

A friend for all seasons

Vijay is an exemplary musician and a wonderful human being, a real suddhatma. He strives hard for perfection and idealism marks all his endeavours. He makes sure that his music has been perfected before his well presented concerts. To ensure this, he puts in hours of dedicated practice and also makes sure his accompanists coordinate well with him. He plans all his concerts to suit the occasion, place, duration, and accompanists. He prepares a list for the concert well in advance, informs his accompanists about it, enables them to master the songs by organising a few practice sessions or by sending them tapes. For him, the success of the concert depends on all of them putting in their best efforts and presenting it with a unified frame of mind. The

audience should be respected and the music presented to them should be of a high calibre, a complete team effort.

Vijay has bhakti not only towards DKJ, but all his guru-s — Rajappa Iyer, D.K. Pattammal and all his teachers at Padma Seshadri and Vivekananda College. He imbibed the DKJ bani in total and our guru was really proud of him. Whenever somebody went up to him and told him that Vijay or anybody for that matter, was his worthy student, his joy knew no bounds. DKJ exhorted all his students to freely imbibe the positives from every good musician. At the same time, he kept a check on them too by correcting them wherever necessary.

Thus Vijay initially presented a typical DKJ bani, but later

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imbibed from the music of great musicians such as Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, Madurai Mani Iyer, M.S. Subbulakshmi and K.V. Narayanaswamy — all whom DKJ held in high esteem.

Over the years, this process of osmosis has enabled Vijay to carve a musical niche for himself, at the same time not digressing from the path laid by DKJ. Also, being a very spiritually oriented person, Vijay's passionate interest in Harikatha and upanyasam have enabled him to understand the deeper meanings and relevance of the sahitya of the saints. This has contributed to his bhakti-laden renditions of the great compositions.

Vijay's prowess in the laya aspect is well known. He can sing a difficult misra nadai or a khanda nadai pallavi with great ease. He is an accomplished mridanga artist and has played many a concert with professional grace.

He takes care to maintain and carry a good tambura for all his concerts. The most unfortunate thing we see in



many concerts today is the sole use of the electronic tambura. The importance of a real tambura is hardly felt, both by musicians or rasika-s. Vijay always makes sure that his tambura-s are well tuned and carries them to even outstation concerts. He teaches his students only with the tambura and also trains them to use it while they sing.

Punctuality is one of his many virtues. If he announces that he will be at some place, at say, 8.19 am, he will be there at the stroke of 8.19! He will find out from the organiser when he should finish his concert and do so perfectly by the clock!

Vijay appreciates and provides encouragement to budding musicians. He has identified many such talents and recommended their names to premier institutions,

without their knowing it was his recommendation that worked for them! He was instrumental in showcasing for the first time a few musicians who are stars today.

Vijay is a patriot of great fervour. On every Independence

Vijay Siva (Secretary) and B. Kannan (President) with other office bearers and committee members of YACM — J. Balaji, V. Suresh, R.K. Shriram Kumar, P. Unnikrishnan, at the first anniversary celebrations of YACM (1986), seen with Semmangudi, Sadasivam, MS, Padma Subrahmanyam and Yesudass





Vijay Siva with R.K. Shriram Kumar (violin), J. Vaidyanathan (mridanga) and B. Purushothaman (khanjira)

Day and Republic Day, he hoists the national flag at his house, singing a few patriotic songs.

He has always been a reliable friend to many. Personally, he has been an integral part of my life.

The genesis of YACM was a classic example of how Vijay joined hands with like-minded youngsters. He got the organisation off to a start, with his inspiring presence and exemplary organisational capabilities. Both of us went to the same school (Padma Seshadri Bala Bhavan) together, right from kindergarten to plus two. Later, we went to the same college, Vivekananda College, Mylapore.

Vijay was one batch junior to me as he is younger to me by about five months. He was a child prodigy and to watch someone who could sing and perform to such high standards was awe-inspiring to all of us at school. Mrs. YGP made him sing on every possible occasion. He was a role model for all aspiring musicians of the school.

Our friendship began in school and music was the sole binding force. When Vijay was already performing, I was just learning to play. When I was in class ten, Vijay came to my house to ask me if I could accompany him in a concert. I categorically refused, saying I wasn't yet ready. To perform with someone like Vijay was too much of a challenge for me. He wouldn't listen. He was adamant and stubborn and ultimately made me agree to play for him. That was the very first concert in my life. Vijay helped me with a few practice sessions. The day of the concert arrived and I left home with butterflies

in my stomach, my parents accompanying me to witness their son's first concert. It was about 5.30 in the evening when I reached Vijay's house. A surprise was in store for us. Vijay was happily playing cricket on the street in front of his house! He had made a small mistake. The concert was to take place on the same date of the following month! All of us had a hearty laugh and we went back home. The concert took place next month, on Sankara Jayanti day.

From then on, I have had the fortune of playing with Vijay in many a concert and have learnt so much from him. He has wished so much good for me and many a time has taken personal care of my well being.

In March 1989, I received a call from M.S. Subbulakshmi, asking me if I could accompany her in her concert on April 14th at the inauguration of Sankara Nethralaya's new building. It was my dream come true, but I couldn't say yes to her because I had accepted to play for Vijay at Madurai on the same date. With a heavy heart, I said no to Amma. When I told Vijay about it, he was elated but annoyed that I had refused the offer. He compelled me to call her and accept her concert. He told me not to worry about his concert. I called Amma and accepted my first concert with her, thanks to Vijay.

Whenever I think of Vijay, this kural of Tiruvalluvar comes to mind :

"Udukkai izhandavan kai pola aangey idukkan kalaiavadam natpu."

Friendship hastens to help in a crisis

As hands do rush to protect a slipping robe