

THE 50th MADRAS MUSIC CONFERENCE  
MUSIC ACADEMY, MADRAS  
Election of the President

Sangita Kalanidhi Budalur Krishnamurthi Sastrigal proposed Smt. T. Brinda to be the President of the 50th Conference. The proposal was seconded and supported by Sangita Kalanidhi Alathur Srinivasa Iyer and Sri Sandhyavandanam Srinivasa Rao. Smt. T. Brinda delivered her Presidential Address in Tamil, an English summary of which is furnished below:

"I am thankful to the Madras Music Academy for the honour done to me by electing me to preside over this 50th Annual Conference of the Academy and to receive the title of Sangita Kalanidhi.

Generally, I prefer to remain aloof from the limelight. But I am not unaware of the yeoman services rendered by the Music Academy for the past 50 years to the art and science of music. I, therefore, at the outset, wish to congratulate the Academy on its efforts to maintain the highest standards by encouraging classical music in circumstances which are fast changing day by day.

I feel that the honour done to me today is really an honour done to the members of my family who have been, for generations, dedicating themselves to the preservation of traditional classical music.

On this occasion I remember, with respect and gratitude, all my ancestors, particularly my grandmother Smt. Vina Dhanammal, my mother Smt. Kamakshi Ammal, several other musical giants and Vidwan Kanchipuram Nayana Pillai under whom I did my gurukulavasa. I pay my homage to them for their blessings as a result of which I am receiving this signal honour today.

My sister Smt. Muktha, who has been my singing partner for nearly 40 years, has a big share in this honour and on her behalf I convey my thanks to all concerned.

Music is a divine art which has been developed by our ancestors as a means of salvation. Bhakti is its inseparable element.

Sri Tyagaraja explains this in his kriti "Sangita Jnanamu" in Dhanyasi. There is hardly anything about music which has not been expressed by Tyagaraja. He has explained the methods of practising music, the reverence with which we should approach it and other truths about music. The kritis "Nadopasana, Nadasudharasa" "Sogasuga", "KaddanuVariki" and "Swara raga sudha" are examples of his songs on the art of music. If only we could understand his teachings and act accordingly, we would have done a real service to the preservation of classical music.

Bhava Sangita means the singing of music with the full understanding of the spirit behind songs. Everyone cannot acquire a knowledge of music. Family traditions, the tradition of a Guru,

constant listening to good music and a capacity to discriminate good music from bad and dedicating oneself to the art with hard practice are factors that enable one to acquire such a knowledge.

While these are the qualifications for persons who choose music as their profession, rasikas must also have a few qualifications to enjoy good music.

It is the responsibility of musicians, rasikas and institutions to encourage and foster good music. Musicians must function with a sense of dedication to the art. They should not indulge in cheap music on the plea that such music is popular among the rasikas. If they select a good style and apply themselves to it whole-heartedly, the music-loving people are bound to appreciate it. Musicians should also develop their own individual style taking into consideration the range of their voice.

It is not desirable to sing Kalpana svaras to swara jatis and varnas for which the svara set up has already been done by great composers. This applies also to changing the ragas of Padams and Javalis and the setting up of new tunes to Tiruppugazh songs.

Every discerning lover of music knows that the compositions of the Musical Trinity and other eminent composers of the past are excellent pieces which depict the raga-bhava, laya intricacies and poetic imagery and are, in every way, our guides for learning good music. I also feel that musicians must acquire some knowledge of Sanskrit and Telugu so that they can pronounce the sahitya correctly.

Now, a word or two about Padams and Javalis. Padams are replete with the bhava of rakti ragas, depict human emotions and explain the relationship between the Jivatma and the Paramatma. They are to be sung in the Vilamba Kala and the gaps provided in the sahitya should be filled up by the singer with long Karvais and beautiful gamakas. A padam singer should have a sweet and high pitched voice which should merge with the sruti. Many Padams are sung starting with the anupallavi. The correct method of singing Padams can only be learnt from a Guru and not from notations published in books. Padams are sung in the latter half of concerts as the voice would have become mellow by that time.

I am aware that after the exertion of singing an intricate pallavi it will be difficult to sing Padams and Javalis. But Javalis are pleasing to the ear and easy to understand. The Javalis of Dharma puri Subbarayar, Patnam Subramanya Iyer. Pattabhiramayya and Tirupati Narayanaswami are our precious heritage.

A few words about women and music. There is no need to emphasize the close affinity between women and the art of music. The presiding Deity of our arts is a Goddess. Syama Sastri, Dikshitar and even Tyagaraja have described Devi as an embodiment of music. Many ragas have feminine names like Kalyani, Kanakangi and Ratnangi. Women have thus not only a right to

practise music but also a great responsibility in doing so.

My conviction is that if musicians and institutions insist upon presenting only high class music, rasikas will naturally take a liking for such music. At present concerts of classical music are mostly arranged by Sabhas and that too rarely. The admission is by tickets. Formerly, lovers of music had opportunities of listening to classical music without tickets in temples and Utsavams and thus improving their knowledge of the art. Now, middle class families are unable to afford this luxury. A taste for classical music can be created only by constantly listening to it.

In this connection I want to make a practicable suggestion. Many institutions and governmental agencies provide encouragement for the improvement of music but the reason why they are not successful is that the art does not reach the common people. My suggestion is an inexpensive one. Our music grew within the precincts of temples. I understand that there are 51,833 temples in Tamilnadu of which 23,358 are under the control of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Department. There are 119 temples with an annual income of more than one lakh of rupees. The annual income of 13,000 temples is one thousand rupees. If a substantial portion of this income is set apart for arranging concerts by musicians who have dedicated themselves to the art, the Government will have done an inestimable service to our music.

It will also do our music immense good if rasikas and institutions make it a point to encourage only deserving artistes to enable them to improve their art without sacrificing their self-respect.

All our sages and saints have proclaimed that God Himself is an embodiment of Nada, music is born from the rhythmic movements of planets and the Universe has been created from Nada. This truth is emphasised by rishis of the Vedic age as well as by the English poet Shakespeare. If divine music is made to ring everywhere that country is bound to be a prosperous one.

I conclude my speech with my prayer to God that good music should fill our country and make our people prosperous and spiritually blessed."

The Presidential Address by Smt. T. Brinda was followed by her concert in which she rendered some rare kritis, padams and javalis. She was accompanied on the violin by Vidwan-T. Kesavalu and on the mridangam by Vidwan Coimbatore N. Ramaswamy. The concert was followed by a Bharatanatyam performance by Smt. Chitra Viswesvaran.