

Saraswati Samman for Parthasarathy, Das

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THE SARASWATI Samman awards, the country's highest literary honour instituted by the K.K. Birla Foundation, were presented at an impressive function in the capital this evening. The Saraswati Samman for 1999 was presented to distinguished scholar Dr Indira Parthasarathy for his Tamil play *Ramanujar* while the award for the year 2000 was presented to eminent litterateur Manoj Das for his Oriya novel *Amruta Phala*.

Union Home Minister L.K. Advani presented the awards. Also present on the occasion were the President of the K.K. Birla Foundation and Chairman of the Hindustan Times Group Mr K.K. Birla and the vice-chairperson of the *Hindustan Times*, Mrs Shobhana Bhartia.

The Saraswati Samman, one of the foundation's four prestigious awards which was instituted in 1991, is awarded every year to an outstanding literary work of an Indian citizen published during the preceding 10 years in any of the languages mentioned in the

eight schedule of the Constitution. The award comprises a cash prize of Rs 5 lakhs. The awardees are chosen by a Chayan Parishad comprising of eminent persons.

"The Saraswati Samman is our contribution to the efforts that are being made at different levels to bring the literature of our languages closer ... Although our languages are diverse, each with rich traditions, there is a basic unity underlying the ethos of Indian literature," said Mr K.K. Birla in his address.

"The Saraswati Samman is part of a much wider programme to bring our rich languages closer and express the oneness of Indian literature," said Mrs Shobhana Bhartia.

Commenting on the impact of Indian culture upon the masses, Union Home Minister L.K. Advani recalled the impact that the TV serial "Ramayan" had on people in India.

Describing himself as an Indian writer writing in Tamil, Dr Parthasarathy described the 12th century saint Ramanuja, the subject of his award-winning play, as a social revolutionary of his times who tried to remove caste



Oriya novelist Manoj Das (R) receiving the Saraswati Samman from Home Minister L K Advani, as President of the K.K. Birla Foundation K.K. Birla looks on.

barriers. Mr Manoj Das, in his acceptance speech said that cynicism in these times of "unfortunate hedonism" must not have its

impact on literature.

In fact, Mr K.K. Birla revealed an interesting fact to the audience, saying that his father had

been impressed three decades ago with a series of articles written by Mr Das on the revolutionary Bagha Jatin.