

A colossus remembered

“A few decades ago, there was a period when the Music Academy and V. Raghavan were synonymous,” said Sangita Kalanidhi M. Balamuralikrishna at the valedictory function of the centenary celebrations of Dr. V. Raghavan, on 22nd August at the Dakshinamurti Auditorium in Chennai. The event was organised by the Dr. V. Raghavan Centre for Performing Arts, Chennai.

The programme appropriately started with ‘Gana Manjari’ – a musical rendering of Sanskrit verses by Carnatic vocalist V. Sumithra with veena accompaniment by R. Ramani. Many of them were V. Raghavan’s own compositions. This was followed by the valediction, in which three famous personalities from three cultural fields participated. They were Balamuralikrishna, Prof. Radhavallabh Tripathi, Vice Chancellor, Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan, New Delhi, and Dr. S. Revati, Prof. Sanskrit Dept., and Campus Director, Madras University.



Tripathi paying floral tribute to V. Raghavan

Sanskrit scholar Prof. M. Narasimhachary, a brilliant student of the late V. Raghavan, and former Head, Dept. of Vaishnavism, Madras University, welcomed the august gathering in his scholarly Sanskrit and impeccable English. Dr. V. Kameshwari, Director, Kuppuswami Sastri Research Institute, read out

felicitation messages and greetings from eminent personalities like Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan, Dr. Karan Singh, Dr. Ram Niwas Mirdha, Chairman of the Central Sangeet Natak Akademi, and Prof. Kutumba Sastry of Sampurnananda University.

Vidwan Balamuralikrishna reminisced about his association with Raghavan. He recalled how he had won Raghavan’s appreciation when he set his special song composed to mark the 50th year of the Music Academy to tune in the 50th mela raga Namanarayani.

Radhavallabh Tripathi, an authority on the *Natya Sastra*, recounted the polymath’s work in various fields of Sanskrit including his starting the World Sanskrit Congress. He made special mention of the journal *Sanskrit Pratibha*, brought out by Raghavan and suggested that though Sanskrit was not studied by many, all of Dr. Raghavan’s writings should be published and made available to the public. “The Muse of Poetry expects this from Sanskrit scholars, and the Sansthan would render help,” he said.

Dr. Revati, connected with Sanskrit literature, yoga, and philosophy, explained described Dr. Raghavan as the Bheeshma Pitamaha of Sanskrit. She said he had left no field untouched – be it music, dance, arts, poetry, drama, or the *New Catalogus Catalogorum*.

Prof. V. Raghavan had travelled extensively and been an unofficial cultural ambassador of India. As part of his programme for the propagation of Indian culture, he started the Samskrita Ranga in 1958 and created a platform for the revival of Sanskrit theatre. Its

S. Revati, M. Balamuralikrishna and Radhavallabh Tripathi at the release of *Punarunmeshab*





Dignitaries at the valedictory function of the centenary celebrations

golden jubilee was celebrated on this occasion by staging the Sanskrit play, *Mattavilasa Prahasana* directed by Raghavan's daughter Nandini Ramani (see *New Production*). Well known Tamil theatre personality ARS was the chief guest and he spoke nostalgically and humorously about his association with V. Raghavan and his family.

His legacy is carried on by his sons and daughters, especially by Nandini Ramani, who has been publishing books, audio cassettes and organising programmes under the auspices of the Dr. V. Raghavan Centre for Performing Arts, of which she is the Managing Trustee. .

Last year when the centenary celebrations began, Nandini, along with the Sanskrit Dept. of the

Madras University, had arranged a seminar titled *Punarunmeshah*, in which many young scholars presented papers on the different branches of Prof. V. Raghavan's writings. On the suggestion of Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan who has also written the foreword, this has been printed as a book. It was released on 22nd August by Radhavallabh Tripathi and the first copy was received by Dr. Revati.

The University of Madras and The Rashtriya Sanskrit Samsthan, New Delhi, established an Annual Lecture in memory of the illustrious Sanskrit scholar during his centenary year. Prof. Radhavallabh Tripathi, who is the Vice Chancellor of the Rashtriya Sanskrit Samsthan, introduced the event and said it would be dedicated to select famous scholars in the field of Sanskrit and

Indology. The first Dr. V. Raghavan Memorial Lecture was held on 22nd August this year under the auspices of the Sanskrit Department. Titled 'Concept of Dhvani according to Dr. Raghavan', it was delivered by Prof. M. Narasimhachary.

Prof. Siniruddha Dash, Head of the Sanskrit Dept. and Head of the National Catalogus Catalogorum (started by Dr. V. Raghavan), announced that a corpus has been established to institute the Dr. V. Raghavan Endowment Scholarship in the University of Madras to help poor students.

The series of events was a befitting tribute to the contributions of Dr. Raghavan to Indian art and culture.

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