

Hariharasubramania Iyer

The article on guru Vechoor Hariharasubramania Iyer of Trivandrum is a well documented and interesting portrayal of the esteemed musician. Thanks to the author C. Ramakrishnan for sparing no effort to collate minute details of the personality and present it in a delectable manner. Although I have not heard of any concert of Vechoor in Bengaluru, I had a couple of students from Kerala who had been his students. Their pathantaram was solid and the kritis had been nicely taught by Vechoor. We look forward to reading more such gems.

I also take this opportunity to thank *Sruti* for organising the lecdems on Tyagaraja in December 2017 and the exhaustive coverage by your team which appeared in the March issue. I request you to cover the lecdems, especially by artists like Sriram Parasuram, R.K. Shriramkumar, Malladi Brothers, Suguna Varadachari, and R.S. Jayalakshmi who speak on diverse and rare topics in the lecdem sessions at the Parthasarathi Swami Sabha during the December season, as

well as other times of the year. It would be useful to rasikas and students living outside Chennai.

S.K. Anil Murthy
by email

P.V. Krishnamoorthy

Most of us had only heard of this great man, more as a brother of the late irrepressible Subbudu. Coming to know of his pioneering contributions to various forms of music and dance, working for All India Radio and Doordarshan, I am overcome by awe and admiration. His joie de vivre, at the age of 97, is infectious. May he continue to enjoy good health and complete a century and more.

I respectfully differ from the opinions of your reader that depth is lacking in today's music and that most musicians do not present less known ragas and kritis (*Sruti Box*, *Sruti*, May 2018). I am a regular concertgoer, though of late less regular. There is an abundant crop of good quality musicians who are competing for opportunities. The youngsters are aware that as Newton

himself acknowledged, they are standing on the shoulders of giants and are able to see far. They are well educated, technologically savvy, keen learners and have a far better voice culture than the giants of the past. They are dedicated and have chosen classical music as a career which is none-too-promising, what with dwindling and ageing audiences. Their only sources of a neat income seem to be foreign tours and 'fusion' programmes. Local remunerations are paltry, with almost nil gate collections. Affluent sponsors keep the show going.

The average attendance is about 25 to 40 per cent of the seating capacity. Eighty per cent are senior citizens and their attendance span is between 45 and 75 minutes. They want as many pieces as possible within this and have little patience for an elaborate alapana. With all these constraints, gifted artists have to strike a balance and present a good, memorable performance.

Here are a few examples of rare ragas and compositions featured in the last few months, post December season. By super seniors: Bombay Sisters - *Samugana nilva* in Kokilavarali. O.S. Thyagarajan - *Sattaneli dinamulu* in Naganandini. By seniors: G.J.R. Krishnan - *Eti yochanalu* in Kiranavali (elaborately treated by GNB over 70 years ago), T.M. Krishna - *Vachamagocharame* in Kaikavasi. Sanjay Subrahmanyam is phenomenal in experimenting with new ragas and many new compositions especially in Tamil. He sings many of Koteeswara Iyer's compositions in ragas like Jyotiswaroopini and Neetimati. In one concert, he sang Janaranjani and *Vidajaladura*, a piece in Patdeep, and as a climax, he resurrected the classic and grand *Koniyadi* in Kambhoji. By sub-seniors:

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Sumitra Vasudev - a rather unfamiliar Begada varnam *Maracheentunte* by Patnam Subramania Iyer. Saketaraman - *Ninaikkada neramillai* in Ragesree popularised by Madurai Somu. Kunnakudi Balamuralikrishna - a tillana in Suddha Sarang. Youngsters: Brinda Manickavasakan sang Chandrajyoti and *Sasivadana*. Jayakrishnan - *Vinanasakoni* in Pratapavarali.

Kunrathur Venkatesan and many others play raga Nagavalli and the composition *Pesum deviam* on the nagaswaram. These are just a few from the concerts I attended or heard over AIR. There must be more from concerts which I did not attend. Musicians like Abhishek Raghuram and Shashank are very innovative.

I conclude with a sample from overseas. College going sisters Maya and Malavi Ravindran from the US (my granddaughters) have been singing during the season for the past five years or so and they always introduce some novelty. In over five concerts they sang raga Roopavati and the composition *Ne morabettidhe*, Dhenuka and Bindumalini; and a ragam-tanam-pallavi in six ragas—Mohanam, Vasanti, Revagupti, Rasikaranjani, Sivaranjani and Bhoopalam.

There is another criticism of fast singing by young vocalists. They do so for a few songs in youthful exuberance, but will settle down to a more leisurely rendition in due course. They may resort to fast brigas occasionally in order to catch attention.

My lament is that most sing the same compositions in any particular raga, like *Ninne nammitinayya* in

Simhendramadhyamam, *Vallabha nayakasya* in Begada, *Palimchu Kamakshi* in Madhyamavati, *Inta saukhyamanine* in Kapi, and so on. This is probably what the reader had in mind.

Dr. R. Narasimhan
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Rejuvenating cultural ties

I would like to share with your readers an interesting musical event in Paris. The “Groupe de Réflexion Franco-Indien” in France celebrated its 28th annual day on the 13 May 2018, with a musical event on the theme *Tithis: Divine days*. The event was held at the Indira Gandhi hall in the Maison de l’Inde, Cité Universitaire, Paris.

The music group was launched in the 1990s. The musicians, mostly amateurs and a few professionals, hail from Afghanistan, Argentina, Bangladesh, France, India, Sri Lanka and Germany. For every annual event, the members choose a theme and build up a programme with a choice of songs. This year, the songs were based on the festivals that fall on a particular tithi (day)—hence the name “divine days”. Of the fifteen tithis, the Hindustani group, under the guidance of Jayashree Majumder and Aparna Sreedhar, chose to sing songs highlighting seven tithis. Aparna Sreedhar and Deepak Mathur sang mellifluous bhajans for the prathama (Govardhan Pooja), ashtami (Krishna jayanti), and navami (Rama navami) tithis. Jayashree Majumder presented pleasing Rabindra Sangeet for the panchami tithi, and the rendering of *Aigiri Nandini* by the Hindustani group made the audience’s pulse throb with the vibrations.

The seven tithis rendered by the Carnatic group, led by Srividya Kuruganty, Jayshree Sarma and myself were triteeya (Akshaya triteeya), chaturthi (Ganesa Chaturthi), shashti (Lord Subramanya), saptami (Soorya), ekadasi (Vishnu), dwadasi (Tulasi), and trayodasi (Sivaratri). These tithis were based on the compositions of Papanasam Sivan, Muthuswami Dikshitar, the Alwars, Purandaradasa and Tyagaraja. The Carnatic group had the privilege of sharing the stage with professional artist Bhavana Pradyumna who enthralled the audience with two songs—*Sooryamoortey*, a composition of Muthuswami Dikshitar, and *Kalyanam Tulasi Kalyanam*, a composition of Purandaradasa. The song *Pallandu pallandu* rendered in Nata raga by the group with chittaswarams was fast yet soulful.

It was interesting to watch twenty musicians, from the Hindustani and Carnatic styles, perform the concluding song *Guruashtakam* (a composition of Adi Sankaracharya) in perfect harmony and unison. Their performance bridged the south, north, east and the west.

For those of us who have migrated and settled down in different parts of the world, such events are very significant in rejuvenating our cultural ties with India.

It was a joy to be a part of this show, where you get an opportunity to watch and listen to amateurs and mature artists perform. The credit goes to Lalitha Badrinath who works tirelessly to make these shows a grand success.

Cynthia Srikanth
by email

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