

Shri R. Pichumani



Renowned Carnatic music veena virtuoso R. Pichumani Iyer, born on May 18, 1920, hailed from a family deeply rooted in musical traditions. His musical journey began with vocal training under Jalar Gopala Aiyar at the tender age of 10. Later, he transitioned to the veena, becoming a disciple of Tiruchi Kupanna at the age of 15. His talent was already evident as he clinched the prestigious National College, Trichy award in a Carnatic vocal music competition.

After completing his S.S.L.C. at the National College School, he pursued a four-year course at Annamalai University, earning the title of Sangeeta Bhooshnam in Veena. Pichumani embarked on his concert career at the age of 20 after extensive training under luminaries like Tiger Varadachariar, K.S. Narayanaswami, and V.S. Gomathi Sankara Aiyar at the University.

Over a career spanning five decades, Pichumani's dedication to traditional values earned him numerous accolades and titles. He performed in thousands of concerts, including public, radio, and television appearances, earning the distinction of being named a Top Rank Artiste by All India Radio. He actively participated in Madras Music Academy festivals, receiving awards such as the 'Shanmuga Vaidvu' award twice and the T.T.K. Memorial award.

Pichumani's notable recognitions include the 'Kalaimamani' title and Gold Medal from the Tamil Nadu Iyal Isai Nataka Manram in 1970-71, Veena Nada Mani in 1982 by Sri Sankarachariar of Kanchi Kama Koti Peetam, and the Central Sangeet Natak Award for veena in 1989. Mylapore Fine Arts honored him with the title 'SANGEETHA KALANIPUNA' in December 1991. Other awards and titles came from organizations like Santhome Arts Academy, Nemili Ezel Pani Mandram, Tamil Sangam, Thiruvaiyaru, and the Bharathiyar Festival.

Pichumani Iyer also contributed to the field as Secretary of the Thiruvaiyaru Thyaga Brahmotsavam in 1980 and a trustee of the Sabha until his passing. The Tamil Nadu Government sought his expertise for staff selection at State Music Colleges and as Chief Examiner for Vidwan Courses' final exams. He also served as a member in the Faculty of Arts and the Board member of the Practical Examination Committee at Annamalai University.

In 1968, the Central Sangeet Natak Academy recorded two hours of his veena music for preservation in the Central Archives. He released several records and audio cassettes with companies like Columbia, A.V.M., and H.M.V.

Pichumani Iyer's legacy extends to his numerous disciples, including P. Vasanthakumar, R.S. Jayalakshmi, B. Kannan, Vasantha Krishnamurthy, Iyer Brothers (Ramnath Iyer & Gopinath Iyer), and R. Raman. The Iyer Brothers from Australia established the 'Pichumani School of Carnatic Music' in Melbourne, paying tribute to their Guru R. Pichumani.

With a unique style and a penchant for pure raga renditions, Pichumani composed Swara Jatis, Varnam, Thillanas, and even introduced a new raga, Vasantha Kaisiki, along with a corresponding thillana, derived from the 18th Mela.