

# Padma Vibhushan



## DR. (SMT.) N. RAJAM



Dr. (Smt.) N. Rajam is a violin virtuoso among the finest and most distinguished artists in the field of music. Her deft fingers coax enchanting melodies from the tuneful strings of the violin. She pioneered a revolutionary approach to classical music by introducing the "Gayaki Ang"—a technique that renders the vocal style of music on the violin—earning her global renown as the "Singing Violin."

2. Born on 16<sup>th</sup> March, 1939 in Ernakulam in a family steeped in musical tradition, Dr. Rajam embarked on her violin journey at the tender age of three under the tutelage of her father, Shri Vidwan A. Narayana Iyer, a distinguished exponent of Carnatic music. She further enriched her musical foundation by learning from the legendary vocalist Vidwan Musiri Subramania Iyer. She mastered the Carnatic style at a remarkably young age before venturing into the Hindustani idiom. It was under the tutelage of the inimitable doyen Pandit Omkarnath Thakur, she absorbed the intricacies of Hindustani music. At the age of fifteen, she made a revolutionary entry into North Indian classical music by adapting the Western violin to express the Hindustani vocal style, introducing the "Khayal Gayaki Ang" with such consummate artistry that it left musicians and violinists across the nation spellbound. Her legendary duets with Ustad Bismillah Khan, T.N. Krishnan, and N. Ramani were immensely popular with audiences and remain cherished in the annals of Indian classical music.

3. Beyond her illustrious performing career, Dr. Rajam served with distinction as a Professor in the Faculty of Performing Arts at Banaras Hindu University (BHU) for nearly four decades. She rose to become the Head of the Department and subsequently the Dean of the Faculty, earning the prestigious title of "Emeritus Professor" by BHU in recognition of her exceptional contributions to music and music education. She has nurtured numerous distinguished disciples, including her daughter Sangeeta Shankar (a Sangeet Natak Akademi Award winner) and many other accomplished musicians who carry forward her legacy.

4. Dr. Rajam has performed extensively across the globe, captivating audiences in numerous countries including the United States of America, Canada, Russia, France, Italy, Germany, Holland, Switzerland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Australia, and throughout Europe. Her concerts have graced the most prestigious music festivals worldwide, where her "Singing Violin" has mesmerized listeners. Professional violinists from across the world regularly seek her guidance to refine and elevate their craft. Her extraordinary technique, which enables the violin to express the full spectrum of vocal articulations in Hindustani classical music, remains unparalleled and continues to inspire musicians across continents.

5. Dr. Rajam has been the recipient of numerous prestigious awards and honours. She has been conferred with Padma Shri in 1984, Padma Bhushan in 2004, Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1990 in recognition of her exceptional contributions to Hindustani music. In 2012, she was bestowed with the Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowship, the highest honour in the performing arts conferred by India's National Academy for Music, Dance and Drama. Among her many other accolades are the Puttaraja Sanmaana in 2004, the Bhimsen Joshi Lifetime Achievement Award, and numerous honours from state governments and cultural organizations.