

The lone

woman percussionist

received then? Speaking to Weekend Suktanya says: "My interest in playing ghatam was not at all encouraged by the members of my family. Initially, my father too was against my playing ghatam. Even my guru advised me to reconsider my decision to become a ghatam player. But after witnessing my talent in handling the instrument perfected by vigorous practise, he (Vikku) supported me".

Suktanya, who now lives in Bangalore, has also performed in a good number of concerts organised in foreign countries including the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, France, Germany and Switzerland among others. Her performance at Cincinatti, where her 'thani avarthanam' (solo playing) evoked a standing ovation is an unforgettable experience, she recalled.

Besides performing at music concerts, Suktanya has also brought out an album titled 'Rainbow' in 2001. She plays the Manamadurai ghatam which is heavier than other ghatams. Also, she innovated a novel concept of playing the ghatam 'ghata tarang' - on the lines of 'jala tarang' - in which seven different ghatams are used for each note of the

octave and she has demonstrated it in about 25 performances.

The ghatam expert has many feathers in her cap. The Music Academy of Chennai declared Suktanya as the 'Best lecture demonstrator of the year' in 1996. The Mumbai-based Bhandup Fine Arts presented her the 'Layakala Nidhi' title in 2000. Veteran musician Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer presented her the 'Raga Tarangini' award in the same year. Suktanya received the 'Layakala Pratibha' from Percussive Arts Centre, Bangalore in the following year.

Despite having all these laurels to her credit, neither the Government of Tamil Nadu nor Karnataka has recognised the talents of Suktanya, she lamented.

What about the sabhas? "Most of the organisers do not provide a mike for ghatam players. Our presence in many a concerts are not at all recognised," she regretfully said.

Asked about her future plans and dream projects, Suktanya said: "My aim is to start an exclusive school to teach ghatam and to revive the fingering style of 'sishya parampara' among the youngsters. Also, I am planning to author a book on the easy practise of ghatam."



By Gayathri G

HE is the disciple of Vikku Vinayakram, the eminent percussionist; an 'A' grade artiste in All India Radio and above all she is the great granddaughter of 'Tamizh Thatha' U Ve Saminatha Iyer - all these credits go to Suktanya Ramgopal, the Chennai-based percussionist,

who is claimed to be the only woman ghatam player of the country.

Suktanya was here last week to perform in a music concert organised by the Sri Thyaga Brahma Gananjali at Sri Venugopallaswami temple, Coimbatore.

Put under the meticulous training of her guru Vinayakram, she made her maiden performance at the tender age of 13. How was she