

Yesterday at [#CTU50](#) was an absolute blissful, fulfilling day from all angles.

I had to miss the wonderful Hanuman Chalisa and Thodayamangalam due to my Saturday classes. I cut one class so as not to miss the LecDem on Sri Purandaradasa kritis by Sri Srimushnam Raja Rao Sir. I didn't know Raja Rao mama sang. He has a very rich deep voice. His humor filled Lecdem was very interesting and he touched several beautiful aspects of Sri Purandaradasa in the small timeframe that was given. He was ably accompanied by Sri Patri Sir and Sri Raghul ji and voice support by our own Aravind ji.

After that followed Sri Ramajeyam - a special showcase on kritis of Lord Rama composed by Sri Papanasam Sivan. Few students of Ashok Ramani Sir rendered the songs beautifully ending in my favorite Ramanai Bhajittal. They were ably accompanied by [Karthik Iyer](#) and Ashrit [Aarthi Aravind](#).

Then came Sri Ashok ji's concert. He was accompanied on the violin by Kamalakiran and Patri Satish ji. Ashok ji's vidwat was outstandingly accompanied by the 2 greats.

Followed by his concert was Sunil Gargyan and team. Sunil Gargyan ji's crystal clear voice, the extraordinary speed, the flawless swara clarity and his renditions was just what the doctor ordered. It started late due to previous concerts and had to be ended quickly because we had one more major concert for the evening.

He started with a Darbar ragam piece which unfortunately I had to miss. Then came a beautiful crisp fast paced Okapari judaga in Kalavathi ragam. Outstanding Saramathi ragam was the main, followed by Mokshamu galada. Some of the sancharas were quite surprising for me. I had not heard the " R S N D " prayogam in Saramathi and that was very interesting. I am a huge fan of KVN Sir and BJ's Mokshamu and I am still biased on that view point. I had not heard this version and it was beautiful. He was ably accompanied by Sri Raghul, Sri Sai Raghavan and Sri Nerkunam Dr Shankar on the Kanjira. To keep up with Gargyan's speed could have been quite challenging but it seemed just perfect. After a good long thani especially with a very beautiful sounding kanjira, TES Sir said, they didn't have much time. People opposed to it as the concert was going beautifully. Gargyan ji said they had specially prepared a Pallavi for CTU completing 50 years in Khanda nadai mishra jampe thalam which completes the 50 beat count and the lyrics were "Thyagarajotsava Chiramjeevathu sadaa jayatu" beautifully composed by Sri Raghul ji. RTP in Hamsanadam was outstanding.

To be continued...

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On Weekend 2, Day 1, Sunil Gargyan ji's concert as I was saying was simply superb. A unique feature during the RTP was, the entire Thanam was handled by Raghul ji probably to save time

which was again very clever and beautiful. After his fantastic RTP followed a very beautiful Kalyana Gopalam in Sindhubhairavi. I have learned Priya Sisters version and I love it. Now this version might grow on me. What a beautiful rendition. He concluded the concert with a beautiful Thirumagalum thiruvadivum, an excerpt from Adaikkala Patthu by Swami Vendanta Desikan in ragam Surutti.

I remembered his last concert when there was severe thunderstorms, the reception and foyer area in HTGC was all flooded and people were running helter skelter in panic at the back of the hall, and he was oblivious to all the chaos and had continued his wonderful concert. TES remembered the same as well.

Back to this concert, I MUST congratulate young Maithreyi Mythreyi Govindarajan who put thambura the entire time. I have huge respect for people who put thambura for hours together. You can play veenai or violin for 3 or 4 hours and you won't feel the stiffness like Thambura, because your hands are moving. With thambura you just have to sit in the same position and do the same plucking without moving your wrist. I used to take pride, as praised by my Guru of course, in putting thambura during our entire class. That would be 1 hour. Then sometime in 1992 or so, I played thambura for Shirgazhi Shivachidambaram for 4 hours and for Sri K J Yesudas for 2 hours. Shirgazhi's concert is when my fingers went numb and something I remember even today. Today my fingers go numb after 5 minutes.. and that's a different story.

After this concert came another SIMPLY SUPERB OUTSTANDING concert by Sriranjani Santhanagopalan ji. Oh My God.. That was something that lacks superlatives. Her voice was able to traverse all octaves very smoothly with ease, her bhava laden super fast brigas and gamakas, glides and slides were only a pleasure to the ears. She was again accompanied by EXTRAORDINARY Sri Patri Sir, Samyuktha on the ghatam and very soothing yet equally strong violin by Kamalakiran.

She started and ended her concert with Sowrastram. Her theme was Mummurthigal, the Carnatic music trinity where coincidentally all three were from Tiruvarur and became musical greats. As she said, all three even though were around, during the same period of time, and popularized and gave a structure to Carnatic music, each brought a different concept to the table. Shyama Shastri was a minimalist with fewer kritis and each one is a strong gamaka laden outpouring of bhakti to Goddess Kamakshi mainly. Where as St Tyagaraja talked about the social norms – in my opinion, probably due to St Purandaradasa's influence on him. Of course, we know St Tyagaraja wrote mostly on Lord Rama along with other Gods as well. And Sri Muttuswami Dikshitar wrote slightly more complicated, intricate, profound and deeply mystical aspects of the Gods or Goddesses. He wrote mostly in Sanskrit and the compositions depicted veena style gamakas. Sriranjani ji presented all the kritis in the respective styles very beautifully.

She sang Sri Shyama Sastri's Sowrashttra varnam. After this beautiful varnam, her Kapinarayani ragam was simply superb with beautiful gamakas and brigas followed by Sarasa Sama Dana. Her neraval on Hitavu matalenta is something that will stay in our minds for a very long time.

Kamalakaran was so perfectly suited to her very mellifluous voice and the outcome was simply outstanding. I will sound very repetitive with all the superlatives, but this was one such concert.

Then came the Magnum Opus of Dikshitar in 14 ragas on Lord Kashi Vishwanatha from Kulikarai. First of all that song itself gives you goosebumps and her perfect rendition of beautiful transition from one raga to the next was just too good. I had to open the lyrics to read the lyrics and I just got a bit teary eyed. Superb.

A very fast Nenarunchinanu followed and then came the main piece. Intha Soukhyam in Kapi. WOW, JUST WOW... This elaborate piece indeed brought lot of Soukhyam. Soukhyam should not be interpreted as simple, melodious, easy. Nope. It had all the ingredients of the Main- fast pace, glides, brigas, hitting the higher octaves very comfortably etc etc.. and Kamalakaran was another melodious superstar. And just imagine with Patri Sir mridangam and the beautiful ghatam, how this combo would have been. And this girl Samyuktha on the ghatam was exceptional. Until the thaniavarthanam her volume was a bit low and then once she tried to match Patri Sir, it was an outstanding thani. Like TES Sir said very aptly, playing with Patri Sir itself is a challenge and she proved she could do it.

Then came a very beautiful Nanda Gopa in Yamuna Kalyani. Most of us have heard Maharajapuram Santhanam Sir's Nanda Gopa and fallen in love with this song. After Sri ji's version, you will just stick with this one. My dear husband guessed it when She announced Dikshitar's visit to the North with his Guru Sri Chidambaranatha yogi and his influence on Hindustani music.

Parvathi ninnu ne in Kalgada, a composition by Shyama Sastri was another beautiful rendition.

She ended the concert with Sri Raghavam Aprameyam in Sindhubhairavi, Patiki harathi re in Surutti followed by Pavamana in Sowrashttram.

The audience were spellbound by this Concert Extraordinaire.