

The ghatam lady



Sukanya Ramgopal is one of the rare female artistes who plays the rather unusual instrument: the ghatam.

As it was unusual for girls in India to play the Ghatam, she had to first start with the Violin before she could learn the Mridangam and Ghatam when she was 12.

"One day I strayed into the class of T R Harihara Sharma and sat down. The experience was exhilarating," she recalls. The renowned master took her under his wing and trained her. Later she continued learning the art with her first teacher's son T H 'Vikku' Vinayakram.

Sukanya has been playing the Ghatam in concerts from the age of 15 and has accompanied leading vocal and instrumental artistes all over India, has toured Europe, USA, Canada, Switzerland, UK, France, Germany etc. where she received special appreciation from music lovers. She has accompanied leading artistes like Balamuralikrishna, Lalgudi Jayaraman, Kadri Gopalnath, Mandolin Shrinivas, Nithyasree, Sudha Raghunathan and many others.

She is an A grade artiste with All India Radio. She is in the panel of Indian Council for Cul-

tural Relations.

Sukanya was given The Best Lecture Demonstration Programme Award by Music Academy, Chennai, in the year 1996.

Apart from being the only woman in India to accompany Carnatic music concerts with the Ghatam, Sukanya has put together a set of six Ghatams, each one tuned to a specific tone of a pentatonic raga scale in order to add melodic movement to the instrument's rhythmic structure.

Such an attempt was not existent in the traditional concept of Carnatic music. Sukanya's concert troupe "Stri Taal Tarang"; a group of young women percussionists presenting this novel concept has already become popular. Sukanya is also a concept member of Stree Shakthi, an all ladies percussion ensemble.

Sukanya hails from a family of eminent Tamil scholars and her great grand father, Dr. U V Swaminatha Iyer was regarded as the 'grand father' of modern Tamil literature. Sukanya lives in Bangalore and you can contact her at

"Sakthi Krupa" 201/1, Byrasandra, C V Raman Nagar P.O., Bangalore - 560093. PH: 00 91 80 5246235. E mail: sukhiram_s@yahoo.com.