

Highlighting the kritis' beauty

THE CULTURE of Carnatic music is essentially melody in refinement and creativity has to be motivated by the aesthetics of the characteristic features of ragas, the structures of kirtanas and expressions of spontaneity.

In rendering great compositions, it is the spirit and not the superficial polish that matters. Intellectual interpretation may delight, but the deepest feelings embedded in the songs, unique in excellence, form the depths of transcendence that is associated with a great vaggayakera like Sri Tyagaraja. When properly rendered, they not only raise an artiste to musical heights, but also leave a lasting impression on the listeners. An artiste's excellence depends on his or her innate ability to co-ordinate the gracefulness of sancharas in ragas and sangatis in songs, the contrasts of vocal fluidity with statuesque korvais.

The effectiveness of these factors in a performance provides a measure of the artiste's adherence to the art, which calls for manodharma without losing the fundamental values that we treasure.

To a large extent, Ranjani and Gayatri, singing at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, held these objectives in view. Two factors contributed to the stature of the performance — one, the sisters looked

askance at the briga technique that rules the performing pattern of the aspirants today. The other one, no resorting to crooning to lend a semblance of sweetness to the vocal articulation. In both, there was firmness of tonal expression and sought the beauty of the ragas they handled with the judicious use of "Odukkals".

The impressiveness of the alapanas of Pantuvarali by Ranjani, Mukhari by Gayatri and exposition of Sankarabharanam in segments by both had to be seen in the arrangement of sancharas. Without watering down standards, they struck a balance between demands of classicism and cutcheri needs. In the higher reaches of Sankarabharanam, Gayatri came out melodically with silken strands of phrasings. Even familiar sancharas gained a touch of serenity as she wove combinations around the tara-stayi gandhara.

In the middle octave exposition, Ranjani blended delicacy and dexterity to lay a firm base of Sankarabharanam's grandeur for Gayatri to build the super structure.

Between them, they laid before the rasikas a panoramic sweep of Sankarabharanam unfolding vivid, vibrant vistas. With the kirtana, "Manasuswadina", the item formed the major effort of Ranjani and Gayatri.

Earlier, the delineation of Mukhari by Gayatri led the listeners to experience a rare pleasure of the flow and flowering of the raga's sparkle at every level. Quite fittingly, they chose to render the kriti, "Kam-bam" emphasising on its melodic scheme.

The other items they handled were "Appa Rama bhakti" (Pantuvarali), "Chala Kallaladu" (Arabhi), "Sri Valli Sevapathe" (Natabhairavi).

Akkarai Subbulakshmi, the young violinist, imparted in her solo versions of the ragas, Pantuvarali, Mukhari and Sankarabharanam felicitous sensitivity. She displayed total control over the instrument and a vein of musical fervour permeated the sancharas indicating a lively insight into the significant facets of the ragas.

A sensitive mridangist tunes his tekas and gumkees to the subtleties and complexities of the expository technique of the main artiste and that was the picture which J. Vaidyanathan presented.

In style, substance and clarity, his percussive support was packed in such telling laya idiom that both during the kirtana session and tani avartanam, his method sparkled with brilliance of patterns.