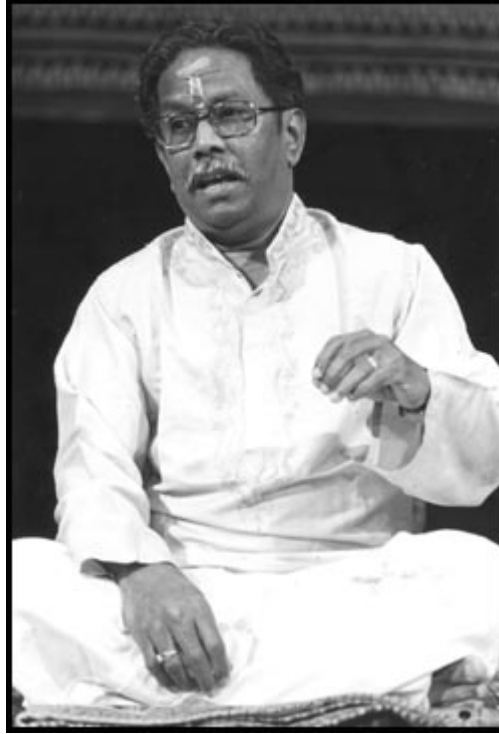


## **T. Viswanathan: In Memoriam**



**Another pillar of the Dhanammal tradition has fallen. T. Viswanathan, born on 15 August 1926; grandson of Dhanammal, son of Jayammal and brother of the legendary Balasaraswati, died on 10 September 2002. We offer a bouquet of tributes to his values and accomplishments as a performer, teacher and scholar.**

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### **Memorial Meetings**

Two organisations joined hands to pay homage to the flute maestro on 23 September in Chennai. Tapasya Kala Sampradaya, run by the disciples of natyacharya K.P. Kittappa Pillai and headed by Indu Varma, and Brhaddvani, headed by Karaikudi Subramaniam, organised an evening of music and talk in memory of Viswa.

The first half of the evening was devoted to a musical homage by Viswa's disciples who had trained with him in India or abroad: Kala Prakash, B. Balasubramaniam, T. Brinda's grandson Girish (all vocal) and T.R. Moorthy (flute). Umayalpuram Mali provided mridanga accompaniment, with Marsi Sarangan wielding the khanjira sometimes. It was

a poignant moment as some of the disciples choked and burst into tears as they sang. And the audience was engulfed in a wave of nostalgia as Moorthy played *Krishna nee beganey baro*, a song which has become synonymous with the Dhanammal family.

Saying that the audience perhaps heard Viswa, instead of Krishna being called, *Sruti* Pattabhi Raman, who moderated the talk session that followed, said he was sure everyone sensed the hovering presence of Viswa on the occasion.

The talk session consisted of solemn speeches, mostly devoid of any humour, by a dozen speakers, including some of Viswa's disciples. Reminiscing or paying tribute were: Dr. Karaikudi S. Subramaniam; Marsi Sarangan, a student of Viswa's; violin maestro Lalgudi G. Jayaraman; scholar and musicologist Dr. N. Ramanathan; Carnatic music composer and connoisseur 'Spencer' R. Venugopal; Dr. S.A.K. Durga, who studied with Viswa both in Madras and Middletown; Carnatic vocalist B. Rajam Iyer; tavildar Haridwaramangalam A.K. Palanivel; mridanga chakravarty T.K. Murthy; Anandi Ramachandran of the Kalki family; P.R. Thilagam, musician and dance teacher of the traditional community known as Kondi Parampara; and mridanga vidwan Ramnad Raghavan who spent many years in the U.S. The entire session was concluded within about 65 minutes, thanks to Pattabhi Raman who came wielding a bell which, he said, he would ring if any one exceeded the allotted time, but never had to. Apparently, his ringing message had been heard by all the speakers!

The memorial function came to a close with the screening of a film on Viswa which included segments of his fluting and singing when he was in Chennai in December last year.

## **- JAN VASAN**

### **Middletown, CT**

When T. Viswanathan started planning Wesleyan University's 2002 Navaratri celebrations, he thought it fit to dedicate the event to four eminent artists who had recently passed away: his niece Lakshmi Knight, Sangeeta Kalanidhi K.V. Narayanaswamy and khanjira vidwans V. Nagarajan and G. Harishankar. All four were very close to him, and had passed away within months of each other, no doubt causing him considerable distress. In a cruel and ironic twist of fate, Viswanathan himself passed away on 10 September, exactly nine days before the start of the festival.

The concert series was conducted as scheduled and, in addition to memorialising the original four artists, it celebrated the life, music and accomplishments of Viswanathan also.

The opening night was devoted to Lakshmi Knight. Paying a tribute to the late daughter of the legendary Balasaraswati in the first half were students Aggie Brenneman, Karen Elliott, Bonnie Novakov Lawlor, Lauren Paul, Kay Poursine and Eva Soltes. All six had trained with Balasaraswati and Lakshmi over the years. The second half of the

programme was a Bharatanatyam recital by Lakshmi's son Aniruddha Knight, who had trained with his mother and his grand-uncle Viswanathan.

The memorial service for Viswanathan was on the second day. Speaking at the event were Douglas J. Bennet, President of Wesleyan University; Jean Shaw, former Director of the Centre for the Arts, who worked closely with Viswanathan in organising the annual Navaratri festival; fellow-Professors Mark Slobin, Neely Bruce and Jeremy Zwelling; Elana Zwelling, friend of Viswanathan; and Douglas Knight, disciple of Viswanathan's late brother, T. Ranganathan, and husband of the late Lakshmi Knight. Readings were performed by disciples Susan Tveekrem and Joseph Getter. Closing remarks were made by David Nelson, fellow-artist-in-residence.

The programme dedicated to Viswanathan's memory also consisted of a vocal performance by Kiranavali Vidyashankar. Her accompanists were violinist H.V. Srivatsan and percussionists David Nelson and Glenn 'Rusty' Gillette. Kiranavali had learnt a number of compositions from the repertoire of Viswanathan's family, particularly from that of his cousin, the late T. Brinda. Srivatsan performed with Viswanathan in the latter's last recording called *Tribute*. Both the percussionists were long-time students of Ranganathan. The evening was a celebration of the Viswanathan family's musical heritage.

The third day started off with a demonstration of Bharatanatyam by Kay Poursine titled 'An Introduction to South Indian Classical Dance'. The next event, titled 'In Remembrance: Video Tributes,' and screened excerpts from concerts performed by Lakshmi Knight, K.V. Narayanaswamy, V. Nagarajan and G. Harishankar, who had taught or performed at Wesleyan during their careers. The evening included 'bhojanam'-- a traditional Indian vegetarian meal, which was followed by a dhrupad music recital by vocalist Uday Bhawalkar and pakhawaj vaadak Manikrao Munde.

The last day of the festival started off with Saraswati pooja in the morning, during which Wesleyan students of all manner brought the instruments of their respective vocations and dedicated them to the Goddess of Learning. The festival then ended with an afternoon concert by vocalist Rama Ravi of Chennai, a musician known for her expertise in rendering pada-s and javali-s who counts Viswanathan and Brinda among her teachers. She was supported by Nanditha Ravi (vocal), B.V. Raghavendra Rao (violin) Manoj Siva (mridanga).

## **- HARISH NEELAKANDAN**

### **Morganville, NJ**

In Morganville, NJ, a flute concert by Mysore A. Chandan Kumar on 29 September was dedicated to the memory of T. Viswanathan. Organised by Kamala Ramamoorthy, Raji Krishnan and Rupa Rudrapatna and held at the home of Kamala Ramamoorthy, the concert featured the great-grandson of Mysore Chowdiah, accompanied by Arun

Ramamoorthy (violin) and K.S. Sudhaman (mridanga). A moment of silence was observed and Harish Neelakandan, one of Viswanathan's disciples, spoke a few words remembering his teacher.

## **- HARISH NEELAKANDAN**



### **Read Hard Copy for TRIBUTES to T. Viswanathan**

#### **☐ Tributes**

- ☐ **A Multifaceted Genius by 'Spencer' R. Venugopal**
- ☐ **Two Personalities In One by Dr. N. Ramanathan**
- ☐ **The Song Of Viswa by Ravi & Sridhar**
- ☐ **Dr. Viswa, My Teacher by Dr. S.A.K. Durga**
- ☐ **My Guru Viswappa by Harish Neelakandan**
- ☐ **A Remembrance by Dr. P.V. Sundaram**

#### **Afterword**

- ☐ **Viswa & The Media by N. Pattabhi Raman**