
Issue I - Article I

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By: Former Students of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning

'When it Rains...it Pours'
'Return to Innocence'

{[Prasanthi Nilayam](#)}

While the current brood may flock back into the monotony of existence by the bell today, - "those were the days" when we would have not one nightingale serenade Swami with a fugue, but a series of virtuosi vying with each other to win our beloved Lords ear! The arena being the Bhajan hall - the Coach, the Referee and the Prize itself were all Bhagawan. (I am not one but three!). Puttaparthi was like Cherapunji back then! You ventured out not only with a raincoat, but a broly in tow!

After a typically inconsequential Ganesha Bhajan - 'Gajanana Hey Shubhanana ' / 'Jai Jai Jai Ganapathi Deva' etc, would come an etude from Masterji in all his glory, the composition outdoing the composer, and most certainly its rendition!

This would be followed every now and again by a capriccio from the primeval Mohan Sir, who would launch into one of his all time favorites full blast, double forte 'Padhmanabha Narayana' / 'Govinda Gopala Prabhu Giridhari' etc.

Midway through this bhajan would glide in our loving Mother - 'Love on two feet' from the interview room. Straight up the dais and onto the throne, eyes wide shut; scan the bhajan hall all in a single motion, glancing for mere second at the pale yellow clock - which was on the men's side of the Bhajan hall then, back into contemplation waiting for the next song to commence.

Thereafter would begin, the "real" Bhajan session.

Typically an S Kumar special would greet us next with 'Dehi Sharanam Simha Vaahini' - a tinge nasal yet very articulate and would up the ante and the adrenalin considerably - get those eardrums ready for greater sounds.

When suddenly the anticlimax. Sanjeev Borbora could thrill us with one of those "un-followable" masterpieces especially in Rupak Taal that he would gain greater pleasure in singing, than we could derive in listening or else it would be the 'harmonious' Krishnamurthy Gopinath who would sing "Janani Sai Devi Dayaamai" / "Soham Soham, Dhyana Karo" - like a lullaby, and that would cradle us into deep a state of subconsciousness. Very soothing, just a little too much so.

Thereafter - "The Action Begin":

Sunamji would wake us up with "Jago Jago Ma ..." in his patented, inimitably endearing manner, with his rounded Ra's. Perhaps emulated by Ajnish Rai many years later.

A Glance here, a nod there and there was the cue. A thousand chirps in the distant background, a moment's silence, a pregnant pause, the flute would compare notes with the sparrows and pigeons. Mics shifting, a muffled clearing of the throat.

"Sri Raghavammmm, Dasaratha..." V Kumar's voice would then resonate through the valley of Peace. (No BOSE / or even "mock Bose" {Ramji} systems around then). The bhajan itself so simple, yet the prelude stunning. Goosebumps all over the flock. Yes you were saddened even then that it was over, no replay button to set, but then again, by the time you could even contemplate its end, already leading onto a crescendo was our very own nightingale of Parthi – Ravi Kumar, at his adolescent best - 'Shesha Saila Vaasa' / 'Bramhanda Nayaka' / 'Sai Hamara' voice soaring, testing the scales, limited only by the range available on the harmonium!

After this you would hear Hirok Sir intonating "Sai, Bhajana Bina" as only he could dare to! The "... Bhagawaana Bina" part still rings in my head, reverberates in my being.

Then the treat of mellifluous music at its understated best, simplicity, rustic simplicity, yet subtlety at its peak and an amazing range to go with it. That was Kote sir's repertoire.

'Bhaja Re, Rama Charan, Satatam...' / 'Anupama Sundara Nanda Kishora...' / 'O Baba, Sai Baba...' / 'Hara Hara Shankara Samba Sadashiva...'.

Simple songs, which he would weave into such a beautiful fabric, exploring the nuances, including all the swaras that could possibly constitute the raga's sequence and somehow fit them all in within the beat's cycle, as only he could, perhaps Arun Kumar Tiwari in a little different manner in earlier years.

Everybody enraptured. Bliss - absolute Bliss. Kirlean auras soaring, Baranovski going nuts. Sat, Chit and Ananda in a heightened state of dynamic equilibrium - seeing Swami in the Bhajan Hall, sitting there as a satiated Conossieur, a proud Mother, a felicitated God!

And suddenly to bring us back to our existential selves, we would have either R. Giridhar / Sunder Iyer set off the alarm, with couple of the many single / two line Namavalis 'Nandalala Yadu Nandala ...' - and only then the bell.

That was how Bhajan sessions were in that day and age 20 years ago. (One suddenly begins to feel old just keying it in). You didn't need a Ravivar then to make you sit up and listen - Everyday was a Sunday! ... and although we do miss these Sundays every now and again, we now can at least enjoy a 'virtual holiday' with the past masters on the Sai Bhajans site!

What we miss most however is seeing our beloved Swami enjoying the rhapsody.

{Brindavan}

It was indeed a fascinating half hour that everyone used to wait for in those days. When the Bhajan group made you feel that you were in Unison with the Lord, The Bliss, the Ananda, and although I myself was a part of the Bhajan Group then couldn't help but wait for that Blissful half hour.

I would like to take you back to certain mesmerizing renderings from the 1990's . Kabir singing Ishwara Allah Ek Tumi Ho, Suresh Sharma singing Aravinda Lochana. Vijay Sai singing Ghana Ghana Nila Vadana Ati Sundara.. and our very own Parthi Nightingale, Ravi Kumr singing

Nandalala Nandalala Daya Karo Bhagawan..(Tears will automatically flow..) and with classical renderings by Sunam Sir singing Bhaja Mana Shyama Sundara Giridhari, S Kumar sir singing Bhava Nasha Puttaparthi PurishaV Kumar singing Rama Rama Jaya Raghukula Tilaka ... Kote sir singing Hara Hara Shankara Samba Sada Shiva Isha Mahesha. Sunder Iyer singing Narayana Hari Naam Bhajo Re. You just couldn't think of anything else but feel that you yourself are in front of the lord in heaven.. How can you forget the Erady brothers singing Chita Chora Yashoda Ke Bal during Onam?

I would like to thank the SaiBhajanNetwork for giving us (especially we who are not in the physical proximity) this Ananda.

-- THE END --

