

# Akademi

## Awards



Vice-Chairman, Smt. Kamla  
Devi Chattopadhyay, reading  
the citations

**N**INE eminent artists of the country received the Sangeet Natak Akademi's Awards of 1959, for their devotion and services to the cause of dance, drama, music and films, from the President, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, at a simple and solemn ceremony, held at the National Physical Laboratory Auditorium, New Delhi, on April 12, 1960.

The President arrived in a procession led by the Secretary, who was followed by the President, accompanied by the Chairman. They were followed by the Vice-Chairman, and the train thereafter was composed of some of the Fellows of the Akademi, old recipients of awards, the members of the General Council and the Executive Board.

After the President took his seat at the centre, the Chairman, Dr. Rajamannar, welcomed him, and requested him to present the awards. The Vice-Chairman read out the citations and handed over the respective presentations to the President.

The artists went up to the dais one after another, bowed in the traditional style, were garlanded by the Secretary, and then received their awards from the President.

This year's recipients included four musicians, two vocalists, one each of Hindustani and Karnatic schools, and two instrumentalists, one each of the above schools of music. Of the remaining five, there was one dancer, three stage actors and one film actor.

### RECIPIENTS

The following was the order of the recipients who were presented with the awards :

- (1) Shri Altaf  
Hussain Khan — *Hindustani Vocal*
- (2) Shri Wahid  
Khan (*Sitar*) — *Hindustani Instrumental*
- (3) Shri Shermadevi  
L. Subramanya — *Karnatic Shastri (Veena) Instrumental*
- (4) Shri Madurai  
Mani Iyer — *Karnatic Vocal*
- (5) Shri Uday  
Shankar — *Eminent Creative Dancer*
- (6) Shri Ashraf  
Khan — *Acting—Gujerati*
- (7) Shri C. I. Para-  
meshwaran Pillai — *Acting—Malayalam*
- (8) Shri Gopal  
Govind Phatak — *Acting—Marathi*
- (9) Shri Chhabi  
Biswas — *Acting—Film*

The oldest among the artists was Shri Altaf Hussain Khan who was aged 85, and the youngest recipient was Shri Madurai Mani Iyer, who was only 47.

Each musician got a shawl, a gold *Shringhal* (bangle), and a *sanad*. The dancer, Shri Uday Shankar, received a brocade *Angavastram*, a gold necklace and a *sanad*. The actors got a shawl, a lotus-embossed leaf (emblem of the Akademi) in gold and a *sanad* each.

After the presentation of the awards the President in his speech congratulated the recipients. The speech was followed by a vote of thanks by the Vice-Chairman.

#### Financial Aid to Shankar

The Chairman then announced that Shri Uday Shankar had been sanctioned financial aid for the unfortunate loss he recently suffered in a fire near Calcutta. His announcement was followed by that of Prof. Humayun Kabir, Union Minister for Scientific Research and Cultural Affairs, who said that his Ministry would give monetary help to Shri Uday Shankar, and Shri Kabir hoped that the Akademi would also give some money from its own funds.

The function concluded with short recitals by some of the recipients. The variety programme included *Dhrupad* in *Multani* by Shri Altaf Hussain Khan, *Desha Raga* on *Sitar* by Shri Wahid Khan, *Karnatic Todi* on *Veena* by Shri Shermadevi L. Subramanya Shastri, and *Thyagaraja Kriti in Pantuvarali* by Shri Madurai Mani Iyer. Shri Ashraf Khan sang *Saraswati Vandana* in Sanskrit, followed by his enactment of a tipsy man, singing the praises of wine.

Chairman giving welcome address



#### CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS

The following is the full text of the welcome address by Dr. Justice P. V. Rajamannar, Chairman of the Akademi:

“Revered Rashtrapatiji,

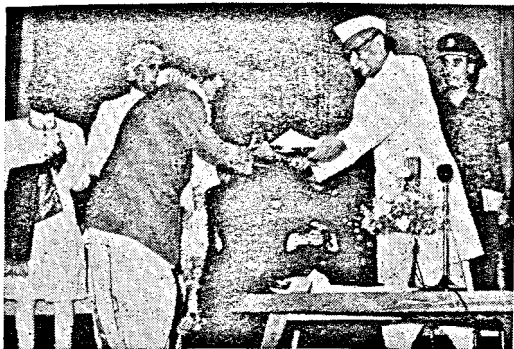
“It is my proud privilege to welcome you once more, on behalf of the Sangeet Natak Akademi, of which I have the honour to be the Chairman appointed by you, to the function this evening. It was indeed very gracious of you to have accepted our invitation to present the Akademi Awards to the eminent artistes in the field of Music, Dance Drama and Film, who have been chosen for this year. The presentation of these Awards by you as the President of the country has become an event of national interest and importance. The Sangeet Natak Akademi is the recognised National Akademi in respect of the four great arts of Music, Dance, Drama and Film, and it is in the fitness of things that you, Sir, should give away the Awards.

“Though the artists chosen for these Awards year by year have already attained a high place in their respective arts, they feel highly honoured by taking the Award from your hands.

“As the accredited Head of this country, you are the living symbol of the Unity of this great land not only in the political sphere but also in the cultural sphere. You have always emphasised that culture and virtue are as important to a nation as wealth and strength. You have taken a keen interest in this young Akademi of ours, which you were pleased to inaugurate seven years ago. While I realise that the Akademi has not been able to accomplish mighty things, it has striven to aid in the development of the four great arts entrusted to it by holding Seminars, by presentation of Awards, by establishing a National School of Drama, by publishing rare books in manuscript dealing with Music and Dance, by assisting institutions all over the country devoted to these arts and in other ways.

“I thank you, Sir, for your kindness in acceding to our request and pray that you continue to take the same interest in the Sangeet Natak Akademi, as you have always done. I now request you to present the awards to the eminent artists of the year.”

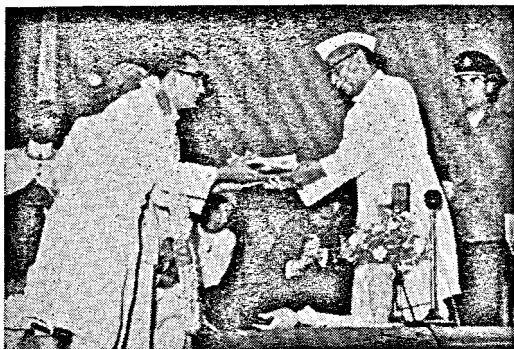
# RECIPIENTS RECEIVING AWARDS



*Shri S. L. Subramanya Sastri*



*Shri Ashraf Khan*



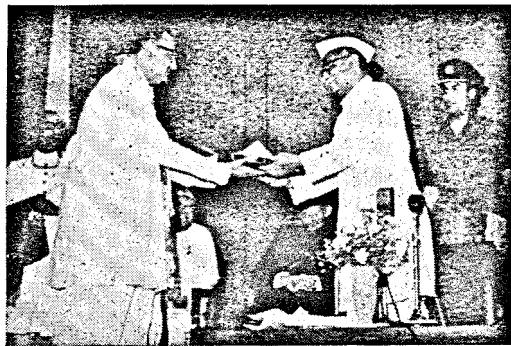
*Shri Gopal Govind Phatak*



*Shri Uday Shankar*



*Shri C. I. Parameshwaran Pillai*



*Shri Chhabi Biswas*



*Shri Wahid Khan*



*Shri Madurai Mani Iyer*

## PRESIDENT'S SPEECH

The following is the full text of the President's speech :

"I am very happy to have been able to come here for presenting Akademi Awards to eminent artists in the field of music, dance, drama and films, on the kind invitation of Shri P. V. Rajamannar, President of the Sangeet Natak Akademi. It is a matter of joy and privilege for me to have been associated with such pleasant functions in the past as well, so that continuity of Association has enabled me to have some idea of the progress being made by the Sangeet Natak Akademi.

"Sometimes I hear people mooting the advisability of the State extending its patronage to these arts and their devotees. Some may argue that State patronage might ultimately imply fostering of uniform standards or regimenting the artists and thereby introducing an unwholesome principle in the realm of fine arts.

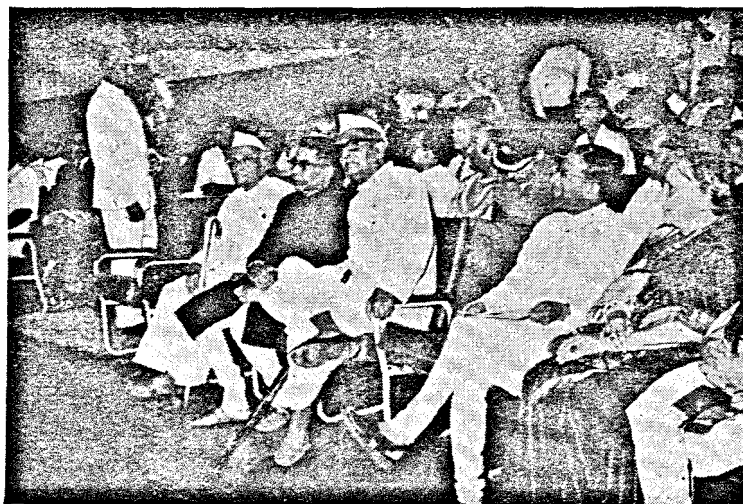
"I have tried to appreciate this argument but I feel that in this case it is based on some misunderstanding of the functions and status of the Sangeet Natak Akademi. As is well known, this is one of the three Akademies sponsored by Government, but only sponsored by it, for it is intended that all these Akademies should function as autonomous organisations. There is, therefore, no question of any direct official influence on or interference with their work. All that the Government may be said to have done is to provide the necessary resources and guidance in administrative matters as and when required. Secondly, in the matter of setting standards or adjudging the excellence of art, the Government is not even-remotely responsible for it,

because every Akademi has well-known and experienced artists on its Board to guide it and to lay down the policy with regard to the nature and quality of art to be encouraged by it.

"For these reasons I feel there is no occasion to apprehend that there is any official interference, to say nothing of regimentation, in conducting the affairs of these Akademies. On the other hand, it should be remembered that non-commercial pursuits like the fostering of arts can be undertaken either in a feudal system where the landed aristocracy extends its protection to them or in a democratic society where it is incumbent on the State to encourage them as a part of its national welfare programme. In the wake of the changes that have taken place in our society since Independence, it was but natural for the Government to step in when patronage of these arts was withdrawn with the disappearance of the ruling princes and the aristocracy.

"For the last twelve years or so we have been trying hard to develop the material resources of the country so as to attack our principal enemy, namely, poverty. But exclusive devotion to material development would be a one-sided objective in any society howsoever economically backward. For a country like India, having a rich and centuries-old tradition in art and culture, such a thing may well be looked upon as unpardonable. Our development plans have, therefore, been as comprehensive as possible. We have tried to cover all fields of human activity and all aspects of

welfare work. The development of cultural activities, specially arts, could not, therefore, have been left out by our planners. The State has merely provided the resources and given a lead



*A view of the distinguished audience*

in this direction. It is for artists now and the lovers of art to take full advantage of this opportunity. Judging from the output of our Akademies, one could say that these bodies have been ushered in not a day too soon and that full advantage is being taken of the platform that they have provided for the development and encouragement of arts.

In the present-day cultural renaissance, which is in evidence everywhere in the country the Sangeet Natak Akademi has a big role to play. By its own example it has to set new standards in keeping with our national requirements today and our age-old traditions in dance and music. Equally important is the task of channelising properly the energy and healthy curiosity released by the forces of this nation-wide awakening. I am sure the Sangeet Natak Akademi is fulfilling this role aptly. It is immaterial, as Shri Rajamannar has also pointed out, if the Akademi is going slow and has not been able to accomplish mighty things. Nevertheless, publishing of rare manuscripts dealing with music and dance, assisting institutions devoted to these arts all over the country, and above all, to have established a National School of Drama, are no mean achievements. I take this opportunity of congratulating the Sangeet Natak Akademi on whatever it has been able to achieve so far and wish it success in its plans for the future.

"Let me also take this opportunity to offer my congratulations to the distinguished artists who have been chosen for this year's awards."

*Shri Altaf Hussain Khan giving demonstration*



*Shri Madurai Mani Iyer giving demonstration*

## WHO'S WHO OF THE RECIPIENTS OF AWARDS

### Shri Altaf Hussain Khan

Shri Altaf Hussain Khan was born at Khurja in 1875. He had his early training in music under his father, the late Shri Zahoor Khan, a distinguished scholar, musician and composer.

Shri Altaf Hussain Khan has deep knowledge of the traditional and classical forms of music, such as *Dhrupad*, *Dhamar* and *Khayal*. His rich repertoire includes *Qaul*, *Qalbana*, *Praband*, *Tirvat* and *Tarana*. He is the sole repository of hundreds of compositions of his versatile father.

Shri Altaf Hussain Khan is also distinguished for his profound knowledge of the *Gayaki* of Tanras Khan Gharana. He is noted for his masterly way of rendering *Khayals* in the most intricate *taals*. His compositions of the complicated and difficult *taans* are highly expressive and impressive. His art has thus a rare quality of dignity and excellence.

### Shri Wahid Khan

Shri Wahid Khan was born at Etawah in 1895. He learnt *Sitar* and *Surbahar* from his father, the late Shri Imdad Khan.

Doyen of a family of illustrious *Sitar* players, Shri Wahid Khan possesses a mastery over the traditional technique of *Sitar*

playing in its pure form. He is noted for his effortless rendering of *Alaap, Jor, Gat, That* and *Jhala* with aesthetic perfection. He has also mastered his family technique of *Surbahar*. His skilful playing on this instrument is sheer delight.

He has won acclaim as an excellent performer from connoisseurs at Mysore, Baroda and several other Durbars.

#### Shri L. Subramanya Shastri

Shri L. Subramanya Shastri was born on 7th November, 1893 at Mudukulathur in a family of reputed musicians. He has learnt music from great musicians like Subbarama Dhikshitar and Ambi Dhikshitar of the Dhikshitar family of musicians.

Shri L. Subramanya Shastri got his training in *Veena* from the great Vainika Sikhamani Veena Seshana of Mysore Palace. In April 1930 he performed at the experts conference of the Madras Music Academy, demonstrating rare aspects of the theory and practice of Karnatic music. From that time he had been on the platform as a respected *Veena* player for about thirty years. He has in his repertoire many rare compositions.

#### Shri Madurai Mani Iyer

Born on 25th October, 1912 at Madurai, Shri Mani Iyer was fortunate to have a musician father like Shri Ramaswamy Iyer, and an uncle, Sangeetha Vidwan Madurai Pushpavana Iyer, who was famous in the art of Karnatic music.

Shri Madurai Mani Iyer began his training in music from an early age of eight under Shri Madurai Rajam Bhagavanar and became a disciple of Gayaka Sikhamani Harikeshavattur Muthiah Bhagavanar in 1922.

Shri Madurai Mani Iyer evolves a peculiar pattern in the *Swara* rendering and his *Apurva-Ragas*, effortlessly executed, possess a high degree of purity. While adhering to the time honoured "*Sruthi*" and melody aspect of Karnatic music he is noted for breaking into its unexplored regions.

#### Shri Uday Shankar

Shri Uday Shankar was born in Udaipur. From his very childhood he got opportunities

to witness the performances of the well-known dancers in the Court of Jhalawar, and naturally he was drawn towards dancing. His father sent him to England to take training in plastic art. He, however, left the painting class under the persuasion of Anna Pavlova and adopted dancing as his career. His talents as a dancer and a choreographer blossomed forth in Pavlova's troupe. Coming back to India he formed his own troupe and toured various parts of the world several times as Cultural Ambassador of our country.

In 1939 he started the renowned Culture Centre at Almora, the first of its kind in India, where a whole generation of modern dancers was trained up.

His pioneering efforts in presentation of ballets, both in life and shadow, have earned him great fame in the art world.

#### Shri Ashraf Khan

Born in Indore in 1891 Shri Ashraf Khan joined the theatrical world in 1903, and since then had been taking active part in Gujarati Stage Acting. A distinguished actor, he is also a popular stage-singer. He has been serving Urdu, Hindi and Gujarati stage with equal distinction.

He has toured various parts of the country with leading theatrical establishments and has won laurels for his masterly acting. In some of the plays he has appeared more than two thousand times.

#### Shri C. I. Parameswaran Pillai

Shri C. I. Parameswaran Pillai was born at Alwaye in February 1898. From his school days he had shown an aptitude for acting on the stage. This was cultivated and developed during his college career when he used to take an active part in many amateur theatricals.

He began his stage career by taking part in English plays and later on he took interest in the Malayalam stage. It did not take him long to make his mark as one of the most outstanding and versatile artists on the amateur stage of Kerala. The main feature of his acting is his ability to handle any role with remarkable ease, poise and naturalness.

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In short, he is a pioneer in the development of the amateur stage in Kerala.

#### Shri Gopal Govind Phatak

Shri Gopal Govind Phatak was born on June 24, 1899. He was drawn to the stage at a very young age.

With the help of Shri Ganpatrao Joshi, whose devoted disciple he became, Shri Gopal Govind Phatak ascended the height of his career in *Lalitkaladarsha*.

For several years he continued to enact roles of various types of characters. His enactments of "Raghoba" and "Macbeth" have left an indelible impression on his audience.

He has been a dominant figure on the Marathi stage for well over 35 years.

#### Shri Sachindra Nath Dey Biswas Alias Chhabi Biswas

Born in Calcutta on 13th July 1900 in a reputed family of Bengal with a tradition of culture, Shri Biswas joined the professional stage and screen in the year 1936. Since then he has been serving the stage and the film-world with undaunted zeal and devotion. He has appeared in over 250 pictures.

With his inherent histrionic talent he has created a rich and unique mode of expression, which has won him universal recognition. In his glorious career as an actor he has portrayed roles of diverse nature with dignity and perfection.

