

## **Carnatic Music- Readers Questions Answered**

By Smitha K. Prasad

Dear readers, in my final installment of answering questions for this session, I will address the topic that those of you who have moved to a new city have encountered i.e. how do I find a suitable Carnatic music teacher for my child in a new city where I do not know anybody, or in general how to choose a teacher for my child. While I am addressing this topic in the realm of Carnatic music, it could very well be applied to any of our classical art forms in general.

If your child has been learning Carnatic music previously, consult your current teacher for teachers (s)he may know in your new city. If you have friends whose children are learning Carnatic music in your new area, they could possibly provide you with a list of names of teachers in the local area. Every big city will more than likely have a classical music and dance society- they will also be a good resource for you to contact and obtain a list of teachers. Attend performances of musicians in the area so that you get a feel for the style of singing. However do bear in mind that good performers do not necessarily make the best teachers and vice-versa- some of the best teachers are not necessarily very prolific performers.

Once you have obtained a list of teachers, provide the teacher with information on how long your child has been learning, what his/her current lessons are- this will give the teacher a background to assess your child. Most teachers will ask you to bring your child for an evaluation. In my evaluation, one of the first questions that I ask a student is if they know what *sruthi* (pitch) they sing in. If your child does not, do find out from your guru. If your child has never learned previously, then this is not an issue as the teacher will determine the pitch best suited for the student's voice quality. I then typically ask the student to sing anything that they are comfortable with and then move on to other pieces to gauge what a good starting point for lessons is.

As a note to the parents, the *guru-shishya* (teacher-student) relationship is a special relationship- take some time before enrolling your children with a teacher. Once you have enrolled your child, I encourage you to be patient and let the *guru* determine the pace of teaching. Switching teachers because someone else's child is learning faster is not beneficial in the long run.

Finally, a word on practice- any teacher can teach only as much as the student practices. Most children have music lessons once or twice a week. Regular practice is a must if a student (or for that matter any artist) aims to progress well. Your teacher can guide you on the methods of practice but (s)/he cannot practice for you!

Till we meet next time, I look forward to more of your comments and suggestions for topics that you would like to see covered through this column.

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