

Mysore Vasudevachar

Mysore Vāsudevachar (aka VāsudevAchārya), a colossus born 150 years ago in Karnataka, was a rare combination of a ‘composer’ and ‘practitioner’ in one, and rightly hailed as the torch-bearer of the lofty tradition of Saint Tyagaraja in compositional excellence. He was the son of Chevur Subramanyachar, a musician from Coimbatore, who had settled down in the court of Mysore Maharaja (Krishnaraja Wodeyar). Vāsudeva (Vāsu), just three years old, was blessed by the Maharaja personally “You will bring keerti for Mysore.” Indeed,

Vāsu not only brought fame to Mysore, but also served with distinction four generations of Mysore Maharajas through his long life.

Young Vāsu, just a three-year old child, lost his father, and was inducted into Samskritam and Vedic learning by his maternal grandfather. But, Vāsu was more intent on learning music than scriptures, so he often went to his neighbor, Subbaraya Sastri, a court musician, and then to musician, Padmanabha Iyer, for formal learning. Only when the two giants Patnam Subramanya Iyer (a disciple of Manambuchavadi Venkata Subbaiyer, himself a direct disciple of Saint Tyagaraja) and Maha Vaidyanatha Sivan visited the Mysore Court did young Vāsu realize that his music learning was totally inadequate and that he needed a great master to mentor him. When he requested Patnam Iyer for tutelage, Sri Iyer politely told Vāsu, ‘We are in two different places, and I don’t know when, but God willing, we will meet again.’ After months of waiting with passion and angst, young Vāsu submitted his petition to the Maharaja who graciously granted him the scholarship to go to Thiruvaiyaru to learn directly from the maestro, Patnam

Subramanya Iyer. So, in 1881, the newly-married teenager, Vāsu, moved to Thiruvaiyaru for gurukulam. After six years of patience, perseverance, and Sādhanā, Vāsu returned to Mysore and gave a grand concert in the presence of eminent musicians and dignitaries, including Veena Sheshanna. Vāsudeva was soon appointed as the AsthAna vidwan of Mysore, and his musical journey as a concert performer gained significant momentum from then on.

His penchant for creativity and composing songs was not known even to himself until a strange incident happened in 1900. A major plague broke out in Mysore and there was fear that not many would survive the epidemic! At this time a friend of his prompted him to ‘make a mark before the world would end.’ In response, young Vāsudeva composed his first kriti, ‘chintayeham jAnaki kAntA’ in mayAmALavagauLa; he did not stop with it but went on to create several more compositions. When he passed away in 1961, he left a great body of over 200 compositions encompassing all genres including varNams, jatiswara, keertanas, Kritis, jAvaLi, padams and tillAnAs. While VāsudevAchārya was significantly influenced by his mentor Patnam Iyer and his Adi Guru Saint Tyagaraja, his compositions are original. Nevertheless, they do have the ardor and sweetness of Tyagaraja’s compositions.

“Abhinava Tyagaraja” as VāsudevAchārya was known, was an uttama vAkgeyakara. He had the rare gift to weave together exquisite words with divine music. Besides the lovely Kalyani kriti, ‘SrimadAdi Tyagaraja guruvaram,’ he also paid homage to the Trinity in three rAgamalikas. Once when the Maharaja asked him to compose in his mother tongue, Kannada, Vāsudevachar politely declined by saying that he had no formal learning in Kannada and would hesitate to even try to create compositions like those of ‘Purandaradasa’ simply because



he knew that accomplishing such a feat was 'beyond him.' Reluctantly, however, he pleased the Maharaja by composing the kriti 'KaruNisau dayAmAyE' in Saraswati manOhari; however, this was found by some to contain too many Sanskrit words, so Vāsudevachar composed another kriti "Sri Purandara guruvaram bhAvayEham."

Lesser known is the fact that he had a keen sense of humor. He authored two books in Kannada, one of them 'naa kanDa kalavidaru (Artists whom I have seen)' encompassing many biographies and humorous anecdotes of stalwarts of music he had interacted and observed, and the other 'nenapugaLu (memories)' which is like a partial memoir or autobiography.

Besides being lauded as a great performer, scholar, and composer he also set to music the grand verses of his royal patron, Jayachamaraja Wodeyar. Some of those gems are, Kshirasagarasayana (MayamalavagauLa: Dhruva), Sri Jalandhara (GambhiranATTai, Adi) and Sivasivasivabho (nAdanAmakriya, Jhampa). His family has confirmed that some of his creations were purely circumstantial. When a musician of the royal court, Nalwadi Krishnaraja, observed that KadanakutUhalam, the raga created by Patnam Subramanya Iyer, was not only a very difficult raga but also, there were no other compositions in that raga, VāsudevAchārya composed three in one evening: 'Sa, sa ni dha pa, a jati-swara; neevE rakshaku, a varnam: and neekEla dayaradu, a kirtanam - all in that 'rare raga' KadanakutUhalam! The same musician remarked publicly, on another occasion, that Vāsudevachar's compositions were not only simple, but they also did not need any practice or preparation so any novice could sing them! Vāsudevachar calmly responded by creating new and outstanding compositions such as 'mari mari vacchunA, mAnava janmamu' in kAmbhoji (with about 20 sangatis

in pallavi and Charanam), and "rA rA rAjeeva lohana' in mOhanam to cite a few. When the jealous Nalwadi heckled 'What is so special about the mohanam chiTTAswaram' and sang 'sa ri ga rA' Vāsudevachar asked him to stop there and said, '...nODu, sarige rA...sariyAgi bara bEku' (in Kannada - meaning, it should come properly!). No wonder Nalwadi was humbled. Anecdotes of such nature abound and due to paucity of space, we rest here.

VāsudevAchārya did not merely walk the path laid by composers before him. 'PranatArthiharam aham' in KhanDa tripuTa with a 6-akshara eduppu, and handling of difficult ragas dexterously such as 'siggulEdA naa' in Balahamsa, 'Gurukripaleka' in Pushpalatika, Suddha sAveri tillAna, and gems in Megharanjani, Sunadavinodhini et al are some testimonials to his remarkable scholarship and authority. VāsudevAchārya published 150 of his compositions himself with the patronage of the Maharaja who arranged for the printing and publishing of Vāsudeva keertanamajari.

When Rukmini Devi Arundale founded Kalakshetra (1936), she could not think of a better Achārya than VāsudevAchārya (who was past 70 years then). The great Achārya shifted to Kalakshetra, as the principal & chief musician, at the request of Rukmini Devi and also helped set the Ramayana to music. His contemporaries at Kalakshetra were stalwarts such as Tiger Varadachariar, Veena Krishnamachariar, and Mazhavarayanendal Subbarama Bhagavatar.

Padma Bhushan, Sangita Kalanidhi and Sangeet Nataka Akademy Fellowship are only a few of the awards and titles conferred on the great musician composer. The acclaimed institutions felt proud in conferring honors and titles on VāsudevAchārya. When the colossus breathed his last in 1961, the music world mourned. The Hindu

published the great highlights of this musical genius' career while Sangeet Natak Akademi noted that "...in his demise, the country lost a great musician and composer." Kalakshetra teachers and students grieved the loss of 'Pacchai thAtha' (because of the green shawl he constantly wore). Chakravarthi Rajagopalachari (Rajaji) wrote a letter to Rukmini Devi which became the talk of the town. Rajaji said, "A condolence to the family may appear conventional, but my consolation to you is rather different.... You have done noble service to the great old man like a daughter to a dear old father and how much grief you are handling to lose Vāsudevachar and also Karaikudi Sambasiva Iyer leaving Kalakshetra to grieve. Your tender watchful care of these two great musicians, two pure souls of golden worth, especially during their last years, is a great unprecedented example to all that value humanity and culture in the truest sense."

It is not out of place to repeat the prescient commentary by eminent writers, "It is our tradition that a considerable part of our cultural lore centers round our great musicians. In the years to come, VāsudevAchārya will be spoken with reverence, and the cultural world will sing his songs and discuss his influence on musical trends for centuries to come."

We close this with immense gratitude to S Rajaram, his grandson who took over Kalakshetra at Rukmini Devi's request and turned out to be the sole repository of Vāsudevachar's compositions. His other grandson, S Krishnamoorthy, who headed AIR translated his grandfather's memoirs into English.

Indeed, Vāsudevachar was one of the greatest vAkgeyakaras of the 20th century.

Tiruvaiyaru SR Krishnan



Sangeeta Acharya Tiruvaiyaru S R Krishnan Guest of Honor

Sangeeta
Acharya
Tiruvaiyaru
S R Krishnan has

been a Carnatic musician for more than sixty years. Having trained under legendary musicians such as Gaana-bhooshaNam Brahmasri Kumaramangalam Srinivasaraghavan, his father, and Sangita Kalanidhis Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer, Madurai Mani Iyer and G.N. Balasubramaniam, Krishnan has been an AchArya for about 50 years, and a renowned exponent of ‘Sankeertanam’ & ‘Harikatha’ traditions (encompassing Carnatic & Hindusthani systems of music) for more than five decades across four continents of the globe. His AchAryAs in Sankeertanam & Harikatha traditions included Srirangam Nathamuni Narayana-Iyengar, PudukkOTTai TV Narayana Sastri, and the legendary Swami Haridoss Giri, aka GURUJI.

Krishnan, a disciple of His Holiness Chandra Sekhar Endra Saraswati aka Kaanchi paramAchArya, was indoctrinated into Vedic/Scriptural education in Sanskrit college, Madras. He is a composer & lyricist

in six languages, a poet, journalist & a novelist in both English and Tamil. His operatic creations include, ‘Sitaayaascharitham Mahat aka Triveni Ramayanam’ and ‘SaraNam Aiyappaa’. Saint Tyagaraja, Divya Prabhandam and Abhanga sankeertanam have been his favorite Harikatha topics.

Krishnan started as an International Banker in 1965, and has been an International Fiduciary since 1991. He has widely traveled and has been a distinguished Fellow of several Royal Academic Societies/Institutions of the United Kingdom since 1978. He is a founder principal of three international fiduciary corporations two of which currently operate in several jurisdictions at the nomination of Federal & State Agencies of the US Government.

He and his wife Radha are patrons of several philanthropic institutions in India, which care for mentally & physically challenged and the destitute, who the Krishnans describe as ‘God’s favorite children’. More than 50 CDs from about 20 live recordings are currently available free from his website www.sankeertanam.com

Ariyakudi

RAMANUJA IYENGAR

Ariyakudi, a relatively nondescript village in the present day Sivaganga district of Tamil Nadu, India, has become globally famous thanks to its native, Sri Ramanuja Iyengar, the Sovereign of South Indian Classical music, and the colossus who ruled the Carnatic Music world for 60 years since the advent of the 20th century. Today, the term, Ariyakudi, not only denotes the legend of Carnatic music but also the tradition that is followed by the illustrious students of this great master.

Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar was seen by legendary contemporaries and maestros such as Palghat Mani Iyer, the monarch of mridanga, as the trail-blazer of his times, due to his aesthetic refinement of mastery of technique, adherence to dignified methods of holding the audience in rapt attention, effortless voice culture, extensive repertoire, and remarkable laya values that he had perfected by intensive application.

The music world should thank Ariyakudi's father Thiruvengadam Iyengar, an astrologer, who noticed the young boy's penchant for music. He took Ariyakudi to Pudukkottai Malayappa Iyer around 1903, and concurrently arranged for his education in Sanskrit and Tamil in Pudukkottai. The next rigorous gurukulavAsam started in Srirangam, when Ariyakudi was sixteen, under his next guru, Namakkal Narasimha Iyengar; he groomed the young Ramanujan in to a Sankeertana vidwan over the next two years. During this period, Ariyakudi would visit the 1,000-pillar mandapam of Srirangam and sing devotional songs to his heart's content; Ariyakudi then went to Ramanathapuram kingdom and spent the next 10 years in GurukulavAsam under Ramanathapuram (samasthana vidwan) Srinivasa Iyengar (Poochi



Iyengar) who launched him on to the concert platform. When young Ariyakudi turned 20, he started singing along with Poochi Iyengar in concerts. Ariyakudi was once asked to accompany his guru, Poochi Iyengar, at Devakottai. It was one of his Guru's most awaited concerts. Koneripuram Vaittha, Tirukodikaval Krishna Iyer, Azhaganambia Pillai, Ghatam Krishna Iyer, Pudukkottai Dakshinamoorthi Pillai and several other Jambhavans were eagerly waiting in the audience. The influential organizer requested, minutes before the concert, if Poochi Iyengar's disciple, Ariyakudi, could do that evening's concert. With his Guru's instant blessings, Ariyakudi did his rangapravesam that day with the doyens of Carnatic music applauding the young performer and acknowledging him as a fully-fledged concert artist. Destiny took its turn for the next forty years to turn him into the most quoted legend and 'the treasure house of Poochi Sahityams.'

A superior intelligence guided Ariyakudi in perceiving clearly the changes that were occurring in the Carnatic Classical Music scene. It led him to help fashion and refine a concert format, that no one had attempted before; this put him ahead of his contemporaries. At about the time, the source of patronage of classical music was shifting from princes, zamindars, and other affluent patrons to music enthusiasts at large through organized Sabhas. Although his guru Poochi Iyengar and a couple of other musicians before him had anticipated the shift and begun modest adjustments, it was Ariyakudi who fashioned and perfected the new concert format in its entirety and introduced it boldly. His lead was quickly adopted by other musicians of rising eminence and widely followed by almost everyone to this date.



Concurrently, he developed a personal style of singing which accommodated the strengths and weaknesses of his own musical endowments to achieve/perfect the winning formula. This unique style, punctuated by a unique tempo and refinement helped him utilize the reach given the natural tremor of his voice coupled with its heaviness and gruffness. He quickly learned that 'mastery came with absolute alignment with the tambura sruti,' which thus helped him overcome all minor voice tremors. His kAlapramANam was unique, as he had deciphered the tempo which suited his voice and musical impulses; this resulted in the legendary percussionist, Palghat Mani Iyer, who admired Ariyakudi on stage and off stage, to remark that his own sense of proportion, sense of concert responsibility to the audience and his disdain for artistic compromises were all shaped by the 'Ariyakudi influence.' The mridangam maestro, when questioned as to the beat for 'Ninnuvina Gamari (Poorvikalyani)' that he played for Ariyakudi's rendition, whether viloma chApu or Chatusra Eka, misragati, said without blinking, 'I never really noticed; I would look at his face and not his hand and play.' That is the ultimate measure of Ariyakudi's and Palghat Mani Iyer's symbiotic mastery for several dozen years. Mani Iyer often refrained or hesitated, until nudged, to commence his 'Tani Avartanam (solo exposition)' because he did 'not wish to change the atmosphere that aNNA had created'; Mani Iyer went further to reiterate his perception of the role of a 'Mridangist;' it was essentially to embellish the vocalist and the 'tani Avartanam' was merely an incidental component of a concert. On his part, Ariyakudi responded to every tani Avartanam of Mani Iyer with the exclamation of 'Bale....Deiveekam (Divine).'

Ariyakudi's presentation was ingenious in avoiding rigidity. He could easily adapt to every situation: the make-up of his audience, the locale of concerts and to several personal variables such as the state of his voice that day, caliber of his accompanists, and, of course, the overall ambience. Based on the weather of the day and his voice, he chose compositions, on the fly, that were apt for a given occasion. He was remarkably shrewd, not just intuitive, in deciphering the wishes or mood of his audience and, accordingly,

rearranging his repertoire for the day. He worked on what people perceived as a magical formula to pick ragams for different segments of the concert. The cognizant, the connoisseur and the uninitiated were all in bliss, concert after concert. This was because he paid keen attention to the need to sustain musical integrity, to uphold good taste, to offer variety, and to appeal to lay listeners.

Rigorous and disciplined sAdhakam (practice) helped him dispense a voice that was hard like

SUPPORT

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE CENTER

BECOME A PILLAR

Your name will be permanently placed in the center

ALL IT TAKES IS TO PLEDGE TAX DEDUCTIBLE DONATION OF

\$1000 (SILVER), \$2000 (GOLD)
\$5000 (PLATINUM)

PER YEAR

Yearly donation	Tax refunds*	Actual cost	Monthly cost	Pillar status
\$1000	\$380	\$620	\$52	Silver
\$2000	\$760	\$1240	\$104	Gold
\$5000	\$1900	\$3100	\$260	Platinum

* Based on 28% (Federal) and 10% (California). Please consult your tax advisor for exact amount.

Vedic Cultural and Spiritual Center

Shiva Vishnu Temple of San Diego

9252, Miramar Road, San Diego, CA 92126

www.vcscsd.org • 858-549-3940



a diamond, rich and vibrant for reach, and supple enough to lace thick and thin shades of melody. He did sing full-throated, but never shouted nor resort to falsetto, which the established and aspiring musicians of today have to note!

He was a master in displaying all the characteristic attributes of a rAga in a matter of few minutes, nevertheless, with purity in gamaka; the clarity with which he pronounced the words of the lyrics written in the South Indian languages was stellar. His unique tANam(s) and 4-kaLai chaukams (the slowest tempo to administer, unwaveringly) were a subject of admiration by his doting fans. He could mesmerize the audience by occasionally handling closely-allied rAgAs, such as PantuvarALi, PoorvikalyaNi, SubhapantuvarALi and VarAli, in a single concert without slipping a shade into one another!

His delineation of dos and don'ts on concert platform is even today a reference point in the world of Carnatic Music. He often introduced jaati and gati variations in the same tala within a short span and emphasized a combination of the elements of prastAra, alankAra and yati (phrases of gradually increasing or decreasing dimensions). However, he usually chose to conceal the vyavahAram (rhythmic complexity), a sign of musical restraint in a great musician. His aesthetics impelled him to conceal laya complexities rather than flaunt them as proof of his technical mastery!

A tunesmith for Tamil songs, his tuning of Arunachala Kavirayar's 'Ramanatakam' and Andal's

"Tiruppavai" will be remembered as long as music and literature live. He was a musician with a principled position on Tamil Isai. He, nevertheless, took a principled stand when asked to sing only Tamil songs in certain sabhas or concerts; he made sure he always began with a varnam and a krithi of Thyagaraja or Thyagabrahmam (as he preferred to call him) which would be in Telugu. Extremism was not for him, and he was vocal about it.

Ramanuja Iyengar carried himself with dignity, and this quality was always reflected in his concerts. He never treated any of his concerts lightly nor exhibited mannerisms which could be construed as less than dignified. He did not indulge in gimmicks. He avoided placing emphasis on words that could sound unseemly. Ariyakudi's sense of propriety did not allow him to do so. The combination of qualities which made Ramanuja Iyengar a great musician is rarely found in a single musician.

It is generally said that 'Great Artists are sometimes genesis of great controversies', often times, unbeknownst to them. There is a small group of musicians and self-anointed puritans who maintain that Ariyakudi format contributed to either a diminution in depth or a dilution in quality. The rest, who form the vast majority of music fans, however, consider Ariyakudi and his format as the gift to Carnatic Music renaissance and continue to assert that the net effect was comparable to changing a five-day Cricket Test Match (from a game dominated by four or five players) into a lively One-Day Test match (game in which

a number of players took active part). Yet another observation is about the relevance! Whether the contemporary manifestation of the novel format that he fashioned in the 1920s has lost appeal is a moot point, but it deserves closer scrutiny. When Ariyakudi introduced it, it was considered most timely and became a gold standard. Certainly, the listening public welcomed it with enthusiasm. He was not responsible for the cutting down of the duration of the standard concert from about five hours to nearly half of that prevalent today or to a third of it in Chennai Music Season lately. The change he brought about only influenced the orientation and content of the concert, not its duration. Long after the monumental introduction of the new format, he continued to give concerts of four to five hours' duration regularly. The new format replaced the long attempted practice of presenting, over some five hours, a handful of items culminating in an elaborate ragam-tanam-pallavi. He thus emphasized variety and through it attempted to bring in millions of lay listeners, while yet retaining the traditional core and the overall time!

He was a guru in the old tradition, a 'pun-dit' who specialized in his own unique brand of humor on and off the stage. There are a thousand anecdotes about this unique quality and memorable mannerisms of the master musician but this is not the forum for delineating such, primarily due to limitations of space and size.

Apart from being a performer par excellence who rocked the Indian music scene for decades, he was

also the most venerable Guru of his times. Not just anyone could walk in to enroll as a pupil. An aspiring disciple had to have had a good grounding in music and to be at a fairly advanced stage of learning process. It was Palghat Mani Iyer that prompted Palghat K V Narayanaswamy (KVN), who by then was already a performer and proficient enough to learn from such a luminary. KVN was one of the very few who did 'gurukulavasam' the 'good-old-style' and emerged as the torch bearer of Ariyakudi tradition. Ariyakudi reportedly varied his teaching methods according to circumstances, but needless to say that such a process of teaching-learning was mostly casual and indirect. GurukulavAsam with IyengarVAl usually entailed hard labor where the in-home disciples did various daily chores and virtually all errands at Guru's home. KVN and Madurai N Krishnan distinguished themselves in performing all those daily chores, but were highly self-motivated to innovate efforts on their own to understand why and how Ariyakudi handled a specific ragam or composition in a certain way and to interpret correctly those delineations, observations, guidelines and tidbits of advice to help treasure an education that would be forever remembered and practiced! That was their individual marathons towards reaching stardom in Carnatic Music.

Ariyakudi's long list of disciples consisted of his brother (Ariyakudi) Raghava Iyengar; Ganesa Iyer; Devakottai Srinivasa Iyengar; K.C. Vaidyanathan; Alleppey Parthasarathy Iyengar; Ettayapuram R. Rama Iyengar, aka Ramanna; K.V. Narayanaswamy;

Madurai N Krishnan, Rajam Iyer; Gopalaswamy Iyengar; Pratapam Natesa Iyer; Kandadevi Narayanan; Sampath and Allepey Venkatesan and many others. On the distaff side, the list was topped by Veenai K.S. Dhanammal and included Tirugokarnam Kanakambujam and Aparanji. The latter's daughter was paired with the famous T Balasaraswati in 'Jodi nAtyam.'

There were others who considered Ariyakudi as their 'mAnaseeka Guru' (mentor, like the mythical Drona to Eklavya) even though they were not his formal disciples. That list included Karaikudi Meiyappa Chettiar, singing-star of film world T R Mahalingam, and, of course, Madurai Mani Iyer and G N Balasubramaniam who both were contemporary stars of the Ariyakudi era. GNB was generous in his repeated praise and admiration for 'IyengarVAl' (the reverential term denoting Ariyakudi) acknowledging that his own medium tempo excellence and fast Bruges were primarily influenced by the master musician. The writer knows that Madurai Mani Iyer very much wanted to be Ariyakudi's formal disciple but Mani's father thought differently. Another stalwart who put the petition and waited patiently for admission was M K Thyagaraja Bhagavatar. The anecdote was that MKT declined a prestigious invitation to sing in Tiruvaiyaru TyAgarAja Aradhana, as he felt not fit enough to accept such a privilege; the grapevine was that he was smarting from the disappointment (of non-acceptance by Ariyakudi) in his mind.

There is not a famous violinist or a percussionist who has not

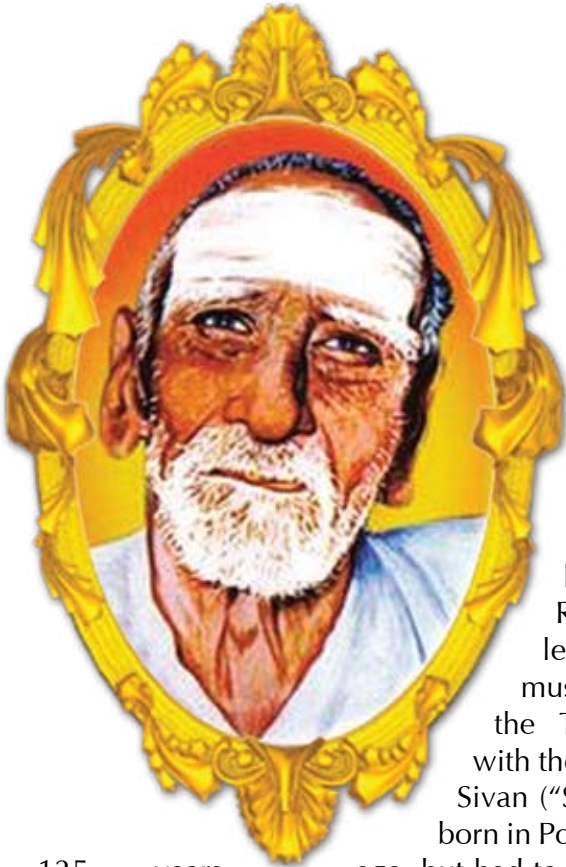
played sidemen for Ariyakudi. The renowned Indian institutions for music and dance crowned him in tandem as though to add value to their own awards. Starting from 'Sangeeta Ratnakara' in 1937 and 'Sangeeta Kalanidhi' in 1938, Ariyakudi was honored by the Mysore Maharaja with the 'Asthana Vidwan' title in 1945 and with 'Gayaka Sikhamani' in 1946. He was honored with the President of India award in 1952 and with the Padma Bhushan in 1958. Sangeet Natak Akademi bestowed on him its highest award in 1952 and made him a Fellow in 1954. Sringeri Sankaracharya and Kanchi Paramacharya, HH Chandra Sekhara Sarasvati were his music fans; Ariyakudi expressed his gratitude to them and openly acknowledged that their divine blessings were far superior to all the awards and titles he had garnered through his life.

Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar was, in the words of a contemporary, the architect and maker of modern Carnatic music. He brought Carnatic music, out from the purview of pure art form to one of entertainment, adroitly introducing modernity yet keeping tradition intact.

The writer fondly remembers the occasion of receiving the highest TiruppAvai award and a citation in 1958 from this Legend of TiruppAvai @ the annual music festival in Sri Parthasarathy Temple, Triplicane, Chennai, India, which Ariyakudi chaired for decades.

Tiruvaiyaru SR Krishnan

PAPANASAM SIVAN



Polagam Ramamritha Payer and his wife Yogammal would not have known that their son Ramayya would become a legend in the world of Carnatic music or a renowned lyricist in the Tamil Celluloid film world with the revered coinage Papanasam Sivan ("Sivan"). Young Ramayya was born in Polagam, near Thanjavur, about

125 years ago, but had to migrate, when he was hardly 6 years old, to Thiruvananthapuram samasthanam (the modern day Trivandrum), after he lost his father. With the subsistence provided by the generous Maharaja's OoTTupura, and with free education from the Maharaja's Sanskrit College, he graduated to the certification as 'UpAdhyAyA.' As a teenager, Ramayya also felt fortunate to come under the musical influence of (SwarakkuDukkai) Noorani Mahadeva Bhagavatar (Asthana vidwan in the Court of Thiruvananthapuram maharaja), Samba Bhagavatar, and Karamanai NeelakanTa dAsar at a time when the musical foundation had already been laid by his mother, Yogammal, and his maternal grandfather who taught him more than 600 devotional songs. During this learning phase, young Ramayya was inspired by the famous composer Nilakanta Sivan and used to regularly attend Nilakanta Sivan's Bhajans in 1902 and 1903. This affiliation with the vAkgeyakara Nilakanta Sivan is mentioned in 'enadhu ninaivukkaDal,' a book of personal reminiscences written by Sivan himself. While young Ramayya worked as a cook and as a handyman in Maharaja's Oottupara, he used to frequent Harikatha kAlakshebams to absorb the style and erudition of Harikatha bhagavatar ManamElkudi Venkatachala Bhagavatar (who was vocally supported, then, by Harikesanallur Muthiah Bhagavatar who later became one of the greatest vAkgeyakaras of 19th and 20th centuries). Another great musician that Ramayya admired was the Harikatha exponent Tiruppazhanam Panchapakesa Bhagavatar. In his memoir 'enadhu

ninaivukkaDal', Sivan mentions the greatness of Panchapakesa bhagavatar as having been endowed with the pancha-va'karams or five'Va's – Vastra, Vapu, vAk, Vidya and Vinaya (quoted from a famous poet).

When his mother passed away in 1910, Ramayya returned to Tamizh Nadu with his brother, but moved from place to place before finally settling down in Papanasam village. His penchant for devotional music and mellifluous and divine rendition of bhajan songs over the next few years in and around Papanasam earned him the name 'Papanasam Sivan.'

Sivan reportedly abhorred classical music that was then practiced on the 'concert platforms' for he felt they lacked devotional and spiritual fervor. It was in response to this that he said that he began composing songs that were 'primarily driven by devotion rather than by abstract music.' By 1912, he started listening to 'classical' concerts, rather perforce, which, nevertheless helped elevate his musical journey from being a mere Keetana-driven devotee

to that of a 'classical composer.' For this transition, the music world must thank MahAvidwan Konerirajapuram Vaidyanatha bhagavata. Ironically, Sivan walked out of the first concert of Vaidyanatha Bhagavata, highly critical, as he (hardly 22 years of age) could neither understand Telugu nor appreciate Tyagaraja's compositions. He also felt that the niravals and kalpana swarams did not evoke any emotion in him! But, in a later concert which he was forced to attend, Sivan listened to Bhagavata's superior rendition of Gopalakrishna Bharati's "tiruVaDi Saranam." This reversed his unsubstantiated prejudice so much that he became an instant ardent devotee of Bhagavata's music. He listened, within the next year, to more than 50 concerts of Bhagavata, and this experience took him to his home to become a living-in disciple, albeit for a few months. Over the years, Sivan's overwhelming admiration for Vaidyanatha Bhagavata's raga rendition especially 'tODi' led him to compose about 20 songs in the raga tODi! Sivan reminisces the kind incident (in his memoir) when he was asked to sing at the end of a public concert by Bhagavata and how Bhagavata (whom Sivan refers to as his Guru) showered love as a father to a disciple (who had lost his biological father so young). Sivan adds that his own musical style, in his later years, was praised by Marungapuri Gopalakrishna Iyer and Musiri Subramanya Iyer as bearing a strong semblance to Vaidyanatha Bhagavata's 'bani.' With no other formal teacher or

a father figure in his life, Sivan recounts his sadness in his memoir about the personal impact of Bhagavata's passing away in 1921. When Sivan settled down in Madras in 1929, Rukmini Devi Arundale appointed him as a music teacher in Besant High School and then brought him to Kalakshetra (1934-39) where Rukmini Devi herself became one of his disciples. His sojourn at Kalakshetra is reported to have inspired him to compose several pada-varnams.

Sivan, though lacking formal education in Tamizh, became one of the greatest patrons of Tamizh Isai and Freedom movement. His Harikambhoji kriti 'PaamAlaikkui Nai' on Mahakavi Subrahmanya Bharati is one of the examples highlighting his passion for Tamizh kavis.

Carnatic Music world has acknowledged him repeatedly that as a composer Sivan ranks alongside the eminent vAkgeyakaras who followed the Musical Trinity. Sivan did not use any lexicon or dictionary for choosing rhyming words nor did he seem to emphasize grammatical or puritanical approaches. Almost all doyens of yester-years such as Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar, Maharajapuram Vishwanatha Iyer, Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavathar, Madurai Mani Iyer, Musiri Subramania Iyer, Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, M S Subbulakshmi, K V Narayanaswami, D K Pattammal have sung hundreds of compositions of Sivan in their performances. Sivan's



Sangeeta Acharya Tiruvaiyaru SR Krishnan

has been a Carnatic musician since when he was nine years of age. Having trained under legendary musicians such as Gaana-bhoosha Nam Brahmasri Kumaramangalam Srinivasaraghavan, his father, and Sangita Kalanidhi Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer, Madurai Mani Iyer and G.N. Balasubramaniam. Krishnan has presented 'Divya Naama Sankeertanam' & 'Harikathas', encompassing Carnatic and Hindustani systems of music, for more than five decades and across four continents of the globe. An International Banker for 48 years, Krishnan has been a distinguished Fellow of several Royal Academic Societies/Institutions of the United Kingdom since 1978. He is a founder principal of three International Fiduciary corporations since 1987, two of which work for several Federal & State Agencies of the US Government. He and his wife Radha are patrons of several philanthropic institutions in India, which care for mentally challenged and destitute, who the Krishnans describe as 'God's favorite children.' More than 45 CDs from about 16 live recordings are currently available free from his website www.sankeertanam.com.

compositions are mostly in Tamizh but he has also done some exquisite Samskrit and maNipravAlams covering a wide gamut of formats such as varnams, kritis, keertanams, padams and javalis. His daughter Dr. Rukmani Ramani, has brought to print several hundreds of his compositions in seven volumes.

Although Sivan did not have many direct disciples doing Gurukulavasam with him, Madurai Mani Iyer, Professor S Ramanathan, Lalgudi Jayaraman, MS Subbulakshmi, DK Pattammal, Palghat KV Narayanaswamy, DK Jayaraman all learned his songs, at one time or the other, from him.

After ten years of relentless work, Sivan completed in 1952 a rhyming Sanskrit Dictionary titled 'Samskrita BhAsha Sabta Samudhaha' (aka Vadamozi Sorkadal). The last works of Sivan were 'Sri Rama Charita Geetam' (the epic of Ramayana composed in Tamizh in 24 stanzas set to 24 ragas, capturing the essence of the 24,000 slokas of the original epic) and a historical titled 'Kaaraikkal Ammayar Charitam.' Both these operas have been published in book form. Simizhi Sundaram Iyer, a great patron of Tamizh was so moved by this Sri Rama Charitam that he conferred the title 'Tamizh tyAgayya' as the popular belief amidst Tamils was that he was probably a reincarnation of Saint TyAgaraja.

Sivan composed hundreds of songs for Tamizh films, for about 15 years from 1936 to 1951, lacing spiritual fervor into those

compositions, which combined classical and light treatment of the ragas; the film world has acknowledged that his songs were primarily responsible for the phenomenal success of many of those films and its producers. Reluctant as Sivan was to mix with the motley film world personalities, Sivan's close friend and a film director, K. Subramaniam convinced him to play select roles in four Tamizh films, Bhakta Kuchela, ThyAga Bhoomi, Bhakta Chetha, and Kubera Kuchela, all of which were great hits in those times. Those roles suited Sivan admirably, and it was the unanimous verdict of critics that he alone could have lived these roles. Sivan delighted not only his millions of fans, but also the stalwart music directors such as CR Subbaraman, KV Mahadevan, G Ramanathan, SV Venkataraman, Thuraiyur Rajagopala Sarma and R Sudarsanam, who all reigned supreme then. MKT, MSS, MLV, PU Chinnappa, NS Krishnan, TR Mahalingam, GNB and many other top notch singers and actors became famous by singing Sivan's compositions.

Sivan was a recipient of a several awards and titles. At Sivan's 60th birthday, Jagadguru Chandrasekhara Saraswati (Kanchi ParamAchArya) blessed him with the title 'Siva Punya Gaana Mani.' In 1962, Sivan received the President's Award. The Tamizh Isai Sangam honored him as the 'Isai Peraanar.' The Indian Fine Arts Society conferred in 1969 the title of 'Sangeeta Kala Sikhamani' and the Music

Academy the title of 'Sangeeta Kalanidhi' in 1971. In early 1973, the Indian Republic conferred on him 'Padma Bhushan.' He was also recognized as a Fellow of the Sangeet Natak Academy. Sivan passed away in October of 1973.

Sivan's benefactors and patrons included Rukmani Arundale of the Theosophical Society and Kalakshetra, Director K. Subramanyam, Smt M.S. Subbulakshmi, and the former Chief Minister, Dr. M.G. Ramachandran, and Tamil Nadu State Sangeetha Nataka Sangam, to name a few.

Sivan, very pious by nature, led a very simple unostentatious life, and was humble to the extent of self-abnegation. Whatever wealth he made through films, he donated everything for philanthropy. Sivan left a treasure hove of film songs to the grateful Tamizh world and several hundred devotional compositions par-excellence to Carnatic musicians and fans for generations to come.'

Sivan was not a concert artist, in the way Carnatic musicians and critics brand performers! But, Sivan was an ardent devotee of sankeertanams, and he proudly announced himself as part of a 'Bhajana Ghoshti.' He organized and participated in regular bhajans for several decades and traveled numerous locations of South India with his group of devotees. Sivan's bhajanai tradition is continued even today by his daughter Dr. Rukmani Ramani and his grandson Papanasam Ashok Ramani, a musician in his own right.