

# The violin finds a voice when he plays

**TRIBUTE** A phenomenon in the field of music, violin exponent Lalgudi Jayaraman turns 75 tomorrow.

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As heir to a family of musicians that traces its guru parampara to a saint-composer Tyagaraja, it was no small inheritance that young Lalgudi G. Jayaraman was beneficiary to Gopala Iyer, Lalgudi's father and guru, who identified unmistakable sparks of genius in his son. But the legatee was not complacent. He worked hard and soon mastered the art.

Alathur Subbier remarked with admiration: "What we practise and make perfect in three months, this boy plays in three minutes." Madurai Mani Iyer prophesied: "This boy will go places." Lalgudi was soon to become a globetrotting phenomenon. Recognition for his musical worth came in various forms — a horde of awards, a legion of rasikas and also in one other unusual form. Study groups and seminars critically analysed his compositions as well as his Bani.

Lalgudi's uniqueness as an accompanist lay in his ability to instantaneously absorb the spirit of the main performer. With great aplomb, he matched the gamaka-oriented style of Ariyakkudi, the dazzling brigas of GNB, swaras quick to recog-

nise those as a blessing. The violin was actually enunciating the lyrics, when he was playing.

Lalgudi's first composition (1956), a Tillana in the raga Vasantana, won whole-hearted approval from GNB. Voleti Venkateswarulu specifically requested him for one in Pahadi and Nedunuri asked for another in Rageshri."

Lalgudi's love for solving mathematical puzzles probably evolved as a passion for rhythmic intricacies. Varnam and Tillana, that gave him ample scope to experiment with laya, became his preferred musical forms.

Experiments and challenges in music are exciting to Lalgudi. For long, the reposeful Nilambari was considered inappropriate for a varnam but only till Lalgudi's varnam appeared on the concert platform. It also caught the attention of a dancer. At her request, Lalgudi composed lyrics to solfa passages in the composition and the tana varnam got converted into a pada varnam.

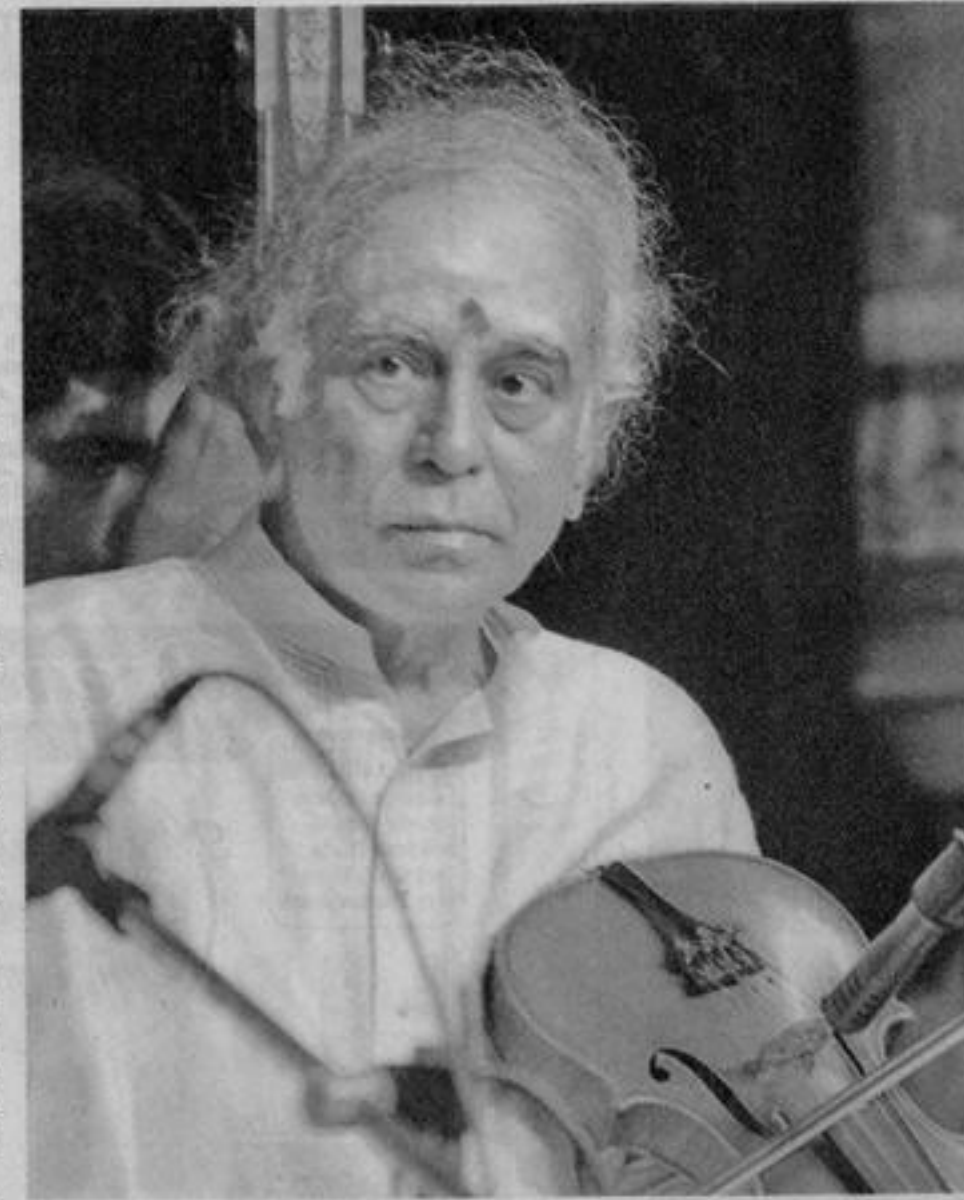
Like his father, Lalgudi too loves exploring new ragas. Like a dedicated craftsman, he chisels his songs to perfection. This

makes a Madhuvanti or a Priyadarshini find its identity; and an Anandabhairavi or Charukesi discover its youthfulness.

Beyond varnams and tillanas, Lalgudi has composed kritis, operas like Jaya Jaya Devi and orchestral pieces (vadyavrinadas). His lyrics, be they in Tamil, Telugu or Sanskrit are meaningful and appropriate to the melodic structure. Bhakti is the only emotion portrayed, significantly even in compositions meant for dance.

In some of his compositions, one also gets glimpses of the nature lover in him. Movements of some notes in his Priyadarshini vadyavrinada creation resemble the dance of peacocks, the opening phrase of the Mohana Kalyani Tillana brings forth the image of a deer capering, the Pahadi tillana gives one the experience of sailing in gentle waters surrounded by mountains and so on. None of his compositions bear his mudra allowing his music to proclaim the identity of the composer.

Lalgudi is an admirable tunesmith. Besides Tiruppugazh, bhajans and songs of poets like Bharati and composers like Brahmendra, he has tuned slo-



**MULTI-FACETED:** Lalgudi G. Jayaraman

kas of the Sankshepa Ramayanam, deftly placing its 32 aksharas on the base of the seven traditional talas. Va. Ve. Su's Panchali Sabatham and Pancheshwaram and the popular Dhanasri tillana of Swati Tirunal.

His contributions include not only 'settling' the musical framework of songs like Tyag-

araja's Rasali kriti and Raksha Bettare in Bhairavi but also popularising a few lesser-known kritis of the saint like Entamuddo in Bindumalini and Pallavi Seshayyar's kriti in Ooromika.

Lalgudi's offerings to the world of Carnatic music extend beyond his music and compositions. In 1985, he voluntarily

stepped in to renovate the dilapidated houses of the legendary Trinity at Tiruvarur. He single-handedly collected Rs. 18 lakhs for its operation. The Lalgudi Trust also engages in several philanthropic activities.

It is a life of principles that Lalgudi has led both on and off the concert platform. As an accompanist to five generations of musicians — vocalists and instrumentalists, he has strictly adhered to kutcheri dharma.

Rasikas emotionally remember the lavish musical feasts Lalgudi has been treating them to — solo recitals, accompaniments, jugalbandis, brilliant lecture-demonstrations, the Violin, Veena and Venu ensemble, his brainchild that created quite a stir when it was launched... His creativity continues to gush forth. He has set the music for a yet to be released 'art film' and his latest composition is a varnam in Atana on Lord Rama, this July. Besides his sisters and his children he has many other students who hold the Lalgudi flag aloft. This scion of the Lalgudi clan has not only preserved his inheritance but substantially enriched it too. Today, he ungrudgingly opens up his treasure chest to his students. But, he is uncompromising in one demand he makes of them — their commitment to music.

As he steps into his 76th year, on September 17, the music world fondly wishes this legend of Carnatic music many more achievements, accolades and robust years.