

PROMINENCE OF CHEMBAI VAIDYANATHAN IN CARNATIC MUSIC AND ON MUSIC FESTIVALS (2020-2021)

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Abstract: The contribution and dedication of Chembai Vaidyanathar Bhagavathar on music festivals are remarkable. So he is always come in to the major place in the scenario of music festivals. Chembai Vaidyanathar is the musical emblem that has set a unique mark in the history of Carnatic music in Kerala. His name is still a form of worship for music lovers. This article is a glimpse into the music career of the Music Emperor of Kerala. The Karnataka Sangitam or the Carnatic music was initially concentrated among the Travancore and Palakkad Iyers, but soon gained popularity all over Kerala in the last two centuries. In the last two centuries, several eminent Carnatic musicians have come from Kerala. During the early stages in the history of vocal music, the media of propagation was oral expression and vocal exercises. Without any external aids, depending largely on the God given gift of vocal ability, classical music was handed down from the Guru to the shishya by word of mouth. Interestingly, even after external aids are being commonly used, signs and lines, symbols and letters, vocal exercises and oral traditions continued to be used, because the aids and media are not suitable substitutes for the audio mechanism of the human throat.

Keywords: Music festivals, Carnatic music, Chembai family, significant of Carnatic music, Research trends, Guruvayur Temple, concerts, sangeetholsava.

1. INTRODUCTION

Chembai is a great genius who has created Nadabraham's amazing universe for over six decades. Chembai is a musical family in a village with only 50 families in Palakkad district. Chembai Vaidyanathar was born on September 14, 1896. He was familiarly known to all as "Chembai". His father Sri Vidwan Anantha Bhagavathar was the great grandson of the famous musician Sree Chakrathanam Subha Iyer, one of the court musicians of the Travancore State. His father was a famous musician from South India, who was a genius in Thanam music. To sing a thanam, a singer must have wisdom, sound, temperament, manodharma music and Bani. (Bani is a Thanjavur music culture) It is impossible for even the greatest musicians of that time to entertain themselves with this. Chembai's grandfather was so famous that, so he was called as Ghanachakra Thana Subhayar. So we can understand the authenticity of the Chembai family in the fraternity of Carnatic music. He had a great sense of humor as well as music. So his concerts and presence attracted by the audience progressively. He could do a niraval and swaraprastara from any given point, which bespoke of mental alertness in a concert. His empathy for his accompanists and disciples was noteworthy and he would go to great lengths to encourage them.

Chembai Vaidyanathar was one of the leading practitioners of Carnatic Music. Old musicians pointing out that he, along with Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar & Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer formed the Modern Trinity of Carnatic Music, the trio who were responsible for keeping up the concert tradition in the vacuum caused by the departure of the titans in the beginning of the 20th Century. Before the entry of the bright young stars such as Musiri Subramania Iyer, Semmangudi

Srinivasa Iyer, G.N.Balasubramanian, Madurai Mani Iyer and the female-trio comprising of M.S.Subbulakshmi, D.K.Pattammal and M.L.Vasanthakumari, who took to the stage later. But what made Chembai different from them was his voice, that booming, metallic, powerful voice which never seemed to depart from sruti. It led to mark his name in the history of Kerala Carnatic music as he contributed his life for Carnatic music. The study concentrated the dedication and the passion of Chembai on Carnatic music and the remarkable contributions of his approach in music festivals. The Chembai family had great devotion and passion in Carnatic music, and they made effort to spread the eternal smell of it to the new generation also. The Chembai village is the best place to get the evidence for it. He started Music College in Palakkad to explore the Carnatic music by the new generation.

Chembai along with his brother Shri. Subramanian learnt music from his father Shri. Anantha Bhagavathar. Shri. Anantha Bhagavathar was a talented vocalist & violinist. The Chembai brothers had their first concert in 1905 at a Temple festival in a town called Ottapalam. Their concerts at the temple festivals in Vaikom and Guruvayur were one of the landmarks in the early career of the brothers. At the age of eight onwards Chembai, performed in concert which extended over seventy years of distinguished career in music.

A.V. Krishna had a great influence in Chembai's life. He played an important role in the development of Vaidyanathar Bhagavathar's career. When he was making a mark as a musician in the local area, he was very young then-Krishna Iyer was a busy lawyer based in Trissur. He studied music under Chembai's father. Later had the opportunity to enhance his perception of music appreciation by listening to fine performances by top musicians in Malabar and in Madras City. He knew Kathakali songs set to Carnatic music and as well the songs used in Ottamthullal and Krishnanattam. He had both the motive and the competence to play the role of a mentor to young Vaitha. Krishna Iyer who later discovered Palakkad Mani who was being groomed as a vocalist by his father and who helped to launch the youngster on a career as mridangam vidwan. A.V. Krishna Iyer had the time to time visit to the village of Chembai. He recommended suggestions to his younger brother Subramaniam(Chuppamani) to improve the attractiveness of their singing. But he offered more than mere advice. He took the initiative to recommend Chembai for concerts outside the Palakkad area in Malabar, Travancore and Cochin. A.V. Krishna Iyer used to teach Chembai Sanskrit and persuaded him to sing Agre Pasyami thejo, the sloka from Narayaneeyam. It was he who asked Chembai to sing Karuna cheyvanendu, written by Irayyimman Thambi, on Guruvayurappan in Malayalam.

Guruvayur temple was his resort and shelter throughout his life where Chembai's music performance was an indispensable item from 1907 during the Ekadashi day till his demise in 1974. Chembai being an ardent devotee of Carnatic music. Chembai attracted a very large audience with his metallic voice which has wide range and volume. This has led to promotion of the standards of performing vocalists. Chembai enthralled music lovers for over six decades with his powerful and majestic voice. Some of his prominent disciples include K.J. Yesudas, T. V.Gopalakrishnan, V.V.Subramaniam, Jayan and P. Leela. Some musicians recall the man and his music

Sangeetha Samrat, Sangeetha Kalanithi Chembai Vaidyanatha Bagavathar is undoubtedly the living Doyen among the classical musicians of South India. He has been a successful performing vocalist for the last 60 years and more, and is noted for the sustained quality of his vibrant voice. This is because of his deep devotion to Lord Krishna of Guruvayoor, to whose temple he contributes the major earning. He is the latest recipient of the Padma Bhushan award. Innumerable artists have been encouraged by him both as co-performers and accompanists. Sri Chembai has given his full emotion in the kriti "Ksheerasagara" depicting the mind of Thyagaraja in the phrase "Tarakanama". Voice culture occupies an important place in Carnatic music with many valuable insights provided by musical experts from past to present.

Voice culture consists of two components, the physical voice that executes the commands of the mind, and the mind, which creates the musical expressions. When both elements work together seamlessly, a whole new world opens up toward tremendous possibilities. The facile voice inspires more creative expressions in the mind and the mind, in turn, challenges the voice to keep up. Chembai died suddenly on 16 October 1974, aged 78, of a cardiac arrest. Shortly before that, he performed his last concert at a Poozhikkunnu Sreekrishna temple in Ottapalam (the venue of his first concert), Chembai has many phonograph recordings to his credit, recorded from 1932 to 1946. Those were the days before the advent of the concert microphone, and a singer was entirely dependent on the timbre and reach of his voice for a successful concert. Chembai was blessed with a voice of great depth. In 1957 he established a musical college at Palakkad to spread the fragrance of Carnatic music.

SCOPE AND LIMITATION OF THE STUDY:

The aim of this article is to be mention and bring to notice about the significance role and contributions of Chembai vydyanathar and his family on music festival which held in Guruvayur temple as an annual function. The Chembai Music Festival was started to show devotion and love to Guruvayurappan through his music. The great legend Chembai had been conducting a music festival in his native place in accordance to show the favor of music right from 1924 onwards. This continued by his family and now its continued by Chembai Sreenivasan and Chembai suresh. The concert is known as Chembai Ekadashi music festival and it held annually in the month of February or March in the same village in Chembai. He was also had been conducting sangeetholsavam in Guruvayur every year in the month of November. Now Chembai sangeetholsavam is conducting by the Guruvayur devaswam board. This festival is have the significant role in the culture of Kerala, as the new generations are getting experience to explore the element of Carnatic music as well s the different singing style.

This study focused on the Chembai family and their great contributions to the field of Carnatic music. Chembai was the recipient of numerous honors. He received the 'Sangita Kalanidhi' title in 1951, 'Central Natak Akademi Award' and 'Padmabhushan' from President of India, and the 'Gayana Gandharva' title. Swami Savanna conferred on him the title of Sangita Samrat. Honours were also bestowed on him by the rulers of Cochin, Mysore, Baroda, Vijayanagaram, Bobbili and Jaipur. He lived a life of a savant and passed away on October 16, 1974. Even after his demise, Chembai continues to inspire countless musicians who participate in his memorial concerts. With his rich vibrant voice and a ringing tone, Chembai's music had a direct appeal to his listeners. The research leads to the travel of Chembai to new generation of Carnatic music. Chembai had a vigorous, strong, vibrant, ringing and resonant voice. He would sing in a clear, open-throated style that requires high levels of physical and mental endurance to pull off, yet, he did so in a seemingly effortless manner.

The study emphasis the contribution of Chembai family in the field of Carnatic music and his prominence in music festival. The study is mainly based on primary and secondary sources.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- To develop the knowledge of the Carnatic music in Kerala and to understand the influence of Carnatic music in spiritual life.
- To cultivate and enhance the interest in music.
- To gain familiarity with a range of different musical practices and traditions through music festival.
- To learn to think about cultural, historical, and cognitive dimensions of Carnatic music through Chembai vydyanathar music.

HYPOTHESIS

- It is hypothesized that the role and the contributions of the Chembai Vaidya Nathan and family and its influence in Kerala Carnatic music and in the music festival.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITRATURE

The family's connection with classical music spans five centuries. Vaidyanatha Bhagavathar's father, Anantha Bhagavathar, was a violinist and singer from Chembai, near Palakkad, to whom a local Maharaja awarded the title "Ghana Chakratanam", indicating his mastery of a special closed-mouth style of singing tanam. At age 3, Chembai began to learn Carnatic music from his father in the customary guru-shisha tradition, and also began violin and flute training in 1912. Sambai is also one of 12 names of Sirkazhi, the birthplace of saint Gnanasambandar 7th century. T.N.E L. R. Viswanathan Sarma (1954), Chembai Selvam (Biography of Chembai), 1954: Amudha Nilayam Ltd. N. Pattabhi Raman and K.S. Krishnamurthy, Sruti, Issue 98, November 1992. The article was written by lawyer-poet P.T.Narendra Menon of Ottapalam, with the cooperation of his musician-wife Sukumari Narendra Menon, a disciple of Chembai is describing about the last days of Chembai Bhagavathr.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study was based on the survey method. The primary and secondary sources are used for collection of data and Constraint identification and classification through a structured approach is another step. Both quantitative and qualitative method used in the same study. Interview with the eminent personality's .visited places related Chembai. Related Articles also referred to study the topic.

4. CONCLUSION& FINDINGS

Chembai Vaidyanathar Bhagavathar and his contributions in Carnatic music have the great influence in the religious and cultural life of Kerala. Chembai himself had promoted many young musicians including Palghat Mani Iyer, Palani Subramania Pillai,T.V. Gopala Krishnan and K.J. Yesudas. The family's connection with classical music spans five centuries. Vaidyanathar Bhagavathar's father, Anantha Bhagavathar, was a violinist and singer from Chembai, near Palakkad, to whom a local Maharaja awarded the title "Ghana Chakratanam", indicating his mastery of a special closed-mouth style of singing tanam. An ardent devotee of Sree Krishna, Chembai attributed all his success to Guruvayoorappan. The maestro himself used to conduct the festival in the temple town during his lifetime.

Chembai Music Festival is the venue for a new generation in the world of music. Music festivals are very important in the culture of Kerala. The music festival is blessed with leading musicians and singers. The new generation is able to meet many prominent singers and also the singers can sing in front of the Carnatic music legends. 3000 musicians, including classical vocalists and players of various instruments, will participate in the 15-day Chembai Music Festival of Guruvayur Sree Krishna temple. It was his great desire to sing until his last breathe and the almighty God blessed him with the same desire.In1974, October 16th he Attended Poozhikulam Concert . The concert was attended by many prominent musicians. Chembai sang his favorite krithis and rags with full of emotion and energy. The favorite kritis of Bhagavathar started flowing out. He was in form, and it was a first-class concert. He sang Viriboni in Bhairavi, Vatapi Ganapatim in Hamsadhvani, Pavana guru in Hamsanandi and Rakshamam saranagam in Nata with his usual verve and gusto. Then he took up Sree Subrahmanyaya in Kambhoji, and elaborated the raga, to be followed later by a sizzling niraval and swaraprastara. Power mingled with visranti in his alapana. The bell-metal voice was practically intact. The sruti suddham and accuracy of tala were there ravaged by old age. The enunciation of sahitya was as usual clear, though he never used artificial dentures.

The specialty of Chembai, kattiri swara combination of scissored swaras also was there. And above all there was soulful bhava. We heard this last concert with bated breath, never suspecting the imminent end for a moment. Bhagavathar took up many items not usually sung by him.Bruhi Mukundeti of Sadasiva Brahmendra was among them. Then, of course, he sang Karuna cheyvanendu tamasam by Irayimrnan Tampi, his favourite and a virtually indispensable song in all his concerts. Tears rolled down his cheeks as he sang it, and he raised his hands high above the head and joined his palms in prayer. Then he rendered a sloka, Vandemataram Ambikam Bhagavatim, the supplication of the child going to the mother's lap. He concluded the concert with his favorite song "Karunai Cheivan Endu Thamasam Krishna" (Why is there so much delay in conferring your mercy, Krishna?).. He ended up singing mangalam and came to the house of Vasudevan Nambuthiri as he felt too much of tiredness. The day he left his body and the passion of music to the next generations. His nephew said he had always spoken about an easy death, and had attained it As the funeral pyre burnt and died down on the banks of the river the next day, this passage came back to mind and I thought Chembai's music had once again conveyed the message to all those who love the saptaswaras. Deccan article reported on 2015, December 13th that, the Chembai Vaidyanathar Bhagavathar donated his earnings to his village temple.

As a researcher when I visited the venue of Chembai sangeetholsava at Guruvayur and could experience and analyzed the momentous vital role of Chembai Bhagavathar's in Carnatic music and in the music festival. The venue was crowded with the melophiles. I experienced the positive vibrancy of Carnatic music and the spiritual ambience. The young singers even the beginners in the Carnatic music fraternity performed well in front of the dignified audience.

The interview with Dr. Manikantan, who is the regular participant and the attendee of Chembai music festival, was very fruitful to get the clear perception about it. According to him the number of participants and attendees has been increasing year by year. This shows the influence of Carnatic music and Concerts in the present scenario. The intention and the dream which Chembai had about classical music is accomplishing through this Concerts. The Chembai Music College has a great reputation among the public and the students are attracted to pursue their higher studies in Carnatic music and instrumental music. When I conclude this article, I perceived and experienced the influence of Chembai Vydyanathar in the world of Carnatic music and music festivals.

AWARDS RECEIVED BY CHEMBAI VYDIANATHAR

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Carnatic musician Trichur V. Ramachandran[18]
Veena maestro A. Ananthapadmanabhan (2011)
Carnatic musician K. G. Jayan (2010)
Carnatic vocalist Parassala Ponnammal (2009)
Mridangam maestro Mavelikkara Velukkutty Nair (2008)
Carnatic vocalist M. Balamuralikrishna (2007)
Violin maestro M. S. Gopalakrishnan (2006)
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- [17] <http://www.hindu.com/thehindu/fr/2005/09/02/stories/2005090201460200.htm>