

The Mystique of Music
A multi-lingual musical journey
through the myriad colors of India

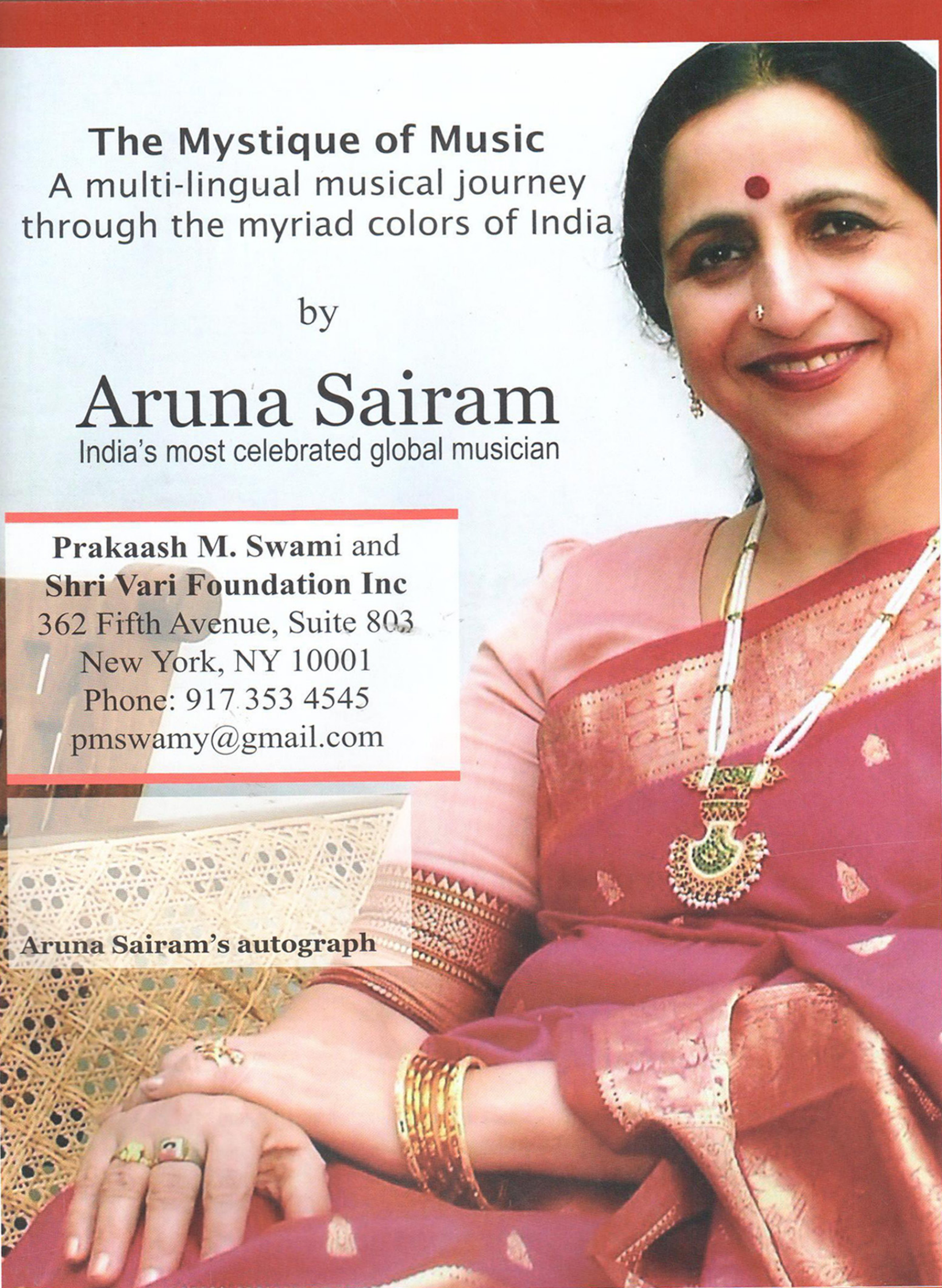
by

Aruna Sairam

India's most celebrated global musician

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Aruna Sairam's autograph



Aruna Sairam, a multi-faceted global Indian musician

(www.arunasairam.com)

Aruna Sairam, one of the most respected exponents of Carnatic vocal music, takes us on a wonderful musical journey through the myriad colors of India. “Sometimes a voice keeps you entranced. At other times a personality. Very rarely does it happen that both the richness of the melody and the exponent herself mesmerizes you completely. Aruna Sairam is one such remarkable artiste, who commands respect, inspires admiration and exudes humility” wrote *New Woman Magazine*, Mumbai.

Such has been the flavor of Ms Aruna Sairam, the revered classical singer of Carnatic music. Ms. Sairam’s name has come to be associated with classical purity, and she is now renowned both for her understanding and interpretation of “bhava” in classical music and her ability to hold her audiences enthralled by her detailed and involved interpretation of even rare compositions.

Aruna Sairam’s command and control over Carnatic music have now resonated all over India, Europe and North America and across Asia. She is doing yeoman service to India by unifying the different linguistic and regional cultures. She is an eminent cultural ambassador of our country, the world over. Ms Sairam has been appointed by the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu as adviser to the Department of Culture, Tamil Nadu, on musical education in the state.

Ms. Sairam is one of the most renowned and beloved representatives of Carnatic vocal music – a style that is rooted in the devotional songs and music from the temples of South India. In her long concert career she has developed a distinctive style, which is based in tradition while remaining open to influences from other fields.

Ms. Sairam’s tone has been described to have a rich, vibrant timbre that though powerful, has the tantalizing capacity to seem intimate, as though she is singing for each individual seated in the audience. Her ability to transcend the mundane has been noted by critics of all nationalities. *Le Monde*, Paris described her by saying: “Aruna Sairam made us forget the existence of time, with her rapturous singing with infinite glissandos and deep emotion. The French public already familiar with Aruna’s music at places like Theatre de la Ville and opera Nationale de Lyon received a new symbol of God through her music that evening.”

Ms Sairam’s concerts play to packed houses, an occurrence that is rare for classical music. Each event is special, marked with rare poise and an equally moving emotive vibration that endears her to her audiences. She has had the rare distinction of performing in venues such as Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi.

She has also performed across the length and breadth of the country, bringing the richness of South Indian classical music to people from all walks of life. These include special performances at the Siri Fort Auditorium, the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation



in Delhi and Hyderabad, the Sangeet Research Academy in Calcutta, the Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra Festival held in Bhubaneswar and the Music Academy Chennai.

Recently *Outlook Magazine* observed that “M S Subbulakshmi is no more. But if there is any singer who comes close to matching such purity of voice, diction, impeccable sruti alignment and frill-free singing, it is Aruna Sairam”

As an individual, Ms Sairam has given liberally to philanthropic activities and socially relevant causes. She has been instrumental in creating trust funds for the families of deceased musicians. She has been the benefactor for a variety of hospitals and medical facilities.

Rarely have musicians received the approbation of their colleagues as Ms Sairam has done. Her sophistication and style has been instrumental in bringing her closer to her many collaborators. Her work with Dominique Vellard, the director of the Ensemble Gilles Binchois at Dijon, France has been greeted with high critical acclaim. This work is among the first to investigate the origins of sound.

She is a master of the voice, using this skill to work with several other singers and musicians. Talking of her association, Christian Bollman, the famous German music composer, notes that she is one of the very few individu-

als who instantly invoke the aura of the divine.

India Today, India's premier magazine in their 30th anniversary issue, listing 30 greatest classical recordings, said "Music of the Gods: Unheard. Unmatched. Incomparable. Thirty of the most divine classical music recordings by legends past and present. Undiluted genius rewound. Aruna Sairam, Rangapura Vihara in Raga Brindavana Sarang- Never afraid to experiment, innovates and pushes the boundaries of convention in the realm of Carnatic music"

Music begins at home

As a musician, Ms Sairam's initiation in music began at home, under her mother, Rajalakshmi Sethuraman in Mumbai. Ms Sairam has had the distinction of immersing herself in a musical vibration enriched by such eminent artistes as Bharat Ratna M. S Subbulakshmi, T R Mahalingam and Sangeetha Kalanidhi Padmashri T Brinda, whose musical purity remains a cherished legacy in the Carnatic firmament till date. The latter became Ms Sairam's guru and her most important guide towards finding her sound, her timbre and the ability to bring out the height of emotion while still singing in a slow tempo.

Further, she has imbibed various musical nuances from maestros including Veena Vidwan Padmashri K S Narayanswamy, Sangeeta Bhushanam A S Mani, T R Subramaniam and S Ramachandran. Further, she has studied some rare compositions with Padma Vibhushan Dr M Balamuralikrishna.

Ms Sairam has been featured on thirty five separate albums. Of these, five albums have been produced and distributed in Europe, most of them in France. A review of her performances in Europe is summarized as: "A work of glowing beauty and remarkable learning, (Ms Sairam's work) is more than a juxtaposition of one form with another. It is the rebirth of tradition without treason, at any given moment, true to the form and character of her own personal input" – (Excerpted from the review of the Brussels Symphony, Belgium)

Among her musical output in India, noteworthy albums include "Madhurasmiti", a collection of rare kritis and "Ksetra Srirangam", an album devoted to sacred chants and songs about the ancient Vaishnavite shrine of Srirangam in South India. Her albums have topped the classical charts consistently for the past five years and continue to do so. Her concerts are sold out well in advance of the actual performance.

Having trained under an expert of the "padam" and "javali" tradition, Ms Sairam's renditions of rare padams that require rigorous preparation and meticulous control over the voice, is noteworthy.

Apart from her collaborative work with Dominique Vellard entitled "Sources", Ms Sairam has released a very innovative album in Germany with musicians Christian Bollman and Michael Reimann entitled "Aruna : Thousand Names of the Divine Mother", containing sacred chants (from the well-known Lalitha Sahasranamam) layered with a panoply of sounds not traditionally associated with Indian Classical Music. This album too met with rave reviews and has been circulated very widely among musicians in Europe. A review of her concert in The Los Angeles Times said "Best of all, there was the gifted South Indian singer Aruna Sairam, singing with a mesmerizing combination



of sheer inventive abandon and virtuosic musical precision. Her solo on the seven-beat pulse of "Satileni" was an astonishing display, its passion and probing intensity reminiscent of the penetrating, exploratory improvisations of John Coltrane." Don Heckman in Los Angeles Times

As a celebrated artist in the famous Music Festival in Chennai, Ms Aruna Sairam has blazed trails that have enhanced the performance of South Indian classical music in a substantial way. Her introduction of "abhangs" in traditional concert performances has met with unprecedented enthusiasm. Further, her introduction of meticulously researched, rare literary texts within the scope of a more well-known composition delineates her from the regular concert performer. An example of this is a poem that is more than twelve centuries old (by Tirugnanasambandar) with which she prefaced a composition by Papanasam Sivan recently.

Testimony to these accomplishments is the waves of entirely new, dedicated audiences to Ms Sairam during the festival, which travels from long distances to attend her performances. Recently, her performance of a very specially conceived composition that fused several classical masterpieces into a ragam-tanam-pallavi format elicited a standing ovation among a thousand strong crowds in Chennai.

Rare reviews

Reviewing this composition, a noted critic in the Chennai press adds: "If you were to cut an album from Aruna Sairam's sensational performance on Sunday at the Krishna Gana Sabha, it would be the Ragam, Tanam, Pallavi which received a rapturous applause from the audience" The Hindu, Chennai, 11/08/2006

Ms Sairam has performed live across North America kick

starting her tour at the Carnegie Hall in New York, in a unique tour entitled "The Spirit of Fes" with North African and American musicians.

She is a generous contributor to several charitable causes, and has performed gratis for many organizations, using her talent to promote the case of those in need. Her ability to transcend the barriers of language, culture and more significantly, musical familiarity and reach her audiences as a human being makes her a communicator par excellence.

Rarely do individuals manage to elevate their audiences through the sheer force of their vibration. To quote a very noted musical critic, Ms Aruna Sairam is our link to the divine. Some of the prestigious award conferred on her include "Kalaimamani" Award of Government of Tamil Nadu 2006; Isai Chelvam by Muthamizh Peravai, Chennai 2006; Sangita Choodamani by Sri Krishna Gana Sabha Chennai 2006; Sangeetha Kalasarathy by Parthasarathy Swami Sabha, Chennai 2005; Vani Kala Sudhakara by Thyaga Brahma Gana Sabha, Chennai 2004; Padma Sadhana by Padma Sarangapani Academy, Chennai 2004; Tamil Isai Vendhar by Kartik Fine Arts Chennai 2003; Sangeetha Kala Mani by Kanchi Kamakoti Mutt 2002; Sangeetha Kala Rathna by Sriragam Fine Arts, Chennai 2002; Isai Peroli by India Fine Arts, Austin, USA 2003; Best Musician Award by Tamil Nadu State Sangita Nataka Academy and Best Musician Award by Sri Krishna Gana Sabha Chennai.

Performances in France

Ms Sairam has created and attracted a large segment of audience in France for Carnatic Music. These include performances at the Theatre de la Ville Paris, Opera Nationale de Lyon, Cite de la Musique and Radio France.

Sources: She has been performing concerts with eminent singer Dominique Vellard of France whose musical career began at the school of Notre-Dame de Versailles, and who is today the director of Ensemble Gilles Binchois and is an acknowledged master of Medieval Liturgical Music. Their concerts have created amazing response from audiences whenever they have performed at various theatres in France.

Nuit De La Voix: The duo Aruna Sairam and Dominique Vellard have now extended and created the thematic concert "Nuit De La Voix" (The Night of the Voices) with Nouredin Tahiri, an Islamic Singer from Morocco. The trio has performed at the Festival of Sacred Music, at Fes in Morocco among other venues.

Le Bebe Blue: Aruna Sairam's music and singing have been the inspiration for the production of the French musical "Le Bebe Blue" (The Blue Baby) depicting the story of Lord Krishna directed by French Theatre Director Dominique Pompougnac. The most important segment of audience for this production was children of France. More than 40 such performances were rendered all over France.

Performances in Germany

ARUNA: Thousand Names of the Divine Mother is a series of concerts with German musicians Christian Bollmann and Michael Reimann. Their CD of the same title has been a best seller in Europe.

Her performances include prestigious venues such as Theatre de la Ville Paris (audience of 2000 plus); France; Radio France, Paris live concert broadcast all over Europe, France, Swiss Na-



tional Radio Broadcast, Switzerland; Rietberg Museum, Zurich, Switzerland; Concerts at Universities of Germany; Radio Deutsche Welle, Cologne, Germany; National Television, Spain; Opening of Autumn series at Opera National de Lyon, France; Festival of Sacred Music, at Fes, Morocco; the Festival of South Indian Music-Cite de la Musique, France, the Sutra Festival of Music, Malaysia; Tropen Institute, Amsterdam, Netherlands, Thyagaraja Aradhana in Cleveland, US; concert tours in Singapore, the US; Muscat, Spirit of Fes tour in the US; Australia, New Zealand and Belgium.

Her teaching experience includes a program for schools, across several towns in Switzerland, 1994; musical guru to a French national under the Indo-French Cultural Exchange Program, 1994-1997; "Harvard Sangeet" – a workshop on Carnatic Music for students of Harvard University in the US and served as member, experts committee in voice culture, Government of India.; member, musical scholarships selection committee, Government of India; member of Referentin, Weltmusik Konferenz, Saarbrücken, Germany, 1996; consultant, South India Festival of Music and Dance, Cite de la Musique, France, 1999.

Albums recorded include Sangeeta- Padams & Javalis; Kalavardini- classical; AVM Double Album-classical; HMV classical, AVM-classical; AVM- Perennial Melodies; Abhirami Recording-classical; HMV Live at Krishna Gana Sabha; HMV- classical; Charsur Digital Madhura Smriti-classical; Charsur Digital -live concert -December 2000 season; Charsur Digital Ksetra-Sri Rangam; Amudham Recording- Kana Vendamo; Music Today-Ma Stuti-devotional; Times Music- Ekaika Ragam; Music Today-Swar Utsav -Live concert; Charsur Digital Live concert -December 2001; Charsur Digital- live concert December 2002; Charsur Digital- live concert- December 2003; Rajalakshmi Audio Bhagyadalakshmi- live concert; Rajalakshmi Audio- Jeevanandam; Charsur Digital Kamboji- Rajalakshmi Audio- Unnai Allal; Charsur Digital DVD - live concert 2004; Rajalakshmi Audio, Arupadai; Rajalakshmi Audio- Kannanum Kandanum; Charsur Digital - Ksetra-Chennapuri, Rajalakshmi Audio-Shanmatam; Charsur Digital - Live concert December 2005; Rajalakshmi Audio- Madarasil Margazhi- live concert 2005; Rajalakshmi Audio - Hariyum Haranum; Charsur Digital-Live concert December 2006.

Her recordings abroad include Auvidis, France- Chant Carnatique; Makar France -The lyrical Tradition of Carnatic Music; Lichthaus Musik, Germany- Aruna -1000 names of the Divine Mother; EMI-Virgin, France-Sources; OCORA-Radio France Tanjore Style of Singing.



With President APJ Abdul Kalam



With Jawaharlal Nehru



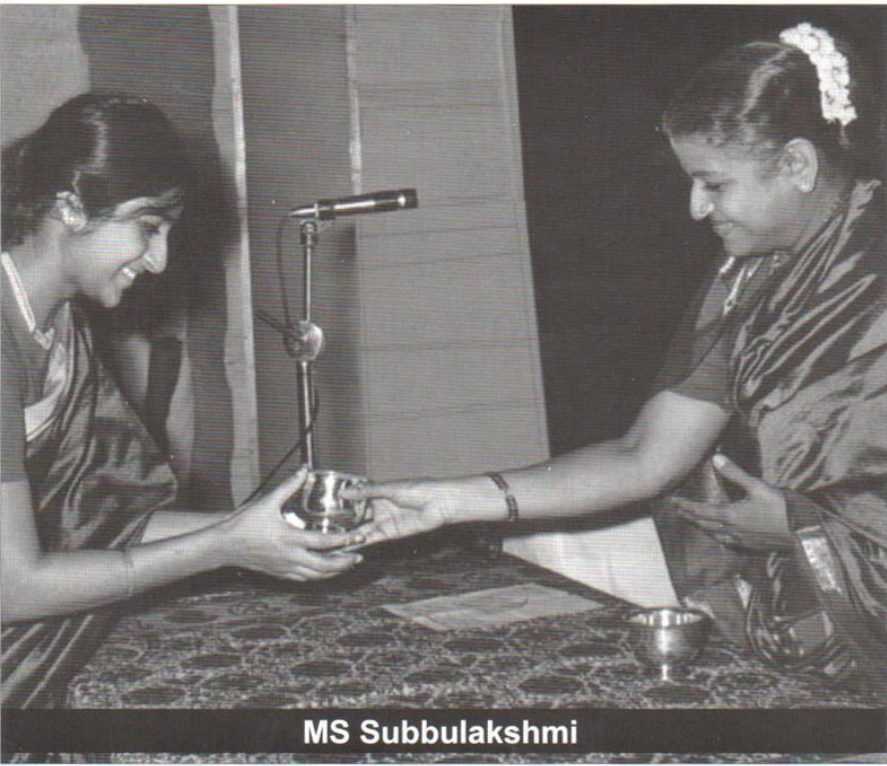
With President R Venkataraman and First Lady



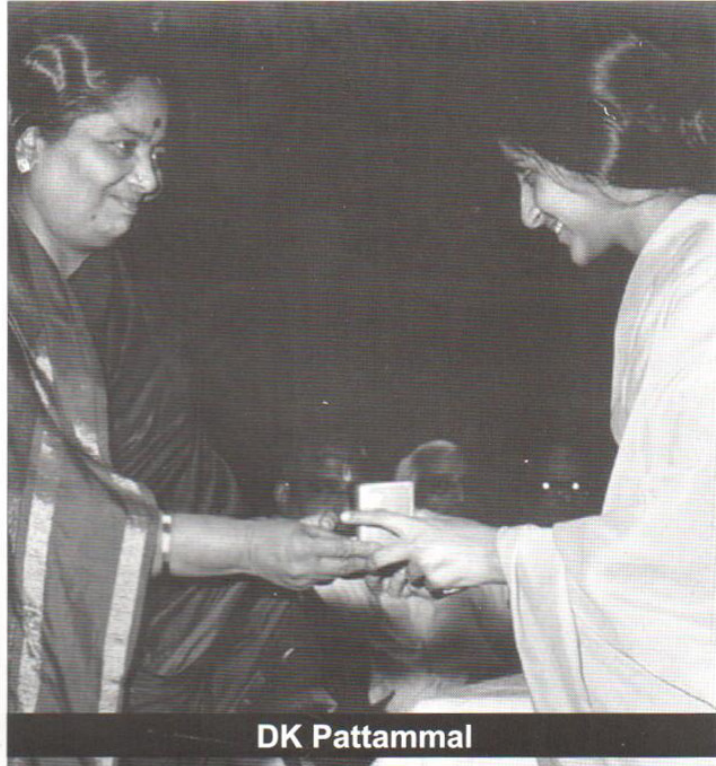
With Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi



Receiving award from Chief Minister Jayalalithaa



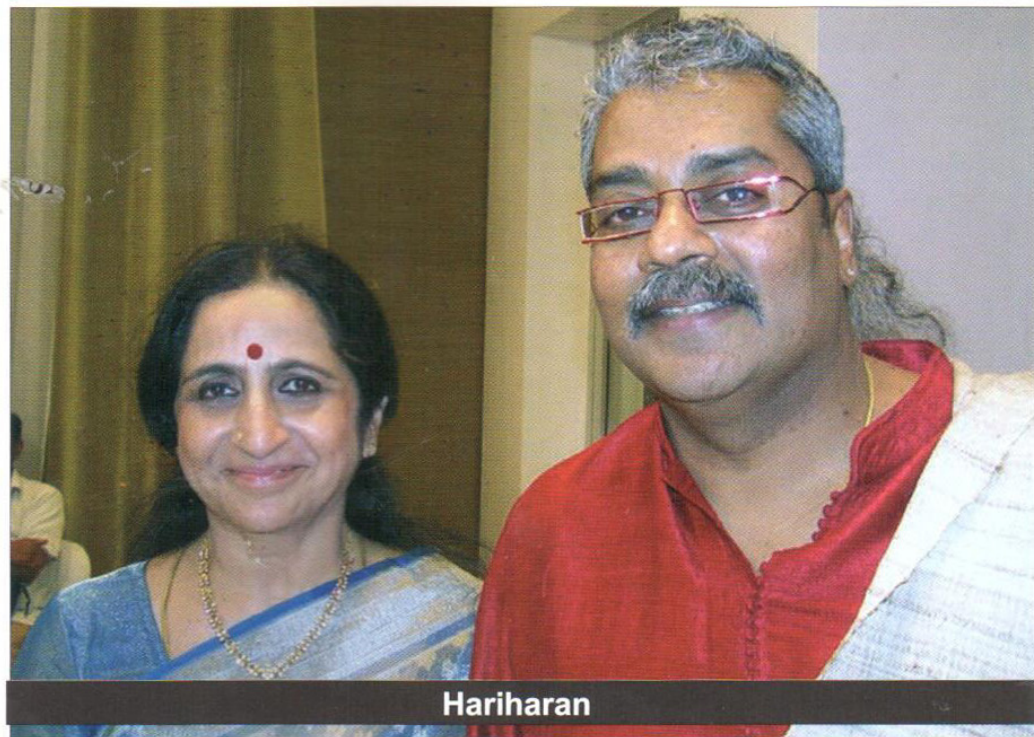
MS Subbulakshmi



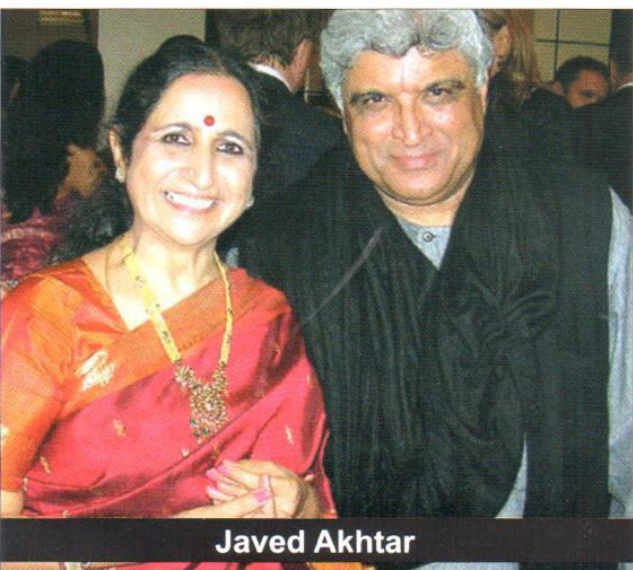
DK Pattammal



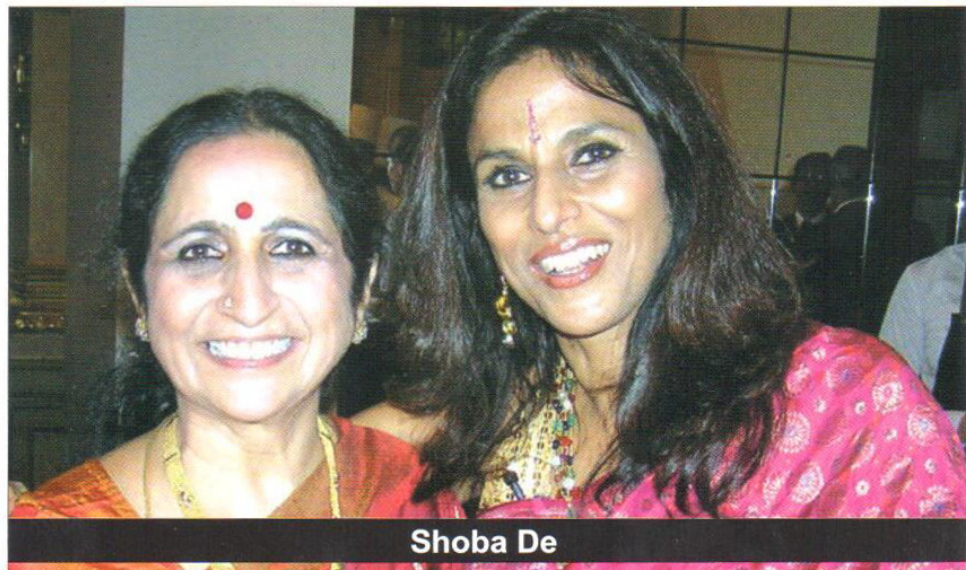
T Brinda



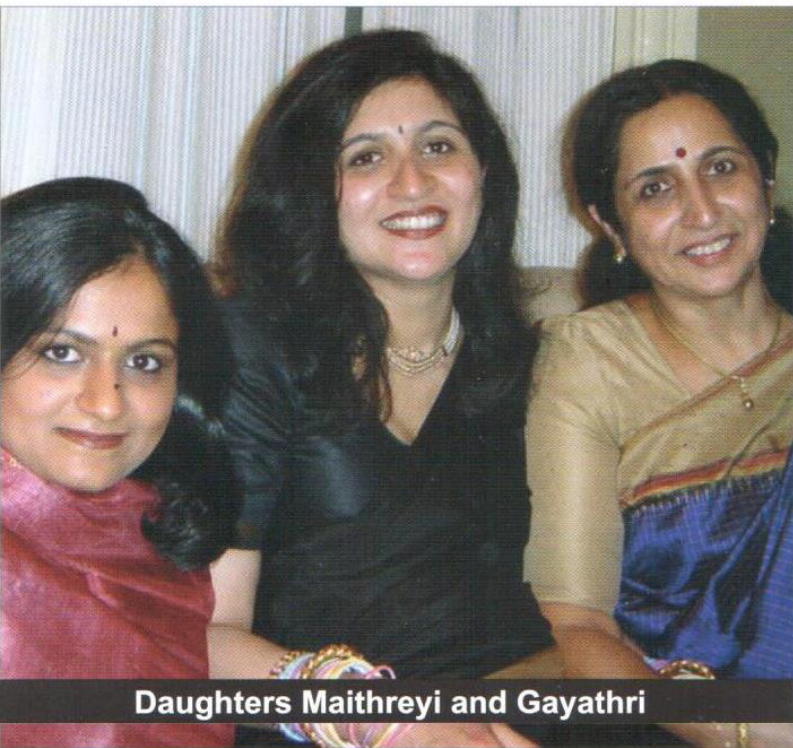
Hariharan



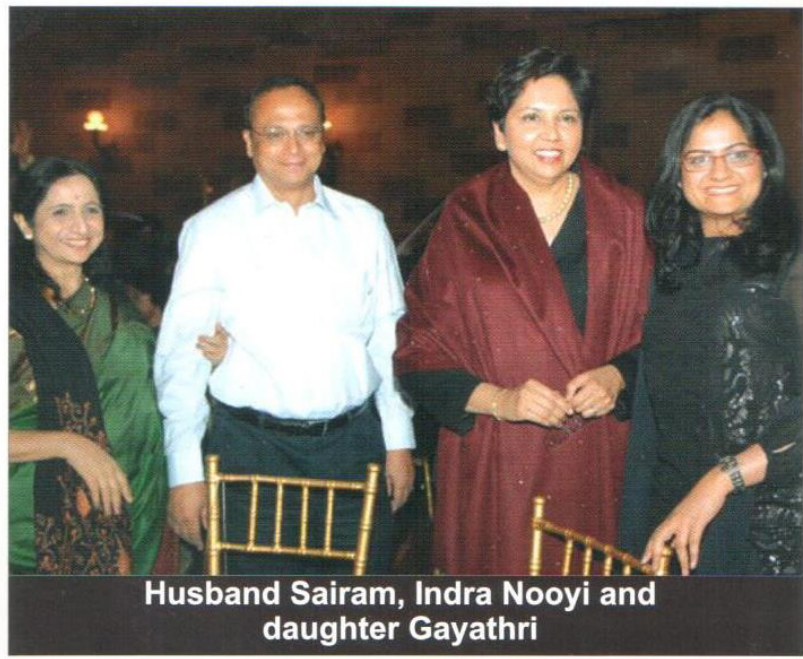
Javed Akhtar



Shoba De



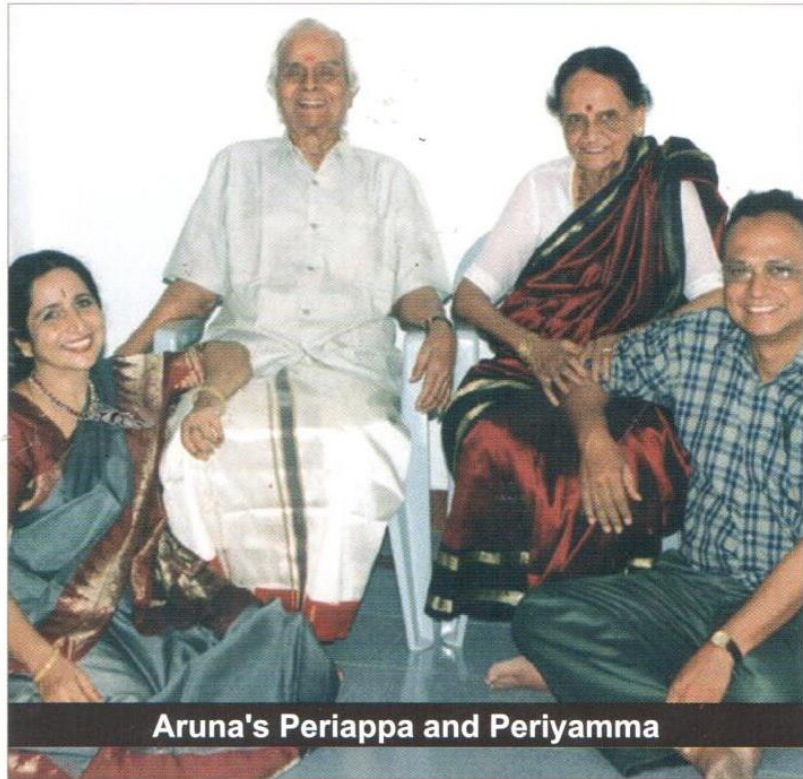
Daughters Maithreyi and Gayathri



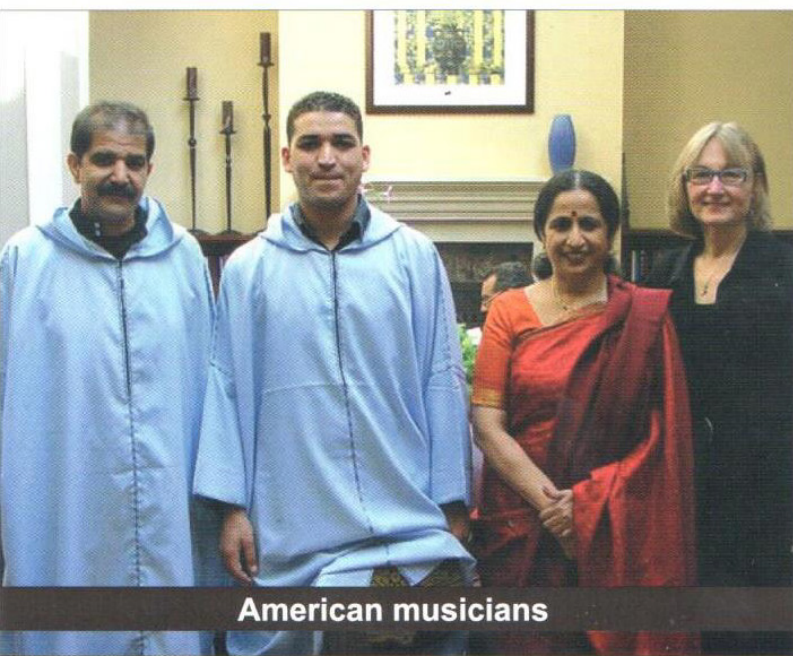
Husband Sairam, Indra Nooyi and daughter Gayathri



Audience cheer in France



Aruna's Periappa and Periyamma



American musicians



German musicians