



K.P. Udayabhanu with Ustad Bismilla Khan.

Straight from the heart

Sasi Kumar C. Thalassery

The popular playback singer Udayabhanu has been honoured with Kamukara Award. The Kamukara Foundation has selected Udayabhanu to receive this year's award for his commendable contribution to Malayalam film music. He entered the Malayalam film music field by singing *Enthinithra panchasara punchiri palil* written by P.

Bhaskaran and composed by K. Raghavan Master, the most loved Malayalam film music director and master of folk numbers. Raghavan Master, as he is popularly known had a dislike for Tamil and Telugu singers who had dominated the Malayalam music world and was in search of a new rise in his forthcoming film *Nayaru Pidicha Pulivalu* after the successful release of *Neelakkuyil* and *Rarichan Enna Pauran*. In those days the Malayalam songs were pure citation of

popular Hindi and Tamil tunes and Raghavan Master was fed up with this kind of recitation and was on the way of creating tune that bring about the traditional folk music of rustic Kerala and he had a start with *Neelakkuyil*.

He suggested the voice of a nineteen year old boy Udayabhanu who was then working as an announcer in AIR, Kozhikode. The producer wanted to enlist the sound of A.M. Raja a dominating

playback singer in those days. But Raghavan Master persuaded the producer to accept his first suggestion. Ultimately his will prevailed and Udayabhanu rendered the song *Enthinihra panchasara punchiripalil* and a duet with P. Leela (*Veluthapenne veluthapenne manassilenthanu*).

Thus Udayabhanu made his debut under Raghavan Master who had introduced Brahmanandan, Sreekazhi Govinda Raj, lyricist Vayalar etc.

Udayabhanu joined AIR in 1955. He had nostalgic memories about his days he spent at AIR, Kozhikode. It was at AIR that Raghavan Master befriended with Bhaskaran and urged him to compose music for Malayalam films. The song written by Bhaskaran were rustic and Raghavan Master used folk music which created a trend in Malayalam cinema beginning with *Neelakkuyil*. Most of the Raghavan Master's immortal melodies were sung by Udayabhanu.

Four years later, in 1962, Udayabhanu sang for *Laila Majnu* composed by M.S. Baburaj, *Chudukanneeralen jeevitha katha pavanurukki*, *Tharame tharame* (along with P. Leela) became instant hits. Since then he was the undisputed playback singer, in later 60's with the emergence of Yesudas on the arena with his romantic voice, he had to withdraw silently from the scene just like P.B. Sreenivas, A.M. Raja, Kamukara Purushothaman. But still Udayabhanu had a firm footing in the film music world in the role of a music director.

Notable songs of Udayabhanu are *Pennayi pirannengil (Ammayekanan)*, *Anuraga natakathil (Ninamaninja Kalpadukal)*, *Vellinakshathrame ninne nokki*, *Kanana cholayil aadu meikkan* (with Leela in *Ramanan*), *Ponvala illengilum (Kuttikkuppayam)*, *Valakilukcum vanambadi* (with S. Janaki in *Mayavi*), *Yathrakkara, yathrakkara* (with P. Suseela), *Annu ninne kandathil pinne (Unniarcha)*, *Evideninno evideninno vazhiyambalathil*, all bring nostalgic memories of yester years.

The voice of Udayabhanu can also be heard in *puthanvalakkara (Chemmeen)*.

Udayabhanu's emergence as a music director was in 1976 by composing songs for Samasya. The song *Kilichilachu, kilukile kaivala chirichu* and *Nirapara charthiya pookkulapole nee* won him acclaim as a creative music director of noteworthy. His

next film *Mayilpeeli* even though it was not released came out with melodious songs like *Endu sundara susmitham tookum, Pathikare pathikare*. In 1984, he composed music for *Velichamillatha veedhi*. In 1985 for *Ethu Nalla tamasa*, in 1998 for *Kochu kochu mohangal* (playback music only) and in 1999 for *Chakkram* were some of the prominent of Udayabhanu film songs, the very special sweetness that has always distinguished in his music composition has gained such recognition.

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Udayabhanu was born in 1936 in a royal family in Tanoor in Palakkad district to Naduvilidani Sankara Varma and Nethyaramma, sister of K.P. Kesava Menon. He had his formal music teaching from his uncle Appukutty Menon and later from Palakkad Rama Bhagavathar, M.D. Ramanathan and Erode Visweswara Iyyer.

Udayabhanu was bestowed with awards when he lured to composing music for film songs. He won the Kerala State Award for the best music director in 1982 and National award for best music director in 1995. He was also the recipient of senior fellowship from Government of India for incorporating music for K.T. Mohamed's play *Meghasandesam*. He was also conferred with Kerala Lalithakala Sangeetha Nataka Academy award and Kerala Sangeetha Nataka Academy Award.

Now he is 72 and for the last two decades he is on a musical mission in popularising melody among the masses by conducting *Old is Gold* programmes. The stage programmes he conducted at different parts of Kerala and abroad attracts huge crowds and now he is still going on with his troupe even though some of his associates like Kamukara Purushothaman and P. Leela are no more.

Recently he had been to Thalassery to stage *Old is Gold* programme in connection with the Bharatholsavam National Folk Art Festival, conducted jointly by Nehru Yuvak Kendra and Sardar Chandroth Memorial Trust. The moment he landed at Thalassery he paid a visit to his master K. Raghavan



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who is at the evening of his life at Saravana Temple gate, Thalassery. The age has not withered Udayabhanu's enthusiasm in propagating ethnic music. In Thalassery a large crowd assembled to enjoy and feel the strength and beauty of ethnic music. Asked about what is his aim in conducting *Old is Gold*, he says he had a live memory of his masters while creating their everlasting songs.

Simplicity is the hallmark of his songs. The enduring celebrity of his songs is that they are sung even to this day. ■