

MUSIC

Refreshing notes from the Cauvery



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'Ponni Punal', a DVD series is aimed at reviving the melam traditions

With changing times, the once-flourishing firmament of melam – nagaswaram and thavil music, witnessed a dimming in its glory. In a welcome development, over the past few years, a posse of young artistes, with a distinguished melam lineage, are on the threshold of staging a revival. Two such musicians, nagaswaram vidwans Chinnamanoor A. Vijay Karthikeyan (assistant professor, nagaswaram, Annamalai University) and Idumbavanam V. Prakash Ilayaraja (nagaswaram teacher at the Government Music School, Villupuram), have contributed their mite to the process, fostered by their mentors nagaswaram vidwan Kizhvelur N.G. Ganesan and thavil maestro Thanjavur T.R. Govindarajan.

Vijay, the grandson of eminent nagaswaram vidwan Chinnamanoor C.V. Ganesan, was trained in gurukulavasam under the famed Tirupamburam TKS Brothers and their father Shanmugasundaram Pillai. Prakash is the grandson of thavil vidwan M.K. Soundararaja Pillai and his gurus were his father K.S. Vedamoorthy and uncle, Segal G. Ranganathan. The duo states, “To help the present and future generations stay connected to melam traditions, we plan to bring out a series of DVDs titled ‘Ponni Punal’ (water of the Kaveri) . The first of these was recently released at a function.”

The list

A compilation of traditional compositions, played during the *purappadal* of the utsava murti at temple festivals as well as kutcheri paddhathi, the first DVD delineates eight items that include mallari (Gambhiranattai), ‘Sri Ganapathi Nee’ (Tyagaraja, Sowrashtram), ‘Pavanaguru’ (Hamsanandi, Lalitha Dasar), ‘Akhilandeswari’ (Muthuswami Dikshitar, Dwijavanti), the main piece ‘Appan Avadharitha’ (Kharaharapriya, Papanasam Sivan) ‘Ayye Methakadinam’ (Ragamalika), ‘Maadu Meikkum Kanne’ (Chenjurutti, Oothukadu Venkata Kavi) and ‘Raghupati Raghava.’ The artistes are accompanied by Idumbavanam K.S. Kannan and Nangoor N.K. Selvaganapathy on the thavil.

The songs are filmed in the serene precincts of the Sarguneswarar temple, a ‘paadal petra sthalam’ at Idumbavanam, located on the southern banks of the Cauvery.

Complementing the DVD is a well-conceived documentary by S. Jayakumar, in which the artistes speak about their learning and practice methodology, focus on raga and sahitya bhava, repertoire, approach to concerts and anecdotes about nagaswara-thavil vidwans. For instance, Vijay highlights the affinity that the artistes of the Tirupamburam bani have for Muthuswamy Dikshitar and Tyagaraja kritis on account of the patanthara having been imbibed from the direct sishya parampara of these vaggeyakaras.

Vijay is currently researching the Tirupamburam tradition for his doctoral thesis. On the anvil are several such archival and documentation projects.

A letter from Editor

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