

# 'Artists need to survive for art to sustain, grow'



*As The Vice-Chairperson Of The Sangeet Natak Akademi, Medical Benefits For Artists And More Visibility For South Indian Musicians Are On Aruna Sairam's To-Do List*

Saranya.Chakrapani@timesgroup.com

It's a packed day and one of those when Aruna Sairam isn't travelling. She makes no effort to conceal the kind of stamina involved in her recently acquired responsibility as the vice-chairperson of the Sangeet Natak

Akademi. A mention of it is enough to make her sit up, tea forgotten, eyes determined, to avidly describe every little vision she has for the "ecosystem of arts" — a phrase she likes to use abundantly.

"It is an ecosystem and there's more necessity than ever to look at it that way. Artists need to be friends with each other; have a united

voice, because the issues we are staring at are layered and diverse," she says.

Sairam has always been a tireless advocate of a united artists' community and her position at the Sangeet Natak Akademi has only helped streamline this vision into several big and small schemes she wishes to implement.

"Medical benefit is one," she says, an idea that was triggered by a hand-written letter Akademi received, oddly from an awardee from Sangli, Maharashtra, requesting to be compensated for his medical expenses.

"He's a folk artist who was awarded by the Akademi in 1978. He's now 80, and couldn't afford a meagre ₹1,750 for his medical examination. Everyone is enamoured by the award, but if we want an art to survive, we must first help the artist survive," she says.

## WHAT'S ON

**Sri Parthasarathy Swami Sabha**  
| Vidya Bharathi Mylapore |  
Malladi Brothers | Lecture |  
8.30am

**Sri Thyaga Brahma Gana Sabha**  
| Vani Mahal | Swetha Sriram |  
Vocal | 4pm

**Sri Rama Bhaktha Jana Samaj** |  
Avichi Higher Secondary School  
| Shobana Vignesh | Vocal | 7pm

**Kartik Fine Arts** |  
Bharatiya Vidya  
Bhavan Mini  
Hall | M  
Narmadha |  
Violin | 7pm



Sairam, who has been frequently travelling back and forth to Delhi since her appointment in June 2015, also talks about the importance of art education, which at its outermost, she says, must begin with the roads.

"We want to add vital historic information to all signboards on highways leading to culturally significant towns. For instance, milestones for Thiruvaiyaru would first describe it as the land of Thyagaraja, so that every child and adult — musically inclined or not — can fathom the remarkable artistic lineage of this land," she says.

As far as the south of India goes, Sairam's new position may well be carrying crucial weightage, considering the history of rather scanty representation the board has had from this part of the country.

"While I'm working with a lot of artists from all over India, I am keen to sensitise the rest of the country to the performing arts from the south, by way of performances and seminars by south Indian artists at the Akademi on a regular basis," she says. "Our chairman Shekhar Sen brings in the much-needed astuteness, from his experience as a celebrated playwright and actor. He, along with a distinguished panel of artists, will make this possible."

## DUAL NOTES

A Prathap



**WHEN TWO'S COMPANY:** Carnatic Brothers K N Shashikiran and P Ganesh enthrall audiences at Brahma Gana Sabha on Wednesday

**Ragam**  
**Tanam**  
**Margazhi**

