

FRIDAY REVIEW

NAVOTSAVAM

Sailing from one raga to the next

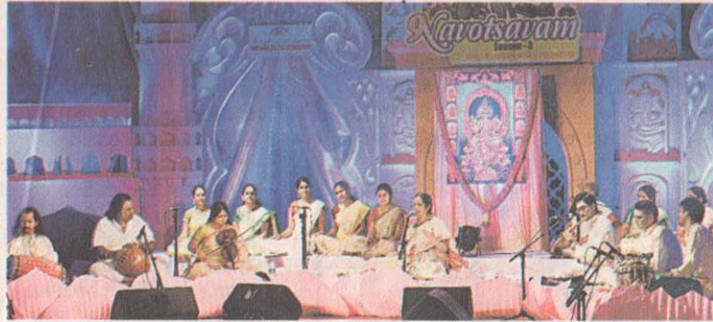
After a long gap, Aruna Sairam performed in the city and left her audience mesmerised.

V.V. RAMANI

The celebratory mood which enveloped the city during Navaratri had barely subsided, when another celebration giving us a rich fare of music and dance began soon after. 'Navotsavam' the annual festival hosted by S S International Live, began on a classical note with a concert by Aruna Sairam titled 'En Thai Nee Anro.' Performing after a long gap in Chennai, this was a concert which her fans looked forward to.

The booming voice of Aruna chanting the Omkara mantra greeted the rasikas as the curtains rose, and she was soon joined by a group of women chanting verses from Lalitha Sahasranamam.

Aruna's ode to the Devis was a blend of classical songs, bhajans and group chanting.



Aruna Sairam and her group.

PHOTO: K. V. SRINIVASAN

Keeping up with the current trend of novelty in presentations, Aruna's ode to the Devis was a blend of classical songs, bhajans and group chanting. The overpowering stage decor was thankfully toned down by the team of six accompanying artists and ten musicians on the dais dressed uniformly in shades of half white.

A lively rendering of 'Saama Gana Lole' in Hindolam was followed by a slow paced rendering of 'Kanaka Shaila Viharini' in Punnaagavali where Aruna's evocative singing reached out to the

listeners. Navarathri Navotsavam it was, so naturally it veered towards Muthuswamy Dikshitar's gems - Navavarana kirthanas and 'Kamalamba' in Anandabhairavi unfolded in all its glory. Even as the singer was exploring the nuances of the song, a group of five young girls rendered a sloka emphasising the lines 'Sharanye Thyryambike Gowri' in varied octaves. An interesting idea and the girls sang competently but the two did not blend.

The Ashtaragamalika kriti composed by S. Kalyanaraman in Jaganmohini,

Anandabhairavi, Sunadhavinodini, Kiravani, Kalyani, Nayaki, Ranjani and Devagandhari was an ideal choice for the singer's virtuosity and she sailed effortlessly from one raga to another. The cascade of swaras in these ragas reminded me of the song 'Oru Naal Podhuma' from the film 'Thiruvilaiyadal.'

It was now time for Aruna to move beyond the southern frontiers. Bhavani Maatha came alive in Aruna's soulful rendering of 'Bhavani Diwani' and the Bengali song 'Jaago Tumi Jaago' evoked the image of Maa Durga. The devotional

fervour she infused in her chanting of the Kalighat Jaagan as a prelude to the song was heart-wrenching.

Aruna also shared her foray into other musical disciplines and its experiences. She spoke about her response to the music she heard in a crypt of a church in Germany and drew parallels to Adi Sankara's 'Sarva Brahmamayam' in Kalyani. She sang both versions in quick succession. Aruna concluded the show on a high note with her signature song 'Bhaktha Jana Vatsale', culminating with Lalitha Sahasranamam and Om.

The brilliant team comprising J. Vaidhyathan on the mridangam, Dr. S. Karthick on the ghatam, Padma Shankar on the violin, Muthukumar on the flute, Kishore Kumar on the sitar and Chandrajit on the tabla provided sensitive support to the vocalist.