

# The New Patrons

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From times immemorial patronage of music by royal patrons has really been responsible for developing music. This general statement holds good for Carnatic music. Even though the musical Trinity were not dependant on patronage and in fact Thyagaraja's famous song in Kalyani bears witness to this, patronage of arts by the kings and smaller chieftains kept musical forms alive and made it possible for some outstanding musicians to devote their full time to music.

This state of affairs continued in the early decades of the 20th Century and the contribution of the Maharajas of Mysore and Travancore and the Zamindars of Tamil Nad require special mention. With the advent of independence and with the formation of a Republic it was but natural that the patrons who supported music and who helped to raise Carnatic Music to great heights would disappear. One would consider the past 30 years as highly significant and a watershed in the history and evolution of Carnatic Music. Besides the inevitable lack of patronage by the former aristocracy caused by their gradual extinction, the impact of film music was great. Film music made very rapid strides during this period and mass media ensured wide receptivity to the same. To the lovers of Carnatic Music, the doubt arose whether it would be possible for Carnatic Music to survive, much less sustain, and enrich itself in the inimical background.

Carnatic Music has indeed not merely survived but has enlarged its appeal and has succeeded in motivating a large number of musicians to take up the study of music. In fact, musical appreciation as well as the skill and expertise have increased and the attempt of every artiste has been to enrich musical tradition. That this has been possible is a tribute to the new patrons of music. The state, no doubt, was the first to realise the need to step into the former royal patrons. The

Sangeet Natak Akademis and Akashvani have tried and succeeded to a large extent in extending patronage to music. Realising that the best efforts come out of competition, they have popularised talent competitions. Besides, they have utilised the mass media to make it possible for every owner of a radio set to listen to the masters of music, for a small license fee of Fifteen Rupees per year.

While the State was the first patron to emerge and prop up Carnatic Music, the temples of Tamil Nad and to a smaller extent in other states extended their support by organising music programmes during festivals. There is no doubt that the contribution of Hindu temples to popularise and to cultivate the musical ear among listeners is notable.

Without in any way detracting from the importance of the patronage extended by the State and the temples, the pride of place as the new patrons of Carnatic Music should go to the music lovers themselves. It is to their credit that they formed music Sabhas and encouraged musicians young and old. Meagre as the resources of the Sabha have been, and with a small subscription from members they have sustained musicians and made it possible for a musician to make a living out of music alone. This is indeed the finest example of a co-operative effort succeeding wholly and completely in its objective. Music Sabhas have spread all over India and in any town where Tamils live, a Music Sabha operates. Some Sabhas have made outstanding contributions like the Krishna Gana Sabha, the Music Academy and the Shanmukhananda Sabha of Bombay. Small or big every Sabha has sustained music and musicians.

In the ultimate analysis, the new patrons of music lovers who have convincingly demonstrated that even with the little contribution they can equal and do better than the royal patrons of the past. ■