

# MUSIC EDUCATION: SOME POINTERS

It is true that our great musicians have almost invariably come up through training in the *gurukula* tradition. On that account, however, it should not be said that the formal *gurukula* is the only type of institution where music can be taught best. There have been gurus and gurus and thousands of musicians trained in the *gurukula*, but only a handful of them are well-known in the field of music, either as performers or as teachers. What is important is the spirit of the tradition, the personal communication between the teacher and the taught, and this must be preserved — be it in the university, *vidyalaya*, school or *gurukula*.

In at least one respect, the university can add to the benefits of the *gurukula* method. This is in the development of critical faculties and in the search for higher levels of understanding and artistic expression. *Gurukulas*, barring a few exceptions, failed to encourage this spirit of inquiry; each swore by a particular style and even grammar, sometimes, as in *gharanas*.

How about the concert musicians as a teacher? While concert music, especially in the South, has 'popularized' classical music, it must be admitted that this has not been an unmixed blessing. The finer aspects of the art are almost being forgotten, and the ends limited to entertainment and applause.

Music is, of course, by its very nature entertaining, but it is that and very much more. It is in throwing light on the neglected and unexplored regions of the meaning of music that universities have a large part to play. Very few musicians engaged in music as a career have the time or inclination for a disinterested pursuit of the art. Usually they circumscribe themselves to the limited purpose of pleasing the patron — be it the prince or the public. Patronage of music is said to

have passed from the prince to the public these days. But this is true only in the career aspect, not the creative. To my mind, the real substitute for the enlightened princely patron of old would be the university. Here, the teacher in pursuit of ideals has no need to feel cramped by extraneous considerations.

Music education in the university should not be limited to training in technical skills. True to the highest ideals of university education, its aim should be the enlargement of the mind. Music being a practical art, however, knowledge in music should spring from the practice of it. But university education should correlate theory with practice, combine artistic sensibility with scientific inquiry, and provide a view of the art of music in the wider perspective of Art and Life.

Improved teaching should result in improved standards in the practice of the art. At least for some years to come, I feel, music education in universities should not be career-oriented. It should conform to the original ideal of the university, namely, education for its own sake. The student should be taught not only to perform well but also to understand the meaning, the aesthetic significance, of what is performed. It is desirable that learning in music should include a general understanding of aesthetics as such, and as applied to the allied arts of dancing, drama, sculpture, painting and poetry.

Ideally speaking, the process of learning any discipline should be a source of joy. Music being intimately connected with joy, it should not be difficult for the teacher to achieve this. Far from being satisfied with imparting a few theories, technique and tricks of the trade, the university teacher should be concerned with the all-round development of the musical personality of the

student. He should feed the flame of art in the student with the oil of inspiration, encouragement and guidance. The subject of music should be taught as an art and not as a craft — much less, as a jargon. Grammar and technique should be taken in the stride, and these are to be transcended ultimately.

I am one of those who regret some of the current trends in our music — the so-called intellectualism in particular. This trend which started, I believe, in Carnatic music, is noticeable in Hindustani music also nowadays. It is a curious irony that we, who claim to 'hear' our music, are less sensitive to tone quality than the Westerner who 'sees' his music. Happy exceptions apart, musicians and listeners (especially of the South) are usually satisfied with some illusory pleasure, and do not care for the aesthetic joy — *rasa* — that music should give. Ideas, pseudo-intellectual and pseudo-emotional for the most part, have assumed an excessive preponderance over the fundamental need of music, namely, the production of sweet sounds. Voice is neglected, and, even in instruments, the potential tone quality is seldom brought out. In the name of technique, trifles and trivialities are increasing day by day.

In art education, imitation is inevitable in the earlier stages. Things worthy of emulation should be presented to the student, and he should be encouraged to choose and gradually develop his own personality as a creative artist. The subtleties of our music should be explained and, as far as possible, elements of form and style analysed so that the student, proceeding along alternating steps of *lakshya* and *lakshana*, will evolve his own synthesis.

V.V. Sadagopan in  
"Spirals And Circles"