

Sukkanya Ramgopal is one of the frontline musicians of India and the first woman ghatam artist of the country. Over the past forty years, she has mastered the art of playing the ghatam in Carnatic music.

Born in Mayiladuthurai in Tamil Nadu, Sukkanya initially began training in the mridangam at the tender age of twelve at Sri Jaya Ganesh Talavadya Vidyalaya in Chennai, under the tutelage of Sri T. R. Harihara Sharma. She also learnt the violin under Sri Gurumurthy. However, it was the ghatam that was her true calling. Under the able guidance of Sri Harihara Sharma, and later under Sri Vikku Vinayakram, Sukanya trained rigorously on the ghatam. Over the last four decades, Sukanya has mastered unique ghatam fingering techniques and is today considered one of the torchbearers of the Vikku *baani* of ghatam playing. She is also a proficient performer on the Konnakol (vocal percussion). Sukanya hails from a family of musicians and Tamil scholars. She is the great granddaughter of Mahamahopadyaya Dr. U.V.Swaminatha Iyer, fondly known as 'Tamil Tatha'.

The *Ghata Tharang* is a unique idea conceptualised by Sukanya. Her commitment to breaking new ground has inspired her to play the *Ghata Tharang* with 6-7 ghatams of different *shruthis*, thereby creating unique melody on a percussion instrument. This is the first time that a percussion instrument has come to occupy the centre-stage in a Carnatic concert.

Sukkanya has provided ghatam accompaniment to several senior Carnatic musicians. Besides performances across prominent venues in India, she has also enthralled audiences across the world.

Sukkanya leads an all women's instrumental ensemble called *Sthree Thaal Tharang*. She was the recipient of the prestigious Sangeet Natak Akademi Puraskar for the year 2014.

Other honours, awards and titles she has received are:

- Best artist award from Karnataka Sangeetha Nritya Academy, 1982
- Best artist award from Narada Gaana Sabha, Chennai, 1990
- 'Laya Kala Nidhi' title from Bhandup Fine Arts Society, Mumbai, 2000
- Raaga Tharangini Award from Dr.Semmangudi Srinivasaier, 2000
- 'Layakala Prathibhamani' title and Sri H. Puttachar memorial award from Percussive Arts Centre Bangalore, 2001
- 'Naada Laya Samragini' title from Sree Ramakrishna Bhajana Sabha, Bangalore, 2003
- Best senior ghatam artist prize from Music Academy, Chennai, 2007
- 'Laya Vadya Chathura' title from Anna Nagar Music Circle Trust and Sadguru Sangeetha Vidyalaya, 2008
- Felicitated by the Ayyanar College of Music, Bangalore, 2008
- 'Artiste of the Year' award from the Bangalore Gayana Samaj, 2009
- Ananya Puraskar award from the Ananya Cultural Academy, Bangalore, 2014
- Swara Bhushani Award from Bangalore Gayana Samaj, 2014
- DEVI award from Indian Express in 2015
- Vani Kala Nipuna award from Thyagabrahma Gana Sabha, Chennai, 2016

- Asthana Vidushi, Datta Peetam of Sri. Ganapathi Sachidananda Swami, 2017
- TTK Award, Madras Music Academy, 2017

In 2015, Sukanya founded *Sri Vikku Vinayakram School for Ghatam*. In 2017, she founded Sunaadam Trust, an organisation committed exclusively to the teaching and popularising of the ghatam. The school is now part of the trust and students from the school perform regularly. She is the author of the first textbook for ghatam learning. The book 'Sunadaam: the Vikku Baani of Ghatam Playing' was released in September 2016.

Sukanya was among the 14 female artists felicitated by the Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya in Chandigarh and Madhukali in Bhopal in 2006, for mastering and excelling in playing musical instruments predominantly in the male domain. She was adjudged by the jury of the magazine 'Gentleman' as 'a quiet crusader with a combination of creative talent, outstanding ability in a particular field, tenacity in fighting obstacles and a motivating force that was aimed at enriching, improving and helping society rather than oneself.'

Sukanya has also been featured in the book *The Singer and the Song: Conversations with Women Musicians* authored by C S Lakshmi, published by Kali for Women in 2000.