

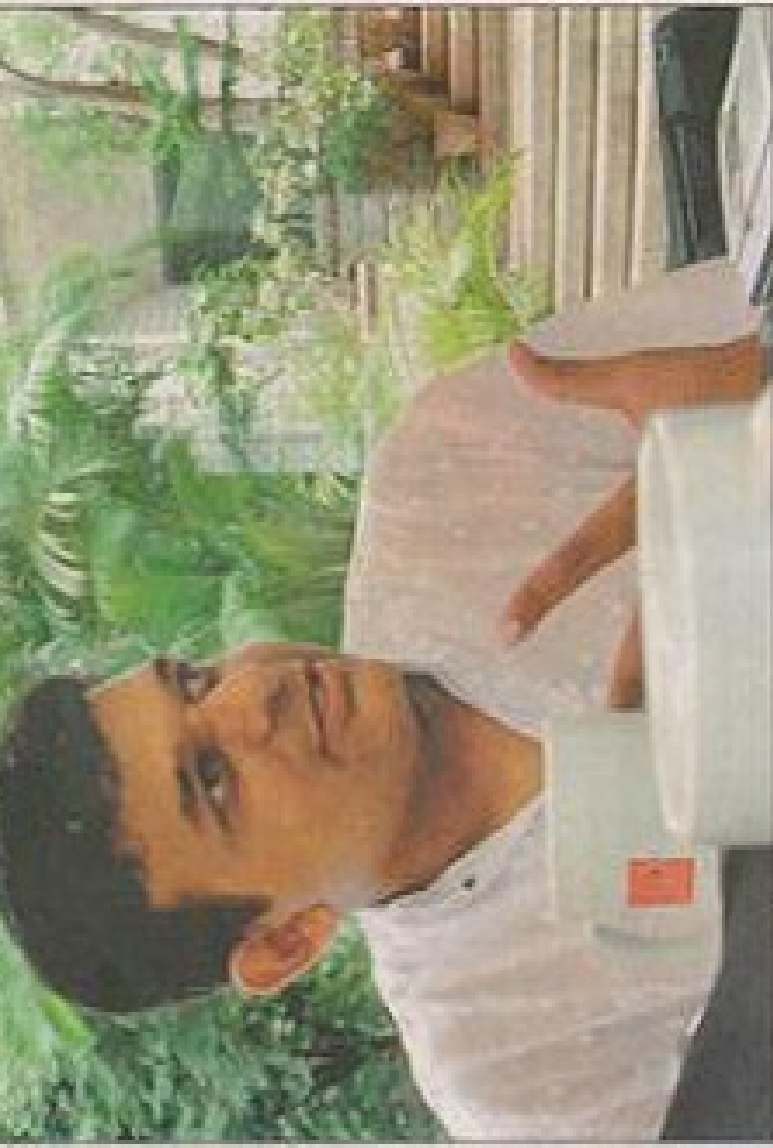
*talks to  
T M Krishna, one  
of the top ranking  
vocalists of the  
country today and  
the youngest  
among the new  
generations  
musicians.*

**L**istening to T M Krishna speak is very much like listening to him sing. His tawny eyes

sparkle with confidence. His vibrant voice exudes boundless energy and enthusiasm. His ideas, reflections, memories come cascading down in breathless pace very much like his effervescent 'kalpana swara's'. The passion he brings into a conversation is same as the passion he brings into his 'barberi's'. Well, passion for life and for perfection - that's the stuff Krishna is made of.

"I love economics and management. If I were not a musician, I would have studied in a business school and gone into management." When I heard Krishna say this, I was over-whelmed with pride even as I instantly threw a complimentary glance on the corporate world. To him, business acumen is a family inheritance and a zest for perfection is first nature. That Krishna would have ex-celled in any field is anybody's guess. Fortunately for us, it is music that stands to gain. Youngest among the new generation musicians, Krishna is not only one of the top ranking vocalists of the country today

Krishna's initiation into Carnatic music began at the age of six under the tutelage of Sri Sotharanna Sarma. "My Guru was a tough task master and would not be satisfied with anything but the best," he says. He later received advanced Pallavi training (a-



**Musician T.M. Krishna.**

Neruvu), non-stop. Midway if he found me repetitive, he would gently say, 'Come on, 'Singha kutti' (meaning lion cub) Start again.' And by the time I finished, I would be dead," he adds with a smile. In retrospect, Krishna gratefully acknowl-

edges his guru's insistence on couplets of concerts at YACM, where he won appreciation from senior musicians and encouragement from friends in the music circle. "That was when I felt respected as an artist," he admits. By the time Krishna was in his third year of college, he had decided to make music his life and career.

Krishna's most glorious moment came when, after listening to him sing, Semmangudi Sriathaya Iyer offered to teach him. "Being with him was an experience by itself," he recalls. "Mama was a very practical man, never caught up in his own times. He was always in touch with reality. He was such a fun person to be with. If I didn't go to class for a few days, mama would ring me up and say 'This is an old man here, is TM Krishna machaari there?' (Krishna was named after his grand-uncle TT Krishna-machari and Semmangudi would often address him like that) The next morning, I would run to his house," he says.

Admired by puritans for his 'barberism', Krishna is also a youth icon who brings in original and fresh perspectives into his art. "Tradition and innovation

"The problem is that we often think tradition is a box and we get stuck."

An artist with a strong sense of social responsibility, Krishna has co-founded and is actively associated with many organisations that promote music and provide music education to talented, underprivileged children. "Two children we have supported are doing very well. I am eagerly looking forward to seeing them perform at the Academics," he says beaming. Presently he is working on the monumental Saugha Sampada Pradarshini audio project.

One of Krishna's biggest passions is to make more and more people listen to Carnatic music. "It is my responsibility," he feels. "Nowadays there are so many other things happening. So it is necessary for us to keep presenting classical music at every opportunity. That way we spread awareness." But in his enthusiasm to take music to the people, he also makes sure that there are no compromises.

Well, Krishna's music says it all. Absolutely no compromises. Integrity, he believes, is the most important quality of an artist. "When you sing, it is just

**66** Tradition is fluid, you can like a bubble. You can stay within the bubble and still push the boundaries. The problem is that we often think tradition is a box and we get stuck. **69**

**T.M. KRISHNA**

edges his guru's insistence that discipline in him. "Today if I can go to a concert without planning, it is because of the discipline and clarity of thought they have given me," he says.

Music continued as something that he 'also-did' until Krishna came into the fold of Youth Association for Carnatic Music (YACM). YACM was not just a platform for young artists. It was a youth movement. "The most remarkable