

# IFAASD

## 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Music & Dance Festival





## A Message from the Secretary



Dear Patrons,

Welcome to the 16th Annual Indian Music and Dance Festival! I hope you and your families are thriving and enjoying transitioning back to pre-pandemic activities, including attending in-person music and dance programs. During this year's festival, we are excited to celebrate the musical legacies of Bharat Ratnas Ravi Shankar and Bhimsen Joshi, Sangita Kalanidhis TM Thyagarajan, and MD Ramanathan. In addition, we will be honoring highly accomplished artists including Nagai Muralidharan, Lalgudi GJR Krishnan, Lalgudi Vijayalakshmi, and Kala Ramnath with lifetime achievement awards. We will also be recognizing the services of Dr. Madhu Madhavan, Hema Rajagopal, and Harini Vikas-Jha with the Samaja Seva Rathna award.

On behalf of the board of the Indian Fine Arts Academy, I want to thank you for your continued support throughout the past year. Your active participation in the academy's activities as well as your financial contributions to its growth and development have

enabled us to have a very busy and productive year. This past year, we featured Carnatic vocalists – including Gayathri Venkataraghavan, Sandeep Narayan, TM Krishna, Carnatica Brothers, Vani Ramamurthy, Trichur Brothers, and Bala Boys – Carnatic instrumentalists, such as Balu Masti, and Hindustani instrumentalists, like Vishwa Mohan Bhatt and Rupak Kulkarni. We also had the privilege of witnessing the percussion virtuoso of Sangita Kalanidhi Trichy Sankaran and the Bharatanatyam styles of Shweta Prachande and Priyanka Raghuraman. We staged a spectacular youth festival for the fifth year in a row by inviting 23 young artists from across North America to San Diego. The performances included vocal and instrumental Carnatic and Hindustani music and many dance forms such as Bharathnatyam, Kuchipudi, Kathak, and Odissi.

Working closely with the team of organizers of the Cleveland Aradhana, led by Sri V.V. Sundaram, the IFAASD board's vision for this year's festival was to add more depth and dimension to the academy's repertoire. We are keenly focused on our future together as we celebrate 16 years of adventurous artistic engagement. For the next four days, our wonderful city of San Diego will become even more popular in Southern California as we host 12 events featuring over 43 artists from India and around the U.S. and over 50 young students of music and dance from San Diego.

The board joins me in inviting all of you to thoroughly enjoy high caliber vocal, instrumental, and natya programs throughout the entirety of this grand festival. We greatly appreciate your support and presence at every one of the events scheduled over the next four days.

Once more, I'd like to extend a hearty welcome to all of you and wish you all an enjoyable experience as patrons of the Indian Fine Arts Academy of San Diego!

Sincerely,

**Shekar Viswanathan**

Secretary, Indian Fine Arts Academy of San Diego

## Chief Guest Sangeeta Achārya

# Thiruvaiyaru S.R. Krishnan

*Sangeeta Achārya Thiruvaiyaru S.R. Krishnan is a Vākgèyakāra, Védic scholar, poet, lyricist, composer, journalist, a story writer, and an operatic playwright.*

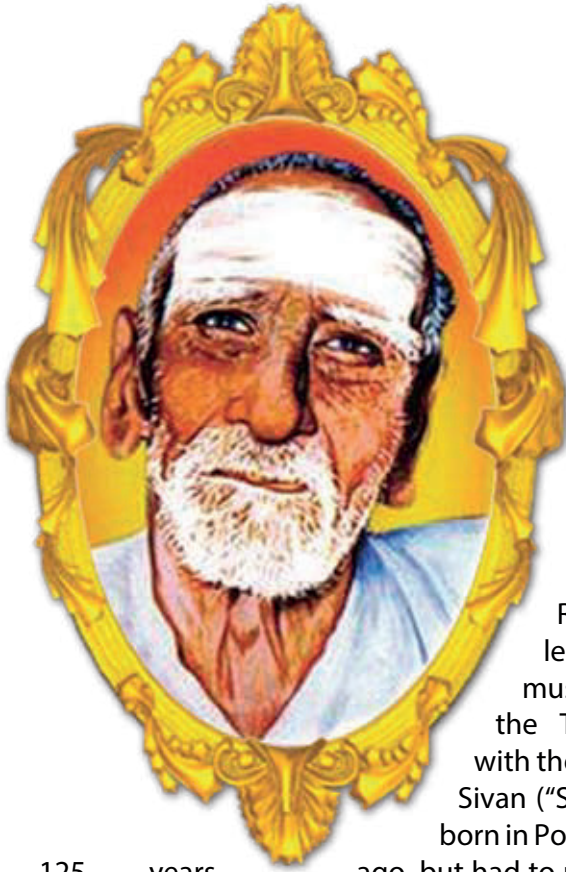
Krishnan was trained in Karnāṭaka Sangitam by his father Gāna-Bhūshaṇam Brahmaṣri Kumāramāngalam Srinivāsa Rāghavan (KSR), and by many other legends of the 20th Century including Maharājapuram Viswanātha Iyer, Madurai Mani Iyer and G.N. Bala Subramanyam. Krishnan has been performing since 1955 in India, Far East Asia, Europe, Great Britain, and the United States, accompanied by well-known artists many of whom are leading names in the Indian Music world. Krishnan is also a celebrated exponent of 'Dakshina-sampradaya-Sankeertanam, Abhang-Sankeertan & Hari-Kathā traditions, performing these divine formats encompassing music from Hindusthāni and Karnataka-Sangeeta traditions of India.

His Gurus for these hoary traditions include Brahmaṣri KSR, Brahmaṣri Nāthamuni Nārāyana-Iyengar, Abhang Sirónmañi Nārāyaṇa-Sāstri, and Swāmi Haridoss Giri (renowned as 'Guruji') with whom Krishnan had performed since 1959 until Guruji's passing away in 1990. Krishnan's earliest Opera based on three versions of "Rāmāyaṇa", titled Sitāyāscaritam Mahat or Triveni-Ramayana" was staged in 1965. A thespian since his youth, Krishnan had performed in the prestigious Kalidas Festivals in Ujjain to play leading roles in many of Kalidas's famed works. He has hundreds of live recordings; some of which are available, on-line, and also on two YouTube channels (Ragasri & Guru Bhakti).



A disciple of His Holiness Jagadguru Kanchi Paramāchārya (68th Pontiff of the Adi Sankara Order), Krishnan continued training in the Vedas and scriptures in Sanskrit College, Madras under the auspices of Paramāchārya.

Krishnan with his wife Radha and his daughters/disciples, Priya, Harini and Subha (aka 'Krishnan-Sisters') are all involved in several philanthropic activities. Krishnan's performances are mostly fundraisers for Charities and Philanthropy and for temples; those live recordings supplement the Krishnans' support to charities, Homes for the mentally and physically challenged and hospitals for the underprivileged. A gold medalist from the University of Madras, India, Krishnan is a Fellow of the Royal Chartered Institute of Bankers (London) and a Fellow of the Institute of Financial Accountants (London) since the 1970s. Krishnan has held top executive positions with several International Banks, in Asia, Europe, Great Britain and the US, and has widely traveled the globe for 50 years. He is the CEO and Chairmen of two reputed US Fiduciary firms serving at the nomination of US Federal and State Agencies, Regulators, Banks, and Foreign Governments. He also serves as the Special Deputy Commissioner of California State Department of Financial Protection & Innovation.



# PAPANASAM SIVAN

*Thiruvaiyaru SR Krishnan*

Polagam Ramamritha Iyer and his wife Yogammal would not have known that their son Ramayya would become a legend in the world of Carnatic music or a renowned lyricist in the Tamil Celluloid film world with the revered coinage Papanasam Sivan ("Sivan"). Young Ramayya was born in Polagam, near Thanjavur, about 125 years ago, but had to migrate, when he was hardly 6 years old, to Thiruvananthapuram samasthanam (the modern day Trivandrum), after he lost his father. With the subsistence provided by the generous Maharaja's OoTTupura, and with free education from the Maharaja's Sanskrit College, he graduated to the certification as 'UpAdhyAyA.' As a teenager, Ramayya also felt fortunate to come under the musical influence of (SwarakkuDukkai) Noorani Mahadeva Bhagavatar (Asthana vidwan in the Court of Thiruvananthapuram maharaja), SAmba Bhagavatar, and Karamanai NeelakanTa dAsar at a time when the musical foundation had already been laid by his mother, Yogammal, and his maternal grandfather who taught him more than 600 devotional songs. During this learning phase, young Ramayya was inspired by the famous composer Nilakanta Sivan and used to regularly attend Nilakanta Sivan's Bhajans in 1902 and 1903. This affiliation with the vAkgeyakara Nilakanta Sivan is mentioned in 'enadhu ninaivukkaDal,' a book of personal reminiscences written by Sivan himself. While young Ramayya worked as a cook and as a handyman in Maharaja's Oottupara, he used to frequent Harikatha kAlakshebams to absorb the style and erudition of Harikatha bhagavatar ManamElkudi Venkatachala Bhagavatar (who was vocally supported, then, by Harikesanallur Muthiah Bhagavatar who later became one of the greatest vAkgeyakaras of 19th and 20th centuries). Another great musician that Ramayya admired was the Harikatha exponent Tiruppazhanam Panchapakesa Bhagavatar. In his memoir 'enadhu

ninaivukkaDal', Sivan mentions the greatness of Panchapakesa bhagavatar as having been endowed with the pancha-va'karams or five'Va's – Vastra, Vapu, vAk, Vidya and Vinaya (quoted from a famous poet).

When his mother passed away in 1910, Ramayya returned to Tamizhnadu with his brother, but moved from place to place before finally settling down in Papanasam village. His penchant for devotional music and mellifluous and divine rendition of bhajan songs over the next few years in and around Papanasam earned him the name 'Papanasam Sivan.'

Sivan reportedly abhorred classical music that was then practiced on the 'concert platforms' for he felt they lacked devotional and spiritual fervor. It was in response to this that he said that he began composing songs that were 'primarily driven by devotion rather than by abstract music.' By 1912, he started listening to 'classical' concerts, rather perforce, which, nevertheless helped elevate his musical journey from being a mere Keetana-driven devotee

to that of a 'classical composer.' For this transition, the music world must thank Mahavidwan Konerirajapuram Vaidyanatha bhagavata. Ironically, Sivan walked out of the first concert of Vaidyanatha Bhagavata, highly critical, as he (hardly 22 years of age) could neither understand Telugu nor appreciate Tyagaraja's compositions. He also felt that the niravals and kalpana swarams did not evoke any emotion in him! But, in a later concert which he was forced to attend, Sivan listened to Bhagavata's superior rendition of Gopalakrishna Bharati's "tiruvaDi Saranam." This reversed his unsubstantiated prejudice so much that he became an instant ardent devotee of Bhagavata's music. He listened, within the next year, to more than 50 concerts of Bhagavata, and this experience took him to his home to become a living-in disciple, albeit for a few months. Over the years, Sivan's overwhelming admiration for Vaidyanatha Bhagavata's raga rendition especially 'tODi' led him to compose about 20 songs in the raga tODi! Sivan reminisces the kind incident (in his memoir) when he was asked to sing at the end of a public concert by Bhagavata and how Bhagavata (whom Sivan refers to as his Guru) showered love as a father to a disciple (who had lost his biological father so young). Sivan adds that his own musical style, in his later years, was praised by Marungapuri Gopalakrishna Iyer and Musiri Subramanya Iyer as bearing a strong semblance to Vaidyanatha Bhagavata's 'bani.' With no other formal teacher or

a father figure in his life, Sivan recounts his sadness in his memoir about the personal impact of Bhagavata's passing away in 1921. When Sivan settled down in Madras in 1929, Rukmini Devi Arundale appointed him as a music teacher in Besant High School and then brought him to Kalakshetra (1934-39) where Rukmini Devi herself became one of his disciples. His sojourn at Kalakshetra is reported to have inspired him to compose several pada-varnams.

Sivan, though lacking formal education in Tamizh, became one of the greatest patrons of Tamizh Isai and Freedom movement. His Harikambhoji kriti 'Paam Alaikku iNai' on Mahakavi Subrahmanya Bharati is one of the examples highlighting his passion for Tamizh kavis.

Carnatic Music world has acknowledged him repeatedly that as a composer Sivan ranks alongside the eminent vAkgeyarakas who followed the Musical Trinity. Sivan did not use any lexicon or dictionary for choosing rhyming words nor did he seem to emphasize grammatical or puritanical approaches. Almost all doyens of yester-years such as Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar, Maharajapuram Vishwanatha Iyer, Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavathar, Madurai Mani Iyer, Musiri Subramanya Iyer, Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, M S Subbulakshmi, K V Narayanaswami, D K Pattammal have sung hundreds of compositions of Sivan in their performances. Sivan's



compositions are mostly in Tamizh but he has also done some exquisite Samskrit and maNipravAlams covering a wide gamut of formats such as varnams, kritis, keertanams, padams and javalis. His daughter Dr. Rukmani Ramani, has brought to print several hundreds of his compositions in seven volumes.

Although Sivan did not have many direct disciples doing Gurukulavasam with him, Madurai Mani Iyer, Professor S Ramanathan, Lalgudi Jayaraman, MS Subbulakshmi, DK Pattammal, Palghat KV Narayanaswamy, DK Jayaraman all learned his songs, at one time or the other, from him.

After ten years of relentless work, Sivan completed in 1952 a rhyming Sanskrit Dictionary titled 'Samskrita BhAsha Sabta Samudhrahā' (aka Vadamozi Sorkadal). The last works of Sivan were 'Sri Rama Charita Geetam' (the epic of Ramayana composed in Tamizh in 24 stanzas set to 24 ragas, capturing the essence of the 24,000 slokas of the original epic) and a historical titled 'Kaaraikkal Ammaiyar Charitam.' Both these operas have been published in book form. Simizhi Sundaram Iyer, a great patron of Tamizh was so moved by this Sri Rama Charitam that he conferred the title 'Tamizh tyAgayya' as the popular belief amidst Tamils was that he was probably a reincarnation of Saint TyAgaraja.

Sivan composed hundreds of songs for Tamizh films, for about 15 years from 1936 to 1951, lacing spiritual fervor into those

compositions, which combined classical and light treatment of the ragas; the film world has acknowledged that his songs were primarily responsible for the phenomenal success of many of those films and its producers. Reluctant as Sivan was to mix with the motley film world personalities, Sivan's close friend and a film director, K. Subramaniam convinced him to play select roles in four Tamizh films, Bhakta Kuchela, ThyAga Bhoomi, Bhakta Chetha, and Kubera Kuchela, all of which were great hits in those times. Those roles suited Sivan admirably, and it was the unanimous verdict of critics that he alone could have lived these roles. Sivan delighted not only his millions of fans, but also the stalwart music directors such as CR Subbaraman, KV Mahadevan, G Ramanathan, SV Venkataraman, Thuraiyur Rajagopala Sarma and R Sudarsanam, who all reigned supreme then. MKT, MSS, MLV, PU Chinnappa, NS Krishnan, TR Mahalingam, GNB and many other top notch singers and actors became famous by singing Sivan's compositions.

Sivan was a recipient of a several awards and titles. At Sivan's 60th birthday, Jagadguru Chandrasekhara Saraswati (Kanchi ParamAchArya) blessed him with the title 'Siva Punya Gaana Mani.' In 1962, Sivan received the President's Award. The Tamizh Isai Sangam honored him as the 'Isai Peraanar.' The Indian Fine Arts Society conferred in 1969 the title of 'Sangeeta Kala Sikhamani' and the Music

Academy the title of 'Sangeeta Kalanidhi' in 1971. In early 1973, the Indian Republic conferred on him 'Padma Bhushan.' He was also recognized as a Fellow of the Sangeet Natak Academy. Sivan passed away in October of 1973.

Sivan's benefactors and patrons included Rukmani Arundale of the Theosophical Society and Kalakshetra, Director K. Subramanyam, Smt M.S. Subbulakshmi, and the former Chief Minister, Dr. M.G. Ramachandran, and Tamil Nadu State Sangeetha Nataka Sangam, to name a few.

Sivan, very pious by nature, led a very simple unostentatious life, and was humble to the extent of self-abnegation. Whatever wealth he made through films, he donated everything for philanthropy. Sivan left a treasure hove of film songs to the grateful Tamizh world and several hundred devotional compositions par-excellence to Carnatic musicians and fans for generations to come.'

Sivan was not a concert artist, in the way Carnatic musicians and critics brand performers! But, Sivan was an ardent devotee of sankeertanams, and he proudly announced himself as part of a 'Bhajana Ghoshti.' He organized and participated in regular bhajans for several decades and traveled numerous locations of South India with his group of devotees. Sivan's bhajanai tradition is continued even today by his daughter Dr. Rukmani Ramani and his grandson Papanasam Ashok Ramani, a musician in his own right.