

Virutham was the highlight

At their Narada Gana Sabha recital, Bombay Ranjani and Gayatri had a spirited team (H. N. Bhaskar, violin; Manoj Siva, mridangam; T.H.V. Umashankar, ghatam) to augment their confidence. Starting on the fast track with "Gam ganapate" (Hamsadhvani) and "Srivalli" (Natabhairavi), they offered stimulation of another kind with a steadfast alapana of Bahudari (Brova barama, Adi). Mukhari was luminescent in its highpitched outline, suitable for starting on the upper notes of the Anupallavi which underlined the pensive melancholy of "Enraikku sivakripal". Saveri continued the mood.

It was both tender and intense, and modulated with genuine feeling so that you were always aware of both the essence and the whole character of the rakti raga. "Sankari sankuru" had precision and a taut kalapramana in neraval and swaras. The ghatam was excellent here, particularly in the slow speed and karvais, while the mridangam nurtured the singing with regard for bhava. The tani was an absolute treat, proving that clamour is not necessary for generating excitement.

While the sisters get full marks for their programme plan (variety in raga, composer, kriti, tempo) their highest score was for the viruttam. Here the choice of ragas did not matter. What mattered was that they had completely grasped that this form requires entirely different

and specialised skills, an approach which differs from other kinds of improvisations like neraval and alapana. They also knew that here the sahitya plays an important part in evoking the mood. While Gayatri's voice is perhaps the more striking, Ranjani has what the north Indians call "dard". The combination moved you. The javali which followed (Vagaladi, Behag) was embellished with sangatis and taans in Hindustani style which did not jell with the form.

● GOWRI RAMNARAYAN