



DR SHOBHA RAJU

ARTISTE IS MADE ...on the grave of humanity!

“Bro.. che... vaa.... revaruraa?..”

In a distant village, a mellifluous voice was heard on a morning, which was expressive and perfectly in tune.

Shadjama paused her music practice, put her Tumbura aside and came to the entrance door of the house to see the wonderful singer.

Lo! He was a boy around Six or seven years old. His half-pant and shirt were worn out. His hair look ed disheveled, indicating neglect.

As soon as the boy saw Shadjama, he halted singing and extended his hand, begging.

Shadjama said, “Come here”. The boy approached her.

Shadjama: “What’s your name?”

Boy: “Balu... Balasubrahmanyam”

Shadjama: “You are singing very well. If you are guided to practice well, you can become as great as Balu”.

Boy: “My mother always told me that I must become like him”.

Shadjama: “Will you stay in our house and learn music?”

Balu was born to a school teacher of music. Her husband died of liver failure because of heavy drinking. Balu’s mother had tried to



make ends meet with her meager salary. Finally, she succumbed to lung cancer. An associate of the family admitted Balu in a local orphanage. The boy couldn’t tolerate the life in the orphanage. He left it

and started living by singing for alms at bus station, sometimes at railway station and very rarely, in front of houses.

Boy wanted to give Shadjama’s house a try, since there were no better options.

Shadjama started teaching music to him. Her intelligent and innovative ways of teaching captivated Balu. The improvement Balu was showing in singing was also very inspiring to Shadjama.

Years passed by. Balu became sixteen years. He became a very well-trained singer.

An annual event by name, “Yuva Swaram” was very popular in the city. Shadjama was preparing the boy for this, from the beginning. Each candidate would be given 15 minutes. Participant would sing a classical item, a light music item and a folk song. The singers selected in this event would be sponsored to tour in USA and made to give twelve concerts in all

the major cities of US and Bharat. It was a significant stepping stone to a successful career. Each qualified Guru could recommend one eligible student to this event. In a way it's a prestigious event to the Gurus. The event would be telecast live on a popular channel.

The day of the event arrived. Shadjama thoroughly prepared and recommended Balu. She was eagerly watching Balu's performance sitting before the TV. She was overwhelmed by Balu's performance. At the end of the event, Balu was announced as the "Yuva Swaram" (Voice of Youth) of the year. "Congratulations to his Guru, Smt Ranganayakamma", the president of the association, Parandhamiah announced. Shadjama was shocked. Ranganayakamma used to say that Shadjama was her idol and inspiration. She used to appreciate the musical genius of Shadjama. On Ranganayakamma's request, Shadjama used to frequently send Balu to her school to teach special items. Now it was announced that Ranganayakamma was Balu's Guru. Shadjama didn't crave for recognition so much but her trust in human relations was shattered. The world felt ungrateful and she felt as if her child had been taken away from her dubiously. Tears welled up in her eyes from the pain in her heart. "No gratitude?! No human bondage?! No value for love and compassion?! All selfishness? Thanklessness? Her heart was broken.

Balu came home. He was bit guilty for what has happened. "Sorry Amma. The president of the association, Parandhamiah said that he knew my parents and had given twenty five thousand rupees of helping grant to my mother as she was a poor music teacher. He was



responsible for my admission into orphanage after my mother passed away. Later he lost track of me. He advised me not to mention your name as my guru as you don't belong to our caste. If I did, he said that I won't get recognition or encouragement from the organisation. He advised me to mention Ranganayakamma as my Guru. Hope you won't mistake me". Her smile of detachment was only the response.

Balu left for Delhi the next day as he had to take advance training course in music for three months from a great scholar in music. Shadjama was experiencing a great

void in life.

Three months passed by. One day there was a call from Balu. "Amma! I am leaving for US from Delhi. Thought of coming to you. But only one week to leave for US. I need to buy certain essentials. I haven't seen Agra and a few worth-seeing places in Delhi. I'll come back in three months Amma. Wish me well", said Balu.

"God bless you Balu! Take care", said Shadjama as tears rolled down.

Shadjama's health started deteriorating very fast. One fine day she breathed her last. Her spiritual guru, Babaji, the only person with

whom Shadjama was in touch, managed to call Balu and let him know of her demise. Balu spoke to the president of the “Yuva Swaram”, Parandhamiah. “By gones are by gones. Now all the concerts are scheduled and advertised. If you go back in the middle, organisers would incur heavy losses and they might proceed legally against you. Anyways, it doesn't make difference to Shadjama whether you are here or there, as she is no more. Think of your career. Life is not easy”, advised Parandhamiah. Balu couldn't make it to Shadjama's funeral.

“Balu! Tomorrow there is a concert in Chicago. You dedicate the concert to Shadjama, expressing a few sentiments. Listeners would very much appreciate it”,

said Parandhamiah. Balu did accordingly. He had standing ovation and everyone wrote a gift check to Balu. Overwhelmed, Parandhamiah raised a toast in appreciation of Balu and Balu had drinks for the first time in his life.

Balu returned to India with Parandhamiah. He proceeded to his village and went to Shadjama's spiritual guru, Babaji. He took Balu to the grave of Shadjama.

“Balu! Being herself a poor woman, how she raised you teaching music! Fate was cruel on her and she had to live all alone. She turned totally spiritual. Many times she spoke to me about you and her plans of raising you as a musician. She sold off a little gold she had for your clothes and medicines. I helped her with meager amounts as

her father and me were close friends. You'll be surprised to know that Parandhamiah has undue connection with Ranganyakamma. She owes all her ideas to Shadjama. She used to call herself “Ekalavya Sishya” (Ekalavya learnt archery keeping the idol of St Dronacharya. Who ever learns anything by just observing the teacher, without being under direct tutelage of the teacher, is usually called so) of Shadjama. Everybody ditched her. I thought at least you would be a positive force in her life”. Babaji sighed.

“Sir! Let me know if there is anything, I could do”, said Balu, with tears in his eyes.

After a little pause Babaji said, “We thought of having her monthly memorial ceremony next week. On that day, in the evening, we wish to have your concert. You can express your gratitude and sing. Her soul might find some solace.

“How I wish I could do that sir. Parandhamiah is waiting for me to sign a contract for an Australia tour. We have to leave for Australia the day after tomorrow”.

Babaji signaled for Balu to go and left the place with a sense of disdain for the society. Balu looked at him as he walked away. He looked at the grave and went close to it. Bowed to it. His tears fell on the grave. He sang, “Bro... che... vaa... revaru raa” while tears rolled down. He wiped his tears and left the place to sign the contract for Australia tour.

“Who is to whom in this world? Do not ask anyone which way leads to where.

(A translation of Telugu film song)

(Author is a well-known musician, Devotional singer, writer and composer.) **TN**

