

## **CITATION**

**Shri Harikesanallur Venkataraman** is a widely acclaimed music critic in Carnatic music for more than two decades. His reviews are acknowledged by both the lay persons and persons well versed in Carnatic music, for its incisive and instinctive criticism. He is known to be a healthy critic. Not only that, with his sharp but witty criticism, he has been a guide for young musicians to understand the nuances of the art and correct themselves in their course. In fact, his critique is used as a measuring scale of the musician's core competence and skills for further development of their musical career.

Harikesanallur Venkataraman is an erudite scholar with profound knowledge in Hindu Religion, Tamil Literature, Classical music, Astrology and many more subjects pertaining to Art, Culture and Heritage of our Nation. Needless to mention, Religion, Art including music and Ancient Temples are inextricably intertwined in Indian culture. Each of these complement and enhances the significance of the other. Conscious of this connect, he has in most of his music reviews, laid emphasis on religion and ancient temples of our country. This approach has given an aesthetic perspective and awareness about these facets of Indian culture to the modern youth.

His prolific work will be evident from fact that he has authored over 2500 write ups in leading Tamil dailies and periodicals, viz., *Dinamani*, *Dina Malar*, *Daily Thanthi*, *Sakthi Vikatan*, *Vijaya Baratham*, *Kalki*, *Mangaiyar Malar* etc as a music critic. His abiding interest in South Indian classical music found expression in the Tamil Monthly magazine *Sa Ri Ga Ma Pa Dha Ni* dedicated to South Indian Classical Music and Dance, of which he is the founder and first editor. He has also authored over 100 (Carnatic) music reviews in the English daily "The New Indian Express" during 1998-99. His interest lies in bringing to the fore the cultural, historical and artistic abundance in the culture of South India with reference to its temples / heritage / music. Importantly, he

has laboured to ensure opportunities for budding young musicians in various forum and Television channels to enable them to showcase their talents.

Since 1991, he has been writing music and dance reviews.

From 2000 onwards every year during the December music festival of Chennai his reviews are being published in **Daily Thanthi**, the largest circulated Tamil daily newspaper.

By authoring reviews of classic music in Daily Thanthi, he has taken the art to the masses, which was earlier confined to a lesser population i.e, the creamy layer of the society. His knowledge of the nuances of Carnatic music, felicity of expression and command over the language have made him the natural choice for authoring the write ups.

He has also authored brief English comments on the inlay-cards of as many as 800 HMV-RPG audio CDs. He has produced hundreds of music programmes and religious programmes for Jaya TV channel during 1999-2000 and has also appeared in the said channel during the same period and is well known for his articulation. He has produced ten programmes for Chennai Doordarshan Kendra. Further, he has done many musical features for All India Radio, Chennai.

He has presented programmes in almost all Tamil Satellite television channels as guest / anchor / compere – and has done many more roles in front of and behind the camera. He has also scored music for some audio productions. He has acted in the role of an astrologer, in **Cho. Ramaswamy's** tele serial **Enga Brahmanan**, which was telecast in Jaya TV.

From May 2003, he has been continuously appearing in some TV or the other, on all the 365 days. He is giving talks about temples, astrology, classical music and many other subjects related to our culture. Specific reference may be drawn to one such programme titled as "*Thalangalum Paadalgalum*", meaning "Temples and Songs". which was telecast in 64 episodes in DD - Podhigai, Chennai Kendra in the year 2009. The said programme highlighted the significance of the temple with reference to the songs sung to the particular temple. The narration given by him in this

programme described the mythological, historical and architectural significance of the temples with an emphasis on *Bakthi*.

He gives running commentaries for many important temple festivals and Kumbabishekam functions all over Tamil Nadu, telecast in DoorDarshan and other TV channels. Thiruchendur “*Soora Samharam*” held on “*Skanda Sashti Day*” and the “*Deepam Festival*” of Thiruvannamalai held on “*Karthigai Deepam Day*” are noteworthy.

Currently, he is presenting a daily astrological programme titled as “***Oli Mayamaana Ethir kalaam***” in the Zee Tamil TV Channel from 7 to 7.30 am. He has been doing this programme for the past six and a half years everyday and the said programme has been rated amongst the top programmes in the morning band. In fact, it is the only astrology programme which has got a TRP/GRP rating among Tamil TV channels and is being viewed by over three crore people spread across 75 countries.

#### **Family Lineage:**

Shri Harikesanallur Venkataraman is only continuing the hallowed tradition in his family by way of his commitment to music. He hails from a family of stalwarts in the fields of Music, Astrology and Law. His grand uncle ***Gayaka Sikamani, Sangeetha Kalanidhi Harikesanallur Dr. L. Muthiah Bhagavathar*** was one of the founders of the Madras Music Academy and had invented 25 new raagas in Carnatic Music and had composed over 500 songs in various languages. He was the first musician in India on whom an Honorary Doctorate was conferred. In 1942, the Kerala University honoured Harikesanallur Muthiah Bhagavathar with Doctorate. He was the *Asthana Vidhvan* (Royal Musician) in the erstwhile Mysore Kingdom.

Mention may also be made of his grand uncle ***Sangeetha Kalanidhi Justice T.L. Venkatarama Iyer*** –a Judge of **The Supreme Court of India** who popularized the compositions of Sri Muthuswami Deekshatar (one among the Music Trinity). Sri Swaminatha Swami SevaSamaj, the body administering the Uttara Swami Malai Temple, New Delhi (popularly known as *Malai Mandir*) was initially formed under the presidentship of Justice Sri

T.L. Venkatarama Iyer. He was the second President of the Madras Music Academy. He is the one who taught Muthuswami Dikshatar Krithees (compositions) to Bharat Ratna M.S. Subbulakshmi, Padma Vibhushan D.K. Pattammal and many more celebrity musicians.

**Awards and Accolades:**

The following are the awards which have been conferred on him:

- (a) Award of ***Vimarsaga Rathna*** (Expert Critic) conferred by Justice K.S. Bakthavatchalam on 26. 12. 2001 on the day his 1000<sup>th</sup> music review was published
- (b) Award of ***Isai Selvam*** conferred by PadmaShri Avvai Shanmugham Birthday Celebration Committee given by Justice K. Chockalingam in the year 2004
- (c) Award of ***Vidyasri title*** (Best critic) given by the Mayor of Chennai and Dr. Nalli Kuppuswami Chetty in a colourful function organized by the Narayana Iyer Trust.
- (d) Award of Noteworthy Services in Journalism was conferred by His Holiness 108 Sri Suyateendra Teertha Sripadangalavaru on 28.4.2013 at Sri Raghavendra Math, Mantralayam, A.P.
- (e) Award of ***Vimarswaga Vithagar*** (Best critic) given by KMS KalaiUlagam, New Delhi under the auspices of the Delhi Tamil Sangam in a function presided over by Shri. SatishUpadhyay, President Delhi Pradesh BJP on 27.4.2015.