

**Following is an extraction of Madurai Mani Iyer's Presidential Address at the Music Academy's Annual Conference held during December 1959.**

*Courtesy: Music Academy's Journal released during January 1960*

**Presidential Address**

Vidwan Madurai Mani Aiyar then delivered his Presidential Address in Tamil in which he exhorted students of music and teachers alike to pay greater attention to the traditional grounding and training in the first lessons. Lack of this had been responsible for fall in standards, he added.

The Vidwan also appealed the Government to establish a University for Music and help the Academy achieve its aims.

At the outset Vidwan mani Aiyar thanked the Academy for the high honour done to him and expressed the hope that with the blessings of his gurus, Sri Rajam Bhagavatar and Sri Harikesanallur Muthiah Bhagavatar, and of his father Sri Ramaswami Aiyar and uncle Vidwan Pushpavanam Aiyar, he would be able to perform the onerous role of the President of that year's conference.

**Music, a Universal Language**

Music, said the Vidwan, lent beauty to life. It pleased the mind and removed depression. Practiced on correct lines with sincerity and devotion, music has a lot of benefits to offer. It could give a zest for life and a new strength, which did not exist earlier. The devotional songs of ours sung with a faith in god stirred our soul. These characteristics were well noticed particularly in our Karnatic music. A nation's culture was reflected in the growth of the music of its people. Music was a universal language by which the art and civilization of one country were understood by another. It is our good fortune that music had grown and prospered by the industry and perseverance of our forefathers.

Our elders set great store on the devotional aspect of music, the speaker added. Songs of devotion sung with knowledge of the sahitya united the singer and the listener spiritually. Our Sangita never pleased the senses only. It helped to foster bhakti and pursue the path of self-realisation. The songs of the Musical Trinity, replete with raga bhava and bhakti, formed the bedrock of our music.

**Strong Foundation - need of the hour**

Stating that the standard of our music had gone down, the Vidwan pointed out that it was due to lack of proper training in the early stages. Without the foundations of Sarali, Alankara Gita and Varna, the singing of Kirtanas and ragas got defective. He would impress on students the need to practice Sarali and Janta in four measures of speed, Alankara in three and Gita in two before passing on to Varna. At least fifteen varnas should be learnt in two measures of speed before proceeding to Kirtanas. The teachers should also insist on this strict training if the present day shortcomings were to be rectified.

The Vidwan urged that the pieces of Sri Tyagaraja Swami, Sri Muthuswami Dikshitar, and Sri Syama Sastri and of other great composers should be learnt in the correct traditional form. Students should listen to senior Vidwans rendering these songs. Musical training could best be begun between the ages of seven and ten.

### **Tips for the Carnatic Music Professionals**

Addressing the junior Vidwans the speaker said that they must continue to learn new pieces, including those of Gopalakrishna Bharati, Arunachala Kavi, Patnam Subramanya Aiyar, Muthu Thandavar, Poochi Srinivasa Iyengar, Muthiah Bhagavatar, Kotisvara Aiyar, Tevaram, Tiruppavai, Pada, Javali, Tillana, etc. A larger repertoire helps to increase one's knowledge. The concerts of senior Vidwans should be listened to with reverence. Songs should be sung with knowledge of the sahitya, the enunciation of the words being clear. Sangatis lacking raga bhava should be eschewed. While one or two rare ragas might be sung in a concert, juniors should largely handle ragas, which are full of bhava. Even among rare ragas such of those are simple and could be appreciated by the listeners should be sung in concerts, the obscure ones being reserved only for practice purposes. The sruti must be fixed to suit the singer's voice, but must allow the voice to clearly reach the mantra panchama. During practice it might be advantageous to have a little higher sruti.

While beginning a concert a singer must start from the adhara shadja and reach the mantra panchama with the bhava of the opening raga in mind. Then in the same raga bhava he must reach the Madhya panchama and stay there. After elaborating the raga between the Madhya and mantra panchama the upper shadja must be reached. From there the raga could be elaborated up to the Tara sthaya madhyama and if possible the panchama. After a short raga prelude on these lines for five to fifteen minutes, the kirtana and swaras in two measures of speed might be sung. Each Kirtana might be handled in this manner. At every opportunity it was good to stop at the adhara shadja, panchama and upper shadja. It was necessary to do the elaborations with these three places as the base in turn. In the case of some ragas the jiva swaras also might be utilized at the base. Vidvan mani Aiyar also advised junior vidvans that in addition to following the styles of their gurus they could incorporate the good features found in the styles of other singers and develop individual styles of their own. He would also appeal to the music sabhas to encourage junior Vidwans by giving them monthly concerts. The radio had done a service to Karnatic music by carrying it to the nooks and corners of the country and outside. If they would also broadcast the programmes of juniors, they would be bringing these vidvans before the public to a larger extent. If the vidvans also, on their part, would work hard and get fully trained they would receive adequate public recognition in their time.

Raga singing occupied a unique place in Karnatic music, said Vidvan Mani Aiyar. It provided the best opportunity for a Vidvan to show his creative talents. Ragas like Todi, Sankarabharana, Kalyani, Bhairavi and Kambodhi had been handled by generations of vidvans in the traditional manner. They never tired us although the style and presentation of each singer might depend on the quality of his voice and his imagination. For the last two generations a few rare ragas had been popularized and had come to be presented in a beautiful form. Experienced vidvans could

handle these ragas to a larger extent. He reminded everyone that the identity of a raga should be made known even at the start before any elaboration was attempted.

### **On 'Paatantharas' of Krithis**

Pointing out that there were increasing number of versions of one and the same composition, the speaker urged that one should, as far as possible, learn the pieces of the Musical Trinity in their old traditional forms, sing them as they were with bhava and preserve them. Vidvans could mutually help in the learning of traditional forms and preserving them. Facilities should be given for vidvans to get at these old forms and paata. It would be appropriate if this service to Karnatic music was rendered under the auspices of the Academy.

Vidvan Mani Aiyar continuing, said that the phrases taken from a kirtana for neraval should be chosen with an eye on the bhava of the piece, which under no circumstance should get damaged. Swara singing should keep to the raga bhava using the necessary gamaka. Tana should be begun in the madhyama kala and maintained in it with snatches of fast-tempo-phrases thrown in. Pallavi-singing in two kalais or four kalais or four kalais could be attractive if the original time measure is sufficiently slow to allow of the second and third measures. The less the number of words used the greater was the scope for elaboration of a pallavi. Making a passing reference to sruti bheda the speaker said that it was worth considering whether it is advisable to bring in the chhaya of other ragas when one is singing a particular raga.

### **Musical instruments - God's gift**

Vidvan Mani Aiyar then referred to the various musical instruments of South India. Generations of Nagasvara vidvans had rendered service to Karnatic music by elaborating ragas in an inimitable manner. Veena had an honoured place in our music. If the voice could only render what the Veena offered it would undoubtedly be gandharva gana. The flute had its special appeal. The violin, as an accompaniment had helped the singer to improve his manodharma. The mridangam was indispensable for the maintenance of tala and added luster to a concert. Jalatarangam, Kanjira and Ghatam had each its individual beauty.

Karnatic and Hindustani music were sisters, said the speaker. Each had its peculiar attractive features, several of them being common to the two. But it would be advisable to sing Karnatic without straying from its characteristic style. Vidvans of both schools could, however, benefit mutually by listening to the rendering of the other school.

### **An Appeal**

The Government had been doing their best to foster music by means of scholarships and prizes to students. A greater help to the cause would be done by the Government by the establishment of a University for Music. The nucleus for such a University might well be in the Music Academy which had rendered service for thirty years. The Academy had now struggled and to have a permanent building for its own with the co-operation of rasikas. The speaker appealed to the Government to render all assistance for this construction. The musical world was grateful to Sri

K.V.Krishnaswami Aiyar for his untiring work and zeal in looking after the progress of the Academy all these years.

Vidvan Mani Aiyar recalled the first Conference of the Academy in 1927 in which his father read a paper and he himself gave a concert. He had been taking part in the Conference every year since then. He was happy that he had the opportunity of presiding over the Conference that year.