

Profile of

GEETHA RAJA

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An acclaimed and widely travelled Indian Carnatic Vocalist, Smt Geetha Raja is a disciple of Sangita Kalanidhi Smt T. Brinda. As a representative of the Brinda school of music belonging to the Veena Dhanammal tradition, her singing is marked by a strong adherence to classicism.

Kalaimamani GEETHA RAJA has established herself as a well known vocalist in South Indian classical music for more than four decades. She is an accomplished musician with Master's degrees in Music and English.

MUSICAL EDUCATION

Geetha had her initial training in music from Sangita Kala Acharya Shri **Bombay Ramachandran** and later was privileged to come under the tutelage of **Sangita Kalanidhi T. Brinda** from whom she imbibed a vast repertoire of classical compositions. She has also had specialised training under **Sangita Kalanidhi, Padma Bhushan K.S. Narayanaswamy** and **Padmashri**

Shri Kunnakudi Vaidyanathan. Her performances include a wide selection from the Krithis of Thyagaraja, Muthuswamy Dikshithar and Shyama Shastri, Tamil Krithis, padams, javalis, abhangs, bhajans and devaranamas.

EARLY LIFE

Born on 5 June 1955 in a family deeply interested in music and the arts, Geetha's musical instincts were nurtured by her parents – Smt Bhama and Shri V.Balakrishnan. Her marriage in 1973 to Shri S.K.Raja further strengthened her interest in music, as her parents-in-law, Smt Rajalakshmi and Shri R. Sethuraman supported her musical career. Geetha's husband Shri S.K. Raja has been a constant source of encouragement throughout her journey in music. Smt T. Brinda was a regular visitor to their home in Mumbai, where Geetha was introduced to the music of this great legend.

CONCERT EXPERIENCE

Geetha is an A Top Grade Artiste of AIR, Chennai and performs regularly on radio and television. She has been featured often in the National Programme and Akashvani Sangeet Sammelan of AIR.

Geetha Raja was the recipient of the prestigious “Sangita Kala Acharya” award – -2024, from the Madras Music Academy.

The highest civilian award in the state of Tamil Nadu, “Kalaimamani”, was conferred on Geetha Raja in 2006; she received the “Asthana Vidushi” title from Sringeri Sharada Peetham in 2001.

Since 1980, Geetha has travelled extensively and presented concerts at important venues and festivals all over India and abroad. She has performed in Austria, Belgium, Canada, France, Russia, the U.K. and the U.S.A.

The “Voices of Women” festival in Belgium, the Nehru Centre in London, Radio France in Paris and the Indo Austrian Association in Vienna are a few of the well-known European centers where she was invited to perform.

In addition to presenting concerts in India and overseas, she has explained Indian Music through workshops and lecture demonstrations, to audiences in Europe and the USA.

Some of her prestigious appearances include performances at Smithsonian Institution’s “Inspired by India” festival (2005); Cleveland Thyagaraja Aradhana (2005, 2012, 2017 and 2019); Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts – Washington DC (2006). Geetha has given a number of jugalbandi programmes with Hindustani vocalist Sandhya Kathavate, emphasizing the similarities and contrasts in the Carnatic and Hindustani styles of music.

She has presented concerts and interviews in private television channels, lent her voice to dance drama recordings and written articles on music in various journals.

She has trained in playing the Veena from Sangita Kalanidhi, Padma Bhushan K.S. Narayanaswamy. Critics have commented on her resonant voice, fidelity to sruti and clarity of diction.

Her performances include a wide selection from the Krithis of Thyagaraja, Muthuswamy Dikshithar and Shyama Shastri, Tamil Krithis, padams, javalis, abhangs, bhajans and devarnamas.

TEACHING

Geetha is actively involved in teaching carnatic and devotional music to advanced learners of music through classes and the internet. She firmly believes in the propagation of our rich musical heritage and engages herself wholeheartedly in this task. She has conducted special classes in padams and javalis under the auspices of the Music Academy, Chennai, from 2009 to 2011.

Some of her disciples have been awarded the prestigious CCRT (Centre for Cultural Resources and Training) Scholarships from the Govt. of India. In 2020 and 2021, Geetha has done a series of video recordings with her disciples, consisting of rare krithis of the Trinity, Padams and Javalis – a legacy from her Guru Smt.T. Brinda.

CASSETTES AND CDS

Geetha has sung for prominent recording companies – Swathi Soft, Sangeetha, HMV, Saregama, Amutham Music, Dreams Audio, Gitaa Cassettes and Kalavardhanis and released a number of cassettes and CDs.

Giri Trading Agency has brought out a double CD album in 2011 - entitled “Sri Bharati Tirtha Kavita Lahari” - Sanskrit compositions of the Sringeri Jagadguru, Sri Sharada Peetham, set to music by Sri Kunnakudi Vaidyanathan and rendered by Geetha Raja.

TITLES, AWARDS AND RECOGNITION:

- Received the "Sangita Kala Acharya" award from the Madras Music Academy-Dec 2024
- Awarded the A Top Grade by All India Radio-- Dec 2023
- Presented with "GNB Award" from the Indian Fine Arts Society, Chennai --Dec 2022
- Presented with "Prof V Sivakumar Award" from Brahma Gana Sabha, Chennai -- Dec 2022
- Received Bodhaka Award from Maragatham Sankaranarayanan Trust, Chennai – Dec 2018
- Received Dr MLV Endowment Award instituted by CMANA, from Narada Gana Sabha – Dec 2014
- Participated in the Akashvani Sangeet Sammelan (All India Radio) at Trivandrum -- Sep 2013
- Received the Achiever's Award and title of "Sangeetha Sevai Chemmal" from the South Indian Social and Cultural Academy - Sep 2013
- Performed at the Cleveland Thyagaraja Aradhana, USA, during the birth centenary of Smt T. Brinda--April 2012
- Appointed as Member of Audition Committee for Carnatic Classical and Devotional Music by All India Radio for two years--2010
- Financial Grant from the Dept. of Culture, Govt. of India, to work on "Tamil Isai in Carnatic Music" - 2007
- "Jayarathna" - Title from Jayadhaarini Trust – 2007
- "Kalaimamani" - Title from Govt. of Tamilnadu - Feb. 2006
- "Meritorious Vocalist Award"-Maharajapuram Santhanam Trust - 2006
- "Pannisai Mamani" - Title from Kunnakudi Meenakshi Ramaswami Trust – 2004
- Participated in “Raga Vaibhavam” programmes conducted by Padmashri Kunnakudi Vaidyanathan --2003--2006
- "Asthana Vidushi" - Title awarded by Shri. Shankaracharya, Sringeri Mutt, Karnataka - April 2001
- Dr.S.Pinakapani Award for Best Raga Alapana - Music Academy, Madras – 2000
- T.S. Sabesa Iyer / Tanjavur K. Ponniah Pillai Award - Music Academy, Madras -1998
- Sung for an award - winning dance documentary film entitled "Sanchari", produced for the Ministry of External Affairs - 1991
- Awarded the Govt. of India fellowship under the Department of Culture Scheme of fellowships to outstanding artistes in the field of performing arts for two years - 1988-90
- Smt. Sarada Krishna Iyer Memorial Award - Music Academy, Madras - 1988
- Specially sponsored by AIR to give a series of concerts in Andhra Pradesh before invited audiences – 1985
- Fellowship for two years from Bhulabhai Memorial Institute, Bombay, to learn special repertoire from Sangita Kalanidhi K.S Narayanaswami.-- (1984--1986)
- Smt.D.K. Pattammal Award - Music Academy, Madras – 1983
- V.R. Sambasiva Iyer Memorial Award – Music Academy, Madras – 1978
- Selected by Tamilnadu State Academy (Eyal Isai Nataka Manram) to give a series of concerts in South India – 1977
- "Sur Mani" title awarded by Sur Singar Samsad, Bombay – 1976
- Gokulashtami Series Award - Krishna Gana Sabha, Madras – 1975
- Awarded prizes in AIR competitions in the three categories eligible to vocalists i.e.,Classical, Light Classical, Light Music (1971-74)
- Several other prizes and gold medals in music competitions conducted by sabhas in Bombay and Madras - 1967-75