

SRI R. YAGNARAMAN - A TYAGA RAMAN

by R. Krishnaswami

"A man is but the product of his thoughts. What he thinks he becomes"

— Mahatma Gandhi

These words fit in admirably to my good friend Sri R. Yagnaraman. It is a proverb in Tamil that a "Single Tree cannot become a Grove", (*தனிமரம் சேரப்பாக்காது*). But every rule has an exception. Yagnaraman's services to the cause of Carnatic Music by leading the institution Sri Krishna Gana Sabha, celebrating its "Swarna Jayanthi" makes an exception to the above said rule. "Men may come and Men may go, but the institutions remains for ever". To give that permanency to an institution, lies behind the efforts and sacrifice of few individuals in general and particularly one in a few cases. Sri Krishna Gana Sabha earned its name and fame through the efforts and sacrifices of Yagnaraman.

"Na Karmana, Na Prajaya Na Dhanena Tyage Ekena Amruthatva Manasu" proclaims Upanished. It is not by deed, progeny and wealth, one can achieve greatness and immortality. It is only by sacrifice, one can attain greatness and superiority .This is true in all its aspects to Sri R. Yagnaraman. Hailing from a respectable agricultural family, he equipped himself in Law, enrolled as a member of the Madras Bar. He joined the offices of late Mr. Justice G.R. Jagadesan and commenced his active practice in early 1960s. I have seen him in the corridors of the Madras High Court holding the case briefs and running between Courts. But his interest in fine arts, more so in Carnatic Music over powered his Zeal to the noble profession and made him a full time votary of the classical Art (i.e.) Carnatic Music. It is not an easy job to throw away a lucrative profession for the sake of Art. His courage and conviction in taking this strange decision make true the words of Mahatma Gandhi. He proved himself to be the product of his thoughts and he became, what he thought.

This is echoed in his humble address at the 80th birthday function of the Legend Sri Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer. I quote his words: "Primarily, I am a Sabha man. I am only too well aware of the ordeal of running a music Sabha. During the years of 1960-1970, when dramas were swaying the entertainment field and plays were flying high in all the Sabhas, I was a solitary man to rely on music programmes alone to run the Sabha". These words echo his deep involvement in Carnatic music and to nurture this sanctified Art through Sri Krishna Gana Sabha.

He made untiring efforts to keep the musicians always cool and calm. His mind will always be in exploring various avenues to keep the Carnatic Music ever growing. This was the cause for the renaissance of The Sabha Culture in 1970s at Chennai and he encouraged young talents and provided platform for them. Some of them, who were introduced to the Carnatic Music world by him are leading musicians. His selfless work will be written in the book of Gold of Carnatic Music. With this stupendous work of Sri Yagnaraman in mind, Sri Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer once remarked — “the future for Carnatic Music appears to be quite promising, if the immense interest that younger generations is evincing in it is any indication.”

My own experience in diverting attention towards more Carnatic Music, gained only from the success that Sri Yagnaraman brought in projecting young talents.

Our Organization (Narada Gana Sabha) began to provide more awareness of Carnatic Music and it has received immense help and guidance from Sri Yagnaraman, who will contact Artistes and make them to perform in my Sabha. His cordiality and friendliness towards other Sabhas made him the First President of Federation of Sabhas. He wanted to inculcate discipline among Artistes and Organisations and he frowned at mushroom units of Chamber Music Clubs. He was also against allowing the Music performances as free concerts to public. Even today, he is holding that principle of making the concerts as paid one and not on complimentary basis. He has no animosities with persons / Artistes who criticize him for his adhering to strict discipline and sticking to the rule book of Administration. He is a symbol of a “Karma Veera” who believed in actions, heart within and God above.

My friendship with him is deep and an adorable one. There was no room for any difference between us. I have also used his good stageman-ship, whenever I needed his help. One such instance was when my Guni Swami Haridhos Giri expressed a desire to conduct a Nama Sankeerthana festival during December Music Festival. It is well known that Swami Haridhos Giri took herculean efforts to propagate Nama Sankeerthanam. When he expressed his desire to conduct the festival, my thoughts went only to Sri Yagnaraman and he jumped at the idea and made the “Sankeerthana Festival” a regular event in the years to come.

His services were sought for by many, in organizing music festivals. He was instrumental in conducting the Jayanthi Festival at Thiruvavur for the Musical Trinity and also held an important Portfolio in Thyaga Brahma Mahotsava

Sabha. His relentless work on the improvement of the stage at Sri Krishna Gana Sabha, bore fruit in having an air conditioned auditorium with all comforts and a mini hall too. Fifty years of Sri Krishna Gana Sabha is to be reckoned with Sri Yagnaraman's sacrifice and work for over 4 decades with this institution.

*TRUST NO FUTUTRE HOWEVER PLEASANT
LET THE DEAD PAST BURY ITS DEAD
ACT ACT IN THE LIVING PRESENT
HEART WITHIN GOD OVERHEAD*

W.H. Long Fellow

R. KRISHNASWAMI
Senior Advocate

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Dear Shri. R. Yagnaraman

Herewith sent an article for your Golden Jubilee souvenir. On receipt of your letter what came to my mind is put in words. Though it may look personal, it reveals the underlying spirit in the efforts of SKGS. Therefore do not think that it is personal to you. SKGS & yourself are inseparable like the Jeevatma & Paramatma relationship. Kindly accept

Yours affly
R. Krishnaswami