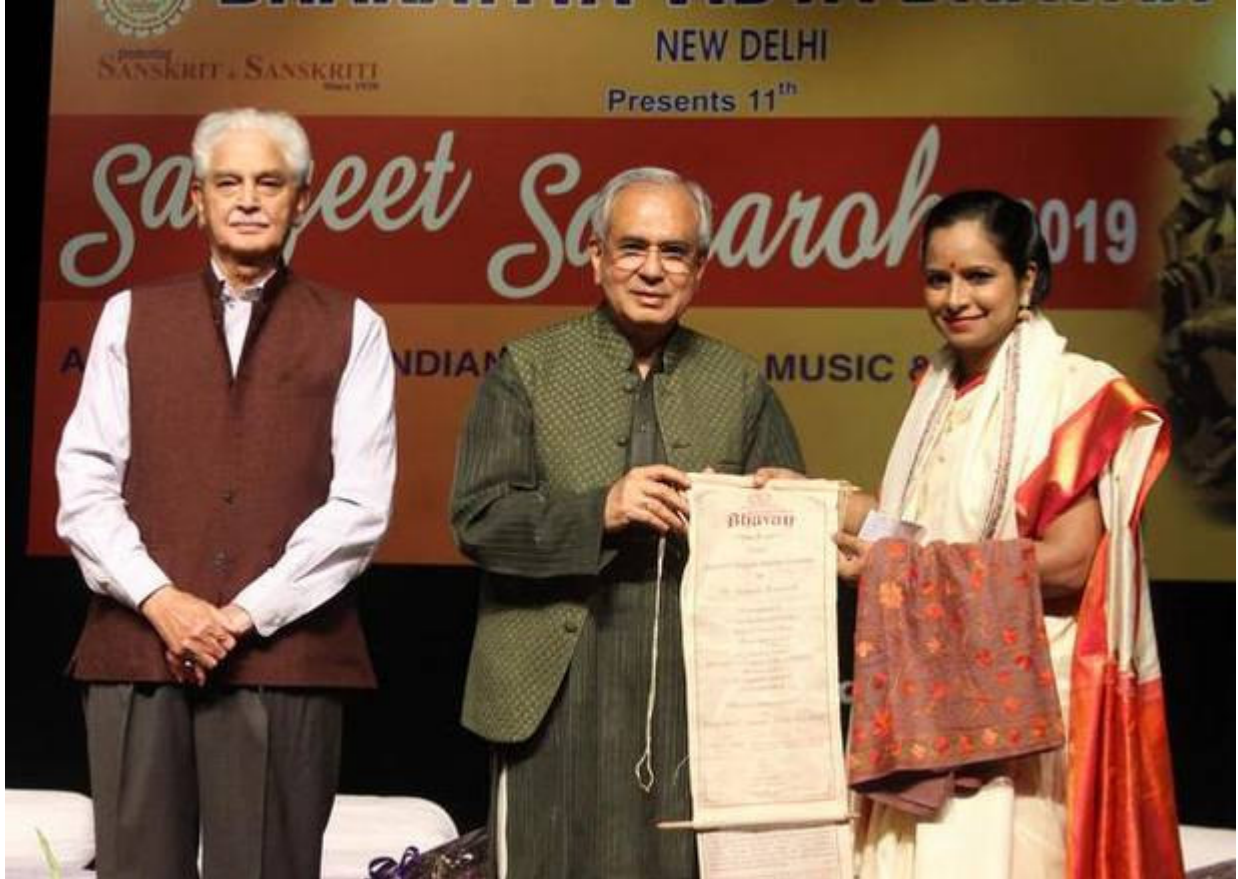


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Recognition for Saraswati Veena



2019 15:53 IST

UPDATED: 30 NOVEMBER Jayanthi Kumaresh receiving the award from Rajiv Kumar Vice-Chairman of NITI Ayog. With them is Ashok Pradhan Director, BVB, Delhi Kendra. | Photo Credit: [Special Arrangement](#)

[Ranjani Govind](#) 30 NOVEMBER 2019 15:53 IST

It is to the National Instrument that vainika Jayanthi Kumaresh dedicates the title recently conferred on her by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan

V eena expert Jayanthi Kumaresh was the recipient of Sangeet Shikhar Samman title conferred by the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, New Delhi Kendra. The vainika was visibly happy that the Saraswathi Veena got this coveted recognition. A student of legend S. Balachander, Jayanthi is a niece of another stalwart, the late Lalgudi G. Jayaraman,

and daughter of violinist Lalgudi Rajalakshmi. Jayanthi is the youngest veena player to have received 'A Top' from All India Radio, and her performances resonate Balachander's style and are stamped with remarkable intellectual value. She is married to Kumaresh Rajagopalan, the younger of the famous Ganesh-Kumaresh violin duo. Jayanthi spoke to Friday Review in Bengaluru on the award, her approach to music and the veena. Excerpts:

You are happier for the veena than for yourself...

The evolution of the Saraswathi Veena has been on a par with that of the human race — starting from using the human skull as the primary resonator and a bamboo stick as the spine, to its shape and structure in the digital and electronic age. This priceless heritage has been recognised by an esteemed institution like Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, which believes in Samskrit and Samskriti. Did you know that Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan was founded even before the Cultural Department of India was formed? I'm delighted that the Saraswathi Veena has been awarded the 'Bhavan's Sangeet Shikhar Samman' by such an eminent institution, whose primary goal is to preserve and propagate Indian culture.

Why is the award so special?

Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Delhi Kendra, organises its annual Sangeet Samaroh where many eminent artistes (Hindustani, Carnatic, instrumentalists and dancers) are invited to perform. On this occasion, the Bhavan confers 'Bhavan's Sangeet Shikhar Samman' on an eminent artiste for their contribution to the field of music. The Award consists of a purse of ₹1 lakh, a citation and a shawl. When I saw the list of previous awardees — Pt. Birju Maharaj, M. Balamuralikrishna, Pt. Hariprasad Chaurasia, Girija Devi, Pt. Jasraj to name a few — I felt very humbled that the Committee chose to recognise the Saraswathi Veena and me, a much younger artiste. I dedicate it to my gurus, my family and the greatness of the Saraswathi Veena itself. I believe this award will help the whole of India see the divine instrument as the nation's pride, and not just a South Indian instrument.

About your rich legacy...

I come from a family where music has been the mainstay for six generations now. There is a lot of expectation and people already have a perception about my style. But performers in each generation have evolved according to their own ecosystem. I have been trained for more than 22 years in the gurukula system by my guru and aunt Padmavathi Ananthagopalan and was later mentored by S. Balachander. I have been guided by my uncle Lalgudi Jayaraman and supported by my husband Kumaresh. These impressions and influences have left me with a rich legacy in a career spanning 37 years. I never forget Veena Balachander's constant advice: 'Every raga has to be discovered beyond its clichéd phrases.' Raga expositions captivated him so much that he always said lyrics and language were beyond the realms of an instrument. So my style not only has features of where I come from, but also carries imprints of my experiences in life.

Do you think veena has to have more representation on stage, may be more special festivals?

In many festivals that we see today, the representation for instrumental music has reduced significantly, especially in the South. Having said that, there is no dearth of talented veena players. If only the celebrated music festivals can extend the stage to these wonderful artistes. I've heard people say that there might not be a next generation of veena players, looking at the thin representation in many festivals. But the recent veena festival that took place in Bengaluru proved that we have ample vainikas to bear the torch.

Yet another Margazhi Music Season is upon us. Anything special from your side?

"Season of Carnatic" is my new web series on YouTube and Facebook to create an awareness about the Margazhi festival. Music Season in Chennai is one-of-its-kind with over 3,500 concerts happening in nearly 50 venues, from dawn to dusk. My series aims to educate people on the artistes and their work. This will help them,

especially youngsters, to appreciate better what they are listening. This series is a month-long attempt with an episode daily to get rasikas Margazhi ready.

A word for young artistes?

Be patient, watch and internalise. Music takes time to become a part of you. Never be in a hurry to perform. There is so much to learn, enough to make all of us remain learners for ever.