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The Contributions of Gayaka Sarwabhauma Sreeman Parupalli Ramakrishnaiyya Pantulu to Carnatic Music

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Abstract

The study is about the life and contribution of Gayaka Sarwabhauma Sreeman Parupalli Ramakrishnaiyya Pantulu to Carnatic music. Parupalli Rama Krishnaiah Pantulu]was a great guru and musician of sterling worth. Parupalli Rama Krishnaiah Pantulu has maintained a standard of ideal Gayaka with importance to raga and bhava in his presentation. He set a noble example as a great guru and a musician for many to follow.

He was a great performer and always followed the Kacheri Dharma and Gayaka tradition. His concerts were divine and educational. He was one of the few musicians with a great reputation over the whole of South India. He was instrumental in the propagation of Carnatic music by his efforts in establishing all India radio at Vijayawada. He followed the Gurukula method of training and treated all his students equally irrespective of their caste and creed. He was responsible for producing many eminent musicians.

Introduction

Parupalli Rama Krishnaiah Pantulu comes from the musical lineage of Saint Tyagaraja. He is a third-generation student and was third in line in the musical lineage of Saint Tyagaraja. He was born on 5th December 1883 at Srikakulam on the banks of river Krishna in Krishna district of Andhra Pradesh. He came from humble backgrounds and his father's name was Seshachalam and his mother was Mangamamba.

Parupalli Rama Krishnaiah Pantulu had an interest in learning music from a very early age despite his parents wanting him to pursue mathematics and become an accounts clerk. Eventually, in 1898 he started learning music from his guru, Sri Susarla Dakshina Murthy Sastry. We can see the lineage from Saint Tyagaraja, who taught his nephew Manambucchavadi Venkatasubbaya, who in turn had Parupalli Rama Krishnaiah Pantulu 's guru Sri Susarla Dakshina Murthy Sastry as his student.

Four years after learning music from Sri Susarla Dakshina Murthy Sastry, he became the village karnam but continued singing and performing at different concerts. The Tahasildar of the village had a deep interest in music and was keen to learn music and hence became Parupalli 's student. In 1907 Parupalli left his job completely and devoted his entire time and energy to his music career. He next moved to Thanjavur and lived there for almost a year to learn the Thanjavur bani and the music style of Dakshinadi. This paved the way for him to become an eminent vidwan of Carnatic music and gaining recognition all over Andhra Desam. Parupalli Pantulu also worked in the advisory committee of the Madras Music Academy as a member for a good number of years.

In the year 1915, he was presented with a gold medal by the governor of Madras, Lord Welland and the next year he was honoured by the King of Baroda. The Kakinada Andhra Sabha honoured him in 1923. Parupalli gave a remarkable performance in all India Musicians' Conference in the year 1927. The Andhra Pradesh parisodhaka Viswa Vidyalayam Vijayanagaram honoured Parupalli in 1929 with the title of "Bharathi Theerdhopadhaya". In 1930, the Andhra Mahasabha of Vizianagaram presented him with a gold medal. At first, he started to live in Machalipatnam and a large number of disciples came to him to learn Carnatic music. Andhra Saraswati Parishad honoured him with the title of 'Gayaka Sarvabhauma' in the year 1931. The style of conferring the award with a 'Ganda penderam' was very unique and happened for the very first time. Saraswati Gana Sabha and Sri Rama Samajam invited and

presented many medals to Pantulu . In 1932, he gave a number of records to the ORRS Columbia Gramophone Co., Ltd.

Parupalli next moved with his family to the city of Vijayawada where he taught music and had a lot of disciples who went on to become eminent musicians themselves. In 1943 at Nuzivid, 1944 at Chivala and in 1945 in Vijayawada (then Bezwada), he presided over the music sessions of Andhra Saraswata Parishad. In 1944 he visited Pune when the Andhra, Tamil and Maharashtra Associations honoured him under the presidency of N.C. Kelkar. At the age of 60, on his 60th birthday celebrations also known as 'Shashtiabdhi', a grand celebration was organized by his students and Vijayawada municipality. In 1944 he was taken in a procession on an elephant which was called "Gajarahana Mahotsav". Vuyyuyru Raja honoured him with the title of "Swarna Kankanam". Sri Samba Murthy, Head of the department of Madras University presided over the function. A lot of Rajas and Jamindars also attended this function and helped organize it on a grand scale.

Sri Rama Krishnaiah Pantulu had extreme devotion toward his guru Susarla Dakshina Murthy . He regularly conducted the Aradhana festival of Guru Susarla at Vijayawada on a grand scale to give encouragement to his students in performing kutcheris. These were the olden days the caste system was still very prevalent in society. Parupalli never encouraged any discrimination in terms of religion or caste and his disciples were of different castes and backgrounds. He strongly believed that such discriminations were regressive and were antithetical to the growth and promotion of Carnatic music amongst people and his students. He not only discouraged caste-based discrimination but also fought sincerely against it by educating the students on the values of equality. He gave shelter and food to his disciples. He had a number of students and to name a few, there were Mangalampalli Bala Murali Krishna, Annavarapu Ramaswamy, N.Ch Krishnamacharyulu, Neti Sri Rama Sarma, Mulukutla Sada Siva Sastry, Lanka Venkateswarulu.

Sri Rama Krishnaiah Pantulu was not only a great teacher but also a great man of humanity. He taught his disciples how to live a life with ideal principles. Parupalli was a great eternal teacher. His “Gurupeetham” provided the necessary shelter and catered to the musical needs of his shishyas (students) and prishishyas (favourite students), like “Kalpavriksham” and “Kamadhenu”. Every disciple called him with utmost Guru Bhakti as “Ayya”. He also took care of the daily needs of students coming from far away places. He had diligently shaped the lives of many students by not only imparting musical knowledge but also the basics of “Satpravartana”. Among the innumerable disciples were not only vocalists but also instrumentalists, veena vidwans, flute vidwans, violinists, and Nagaswara vidwans. He believed that learning a musical instrument along with vocals was important for the sustenance of musical knowledge even at old age. This would even help the students in the later stages of their career to teaching music without relying completely on voice.

Sri Rama Krishnaiah Pantulu was a great vidwan who gave equal importance to Lakshmana and lakshya, both based on tradition. The velocity of his nada is hard to be acquired by anyone else so easily. The power of singing gives equal importance to Bhava, Raga and Tala may be said as the sole property of ‘Gayaka Sarvabhauma’. He was a role model with all the noble qualities of a teacher.

Pantulu actively campaigned for the All India radio station and the Government Music College at Vijayawada and succeeded. His efforts gave results and on 1st December 1948, All India Radio Vijayawada came into existence and one notable feature was that it was inaugurated with Pantulu’s vocal concert. Statues of Pantulu were unveiled at Vijayawada and his birthplace of Srikakulam.

Conclusion

Gayaka Sarwabhauma was an apt title for Ramakrishnaiyya Pantulu . He gave a lot of importance to Bhasha, Bhava, Raga and Laya and could understand the pulse of the audience and would always sing and perform in concerts to cater to that. His great personality and his

loving and caring traits towards his students and training them with knowledge along with great human values provided a great lineage for many musicians to come who would later reap the fruits of benefits of the seeds sown early on by Pantulu .

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