

THYAGARAJA ARADHANA

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If Sri Thyagaraja Aradhana was an occasion in Tiruvaiyaru alone in olden days, proliferation of aradhana celebration in every locality in Chennai and other important centres and abroad has come to stay. If numbers alone should speak of homage and devotion to Sri Thyagaraja, many of us would have to pat our chests with pride. Is it really so? In the past with meticulous care the arrangement was observed at Tiruvaiyaru - musicians seating themselves before mikes in the first row, the violinists and mridangists and other percussion artists filling the wings. A musician occupying the middle of the singers' row waves his palms above his head breaking the talam to indicate to the congregation to begin the Pancharatna one after another.

What exactly is the difference we find now in this media - projected aradhana at Tiruvaiyaru? Many seniors, due to age or sheer indifference, are not to be seen in the aradhana arena. If any one of them is given prime time slot or the national programme, he comes, sings and goes away without participating in the group singing which is the core of homage to the great saint composer. Participation depends on what prominence the vidwan is given by the Doordarshan and All India Radio. Time was when musicians like Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer, Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar, Alattur Brothers, Musiri Subramania Iyer, GNB and Palghat Mani Iyer had participated in uncharvritti with sincerity as a great homage to Sri Thyagaraja whose life support was uncharvritti only.

Finding Tiruvaiyaru as an occasion for publicity young musicians now-a-days through the arena and not with many seniors among them they engage a field day with the DD cameraman exhilarated by young popular faces. But even this preferential attitude of youngsters is absent in the Chennai functions, because too many sabhas arrange it on different days and DD and AIR are absent entities in sabha music halls to cover the aradhana. If Chennai sabhas stick to observing aradhana it is mainly due to the munificence of a noble industrialist who has made fabulous endowments. Sometimes, even the invocatory Kirthana 'Sri Ganapathynee Sevimparave' and 'Gurulekha' are not sung. Thus time honoured customs are giving way to present day adjustments. Perhaps we have to be satisfied with numbers as substitute for genuine gratitude of bhakti to Sri Thyagaraja. One thing our musicians ought not to forget. The pot is kept boiling in their homes by Sri Thyagaraja's bounty. They earn a name by visiting centres abroad to participate in aradhana celebrations there. Should they not, atleast on one day, 'be sincere in their homage to the great saint composer? Sri Thyagaraja is not the loser, the musicians are.