

To the **Organizers, Ravi Gudipati**, and **musicians-in-arms**,

As the subject conveys, it is a 'report' and it *might* be long, subjective to individual tastes. Read on if you dare...

The musical hangover always seems to persist...at least till the next one replaces it...and the saga goes on! A plethora of sounds is reverberating in my head: a palette of instruments painted by the lightning-speed, flippant fingers of **Nagaraj** and color-coded on the canvas as a portrait by **Raj**, heart-stopping rhythmic thrum from the bass strings straining under **James**'s provocation (remember, he was next to me and...I am getting old ☺), the salsa-spicy-samba-fresh sounds of the conga interspersed with the regional drum-beats of *Mera Bharat Mahan* all over, executed by **Arun** (my *co-conspirator*), the delicate-yet-decisive strokes from a thoroughbred *tabalchi* (Wah! Ustad! **Ravi** Boliye!) like **Ravi Gutala** (Boy! he could probably still think of his next work-related assignment in parallel **without** missing a beat – pun **intended!**) – all these elements of music woven richly into the fabric of melody by the vocalists (these guys deserve another section/paragraph(s) for themselves, and so...)

I was both mesmerized and captivated by **Deepika's** renditions. She seemed to induce an uncanny sense of harmony among the group, so much so that all us (poor) instrumentalists could relax our muscles, nerves and what-not to present a wholesome picture. Her past experience of rubbing shoulders with TV shows and the like shows her professionalism – a focused approach to the goal despite hurdles all around. Kudos and best wishes to her!

Murali Krishnamurthy, with whom I had the pleasure to work with (back from **Pallavi** days) seems to always have a bag of tricks! His work towards SEF's indefatigable efforts to 'bring light to the less fortunate' reflected in his choice of one of the toughest *rAgamAlikas* of yesteryear Telugu song – **hAyi hAyiGA**. That the song was repeated makes me say no more. **Murali**-ji/garu/sir, now is the time to ruminate on what you can **also** employ towards your main goal!!

New friends were introduced me thanks to this event: **Murali Sambara** and **Anand Kannan**. Psst! Psst! **Murali (S)** told me that he had learnt *mridangam* for 5 years (it clearly showed on his command of the rhythmic nuances demanded by the songs of choice). His *revelatory* (pun unintended for people who know/understand Telugu) prowess in "**Telisindi Le**" was charming! **Anand** proved himself not only as a competent singer but also as a wonderful showman (*This is One Guy/Who is not stage-shy!*)

Prasad-garu, a gentleman to the core, did very well with his **nAIOni**. He has a tenor that can be fully-exploited with the right choice of songs! His amicability and openness is extremely refreshing!

Sridevi is a wonderful person and singer with whom I have worked with, on many occasions. Unassuming, yet professional, she carried the flagship of SEF's clarion call to the less fortunate of the world to rise like a phoenix, excellently on her nimble shoulders to render the poignant message with **maunamgAne**. With the current status of the economy, this is a reminder ("**Akulanni rAlina choTe/kotta chiguru kanipistundi**") – (for my non-conversant-with-Telugu friends, it means: *fallen leaves make room for new leaflets*, or philosophically put, **Autumn** will always be succeeded by **Spring**...) and hope we can take inspiration from the poet's words (God bless him/her!).

And there is **Ravi Gudipati**...First my personal thanks to him (via **Arun Pillai** of course) for accommodating me in this program! I am not sure he is a Gemini, but yes, I saw two distinct aspects of him – one during rehearsals, and one on the stage. During the preparation-stages, he was more or less silent (except for the last rehearsal where everyone was looking at their watches to head home, but he plodded on with silent force). On the stage, he took things as part of Reality (unlike studio recordings, live performances (at least from amateurs like **me**) always depends on a lot of parameters that is not precisely controlled) and make the best of whatever was offered. To cite, "**Vedam...**", one of the complex compositions of **Ilayaraja** in terms of movement, arrangement and emotions, involved the oxymoronic facet of simple (structured)-complex (handling the progression) – **hamsAnandi/sohinI**. While most of the troupe mutinied on this song, he couched the dissent with charm and humility and rendered it all the same! It came out good (the best judge of course is **Ravi** himself). Well, anyway, he was the pioneer of the show. I am sure **devuDA** would have upped his ratings by now in his circles...my best wishes to him!

The report is incomplete without **Vijaya Asuri**-garu! A phenomenal presence on the stage that can move mountains (also lots of emotions (and ahem! wallets too...)). It is a pleasure to hear her motivated, animated speeches in Telugu (and English of course!) that can unearth the deep-seated emotions within a person. Hint! Hint! If she can join the Obama-bandwagon, help us 18-hour working professionals to keep the home's hearth burning, by providing Obama with ways to raise the economy, peace-of-mind and security...Ah! Wishes are but horses!!**Vijya**-garu, you are gung-ho and keep it going...

And finally, my very special thanks to **Prasad Mangina** (for taking care of gastronomical needs of the group during and after rehearsals), **Veeru** (the sound (bite) man!) who helped us have a wonderful effect for presenting our repertoire, and the unknown, unheard faces of the SEF crowd, who **ARE** the foundation for this to happen..**God bless each of the individual involved!**

My best wishes to SEF, BATA and **every** individual who has contributed to this**HOUSEFUL-HEARTWARMING** event!

With best wishes,

Another face in the crowd,

Venky