



Dr. M.S. Subbulakshmi, remains an unsurpassed phenomenon in Carnatic music: Vice President Addresses Birth Centenary Commemoration event

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The Vice President of India, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu has said that Dr. M.S. Subbulakshmi, remains an unsurpassed phenomenon in Carnatic music. He was addressing the gathering at the Birth Centenary Commemoration of Dr. M.S. Subbalakshmi, in Chennai, Tamil Nadu today. The Governor of Tamil Nadu, Shri Banwarilal Purohit, the Minister for Fisheries, Personnel and Administrative Reforms, Tamil Nadu, Shri D. Jayakumar, family members of Dr. M.S. Subbulakshmi and other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

The Vice President said that Dr. M.S. Subbulakshmi affectionately referred to as MS Amma was the face of Indian Carnatic music for several decades. He further said that she captivated the hearts of billions, not only in Tamil nadu, South India or India but in the entire world. Setting aside mere gimmicks and gymnastics of classical music, she delved deep into the soul of the music and brought forth the treasures from there, not only to the pundits or the elite but also to the common man, he added.

The Vice President said that she rose to heights where all differences vanished and she took us there with her. He further said that all the Nations stood united when she sang in the assembly of the United Nations Organisation. In the enjoyment of such a fine expression of art all differences of caste creed, race and nationality evaporated, he added.

The Vice President said that even Mahatma Gandhi was spell bound when he listened to her rendition of 'Vaishnava Janatho'. He further said that knowing that she might not be able to sing a song he had requested, Mahatma Gandhi is supposed to have said, "I would rather hear her recite the lines than hear anyone else sing it".

The Vice President said that titans on the opposite sides of ideology, the likes of Jawaharlal Nehru and Rajaji, united and stood together when it came to appreciating the music that flowed in her mellifluous voice. He further said that even the great sage of Kanchi, his holiness, the Paramacharya was not an exception. She was an epitome of grace, respected by one and all he added.

The Vice President said that she was not only a singer par excellence, but was also a great actor who donned the roles of baktha meera and Sakunthala on silver screen. He further said that she had that glow, that divine glow, hailed by the great philosopher president Dr S Radhakrishnan as 'Brahma Tejas' found in the "God intoxicated faces" of great sages. Dr Sarojini Naidu was the Nightingale of India by her verses, Dr MS Subbulakshmi was the Nightingale of India by her voice, he added.

Following is the text of Vice President's address:

"India is a land of rich cultural heritage with music in diverse genres representing the truly myriad mosaic of plurality—from the two main fountainheads of classical music—Carnatic and Hindustani—to a variety of folk music from every nook and corner to Sufi music, Qawwalis, Rabindra Sangeet to popular film music.

What defines India is this rich heritage of music and its unifying role in bringing people together cutting across religions, regions, castes and communities.

Dr. M.S. Subbulakshmi affectionately referred to as MS Amma was the face of Indian Carnatic music for several decades. She captivated the hearts of billions, not only in Tamil nadu, South India or India but in the entire world.

Friends! The roots of Indian music can be traced to Vedic literature, Sama Veda in particular and as such every note and cadence associated with our ancient music systems have to be preserved and propagated.

Music has no barriers or boundaries. This Sanskrit saying शिशुर्वेत्ति पशुर्वेत्ति वेत्ति गान रसं फणिः (Sisurvetti pasurvetti, veti gana rasam phanihi) aptly sums up the magical power of music. Metaphysical and spiritual love finds sublime expression in the keertanas of Thyagaraja or Annamacharya, the bhajans of Meera or Tulsidas, among many highly evolved seers and sages of our literary and musical tradition. As Saint Thyagaraja said :“Sangeetha Gnanamu Bhakthi Vina Sanmargam Kaladhe”, which could be roughly translated as “unless you are able to blend devotion with music, it may not lead us to the blissful plane”

Music acquired a divine dimension when somebody like legendary Carnatic singer, late M.S. Subbulakshmi lent her voice to various compositions. Setting aside mere gimmicks and gymnastics of classical music, she delved deep into the soul of the music and brought forth the treasures from there, not only to the pundits or the elite but also to the common man.

In the enjoyment of such a fine expression of art all differences of caste creed, race and nationality evaporated.

She rose to heights where all differences vanished and she took us there with her. All the Nations stood united when she sang in the assembly of the United Nations Organisation.

Even Mahatma Gandhi was spell bound when he listened to her rendition of 'Vaishnava Janatho'.

Knowing that she might not be able to sing a song he had requested, Mahatma Gandhi is supposed to have said, “I would rather hear her recite the lines than hear anyone else sing it”.

Madurai Shanmugavadivu Subbulakshmi, remains an unsurpassed phenomenon in Carnatic music

It will be perhaps an understatement to say that M.S. Subbulakshmi is a well-known name not only in India but across the world.

She was a cult figure, who had mesmerized everyone from Mahatma Gandhi to the common man with her mellifluous voice. Upon Gandhiji's insistence, she recorded his favourite Meera bhajan 'Hari Tum Haro' overnight and sent it to him on his birthday in 1947.

She was the first musician to be awarded Bharat Ratna, the country's highest civilian honour. She was also the first Indian musician to have performed at the United Nations General Assembly and the first Indian musician to be conferred with the Ramon Magsaysay award for public service.

She was called the 'Nightingale of India' by Sarojini Naidu and “Tapaswini” by Lata Mangeshkar, while Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan described her as “Suswaralakshmi Subbulakshmi. Apart from UN, she performed at the Edinburg International Festival and for Queen Elizabeth-II at the Royal Albert Hall, London. She mostly sang in Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Meera Bhajans in Hindi.

For many decades now, it has been a common practice in most South Indian homes for people to wake up in the morning to the strains of M S Subbulakshmi's rendition of Bhaja Govindam, the popular devotional composition written by Jagadguru Adi Shankaracharya, Vishnu Sahasranaamam and Shri Venkateswara Suprabhatam, among others. Her Venkateswara Suprabhatam is played in Tirumala temple daily as part of the ritual.

Titans on the opposite sides of ideology, the likes of Jawaharlal Nehru and Rajaji, united and stood together when it came to appreciating the music that flowed in her mellifluous voice. Even the great sage of Kanchi, his holiness, the Paramacharya was not an exception.

She was an epitome of grace, respected by one and all. She was not only a singer par excellence, but was also a great actor who donned the roles of baktha meera and Sakunthala on silver screen.

She also made a huge contribution to popularizing Annanmacharya Kritis.

She also undertook more than 200 charity concerts and donated the royalties she had earned on devotional albums to the Tirumala temple.

When we celebrate the music of M S Subbulakshmi, we must also remember her husband Sri T.Sadasivam who visualized and orchestrated her career. We must also acknowledge another remarkable person in MS Subbulakshmi life - her daughter Smt Radha Viswanathan who accompanied her mother for almost 55 years on the concert stage and trained her granddaughters Aishwarya and Saundarya. The legacy continues.

I deem it a great honour to be part of centenary celebrations of the iconic M S Subbulakshmi, who lives through her immortal legacy of spreading spiritual bliss through her divine melodies.

Jai Hind."

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