarayal Subbarama Bhagavathar who was a disciple of Ettayyapuram Ramachandra Bhagavathar. The later was a teacher of my guru. Thus the source of this interesting style of swara could be traced to the Dikshithar school. But I must admit, I too have an advantage in a way. I have lived in times of technical advances that have carried my music to enhanced numbers often in distant parts causing these flattering impressions".

Failing Health

Mani Iyer has been in indifferent health for some time. Not infrequently his faculties fail to respond to his ideas and impulses. As we have seen in some of his recent recitals, the result is a struggle against unfriendly elements. Nevertheless, when either transported by the mood or challenged by the accompanist, he will sud-

denly surge back to his old form. And despite his failing energy and consequently reduced range, his voice still radiates its familiar warmth. When I met him not long ago he deplored as always the slowly deteriorating vocal standards of the South and said sadly "Alas if I were endowed with good health, I would like to start a movement for the improvement of the voice culture of the South or at least contribute my best efforts to that end. Anyway situated as I am, I can only appeal to younger musicians. Look to your voice. Keep it fresh and warm, a shining and supple medium of expression. Practice steadfastly in the time tested methods, attached firmly to *Sruti* and *Laya* which are the foundations of music. Remember, there is no shortcut to this art. Proficiency can only be achieved through hard work and dedication".

This article originally appeared in Illustrated Weekly of India dated Nov 22, 1962 with the article title "Madurai Mani Iyer". The article was further reprinted by the Madurai Mani Iyer Fans Association of Chennai during MMI centenary celebration. We owe our gratitude to Shri. VK Viswanathan of USA and Shri. S Venugopalan (son of Chitti Sundararajan a close associate and one who composed many Tamil songs for MMI) of Madurai Mani Iyer Fans Association of Chennai for providing consent to publish the same in LKT.



Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira congratulates the following musicians of Karnataka for being selected for the prestigious 'Central Sangeet Natak Akademi' award. Team SRLKM wishes them many more recognitions to come by in future.

1. Vid. MS Sheela (Vocal)
2. Vid. Suma Sudhindra (Veena)
3. Vid. Lalith J Rao (Hindustani Vocal)

Indian Music Experience (IME)

S Anand, Editor

Designed by the Gallagher and Associates, an internationally acclaimed Museum Planning and Design Firm in the USA, this interactive Indian Music Experience (from now on IME), promises to introduce Indian musical heritage and history that is part of our unique culture. **'Interactive, Experience and Inspiration** are the three aspects that drive this unique museum in the country says Manasi Prasad (Project Director)'. Manasi Prasad further says, 'IME is a 'Please touch museum' where one can experience sound, melody and music by touching and playing around with the exhibits and artefacts. As an example, there is an interactive artefact where one can learn all about composers (Indian Classical) from the first known composer to current by playing around and interacting'.

The goal of the founders is to increase the understanding and appreciation of Indian music with the audience be it classical, film, contemporary or folk music. 'An youngster who has no idea of Indian music should be able to appreci-

IME is an experiential museum and one can actually play the instruments and do more towards one's learning. The museum gets its concept from the famed museum, Experience Music Project in Seattle, USA that inspired the founder. It has musical installations, a cafe, classes and its most recent addition, a sound garden that is now thrown open for visitors.

ate, be motivated and walk away fully inspired after taking a tour of the museum in 1.5 hours' says Dr. Suma Sudhindra, Director-Outreach.

Situated by the side of MLR Convention Centre, Brigade Millennium, Phase 7, JP Nagar, Bengaluru, the museum showcases its extraordinary exterior architecture. While the exterior is eye catching, the interior is designed and architected specifically for a museum of this nature and

Indian Music Experience, JP Nagar, Bangalore





Golden Age concept at IME

is probably one of the kind in the country. Prime Ministers office through Ministry of Culture has shown special interest in this project considering this will be the only interactive museum in the country.

It all started with Mr. Jaishankar, Chairman and Managing Director of the Brigade Group and his team, figuring out their duty towards Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and they wanted to come up with something that is unique and purposeful. They earmarked the civic amenity towards the IME and thus formed the Indian Music Experience Trust. The trust is managed by two admirable commanders Vid. Manasi Prasad (Project Director) and Dr. Suma Sudhindra (Director - Outreach).

The project was conceived about 9 years back and it is 4 years since the content and artefacts are being added. While the architecture of the museum was undertaken by 'Architecture Paradigm Pvt Ltd.' lead by Architects Manoj Ladhak, Sandeep J & Vimal Jain, Several eminent personalities in the field of performing art have been opted for building content. Dr. Suma Sudhindra and Manasi Prasad well known performing artists team up with several eminent musicians, musicologists, researchers like Shri. Pappu Venugopal Rao, Shri. Jayanth Kastuvar, Shri. Deepak Raja, Shri. Rajiv M Vijayakar, Shri. Vikram Sampath etc. to disseminate and crystallise the content.

Organisation

IME is organised in to 3 parts each one serving a specific interest. Exhibit Gallery is the heart of

the museum and housed in a three story building. Sound Garden is in the open air that aims to teach sound and music to school children. Learning centre is the value addition that IME wants to offer by teaching music to the young generation having kindled interest in the minds of the youngsters.

Exhibit Gallery

This is where the complete interaction oriented artefacts are housed that creates an unique experience to the youngsters, tourists and families. The eight thematic galleries give glimpses of Indian musical legacy. 'It is so beautifully architected that the movement from one gallery to another is very seamless and one will not notice it' says Dr. Suma Sudhindra.

There is an excellent animated depiction of Mirabai bhajan '*hari Tuma haro*' that the legend MS Subbulakshmi recorded and sent over to Mahatma Gandhi for what was to be his last birthday. Another star attraction is the 180 degree Theatre that has an animation narrating how Indian Music has evolved over time. The author was wonderstruck with the 'Wall of Fame' that houses the Indian musical legacy and a treasure with RD Burman rubbing shoulders with Gangubai Hangal etc. History of recording has been beautifully conceived to give an idea about recording in India. There is an instrument area that showcases the Tambura used by MS Subbulakshmi, Ustad Bismillah Khan's Shehnai, Pandit Ravi Shankar's Sitar, N Ravikiran's Chitraveena and Ghatam used by Bangalore KS



Children's playing with Sound Stone artefact (Xylophone fused in a sculpture with wood, stone, brass, and aluminium plates, to a gong shaped like a flower with metal plates)

Manjunath etc. Net-net, the visitors will be able to connect to the Indian music after they take the tour. Another attraction is the Photo Opportunity Booth where family can arrange themselves in a studio environment with music related background and take a picture.

Sound Garden

This is an outdoor exhibit. Here, the musical instruments are designed and created in the form of wonderful sculptures. One can play around with these sculptured Musical Instruments and experience sound/melody. The experience here will fill ones mind with sound and melody creating a great feeling. The founders were clear that this has to be housed in the backdrop of the mother nature. A beautiful lawn and host of trees welcome you to this section.

The theme here is to convert the vibrations in to melody or *Naada*. There are a dozen of such sculpted musical instruments. Humming Stone has cavities creating vibrations in several octaves when one hums into the cut-out caves. There is a Sound Stones in black granite that vibrates with a damp rub with your hands. There are bells meticulously chosen to produce all notes of an octave etc. The engineering marvel is the spring drum that has a 9 meter hanging slab that serves as a model for understanding physics of springs and acoustic resonance.

Here, one who is musically trained can produce the musical notes while the novice can really appreciate the melody and sound produced by

these sculptures. For the young school kids, this will provide abundant fun at the same time help them learn the physics of sound.

Learning Centre

Learning Centre is another ingredient of the IME that aims to impart musical training. There is a plan afoot to impart musical education in line with a university curriculum. Over period IME may offer a Diploma in Music that will be recognised world over. The scope of training includes Karnatak, Hindustani, Instrumental etc. As part of the outreach program, IME is engaged with various schools to teach music, conduct seminars and workshops.

In terms of infrastructure, Learning centre includes five Class rooms, a library, a seminar hall. At present, over 100 students are learning various forms of Indian music after school. There is a Cafe where one can get refreshments and a gift store for music related memorabilia.

A visitor to IME can recollect evolution of Indian music and those who are young will get a chance to get an exposure and understand our great musical heritage. This landmark centre is bound to give a world class experience comparable to the best museums across the globe. Those who are inspired and inclined, can consider taking a musical journey through learning centre.

While the Sound Garden is already open to public, the other parts of the museum will be thrown open soon.

An evening of Mellifluous Music

Anagha Yoganand, Bangalore



Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira gave away this year's 'Raaga laya Prabha' on 13th of May 2018 to three young artistes from Karnataka. Vid Abhishek Raghuram presented the awards to Aditi B Prahalad (Vocal), BK Raghu (Violin) Akshay Anand (Mridangam). The award is instituted in the memory of its founders Karnataka Kalashree Smt. Ranganayakamma, Vid. GV Neela and sister- patron and Veena artiste Dr. GV Vijayalakshmi. It was very befitting that the award function was followed by the bewitching concert of Vidwan Abhishek Raghuram. He was accompanied on the violin by Vidwan B Vittal Rangan, Vidwan NC Bharadwaj on the mridangam and Vidwan G Guruprasanna on the Kanjira.

The concert commenced with the composition of Sri Shyama Shastri 'Nannu Brova Rada' in the raga Janaranjani. This rendition was embellished with a short and crisp neraval and Swarakalpana. Following this, the strains of a plaintively moving raga alapana in the raga Shubhapantuvarali set anchor for the krithi 'Ne pogada tarama' a composition by GN Balasubramaniam which was also well seasoned with neraval and swarakalpana. The next part of the concert sought sanctuary under the majesty of the raga Darbar. After a detailed exposition of the raga in all its myriad possibilities during the

raga alapana, the saint Tyagaraja composition, 'mundu venuka iru' was rendered, and in quick succession, another one of the great composer's composition in the same raga, 'Ramabhi rama' was dealt with, further delving into the intricacies of the raga through the neraval. The atmosphere then shifted to the lilting tunes of the raga Mohanakalyani. After a comprehensive raga alapana and a dulcet rendition of the tana by both Abhishek and Vittal Rangan who complemented each other exceptionally, displayed their eminence with singularly unique phrases throughout the rendition of the RTP. The Pallavi was set in sankeerna nadai, tishra jathi, tripudatam. (sankeerna nadai as doing a tishram in tishra nadai). The complex pallavi was executed to perfection. The sahityam of the pallavi was 'Parama Pavani gada kamakshi bhakta jana kalpalathika amba'. The tani that followed was cadent and rhythmic and proved the proficiency of Vidwan NC Bharadwaj on the mridangam and Vidwan G Guruprasanna on the Kanjira. The concert concluded with Saint Tyagaraja's composition 'Patiki Harati re' in Suruti.

It was an evening of grand musical splendour and Vidwan Abhishek had everyone mesmerised with his singing. It was an evening worth remembering.

Madurai Mani Iyer - Radio interview in 1960

Contributor - S Venugopalan, Chennai

Following is a translation of an Interview given by Shri Madurai Mani Iyer to All India Radio (AIR) recorded during early 60s. Seniors who heard him those days may enjoy this more

AIR: Namaskaaram. I would like to record your reminiscences about your gurukula vaasam. Whom you did study with at the very beginning?

Madurai Mani Iyer: I learnt under Shri Rajam Bhagavathar in Madurai

AIR: Whose Disciple was Rajam Bhagavathar?

Madurai Mani Iyer: He was a disciple of Ettayapuram Ramachandra Bhagavathar. My Paternal uncle Madurai Pushpavanam Iyer and the Nagaswaram vidwan Madurai Ponnusami Pillai, were also disciples of Ramachandra Bhagavathar.

AIR: How long would you have learnt from Rajam Bhagavathar and when did you start performing?

Madurai Mani Iyer: I learnt for 2 years from him. We lived in a portion of his house itself on rent. So, it was very convenient to learn from Rajam Bhagavathar.

After that, Harikesanallur Muthiah Bhagavathar established a music school in Madurai in which Rajam Bhagavathar was appointed as a teacher. So I happened to join that school. I learnt there too for about a year and a half. After that I started performing in concerts.

AIR: Can you recollect your very first concert and where it was held?

Madurai Mani Iyer: I had been to the Sivanganai area along with my father who had friends there. My first concert was held there, in a place called Alavakottai, during the kumbhaabishekam festival. Since the organisers of that

festival were well-known to my father, my first concert took place!

AIR: Who played pakkavaadyam (accompaniment) for your first concert?

Madurai Mani Iyer: Nattam Seetharama Iyer, who lived in Kumbakonam, played the Violin. Tiruvarur Kunju Iyer alias Rajagopala Iyer played the mridangam.

AIR: How old were you then?

Madurai Mani Iyer: I was 12 years old then.

AIR: So you started performing from then?

Madurai Mani Iyer: Yes I started performing from then on.

AIR: In order to get so many concert opportunities at that age itself, you must have had help isn't it?

Madurai Mani Iyer: What helped me was my paternal uncle, Pushpavanam Iyer, had been so famous that people who had listened to his music would readily agree to hold my concert if someone recommended my name.

My only responsibility was to perform well in the concert that had been arranged. Getting the concert opportunity itself wasn't very difficult. Had to perform well in the arranged concert, that's all. It would make things even easier.

AIR: Then, as you got older, your voice would have changed.

Madurai Mani Iyer: Yes, my voice changed. When I first sang concerts, I used to sing to a shruti of 5 kattai, 4.5 kattai. My voice (shaareeram) used to be very facile. Later, my voice dropped in shruti, way down to 1 kattai. It all happened quite rapidly in the space of 2 months. And even at 1 kattai, my voice could

only reach the taara Shadja for the highs and the madhya Shadja for the lows.

AIR: A range of only 1 sthaayi (Octave)?

Madurai Mani Iyer: I sthaayi, exactly, effectively that's all it would speak (!). Singing higher than the taara Shadja was difficult, and so was singing below the madhya Shadja. Hence I was constrained to sing within 1 sthaayi at that time.

AIR: So you must have done a lot of saadhakam at that time to get a handle on your voice and strengthen it.

Madurai Mani Iyer: I practised for about 3 hours everyday with the tambura.

AIR: How did you practice then?

Madurai Mani Iyer: I used to set the shruti high and then try to hold the taara Shadja which used to be difficult, but I would practice this for a while, I would take a suitable raga and practice the phrases D N S, P D N S, M P D N S etc., along with the proper bhavam of the raaga, in order to try and strengthen the Shadja then I would proceed upward to halt on R and then take a look at G and then try M. I only managed to reach the M this way. Then I would lower the shruti to 2.5, 2 kattai and sing the high notes a little easier, and then move to 1.5 kattai and sing with even more ease. I had to practice really hard, had to sing open-throated and practice hard to bring the voice into shape.

AIR: In your career, you must have heard the concerts of a lot of vidwans. Can you talk about it a little bit?

Madurai Mani Iyer: In Madurai, I have heard a lot of concerts of Mazhavaayanendal Subbarama Bhagavata, Harikesanallur Muthiah Bhagavata. I have heard a lot of his musical discourses and he would perform concerts, in his performances. There would be a lot of Tyagaraja compositions and other great pieces, the discourses would be very musical.

Also in Madurai, there was Nagaswami Bhagavata who sang a lot of Tyagaraja kritis in his concerts. He would not repeat the kritis he sang from concert to concert in the many concerts I heard! I had a great opportunity to listen to a lot of different kritis of Tyagaraja, all those

in vogue as well as many rare ones. he was a disciple of the Valajapet Venkataramana Bhagavata, a prime disciple of Tyagaraja.

I have heard concerts of Karaikudi Brothers with Dakshinamurthy Pillai on the mridangam, Kancheepuram Naina Pillai, with Malaikottai Govindaswamy Pillai on Violin and Dakshinamurthy Pillai on Mridangam etc.

I have heard lots and lots of concerts of Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar & Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer.

Then I have listened to Veena Dhanammal. And I have listened to lots of performances of great Nagaswaram vidwans during temple festivals, and night processions staying up all night long and walking behind them.

AIR: What is your opinion of current performance methods?

Madurai Mani Iyer: The Current performance methods setup by various senior musicians of our time and their aesthetics, I must say I like it and hold it in high regard. And I try to proceed along that route as much as possible.

AIR: What is your opinion regarding Shruti?

Madurai Mani Iyer: You mean setting an aadhaara Shruti (base shruthi) it should be set such that the taara Shadja is easy to reach not too easy however otherwise it would be floating and fragile. It should not be too easy, if you hold the taara Shadja in an extended manner i.e. kaarvai, you should be able to hold it with firmness and strength, without tiring. Only then you would be able to sing the further higher notes like R, G, M, easily and attuned to Shruti. A lot of musical phrasing, in our current music, is in the upper reaches. These are also the notes that are heard with clarity and which grab the people's attention. If you sing in the lower octave, people nearby can hear it clearly and only knowledgeable rasikas would like it.

However, we are required to sing a lot in the upper octave these days, and for that one should not tire. Even though there are mikes and speakers these days, one should be careful not to tire, since otherwise you would slip from

the Shruti. If that happens, your singing will not be fulfilling or pleasing. And if you don't satisfy the listeners with your singing in that range, then there is no point in singing in the lower reaches either, having lost their attention.

The aadhaara Shadja should also be held well and with firmness. Even if you are only able to intone the lower N D P in a soft manner, that's OK. But the taara Shadja is very important, it should be held with strength and firmness.

AIR: In singing swaras, i.e. kalpanaswaras, you seem to have a unique style. Could you let us know about the evolution of your style?

Madurai Mani Iyer: Unique style? Really not. Mazhavaaraayanandal Subbarama Bhagavata used to sing swaras like this. When I was a student and a novice performer, I have heard a lot of his music. He used to sing swaras even for many rare raagas, his sarvalaghu manner of swara singing used to be very good. I tried to sing like that and develop my swara singing, my style is a direct outgrowth of that.

AIR: Thanks for that information. In swara singing, people sing tisram, misram etc., what is your opinion on this arithmetic (kaNakku)?

Madurai Mani Iyer: As long as the raga bhaavam is not spoiled, there is nothing wrong in singing arithmetic swara prasthara with thisra, misra etc. If the voice admits of this exercise, and if the arithmetic is also interesting, then there is no problem at all. We can all be happy and enjoy.

People who are well-qualified only should attempt it. Everyone need not feel a compulsion to engage in this. If we do arithmetic, troubling ourselves, losing raga bhaavam and losing the Shruti also in the process, there is no point. The sukha bhaavam in the cutcheri would be lost. Without losing sight of the overall sukha bhaavam and the raaga bhaavam, when someone who is intelligent, has a strong memory and has had good association with laya vidwans, does this arithmetic, then we also can enjoy it and appreciate it.

AIR: What advice do you have for the youngsters who are learning music and desire to per-

form, and others who have just begun to perform?

Madurai Mani Iyer: They should hear many concerts of the senior vidwans i.e. the established vidwans. Because, however much they are talented, since they lack the experience, their music will not be sufficient or fulfilling. They should observe how the senior vidwans make their concerts a success and please all varieties of listeners, how they use their voices in a concert hall, how they employ the various thick and thin shades in their voices, how they plan their concerts, these are all to be learnt only by direct observation. It does not happen otherwise, however well one sings by themselves or practices their music.

They have to hear the senior vidwans over and over again, no other way. But, they don't have to imitate them. It will all jell together over time as they keep singing, and hearing the senior vidwans attentively.

They should pay sufficient attention to setting the Shruti before singing. They should give sufficient time to the accompanists to adjust their instruments to the Shruti. Before proceeding to sing, they should attune themselves to the shruti by intoning Sa-Pa-Sa in a manner audible just to themselves. Steadying themselves thus, if they sing, there would be no problem. If in the midst of a concert, the shruti drifts, they should adjust it properly and then only should continue. If the Shruti wavers, sukha bhaavam will be lost, the felicity will be lost. The more and more we are attuned to Shruti, the easier the music will flow. Hence one must pay great attention to it.

AIR: Thanks very much for sharing your experiences and your pointers to all aspiring musicians. Namaskaaram.

Madurai Mani Iyer: Namaskaaram!

Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira (Regd.)

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

We request your gracious presence for the Award ceremony programme
in memory of its visionary founder Shri. G Vedantha Iyengar
and chief founders Karnataka Kalashree GV Ranganayakamma and Vidushi GV
Neela and their sister & chief patron Dr. GV Vijayalakshmi

Vidhushi MS Sheela
will be bestowed with the title

“Sangeetha Vedantha Dhureena”

The award carries a purse of rupees One Lakh, a silver medal and a citation
to be presented by

**His Holiness Sri Sri Yadugiri Yathiraja Narayana Ramanuja
Jeeyar of Yathiraja Mutt**

and

50 senior artistes from Bengaluru will be honoured with the title

“Lalitha Kala Suma”

(The award carries a purse of Rs. Ten Thousand and a citation)

On Sunday, September 09th, 2018

at

The Bangalore Gayana Samaja Auditorium

The Lalitha Kala Suma honour will be presented by

Dr. N Raghu

Assistant Director (Programme), All India Radio, Bengaluru

4.30 pm - “Nadanjali”

Musical tribute in memory of Smt. GV Ranganayakamma
and Smt. GV Neela by Kum. Ananya Ramanujan, great granddaughter of SRLKM
founder Late G Vedantha Iyengar and also a disciple of Vidushi Smt. GS Kamala
and Vidushi Smt. GS Rajalakshmi of Mysore.

5.30 pm - Presentation of honours

Sangeetha Vedantha Dhureena and Lalitha Kala Suma



Raga Laya Prabha Award - Over the years

Printed at Jwalamukhi Mudranalaya Pvt. Ltd. # 44/1, K.R.Road, Basavanagudi, Bangalore-560 004.
Phone # +91-80-26617243, 26623921, 26608090, Email - info@jwalamukhipress.com.