

Evolution of Carnatic music- a series

By Smitha K. Prasad

Dear readers, over the past few columns we looked at the host of changes that have taken place in Carnatic music. This month, I'd like to look two more such features that have gained popularity- 1) concept of thematic concerts 2) presentation of *jugalbandhis*, especially Carnatic-Hindusthani *jugalbandhis*.

Thematic concerts, as the name suggests, are concerts wherein most, if not all, of the compositions presented conform to the theme of the concert or the concert series. Some examples of these are concerts which feature compositions of a particular composer or compositions that are dedicated to a particular deity, etc. These concerts keep up the audience interest and introduce variety on the concert platform. It is also an occasion for musicians to present lesser known compositions on the concert platform if the compositions conform to the concert theme. Other interesting concert themes include concerts that are dedicated to particular *ragas* or series; one of the interesting thematic concert series that I have previously attended was named "*Gowla series*"- each day had an artist in concert featuring one of the *ragas* such as 'Gowla', 'Mayamalavagowla', 'Reethigowla', 'Kedaragowla', 'Narayanagowla'.

A *jugalbandhi* concert is a concert that features two equally skilled musicians as partners in the concert presentation. Both performers divide the concert presentation aspects so that the concert comes across as presenting an equal opportunity for both performers to showcase their skills and virtuosity. *Jugalbandhi* concerts can take place between two artistes in different genres of music (Carnatic - Hindusthani) or two artistes within a genre- e.g.: Pandit Ravi Shankar (*sitar*) and Ustad Ali Akbar Khan (*sarod*), both Hindusthani musicians on different instruments.

Carnatic-Hindusthani classical *jugalbandhis* have become quite popular over time. With both of these streams of music originating from a common source before separating out, it is possible to present *jugalbandhi* concerts which highlight the characteristic of each of these forms in a cohesive presentation. These *jugalbandhi* concerts widely appeal to audiences since they showcase two different styles of presenting the same *raga*, and even the same composition at times. It is also an extremely enjoyable experience for the artistes involved as they play off each other's ideas on an impromptu basis in the concert.

Till we meet next time, do listen to Carnatic-Hindusthani *jugalbandhi* recordings of Dr. Balamurali Krishna and Pt. Bhimsen Joshi-it is marvelous to see these two highly accomplished musicians in concert- these recordings are easily available on the Internet.

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