

Performers and Listeners

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With the explosion of the mass-communication devices such as the radio and television, the best of music concerts sometimes may be cloying. The growing number of artistes and listeners is certainly a sign of progress when a whole society's enlightenment and culture are viewed. The talents for music and dance have ushered in 'numbers numberless' of young professionals and amateurs performing both classical music and dance. The crowding in at every school of students eager for attaining proficiency in the arts proves without doubt how much hold the classical arts have on our young minds. No doubt there is a feeling among some sections of music and dance lovers that pop music and cinema tunes have already broken into the ramparts of classical art and begun to corrupt tastes of the younger groups.

Howsoever inevitable such changes in taste of people may be, one constant factor remains that music and dance have not lost their appeal to hearts. With this basic satisfaction, there is of course a need for improving the capabilities of the uninitiated for a greater devotion to the classical arts of music and dance. There is a core of dissatisfaction felt when listening to performers who try often to excel each other in their expertise more than in drawing audiences by their exertion to fulfil the main function of music, to please the soul and not the intellect merely. It is common experience that before finishing the first song at a concert the desire to show off skill and adequacy in technical knowledge impels them to indulge in *neravals and Swaraprastaras*. The *kirtanams* of the great composers recede to the background and the scope of enjoyment of them to listeners much reduced by this

baneful practice of display of erudition. Often the same patterns in swara singing clog the even flow of the *sahitya* too. Women singers also sometimes follow this unenviable fashion of rendering songs with almost a plunge in to swara sequences which often appear insipid and lacking in imaginative pabulum. While God has amply provided them with a naturally enjoyable voice that can easily attune itself to sruti, they deprive themselves and their listeners of their gifts to ensnare hearts by the swaying reaches of their voice. They equally get lost in the entrails of swara singing and resort to engage the mridanga players in the dry *laya vinyasas*. What a wonderful time the long-forgotten Dhanam's family members provided, may be no more revived in the way now music is sung by many of the sweet-throated ones. Alas, one of the juiciest of experiences for music lovers has been irreparably lost in this maze of imitating of men-musicians at concerts. The want of taste adds to the ineffectiveness of rendering songs with no conception of the Bhava of both the raga and *sahitya* imbedded in it. If only performers carefully try to render the *kirtanams* of the great musical Trinity in Carnatic music, there may be less need for them to interrupt the songs with unnecessary swara essays and *neravals*, which could occasionally be employed to add flavour and frill to the musical structure of the great ones.

The rising generation of musicians are betrayed into a sort of stunt when they wish to dwell on *Vivadi Melas* and prove their extraordinary capacity to maintain the calibre of a concert for becoming normal. It is not in vain that Tyagaraja sang that to become a performer at a concert one must be a DHEERA (courageous one). He reminded

how necessary it is to be soulful of his art so that a songster may draw with him other hearts in their common journey towards a higher region singularly enriched with the aroma of devotion. It is only the gallery-stimulator who should resort to these cliches of unregenerating devices. Our great Vaggeyakaras never served their listeners with anything but the noble ideal of uplifting experience by the combination of Laya, Bhava and musical idioms.

In Bharata Natya, the young ones below their teens easily acquire the necessary exactitude of steps and movements which after some advance in years may be somewhat difficult to achieve. But the advent into the field with no adequate knowledge of music certainly may prove a handicap when it comes to one's own originality in rendering abhinaya later. But nobody seems to be worried at all about the main purpose of a Bharata Natya recital. Every movement which should lead to a combination of all the artistic instincts to shape into a whole with the aim of being 'EKAM SAMARADHANAM' as Kalidasa would put it, is now here perceptible in the manner it is presented today. Hardly the dancer follows the musical Bhavas but only the language of the Sahitya with the result, it descends to a mere histrionic display. If she or he is a true

dancer his or her entire frame should be so saturated with the sense of Laya that every visible portion of her or his part of the body must needs appear to be filled with only laya and nothing else.

The fast emerging desire among some of the foreign returned dancers is to improve the traditional system with new-fangled notions of choreography and presentation that rarely preserve the pristine purity of the language of gesture and movement. To convey through a different language of art of human feelings instead of through words must be taxing enough. But the Rasika can never demand for less than a genuine representation of the correct language or gestures and mudras which alone would prove what an enticingly rare art Bharata Natyam is.

On the whole, one wonders whence this mad race among artists to reach the goal of novelty and surprises? Well; where there is restraint in art, there will always be something of the unapproachable sensitivity for lifting the mind both of the performer and the audience. The soul of enjoyment consists in the artist and the art-lover both coming together in the same experience. That alone is said to be consummating the true form of SARASWATI. ○

