

# BANGALORE S. SHANKAR

## A leading vocalist and teacher

S. Shashidharan

**S**hankar is a popular Carnatic vocalist and teacher in Karnataka. With an impressive career of more than five decades, he has carved a niche for himself through his public concerts and the medium of radio and television. A traditionalist to the core, he has admirers across the globe and has imparted training to many students who are acclaimed performers. Endowed with a powerful and pleasing voice, he impresses his listeners with his clear pronunciation of lyrics, with pauses at the appropriate places.



Born on 27 November 1950, in Jog—the famous waterfall town—where his father G.V. Shastry was working with the Mysore State Electricity Board, Shankar started learning music from his mother Rajamma when he was eight, he was also guided by Nagarathna Bai. He later had his advanced training from Vallabham Kalyana Sundaram, sister of Mayuram Viswanatha Sastry, the famous composer.

A long-time resident of Bengaluru, Shankar spent his childhood days in Malleswaram and later shifted to Shankarapuram, both old localities

in the city. He fondly remembers many concerts he attended at the Malleswaram Sangeetha Sabha, which paved the way for him to become a performing musician. Listening to the music of stalwarts is also a part of learning, and Shankar acknowledges that the concerts of Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar and Madurai Somasundaram, which he attended there, remain etched in his memory.

Shankar owes his success to many of his mentors, who include S. Krishnamurthy—grandson of Mysore Vasudevachar and retired Station

Director, All India Radio; A.V. Krishnamachar—popularly known as Padmacharan, Sanskrit scholar T.N. Padmanabhan, D.R. Venkataraman and Shatavadhani R. Ganesh. This year, Shankar is organising concerts and lecture demonstrations to commemorate the birth centenary of his chief mentor, A.V. Krishnamachar.

Shankar is also greatly influenced by the music of maestros M.D. Ramanathan, Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, Musiri Subramania Iyer, Madurai Mani Iyer, K.V. Narayanaswamy and R.K. Srikantan amongst several other stalwarts.

He vividly remembers that when he was ten, he participated in a



With S. Krishnamurthy  
A.V. Krishnamachar

Shankar's parents



Vallabham Kalyana Sundaram



Padmanabhan



D.R. Venkataraman





With Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer

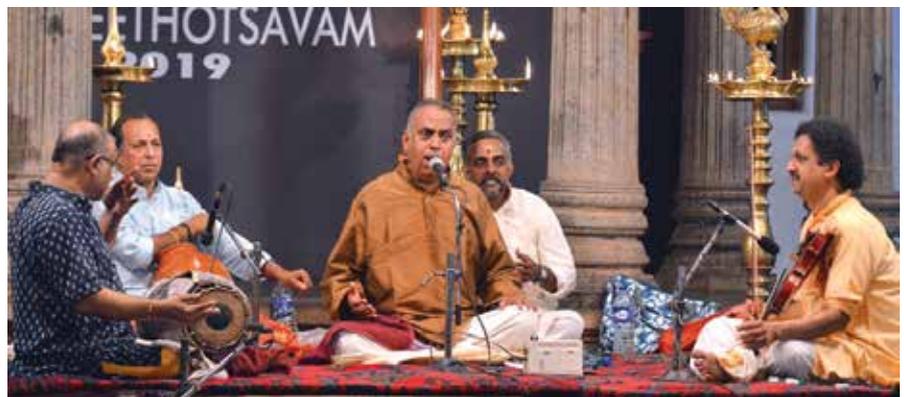


Shankar in concert with Mysore Nagaraj and V.S. Rajgopal (1975)...

competition and received the first prize from none other than Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar. He also won appreciation from legends like M.S. Subbulakshmi and M. Balamuralikrishna, when he sang raga Kalyani in his presence.

A post-graduate in Mathematics, Shankar worked in the AG's office for nearly four decades, balancing both careers. He bagged the first prize in the All India Radio Music Competition in 1973 and is presently an A-Top grade artist, having the distinction of performing on several occasions in the Radio Sangeet Sammelan and national programme of music in both All India Radio and Doordarshan.

A tireless practitioner, Shankar, with his graceful appearance on the stage, presents his concerts with careful planning, appropriate selection of kritis, without compromising on pure classicism. He firmly believes that the concert is a team effort. He opines, "All the artists on stage have an onerous responsibility since they can lift or mar a concert. Acoustics management has assumed much importance these days, and the artists must ensure that the mike volume does not hamper the mood and temperament of a concert. Music is not noise". Many a time, he has enjoyed mike-less concerts too.



At Trivandrum...

...With Mysore M. Nagaraj (violin), Umayalpuram K. Sivaraman (mridangam) and Girdhar Udupa (ghatam)



Shankar encourages young talent and is full of appreciation for his accompanists and spurs them on to greater heights. He does not believe in singing a raga alapana for hours and including a lot of mathematics

or rhythmic complexities in swaras, which are not difficult for him. "I leave it to the mridangists to display their forte in laya," says he.

Invariably, Shankar includes rare compositions of composers like



In concert with his son Ramani



With his wife Swarna

M.D. Ramanathan, Mayuram Viswanatha Sastry, Bidaram Krishnappa, B.K. Padmanabha Rao and many others, in his concerts, to popularise those kritis. He is also adept at singing slokas and ugabhogas in ragamalika, thereby captivating his listeners.

Shankar has toured extensively for concerts and lecture demonstrations, but he has not confined his talent and strength to only performing on stage. Under the aegis of Shankarabharanam Kala Mandiram, he has published books on the compositions of Sadasiva

Brahmendra, a collection of songs by different composers, a book of Mysore Vasudevachar's compositions, and recently one on the compositions of Padmacharan titled *Padmageetha*. Shankar has also compiled a book of patriotic songs written by Mayuram Viswanatha Sastry. Apart from this he has scored music for dramas and documentaries. He has written on music-related subjects, and penned life sketches of musicians for several newspapers and magazines. During one of his concert tours in the United States, when a rasika approached Shankar to compose a kriti on Lord

Ganesa, he composed *Sree Maha Ganapatim bhavaye* in raga Andolika, and now Shankar has nearly ten compositions to his credit.

Shankar's family too is dedicated to music. His wife Swarna is an accomplished musician and a dedicated teacher. Their son Ramani and daughter Ranjani Raghunath, who have settled abroad, have already established themselves as fine vocalists. Apart from providing vocal support to Shankar in his concerts, Ramani Shankar, an A-grade artist of All India Radio, has also established himself as an able solo performer.

With participants of the music workshop on Mysore Vasudevacharya's compositions in May 2022

