

Young musicians trade Mumbai for Chennai

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Bombay Jayashree's epithet may be a giveaway to her musical roots, but the vocalist isn't the only one with a Mumbai connection. While the Bombay sisters, C Saroja and C Lalitha, were the earliest to earn the sobriquet in the 60s, several Carnatic musicians after them have migrated from the 'City of Dreams' to the 'City of Song'.

Vocalist Aruna Sairam, violinist-vocalist sisters Ranjani-Gayatri, vocalists Prasanna Venkatraman and Vignesh Ishwar, violinists Padma Shankar and Charumathi Raghuraman and mridangam player Vijay B Natesan are some of those who traded Mumbai for Chennai.

Having been born or raised on the opposite coast, they were initiated into the Carnatic tradition by resident musicians like T S Krishnaswami, T R Balamani, T Brinda and others. But to excel in this field, they had to situate themselves in the 'Mecca of Carnatic music', as Venkatraman calls Chennai. The 31-year-old moved cities at 22. "Chennai offers more opportunities and an artist is eventually recognised by his performances," says the vocalist. Having said that, Venkatraman is quick to point out that the Bombay of the 90s was infrastructurally and culturally sound with instructors, competitions and talent promotion concerts with full attendance. "Now, attendance at concerts has dropped and good teachers are old or no more," he says.

More recently, 22-year-old Vignesh Ishwar took the leap. The engineering graduate from Chembur in Mumbai, was a student of Palakkad Anantharama Bhagavathar. He proceeded to study under T M Krishna in Chennai from 2008, arriving here every month for lesson. In 2011, he relocated to Chennai permanently.

For most, it's not only better

THE BOMBAY CONNECT

Raised or initiated into the Carnatic music in Mumbai, several performers chose to move to Chennai in order to truly excel in the field



PICS: TOI & Sruti Magazine

CROSSING OVER: Aruna Sairam during a performance at IIT-Saarang on Wednesday. The Padma Shree awardee grew up in Mumbai and relocated to Chennai in 1990s

Charumathi Raghuraman

| **Violinist:** Born in 1987, her talent was spotted by T N Krishnan who offered to train her. She moved permanently to Chennai in 1999



| **Vijay B Natesan | Mridangam player:** Born in 1981, Natesan started performing at the age of seven. He arrived in Chennai in 2008 from Vile Parle in Mumbai

Bombay Jayashree |

Vocalist: Jayashree has performed in over 20 countries and collaborated with performers in India and abroad. She was born in Kolkata and grew up in Mumbai before moving to Chennai in 1987



playing prospects with year-round concerts, but also the chance to refine their art. "People in Chennai demand higher standards, and won't accept you unless you're very good," says mridangam player Vijay Natesan, who arrived in Chennai in 2008 from Vile Parle in Mumbai.

Having trained under T S Nandakumar there, he continued his training with Dr T V Gopalakrishnan. Unlike Natesan's own guru, Nate-

san opted for a complete immersion. "In Mumbai you'd play about three to four concerts a month. In Chennai you're tested every time, for only selection by a sabha and audience approval will decide a musician's fate."

While musicians do migrate to Chennai from other cities, it is apparently Mumbai from where most arrive. "The trend is picking up with more young musicians," notes Radha Nambodiri, Director of Sri Shanmukhananda Bharatiya Sangeetha Mahavidyalaya, affiliated to Mumbai's most popular sabha, Sri Shanmukhananda.

