



# SRUTI NOTES

**SRUTI**

The India Music & Dance Society

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www.sruti.org

## FROM THE EDITORS

Dear Friends:

With Spring almost here and the first Sruti event for the year 2003 fast approaching, Sruti is preparing for a busy music and dance season. The Library Committee will be working on bringing you news and reviews of events both at Sruti and elsewhere in the music world. We are looking forward to your continued active participation in discussions relating to music and dance and contribution of articles to the quarterly newsletter.

We are in the process of putting together the souvenir to be brought out on March 1 for Thyagaraja Aradhana. Please call one of the LC members if you would like to contribute an article. The deadline for sending articles is February 25.

We are very happy to welcome Sreesudha Palepu to the Library Committee. We are still in need of another person (familiar with publishing software) who can help with the task of bringing out the newsletters and other publications. Please call a member of the Committee if you would like to help.



Respectfully  
P. Swaminathan (chairman)  
For the library committee



## UPCOMING SRUTI PROGRAMS

### General Body Meeting

(Sunday February 23, J&B software, Blue Bell, PA; For members only)  
See attached flyer for details

### Thyagaraja Aradhana

(March 1, 2003, Saint Mary's Hall, Villanova University )  
See attached flyer for details

### Aruna Sairam (Vocal)

(March 29, 2003, Gwynedd-Mercy College, Gwynedd, PA)

### Ranjani & Gayathri (Vocal)

(April 13, 2003, Saint Mary's Hall, Villanova University)

### Raja & Radha Reddy and Troupe

**A grand Kuchipudi dance drama with live music**  
(May 10, 2003, Venue to be announced)

## *From the President's Desk*

Dear Friends

We had quite a successful 2002 during which we presented many highly acclaimed artists. 'Composers Day', launched for the first time last year, was very well received. We are also very grateful for the enthusiastic response to the implementation of patron memberships.

As we start a new year of programs, we are looking forward to your continued support and participation in all the upcoming events. We invite all members to attend the General Body Meeting on February 23 for a discussion of several issues of interest (see attached flyer for details). Please help us to serve you better by giving us your opinions and suggestions.

With spring just around the corner, we are looking forward to many exciting programs starting with Thyagaraja Aradhana on March 1. The day-long program provides a great opportunity for all music lovers to showcase their talents. We request all teachers to encourage their students to participate.

The Spring performance schedule includes - vocal concerts by Aruna Sairam, Ranjani and Gayathri, Kuchipudi dance drama by Raja & Radha Reddy and troupe - all artists being presented at Sruti for the first time. We are also working on finalizing plans for the Summer and Fall.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome Sreesudha Palepu to the Library Committee. An electronics engineer and a music enthusiast, she comes with a lot of enthusiasm and ideas.

We will look forward to seeing you all at the Thyagaraja Aradhana.

Sincerely,

Viji Swaminathan, President  
For the Board of Directors

## **Shaping of Sri Muthuswami Dikshitar's Destiny**

T. Sarada

[Third installment in the fact or fiction series]

Dikshitar (1775 - 1835) dedicated his life to composing devotional music. The reasons why he shunned everything else in life and chose the life of an ascetic living in poverty are attributed to different versions of inspirational events that shaped his destiny in his early life. Although Dikshitar was well versed in musicology and knew its grammar thoroughly, his goal was to convey Bhakti and worship in general. He focused on the descriptions, meanings and principles of various rites and rituals of the Hindu religion. At the same time his compositions delineated the *ragalakshana* completely. He indicated the name of the raga as a part of his mudra along with the name *Guruguha* in his compositions. Highly advanced concepts of ritualistic worship, descriptions of renowned temples and deities formed the basis of his songs. He wrote kirtanas that are often used as kritis, since they provide vast scope for improvisation. He wrote mostly in Sanskrit and Telugu and a few in "manipravalam", a mixture of Telugu and Tamil. Dikshitar also wrote padavarnam and javali-like songs, but always with deep spiritual meanings.

Dikshitar's music includes ragas from North Indian music system and he even incorporated Western music elements. He introduced violin as an accompaniment to South Indian music performances. It is interesting to note that one of the early songs that he wrote about Varanasi temple is in, "Sivabandhuvarali", now known as Subha Pantuvarali, which is the counterpart of the Hindustani, "Miyankitodi." He wrote many compositions in Hindustani ragas, making these ragas an integral part of Karnatic Music.

Many later day scholars, including his family members have written his life history. There are many anecdotes about him but as is typical of stories about great people, they cannot be authenticated. Since there is no historical record, it is left to the reader to believe these stories or not. Perhaps, if we accept that the purpose of such stories is only to convey the greatness of such people we would look only at the interpretative values and enjoy them for their moral and spiritual contents.

Here are the stories that are ascribed to what shaped the life or destiny of Dikshitar.

During Muthuswami Dikshitar's formative years, Sri Chidambaranatha Swamigal (or Yogi), a great spiritual guru and a friend of the family, took Dikshitar with him to Varanasi. Their route took them through many holy places and in Varanasi, Dikshitar was initiated into ritualistic worship of Sakti, along with rigorous training in Music. After five years he was asked to go back South by his guru who told him that the education was over and that he had nothing more to teach him. As a parting advice, Dikshitar was asked to stand on the steps of the Ganges, take its water in his hands and see his future reflected in it. Dikshitar saw a Vina in the water, with the inscription, "Srirama" in Sanskrit. That decided his future goal for him. He returned to say goodbye to his guru but learnt that the guru had attained Siddhi, just then. Dikshitar had finished his training and was on his own from then on. (1)

The story is told with a twist by another biographer (2). In Varanasi, Dikshitar went to the Ganges with his guru as instructed by him. He was told that since the guru had nothing else to teach him, he was to return south. The guru then asked Dikshitar to go down the steps further. When he did that, Dikshitar actually saw a Vina with the inscription "Srirama" in Sanskrit. (It is believed that this vina is still in the family). His guru went further down as though he was going for a bath but never was seen again. This parting advice of his guru and the miraculous appearance of the Vina decided the destiny for Dikshitar.

The episode was reinforced soon after by the following incidence (1&2). After returning to the South, still undecided about what he was going to do with his life, Dikshitar spent most of his time visiting famous temples in the South (he would continue this

*Continued on page 3*

*The opinions expressed by the contributors of articles and reviews are published in a spirit of openness of communication and freedom of expression. They do not necessarily reflect the views of Sruti's Board or its members.*

habit throughout his life). At Tiruttani, one of the six holy places of Lord Skanda, an old man greeted Dikshitar and asked him to close his eyes, put candied sugar in his mouth and asked him what it was. When Dikshitar opened his eyes to tell him, he saw in the place of the old man, a vision of Lord Shanmukha on a peacock with His consorts. Dikshitar broke spontaneously into the song "Srinadadhi Guruguho Jayati" in Mayamalavagoula. This was his first musical composition and thus began his life of composing devotional songs. The theme of this song and how he composed another song in Anandabhiravi on Lord Subrahmanya, to answer the questions his bothers had raised about this composition, are explained in another story.

#### References.

1. Sri Muthuswami Dikshitar Kirtanaigal. By A. Sundaram Iyer. Music Books Publishers, Madras. 1989.
2. Muthuswami Dikshitar. By T. L. Venkatarama Iyer. National Book trust, India. New Delhi. 1968.

[Dr. T. Sarada is a member of the Library Committee of Sruti]

## Letters

To the Editors

Please accept my compliments on the two fine articles (by Sarada & Parasaran) in Sruti Ranjani 2002.

May I gently point out a couple of errors in the article on Borodin. I believe GNB was an English Literature B.A. (Hons) of Madras Univ. and not a mathematician. Also I believe, Dr. Sripada Pinakapani continued to practice as a civil surgeon even as he developed a fine school of musicians. I am not sure (if or) when he quit practicing medicine, but I know he was still active in the 60's and 70's by which time he was in his middle age (by Indian reckoning).

Information on GNB is from two sources: (1) Sruti magazine of Madras, issue #7 May 1984, pp 23 (a quote from 'my first kutcheri' an article written in Tamil in 1957 by GNB himself.

(2) 'G.N.B' by V.L. Vedagiri, K.S. Muthuraman, K.S. Mahadevan. Published by GNB's son G.B.Doraiswamy. page 5.

Curiously, while both agree that (a) GNB started studying for a degree in English literature, (b) moved to Annamalai univ. to study music simultaneously, (c) fell ill, (d) returned to madras to complete the degree at the same college, there is a discrepancy about the name of the college. The first reference purportedly written by GNB himself has him studying in Presidency college while V.L. Vedagiri et al put him in Christian college! By the way, I remember the honorific B.A. (Hons) would appear after his name in many of the blurbs announcing his concerts! The degree was a big deal those days.

As for Sripada Pinakapani, apart from anecdotal/personal knowledge, I can also cite Sruti magazine again. In their issue #193, October 2000, they published his reminiscences on his life wherein he states that he was born in 1913, and after listing the various places where he served in the medical profession retired in 1968 at the age of 55. Of course there is also mention of his simultaneous musical activities, in particular, tutelage of Nedunuri.

Rasikan

## 'Sruti' Pattabhiraman



Dr. N. Pattabhiraman, founder and Editor-in-chief of Sruti (India's premier music and dance magazine) passed away on December 23, 2002, at the age of seventy.

Dr. Pattabhiraman was born in 1932 to V Narayanan and Saradambal. He graduated from Vivekananda College, Madras, in 1952 with a BA Hons. Degree. In 1955 he acquired an M Litt., and later a PhD in Economics. He worked at the Indian Consulate and later at the United Nations in New York till 1980, when he moved back to Madras.

A connoisseur of classical music and dance, Pattabhiraman dedicated his life to the preservation and promotion of the classical arts. The Sruti magazine he launched in 1983 soon became a highly respected journal, undertaking the arduous task of documenting the lives of great artists and their works. A creative writer with a great sense of humor, Pattabhiraman was known for the accuracy and integrity in his writings. He had also served on several committees including the Sangeet Natak Akademi's publication committee.

In 1999, Sri Pattabhiraman launched SAMUDRI (Subbulakshmi Sadasivam Music and Dance Resources Institute), a center near Madras for the archival preservation of material pertaining to the classical arts.

Pattabhiraman's contribution to the world of music will be ever remembered. He will be missed greatly.



## Community News

**New arrival** : Rajee and V.V. Raman (member, Library Committee) announce the arrival of their baby boy 'Rishi' on 1/27/03, weighing 6 lbs, 8 oz. Our congratulations and best wishes to the family.

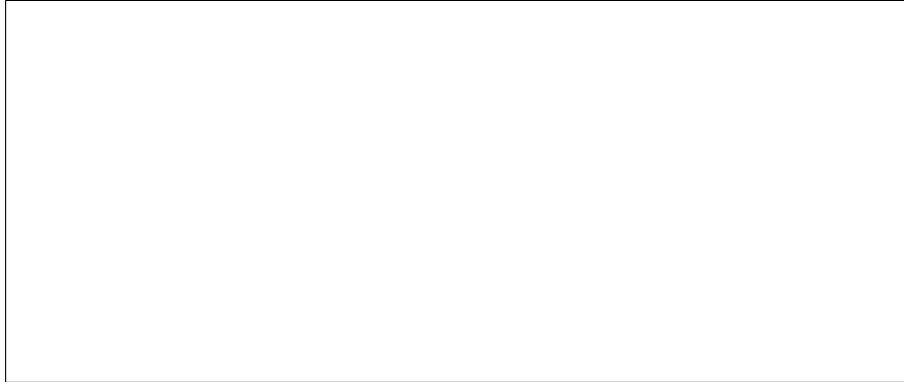
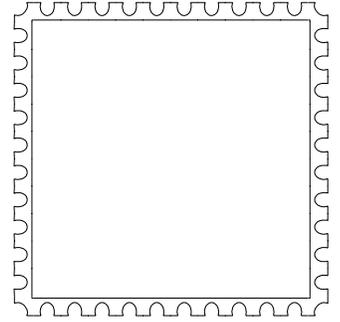
## SRUTI Concert Tapes

Recorded music tapes of SRUTI concerts are available for distribution among the patrons of Sruti. To receive any of these tapes and for a complete listing of tapes available, please contact P. Swaminathan at 215-643-2145 or send an email to panchanadam@hotmail.com.



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