

A GARLAND
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by N. Rajagopalan, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1990

PALLADAM SANJEEVA RAO - EMINENT FLAUTIST: (b. October 18, 1882)

Born at Palladam in Coimbatore district,
of Venkobachariar.

While quite young, Sanjeeva Rao picked up swaragnana when his blind brother, Prananathachar was learning vocal music under Shatkala Salem Narasayya. When the tutor died, the elder followed by the younger Sanjeeva, took up violin play under Sirkali Narayanaswamy. By the age of twelve, Sanjeeva was proficient. He took up a fancy for flute and was introduced to the 'Orpheus of India', Sarabha Sastri when he visited Satyamangalam for four performances for Rs one hundred! (Money value then is relevant.) Sarabha taught Sanjeeva and his two elder brothers for seven years. From the third year, Sanjeeva was giving concerts. (This is in marked contrast to the attitude of Bidaram Krishnappa who did not allow T. Chowdiah to accompany others for a decade.) The Indian Orpheus presented his disciple his own flute as if he was handing over charge of the rich heritage he had raised in his illustrious but brief life. It is relevant to mention that Sanjeeva brothers lived on 'unchavritti'(alms) during gurukulavasa - another instance of 'irresistible will to succeed rarely fails'.

It is said that Sanjeeva Rao's rendering would reflect sparks of his teacher's excellence in -

Ninnuvina namadi endu	Navarasa Kannada
Nenendu Vetakudura	Harikambhoji
Pattividuva radhu	Manjari.

The exquisite touch and flourishes of his master reflected in his rendition made him the most popular flautist and he was called 'the melody idol' of the music-loving public. Here is an assessment by E. Krishna Ayyar, Freedom fighter and Secretary of the Music Academy:

'The glory of Sanjeeva's music is mainly the sound of his flute - his master's. Mr. Rao is not noted for any great shock but whatever he touches is turned into grape and honey.'

Sanjeeva Rao has been using a flute of nine holes. He was conferred with the title of 'Sangita Kalanidhi' by the Music Academy, Madras in 1943. There was no flautist to challenge his sway till T.R. Mahalingam appeared. Chakravarti Hemambikadas Subramania Dikshitar lent lustre and dignity to Rao's concerts with his inimitable harmonium play as accompanist.

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