

Neyyatinkara Vasudevan

Neyyatinkara Vasudevan shone like a meteor in the field of Carnatic music. Hailing from a humble background, he attained success in his career as a vocalist and teacher against heavy odds, facing many rough patches along the way. He passed away on 13th May at his residence in Vazhuthucadu, Tiruvananthapuram at the age of 68.

Vasudevan was born in 1940 in Neyyattinkara in Kerala. He was passionate about music even as a young boy. After high school, his ardent love for Carnatic music prompted him to join the Swati Tirunal Music College at Tiruvananthapuram. He passed Ganabhushanam in 1960 and the Sangeeta Vidwan course in 1962 with flying colours. In the College, he was fortunate to train under reputed musicians like Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer. Later he had rigorous training in Chennai under Ramnad Krishnan who helped him further hone his skills.

Vasudevan made an impact on the Madras music scene when he won the prize for the best sub-junior vocalist in 1971 at the Music Academy and reviews appeared in leading newspapers. He received the award for Best Vocalist in the years 1972, 1978, 1982 and 1988 from the Music Academy. In 1993 he won the award for best raga rendition. Vasudevan's career graph soared upwards with his arrival at Tripunithura to serve as Assistant Professor in RLV College of Music. In 1974, he joined All India



SAMUDRI ARCHIVES

Radio-Trivandrum as an 'A Grade' Staff artist in Vocal Music. He rose to 'A Top' before his retirement in 2000. An affable man with pleasing manners, he was very popular in the Kerala music circuit.

He toured the U.S.A., Canada, Abu Dhabi, Dubai, and Muscat in the 1980s and 90s to give public performances and conduct workshops. Many top ranking violinists and mridangists have accompanied him in his concerts. He was featured in the National Programme of Music and Radio Sangeet Sammelan concerts.

Vasudevan made a number of audio recordings produced under the banner of AVM (Swati Tirunal kriti-s), CBS, HMV and Manorama Music. He has also sung classical songs in films such as *Enipadikal* (1968), *Swati Tirunal* (1987), *Chithram* (1988), *Vachanam* (1990) and *Mazha* (2000). He was music

consultant for the film *Swati Tirunal*.

His adherence to tradition, elaborate raga alapana-s reflecting his manodharma, powerful yet melodious rendition of rakti raga-s embellished with voice modulations and flourishes, clear diction, compact swaraprastara, and his ability to build a rapport with his accompanying artists earned him encomiums from the public and connoisseurs alike. He took pains to popularise Swati Tirunal's compositions. He had an innate flair to draw young music lovers to his fold.

He was decorated with many awards, notable among them being the Kerala Sangeeta Nataka Academy Award (1982), Asthana Vidwan of Sri Venkateswara Temple Trust, Pittsburgh, U.S.A. (1984), Tulasivanam Award, Kerala (1992), the central Sangeet Natak Akademi award (1999-2000), Padma Shri (2004) and Swati Puraskaram (2007).

Vasudevan trained a number of disciples in South India and the U.S.A. Some of his disciples who are performing musicians include M.G. Sreekumar, Sreevalsan J. Menon, the late Tripunithura Lalitha, Mukhathala Sivaji, Alleppey Sreekumar, Suresh K. Nair, Vellayani Ashok Kumar, and Narayanan Nair.

Neyyatinkara Vasudevan was a musician who brought fame to his birthplace and came to be identified with it.

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