

Inaugural Address of Selvi J Jayalalithaa, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu at the 86th Annual Conference and Concerts of Music Academy on 15.12.2012.

Thiru N. Murali, President of the Music Academy,

Thiru Thiruchur Ramachandran, President of the 86th Conference,

Thiru N. Ramji, Secretary of the Music Academy,

Thiru K.V. Krishna Prasad, Secretary of the Music Academy and other Office bearers of the Music Academy,

Sangita Kalanidhi Thiru Trichy Sankaran,

Sangita Kalanidhi Tmt. R. Vedavalli,

Ministers and other dignitaries,

Eminent Vocalists and erudite musicians,

Music lovers and friends,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I feel greatly honoured by your invitation to inaugurate the 86th Annual Conference of the prestigious Music Academy. To be present among the doyens, the connoisseurs and ardent rasikas of Carnatic Music, even for a few hours, is a privilege that I cherish, an opportunity that I would never like to miss. I express my deep gratitude to you once again.

You were kind enough to invite me on an earlier occasion in 2005, but a deluge came and brought torrential rains through out Tamil Nadu, causing widespread damage. Providing relief was my priority then and there was much to be done to organise relief operations on a war footing. That extraordinary situation denied me the opportunity of participating in the function.

But, then, you are now going to experience a deluge of another kind! During the next fortnight or so, eminent musicians and celebrated dancers will be enthraling you with the best of their talents. This deluge of music and dance will take you to a different world, and keep your cares and worries off your mind and inspire you to take wings and soar to the distant realms of consciousness and creativity.

In this historic hall, great musicians have performed in the past and will continue to perform with dignity and sublimity, dedication and devotion that elevates and gives us a joyous ambience of peace in the mind and the heart. Who can deny that peace is the most pressing need of the hour?

The month of December coincides with the Tamil month of Margazhi and is a sacred month according to our tradition. It is the

month of devotion and prayer with which man seeks to humble himself before the Supreme power. It is the month hallowed by the recitation of Thiruppavai and Thiruvembavai and other Holy Texts which help us to develop a feeling of piety and reverence. It is the time to pay homage to all those saints and sages, who showed us the path to go beyond ourselves and feel one with the Cosmos through devotion, love and bhakti. Rightly, therefore, December has become the month when music concerts are accorded a special place where the listeners could become one with the highest of vibrations, that is, NADA. Today, in Chennai the holding of concerts at many places in December is a major event. Musicians and dancers perform giving their best before thousands of appreciative rasikas including foreigners. Joy and spiritual fervour are harmoniously blended, casting a spell over the rasikas, an experience, one may not get in the festivals of other cities.

The December Season of Chennai has all the features that qualifies it to become a season of World Music and Dance Festival. I suggest that you may please sit together and plan for a December Global Arts Festival at Chennai. You can count on me for my help and support!

One of the best offerings of our culture is Carnatic Music. Its enchantment lies in the fact that it is the essence of all musical experience. It elevates. It opens up a magical world of beauty and purity. Carnatic Music refines and uplifts the spirit and brings us face to face with our inherent spiritual nature. It awakens in us a feeling of reverence, inner strength and mental tranquillity. Harmony Rhythm and Melody that flow from an inspired musician who sings in an absorbing concert before an appreciative audience can send our spirit soaring towards the heaven of indescribable joy.

Animals, birds and even snakes are said to respond to music. Musical therapy brings much relief to patients with incurable diseases and helps them to improve their outlook and thereby enhances their chances of recovery. Neuroscientists tell us that music can play a big role in the case of dementia and Alzheimer's, by addressing the patient's emotional and cognitive powers and offers some scope for enriching and enlarging their existence. Such patients, in fact, perceive music even though they may have never heard a particular song before. They respond and enjoy music positively. Music is part of being human, and we are all human, and it is good to remind ourselves of our humanness.

South India's foremost legacy is her rich musical tradition, and Carnatic music has seen the pinnacle and glory of two thousand years of evolution. Today it has achieved such perfection with intricate nuances of sruti, raga, bhava and sahitya that it may have very few parallels in the world of music.

I said, "two thousand years of evolution". To explain, I would say, and all of you know that the present system of concert

singing became popular during the course of the last three centuries. The system presented itself with such greatness and finesse that it created a powerful impact on the emotional and intellectual needs of the musical minded, and it has come to stay in all its glory. At the same time, the Ragas, the melodious expression of the bhava and the rasa of the songs, the sahyas, blossomed into their pristine shape from the பண்கள் of the ancient Tamil people. The பண்கள் were the medium through which the great devotees and sages expressed their emotions from the mundane to the transcendent. The Ragas soon took over to become the embodiment of the infinite variety of human sensitivity and came to represent a colourful and variegated explosion of a profound musical sensibility. Verily they are the chief markers of the high point of Carnatic music.

I do not want to take time on this occasion to delve deep into Tamil musical history. But it will be useful to point out a few unique features for a better appreciation of and deeper involvement in our own music.

First, the length and breadth of the timespan over which our musical culture is spread. From THOLKAPPIAM, which is earlier than 300 BC, we learn that the author was familiar with the many nuances of the music of his time. It means that the people were quite conversant with the musical niceties from very early times. SILAPPADHIKKARAM contains a mine of information on music, dance and the various musical instruments. There are references to the sruthis, the swarams, பண்கள், and the like. Even the word "raga" was used in the names of the பண்கள், like தக்க ராகம், பழந்தக்க ராகம், மேக ராகம், நாட்ட ராகம் and so on. 103 பண்கள் had become popular even in those days. In the mode of பண் singing, the singer could use his / her kalpana, and enlarge his / her exposition, which took the form of various ragas. We owe a deep debt of gratitude to those unknown teachers and practitioners of music for their contribution to the lineage that has metamorphosed into Carnatic music that has absorbed all the best, and today, sparkles with amazing brilliance.

Second, the Alwars and Nayanmars sought infinite BLISS through devotional love of a sublime kind and gave musical expression through their Prabandhams and Thirupadhigams. The Nayanmars used the பண்கள் extensively to create some memorable devotional music, which touches our hearts. The THEVARAM songs of திருஞானசம்பந்தர், அப்பர், சுந்தரமூர்த்தி நாயனார் and the Prabandhams hold an unrivalled position in the world of devotional music.

Saint Manickavachakar whose inspiring work THIRUVACHAKAM is known worldwide for the depth and beauty of its devotional poetry speaks of : "பண் சுமந்த பாடல்".

These devotees did not compose songs in the first instance and set them to music later. Even as they sang, overwhelmed by the agony

and ecstasy of love, the பண் came to them, and set the song to its relevant tune. It was all DIVINE GRACE, the devotees said.

Thirugnana Sambandhar sang:

“எனது உரை தனது உரையாக”

“I did not sing the song!

It’s God’s WORD uttered through me!”

Such humility!

Sundarar sang of the LORD as the “embodiment of the seven musical notes” and “the very fruit of music” as well.

Appar spoke that spiritual freedom is for those who “glorify the LORD as the BEING who vibrates throughout the Universe and in every soul.”

Manickavachakar told devotees to “Behold Him who is inherent in all creation like the sweet music in the Veena. Behold Him who discovered music therein.”

The three year old Thirugnana Sambandhar visits the SIVA temple at THIRUKOLAKKA and sings a sweet padhigam, clapping his palms with enthusiasm. The Lord does not want to see the tender palms bruised, and places two golden cymbals in the hands of the child. The Lord seems to like the child very much. He gives him a pandal made of plants and a pearl palanquin too!

About a hundred years later, Sundarar visits the same temple, listens to this episode, and is moved to tears and sings: “நாளும் இன்னிசையால் தமிழ் பரப்பும் ஞான சம்பந்தனுக்கு, உலகவர் முன் தாளம் ஈந்து, அவன் பாடலுக்கு இரங்கும் தன்மையாளன்!” “To Gnanasambandan, who spread Tamil by his sweet music - you gave the cymbals and appreciated his songs. Of that nature you are!”

THEVAARA MOOVAR!

SEERKAAZHI MOOVAR!!

Muthu Thandavar, Papanasam Modaliar, Arunachala Kavirayar, who sang Tamil kirthanams with bhava and musical expression set the pace for further evolution of Carnatic music. Their kirthanams, as you know, are soaked in Bhakti so much so that they became very popular even during their time.

And, of course, the TRINITY of Thiruvarur -- Thyagaraja, Muthuswami Dikshitar and Shyama Shastri. And, about them, what can I say to the learned Rasikas and musicians, and musicologists present here? Suffice it to say that they elevated Carnatic music to sublime heights. They showed how Bhakthi can find mellifluous expression through music structured in a strict technical way. With no effort, the listener could shut off the outside world and turn inwards

and experience the sweet and smooth flow of a heavenly music that calms as well as purifies humbles and transforms.

It is difficult to make a comparison among these gifted souls. Thyagaraja perfected a most appealing and expressive musical form. The listener was absorbed in the finely-chiselled expressions of the Raga so that peace and contentment would settle on him or her in no time.

Dikshitar and Shyama Shastri achieved beauty through cumulative build-up of repeated effects. With precise style and diction, their compositions provided for successive elaboration for repeated effects.

WILLIAM J. JACKSON who wrote a well researched book on THYAGARAJA says, "In the traditional comparison, such works are said to be like cocoanuts which must be dehusked and cracked and chewed rather laboriously, before they release their rasa. The master lyricist Thyagaraja composed music which has flavour and impact like grapes smashed on the roof of the mouth then juice or rasa is swallowed immediately, stimulating thirst for more."

In our tradition, the true purpose of music is to impart a moral lesson. There should be a feeling of inspiration to lead a better life, consciousness of the purity that abides within. It should serve as a guidepost to the moulding of character so that there is an innate acknowledgement of the Unity of lives under the aegis of the Cosmic power. The compositions of the Trinity not only please the listeners, but give them optimism, a firm hope in their capacity to cross the sea of life with Shanthi and Aanandhaa.

For want of time, I have not referred to the contributions of other great VAGGEYAKARAS like Annamaya, Purandara Dasa, Swathi Thirunal, Uthukadu, and a host of others including Papanasam Sivam in our own time.

We have been fortunate in that, great musicians have adorned Carnatic music like pearls and gems. Our musical heritage has been passing on from the teacher to the disciple and musical legends have thrilled the rasikas with their unique and distinct styles; each has explored the depth of the compositions in his / her own way and helped to enhance the level of the listeners' appreciation. Giants like Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar, Musiri Subramania Iyer, G.N. Balasubramaniam, Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer, Madurai Mani Iyer, and Dandapani Desikar are names to conjure with. How can we forget the Queen of Music, M.S. Subbulakshmi, or D.K. Pattammal, or M.L. Vasanthakumari? They are lustrous stars that shine in the musical firmament showing the path to many youngsters as to how best the sadhana of Carnatic music may be achieved.

{PAGE }

Classical Dance is my subject. I will need a whole day to talk to you about its role in our culture. I suppose that will have to be reserved for some other occasion.

The Music Academy, Chennai is a stellar institution that has played a historic role in nurturing and popularizing Carnatic music and Bharata Natyam encouraging the Vidwans and the Vidhushis to scout for the best of young talents, stimulating the young to take to a systematic study and practice of Carnatic music and in training them to take to music as a profession. The history of the Music Academy is, in fact, closely connected to the growth of the Carnatic music movement in South India. Eminent dignitaries with keen interest in music starting from TTK have rendered yeoman service in fostering the growth of this institution. The world of music -- the musicians, the rasikas, the musicologists and critics owe them a deep debt of gratitude for their service. Today, Thiru N. Murali, and his team of enthusiastic office bearers and supporters, are sparing no effort to strengthen the Academy and to spread classical music appreciation. I wish them all success.

The future belongs to the younger musicians of today. Hundreds of them are rising up from the horizon. They seem to have outstanding musical sense, sincere application and stern discipline and are fully qualified to outshine the masters. Even now many of them have become a big draw in the Sabhas. They are our cultural ambassadors who by their performances can reveal to the world our classicism, our art, and our way of life that has made it possible to preserve the best of cultural values. I offer my best wishes to all of them. To them I say – "Please engage yourselves in more and more rigorous practice and sharpen your skills. That was the way of your elders." I offer my sincere congratulations to Thiru Trichur Ramachandran for being chosen to preside over this year's conference and receive the coveted title of SANGEETA KALANIDHI. He is a musician of pure style, rich manodharma and long experience. I wish him success.

Thank you.

Issued By:-

DIPR, Secretariat, Chennai - 9.