

Sparks of imagination

T. M. Krishna's swaras bore the unmistakable stamp of his guru, Semmangudi.

M. RAMESH

The risk in setting up a high benchmark is that you may fall short of it yourself. T. M. Krishna's Kiravani ('Kaligiyunte Kada') at Bharat Kalachar was indeed unexceptionable. In an alapana, where imagination flew like sparks off a grinding wheel, the niraval (at 'Baguga') was superb and Krishna showed his remarkable range by touching the 'sa' of lower octave in the alapana and 'ni' of the upper while singing swaras. The Kiravani sparkled like the ear studs the artiste is wearing these days, which kept winking at the audience.

Yet, it was not quite the stupefying Kiravani that he presented at Narada Gana Sabha last year. Nevertheless, accompanied as much by the rhythm heavy downpour as by H. V. Venkataram on the violin, K. V. Prasad on the mridangam and Vaikom Gopalakrishnan on the ghatam, Krishna provided a variety fare for his audience.

The concert began with a brisk Sankarabharanam ('Akshaya Linga Vibho') and, as the rains resumed, Krishna decided it was time to thank Nature for its bounty with a pleasant 'Anandamrita Varshini' (Amruta varshini). After the two rapids, the Saveri (Syama Sastri's 'Sankari Samkuru') was a nice contrast.

The Saveri piece was indeed better than the one that Krishna sang last year at Mylapore Fine Arts, which earned him instant and fulsome appreciation from the accompanist, Umayalpuram Sivaraman.

While that scored on the speed front, the recent Saveri was replete with imaginative phrases, especially during swaras. K. V. Prasad was delightfully adherent all through the rendition of the tisra nadai composition, showing remarkable variety in strokes.

Krishna's swaras bore the unmistakable stamp of his illustrious gu-



ru, Semmangudi, and it might well have been the bespectacled, old man with a small tuft sitting in front of the mike.

'Devi Kamalalaye' of Mysore Vasudevachar in Garudadhvani that followed Saveri proved to be refreshingly off-beat. Garudadhvani is the mirror image of Bilahari — reverse Bilahari's arohanam and avarohanam, you get Garudadhvani.

Then came the Kiravani. In the thani that followed, Prasad and Gopalakrishnan played with obvious

enthusiasm, perhaps encouraged by the fact no one left the hall. (The rains outside ensured that.)

It was time for the RTP. Nattakurinji was the raga chosen and for Pallavi, the vocalist took up the opening lines of the gitam, 'Lumbodhara Lakumikara'. Set to tripudata tala with opening half a beat before the beginning of the cycle, it was Krishna's demonstration of his grip over laya.

In the multi-raga swaras that followed, Krishna audaciously sang Lalitha immediately after Vasantha and followed it up with a Hindolam, with gracious touches of Malkauns. All the three ragas exclude the 'panchamam.' It appeared as though Krishna was going to carry on with swaras excluding the panchamam, but that was not the case — he moved on to Khamas and Udayaravichandrika (that substitutes upper 'ni' for the lower in Suddha Dhanyasi).



T.M. Krishna