

She took to 'ghatam' like fish takes to water

Sukanya interspersed her cooking with mastering a 'raaga' on utensils

Bansy Kalappa

BANGALORE: She loves the earthen pot-cum-musical instrument -the ghatam. Sukanya Ramgopal is one of the few women who plays this unusual instrument.

Sukanya has accompanied the finest musicians in the country with her ghatam —Kadri Gopalnath, M.S. Sheela, V. Srinivas, the Sikkil sisters and Nitya Shree. Whether in New Delhi, Mumbai, Calcutta, Chennai or Hyderabad, she enthralled audiences. Doordarshan and AIR have featured her many times.

Sukanya, who gave a concert in Bangalore on Sunday, took to Carnatic music when she was all of three years old. She confesses, "I always had a fascination for the ghatam and longed to learn it." After learning violin and other string instruments, she started with the mrudangam and the ghatam, when only 12 years old. Within three years she mastered it.

As a little girl, she longed to sit where students learnt the ghatam.



THE ALL-WOMAN TEAM: Latha Ramachar plays the kanjira, Vidushi Sukanya Ramgopal plays six ghatams, Bhagya Lakshmi M. Krishna on the morching and M.K. Vasavi plays the konnakol at a concert.

M.D. Asad

Her violin teacher found it difficult to understand why the girl did not concentrate on the violin.

"One day I quietly strayed into the class of T.R. Harihar Sharma and sat down. The experience was exhilarating," she recalls. The renowned master took her under his wing and trained her. Later, she learnt the art under noted ghatam player Vikku Vinayak Ram.

She took to the ghatam like a fish taking to water. For someone who had played on kitchen utensils, tables and wooden desks in the classroom, playing the ghatam was only a natural progression. For years, cooking in the kitchen was interspersed with spare moments of mastering a raaga on utensils, steel plates and the like.

Normally the ghatam artistes do not accompany the *tavil*, but she has accompanied the *tavil* too. She has accompanied A.K. Palanivel, on the *tavil* several times.

After nearly four decades of exposure to Carnatic music she is all set to achieve a record by attempting several firsts.