

**The Hindu, Chennai & Tamil Nadu, Friday, September 14, 2007 Soft Spot**

Favourite raga? That's a tough one. It's like asking which of my two children I like more. As a mother, I cannot even think of choosing between the two. And as a singer, I would say the same. '

It is difficult picking one raga.' But if I have to mention a raga, for which I have a soft spot, it is Kalyani and all her offshoots; I mean the janya ragas of Kalyani. You can sing this raga at any time of the day, better in the evenings and nights though. It lends lustre and power to a concert.

My guru M.L.Vasanthakumari and her guru G.N.Balasubramanian have delved deep into this fascinating raga and unraveled its nuances. Kalyani packs a variety of emotions. It offers musicians a great scope to showcase their skills while delineating it. Each time I sing this raga, I discover a new prayoga. Sruthi bheda can be done at many points and you can also indulge in swara varja (skipping some swaras).

The compositions I enjoy rendering in this raga include Tyagaraja's 'Ethavunara,' Dikshitar's 'Kamalambaam Bhajare,' Patnam Subramanya Iyer's 'Nijadaasa,' Bharatiar's 'Ujjaini' and lots of tukkadas and Dasar padas. I also love singing viruthams or slokas and extensive ragam tanam pallavis in Kalyani.

I remember vividly, once during an afternoon concert at the Music Academy's Margazhi festival, there was power failure for a few minutes. I was in the midst of singing Kalyani alapana in the higher octave. I did not stop, and even attempted some difficult phrases. There was complete silence in the hall. At the end of the alapana, the audience stood up and gave a big round of applause. A memorable and moving moment indeed!

CHITRA SWAMINATHAN