CHAPTER 7

PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES ON STAGE AS

COMPARED TO VIOLIN AND POSSIBLE REMEDIES

7.1. Rendering of Keertane, Neraval And Swaraprastara on
Both Instruments

The very essential part of music of any kind is the aesthetic feature of it. Indian music which is raga oriented is replete with every essence of aesthetic appeal. It is a very difficult thing to imagine our music both of the North Indian and th4r South Indian music without the appeal and variety created by the ragas. Each of the instruments in the system of Carnatic music has its own technique of play. The features of tonal difference and loudness are all played to get the best of the instrument. The melodic system of Indian music is fully served with the different devices of structure of these Instruments. The quarter tones and graces are produced to fullest extent by Veena ,Flute etc. The occurrences of the terms like Rakta, alankrutha, Purna, Prasanna, Vyakta, slakshana, sama, Sukumara and Madhura which are the ten expressions of excellences of the art of singing is all aimed by an Instrumentalist.
Although the Veena and other instruments are effective in putting through all of the ancient system’s tenets these Instruments were struggling for a better opportunity in art musical exhibitions. The violin in this context made its entry without much opposition.

Violin the western instrument in the place of origin and in the current form is used very differently in the west as compared to that of Indian music realm. There is no concept of pakkavadya in the western music. Even at the time of inception by the likes of Baluswami Dixitar The full reach of this instrument was not fully understood. When the violin took its firm place as pakkavadyas the more subtle of the instrument in this place like harmonium and Veena were put aside. With the advent of the violin the scene took on many changes. Some good and some not so good for other pakkavadyas (context here is the number of concerts an artist playes, or in other words the statuses the instruments occupy).

A famous violinist has exclaimed that the only choice allowed for him is the instrument itself. The other things which are the key aspects in a concert like the raga, Kriti,tala, phrase of the neraval and sometimes even the duration of the ragaalpana solo which occurs at the end of the ,main artists rendering of the same all are according to the whims of the main artist of the day. The
limitations are many. But so many of the artists have overcome all these and perform beautifully. The many young violinists of today take the examples of the great violinists of previous times who were pioneers of the art of pakkavadya.

Rajamanickam Pillai is revered to be the epitome of this art. He carried forth the finding niche of this practice. His name is taken with reverence for formulating the many aspects and making it easier to achieve for today’s violinists. Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer always had him as his choice pakkavadya. Back in time the roles were not very different but there are a few points worth mentioning here. There were concerts in which a violinist supported an artist with general things like helping to remember sangathis or correcting a raga alapana and prompting to sing on the tala etc. It was a practice which was observed in many concerts with great vocalists. Maharajapuram Viwanatha Iyer was famously helped by the violinist V.M. Pillai and this was not taken with offence.
Figure 7.1: Orchestra with pakkavadyas
7.2. PALLAVI RENDERING – ROLE OF VIOLIN

Many violinists feel that the pallavi following as a pakkavadya can be a stressful one when the ingredients required for a concert to be a success are not followed.\textsuperscript{19} Many of the main artists do not share the concert of the pallavi before the concert. When a simple or a traditional pallavi is sung the following will compliment the main artist and increase the quality of a concert. When there are complicated factors in a concert, like lesser known talas e.g. Khandajati attala or sankeernajathi rupaka tala etc. The following becomes a challenge and may result in unsavoury errors. It is well known that if an artist cannot bring about the raga bhava effectively on a stage performance he will get distracted because of this lacuna and not be able to play along or perform to the best of his abilities. Pallavi rendering is the crowning glory of a carnatic recital. In such case if the artist does not have enough preparation then the overall concert will be affected not to mention the non fulfilment a violinist feels at the end of such exercises.

Tala reckoning by a main artist under these circumstances can be crucial. We all know in some cases the main artist does not

\textsuperscript{19} Dr. Mysore Manjunath and Mysore Nagraj, Lecture demo at The Annual Conference of Gayana Samaja Bangalore, 2013
support the violinist. These factors when addressed proactively a
concert can become a success. Sometimes the feeling of the
audience that the violinist is a little less of a musician than the
main one gives a negative feeling about the artist. Unfortunately
some vocalists do not bother about this.

Styles of playing and following are a complicated exercise.
Because of the nature of the music itself the artists have to be in
full form and well rested about the many aspects important on
stage. With this in mind the baani becomes important. If the
sarvalaghu pattern exhibited by vidwan Shemmgudi is not
complimented by the violinist, one can only imagine the
consequences of such rendering.

Paathantara is another aspect where the violinists feel the
heat. For e.g. the Surati navagraha Krithi
Angarakamashramamyaham in some schools is in ati vilamba.
Some sing it in madhyamakala.It can be a problem on stage.
When a raga is presented in a style where the Raga specifics are
not adhered to e.g. if Hindola is being rendered and the sanchara
does not cross the dhaivata for some time, or depending upon the
style if the notes are held in a straight position without the hint of
deflecting the dhaivata to touch the nishada the violinist will have
to struggle to understand and wonder as to what raga is being sung and may not be able play effectively and please the audience.\textsuperscript{20}

All the above said aspects have their remedies. The first and foremost is familiarity of the style. By this I mean the two artists i.e. the vocalist and the violinist if they are together on stage frequently most of the above said problems will disappear. There could still be some problems because of other factors. There can be a bad day for a violinist owing to issues with the instrument or lack of manodharma etc. Most of the stage performers know that the sadhana they do is reflected on the stage. It is also true that only a small percentage of the sadhana gets to the performance as there are numerous other things that come in to play. But if the two artists understand each others temperament and have stage concerts together for a while these can be corrected as we see from many examples. Vidwan Sanjay Subramanian and many other famed artists always use the violinists they are familiar with. Some may argue this practice of patronising artists will limit the musical expression. This is debatable. There are many violinists who can surpass all the limitations mentioned above. We have

\textsuperscript{20} I witnessed this happening on a well known stage.
greatest of them like Vidwan Lalgudi Jayaraman, Mysore Chowdia, T.N.Krishnan and many other versatile violinists of today who can take any challenges thrown at them and play a good concert and satiate the needs of a common listener.

![T. Chowdia](image)

**Figure 7.2 : T. Chowdia**

There is one such brilliant example in the great Violinist Chandrashekar. Although being visually disabled he has shown to the world he can play the music almost always successfully. There was an instant which I personally witnessed in a concert. Vidwan Sangeetha Kalanidhi R.K.Shreekantan presented a pallavi in the Raga Todi and in the tala mishra jhampe. The violinist followed brilliantly, did the trikala and the trishara anulaoma viloma brilliantly. Not only this, he did the swaraprastara matching the main artist swara to swara. We are extremely lucky to have such
examples of perfection for us to follow. This demonstrates the exception to the rule namely “main artist should show tala to the violinist”.

7.3. Pallvi Rendering on the Veena

As compared to the violin the rendering pallavi on the Veena is the reverse. A Veena player has the freedom to choose the pallavi just like a vocalist has. The rules are the same. The pallavi if it is composed by the artist will usually be rendered in vocal with the tala at the end of the raga alapana in the same shruthi as that of the Veena. Here the mridangist will have ample opportunity to understand and support the Veena player. Also the trikala and the anuloma viloma is done entirely relying on the tala support of somebody other than the people on stage. However there can be exception to the rules and there are good examples of Veena players who do not need external support. But this is very rare. As the entire instrumentalist including the percussionists rely on the tala of others either on stage or off stage. The Veena player cannot be different. The artist sometimes practices with the person giving the tala support. We all know that even a seasoned mridangist cannot render his tani avartana presentation without the support of tala of his fellow percussionists and the main artist.
All the above written details are to make the point of the problems a violinist or a Veena artist may or may not encounter. I have spoken to an array of them as demonstrated in the earlier instances artists themselves have expressed these views. As of today even though a Veena player may feel the frequent presence of the violin when thinking about opportunities to perform, and feel deprived of frequent opportunities, the violinist in their own way, have their own set of problems to face.

The Late vidwan Shri Lalgudi Jayaraman has once spoken in the music academy of madras about the lack of opportunity to express his manodharama freely. He has said that many of the vocalists are impatient when a violinist is performing his solo pieces of raga alapana or rendering the neraval. (We see many such examples in concerts now where the main artist actually stops the violinist with sometimes subtle and sometimes more coarser interferences).

This sort of impatience actually robs the concert of the flavour which will be the expectation of the audience. We see many good artists’ concerts not being popular because of this attitude. Only a

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21 Dr.Sum & S Sudhindra-Veena, B.S.Anand Mridangist, V.S.Rajagopal –Mridangist
Dr.Mysore Manjunath-Violinist, Vidvan Mysore Nagaraj-Violinist
mature and experienced artist who can give the pakkavady as
good time for expression will be successful as a concert artist.
When the pakkavadya like the violin and mridanga also should
understand the style of a vocalist and plays his instrument in
tandem the music is elevated to a higher state. The comparing
aspect to the above said points to that of the Veena concert can be
listed as follows:

Most definitely a solo Veena concert is a free expression
zone for an artist. Although there are other pakkavadyas, the
melodic accompaniment being absent in a solo Veena concert, the
Veena artist can let his or her manodharama to flow freely. There
will not be a time constraint to be bound by. E.g. In a broadcast
one need not be speculating the time a violinist may take for the
alapana there by making adjustments to the time and adhering to
it. These adjustments on the spur can pose a problem to the
overall rendering.

Rendering of neraval on violin as a pakkavadya has many
interesting aspects to it. As a pakkavadya to a vocal recital the
violinist has many specific responsibilities. Supporting the main
artist on all the departments of performing like “Raga Alapana”,
“Kriti Rendering”, “Neraval”, “swaraprastara” and any other
creative areas within a concert is the most important. There are many advantages and disadvantages to this. While the violinist is following the artist throughout the concert he will be expected to imbibe the style to some extent at least, by the audience. Similarly a violinist is expected to play in a way wherein he is not tampering or interrupting the vocalist’s comfort at any time during the recital. This is a big responsibility to shoulder.

Many times an instrumentalist is judged on the knowledge or lack of it in the Sahitya department. It is not entirely true to assume the Instrumentalists do not care for the sahitya. The Sahitya rendering accurately is the quest of every instrumentalist who is a serious learner of Carnatic Music. There are however many challenges in this area. In case of Veena the Meetu when not accurately employed can result in a rasika deciding that the artist does not know the sahitya of the piece being performed. This in one of the reasons because of which the instrumental concerts, specially the solo kinds do not attract as large an audience as that of a vocal concert. There is an endless list of areas where the sahitya of a given piece is not successfully conveyed to the listener. The reasons are many. The sahitya in some kritis like Most of Tyagaraja kritis have similar Dhatu in anupallavi and the
end part of charana. When this is rendered on an instrument a
listener may nor decipher the sahitya and differentiate between
them. e.g. The misra chapu kriti in the raga Kharaharapriya in which
the anupallvi

Chukkala rayani—is completely same as manasuna dalachi
in the dhatu. There is a problem in the rendering sahitya when
there are multiple shifts in sahitya phrase of a keertane. When
rendering these passages on the Veena this is more pronounced
as compared to that of the violin. The continuity of the sound in
violin makes it possible for a listener to differentiate between the
passages of sahitya. For e.g. in the attatala Varna Veeriboni in
raga Bhairavi the very first line of the sahitya is on both the
Madhya and a part on the manda. In case of the Veena this
explained as the 1st and 2nd string to enable one to understand the
exercise. The pallavi as follows

\[ N_s, s, r, r, rs, grgg - r, ggrg mdp mgrs - \]

Veei Bo---ni---------------------------nne---

\[ Nsmg rsNs –rgsr N, Dn- \]

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sgrN sNDP
KO--- RI--- and so on

This phrase continues with scant sahityakshara and the other “A” Kara that follow are spread over the said 2 strings. When a vainika strives to produce the accurate sahitya with the minimal meetu there is the possibility of a double meetu while shifting over from one string to the other. This problem of matching the corresponding meetu per sahitya akshara becomes not very practical. There is bound to be a few extra meetus. At this point one cannot assume that the artist does not know the saahitya. Here the microphones are not much of a help as the sahitya is spread on both strings. Amplification will only amplify the anomaly. There are many other parts in the said composition which is similar in composition. There are many other compositions where this shift between the strings, sometimes even the 3rd string which is the Mandra ‘S’ are not uncommon. When the sahityakshara is spread thus it always will result in an inevitable extra meetu. The practice one puts on these areas is definitely a way of minimising the number of meetus. Even so these are the real shortcomings in a Veena recital. On the other hand the violinist can convey the sahitya with a little more ease than that of the “Veena” . This is when the above example is the context. There are many other
compositions also with these beautiful challenges. When a Veena player for e.g. puts in many hours with and without using the microphones and compares the result usually the problems are recognised. Here again the timbre of the instrument, the quality of the pickup come into play. Thereby these can be corrected to the optimum levels and will enhance the quality of a concert.

The timbre of a particular Veena is another major factor in the success of a concert. The violin as such has a uniform quality of sound. This is true mostly perhaps owing to the techniques in making of it. Then violin as everyone knows is a foreign instrument and could be a reason for the uniform sound which is the important need of western music as a system. The violin is employed in the orchestra or a rare solo within in western music. The orchestras are a result of the collective effort of the musicians involved. Customised manufacturing of musical instruments including the violin is a result of this need.

The Indian art of making instruments is as discussed earlier is ancient as is an art. But the availability of a uniform kind of wood is all but impossible. The jack wood which is used in building a Veena is seasoned meticulously before being scooped out. Each tree has its own unique quality in density, colour, weight etc. This
in turn results in each of this tree being used to make Veena as distinct in their timbre. The sizes of the Veena also are different from one another. This is also the reason for each instrument to have its own distinct sound quality. In case of Veena this is very evident whenever we discuss the ‘Nada’ of a given Veena. Some older veenas have this ability to have a resonance which is by itself enough to express a player’s manodharma. When one is bestowed with such an Instrument the player is already at ease and can attempt eh more difficult graces with confidence. It is a known fact that some Veenas have very low output and some structural shortcomings which makes the effort a failure. What happens is that the intended “anuswara” in a particular gamaka will either become feeble in sound or jarring. The violinist by and large will be faced with these problems only when there are very big differences in the atmospheric temperature for e.g. while in a recording studio with very low temperature or while travelling from one weather to another which will be extreme. Other than this the gamakas just like any other instrumentalist or vocalist will be a matter of “pathantara” and practice. The comparison study will be dealt with in the conclusion chapter to ascertain the theory of practices and concert successes.
7.4. Rendering Neraval on the Violin

As a pakkvadya to a vocal concert supporting the main artist is the primary function of a violinist. Within a concert the violin has a great responsibility. The understanding between the main artist and the violinist is primordial. A good violinist will follow the main artist without hindering the thought and manodharma of the artist throughout the concert. The main artist’s choice of the raga or the manodharma areas are the places a violinist has to adhere to the shastra and also be continuously aware of the flow of music. The place in which the manodharma sangeetha applies is the most vibrant in a vocal concert as far as the role of the violinist is concerned. There are ample opportunities to display the talent as a pakkvadya artist.

Having understood the primary functioning it is also important to understand the problems in these same areas. The violinist should have the virtuoso to let his manodharma or that of the main artist's manodharma take the centre stage. This awareness is the most difficult one as a pakkvadya. Connoisseur will note these abilities in violinist. It is difficult to write about this art of following. The words will not do any justice in explaining this. A successful concert is that in which the violinist has mastered the
art of following a main artist when he should and playing according to his manodharma in the right places. In the concert the main artist while rendering for e.g. a alapane he will look for only support of the violinist and not prompting ,overdoing or not doing much during the alapane. Also a main artist’s choice of the kritis should be familiar to the violinist . As each artist has his or her own pathantara this is a vast learning opportunity to the violinist. These functional aspects within a concert are the main ingredients to the success of the same. A rasika is like the litmus paper and his approval or disapproval makes or breaks an artist. The vocal concerts are greater in number as compared to any other kind of classical concerts. While a concert goer usually looks for quality and when faced with a choice he is spoilt for the same. The role of violin and Veena is discussed in all the above mentioned parts of a concert later in the dissertation.

When we look at the neraval part as a separate discussion we can see the violinist is an important part of the process. When a vocalist chooses a place to do neraval a violinist is to be ready with his version. The areas chosen for neraval can be in the Pallavi, anupallvi or charana. The manodharma of the main artist and the occasion will guide an artist to choose a phrase. These
places of choice is first rendered as in the composition and then
taken to do an elaboration. By this time the listeners are already
aware of the sahitya and the meaning thereby. Here a violinist has
an advantage when he is doing the neraval as the audience can
relate to the rendering because the sahitya is already in the, minds
of a listener.

Then there are the rest periods between the changeovers
from the main artist where he can visualise his neraval. The raga
alapana is also in the same design because a listener is already
tuned to the raga when the vocalist has done his bit. When the
neraval is followed after the main artist a violinist has the
opportunity to bring forth his manodharma to the appreciation of
the listener.

There is also the chance for a violinist to continuously
correct his shruthi if the need arises during the rendered in the
dhruta kala towards the end the violins can follow the main artist
with ease and aplomb because he will have played the neraval in
stages and will be in the right form of mind and body to render the
drutakala sangatis.
7.5. Sahitya of the Neraval

When the sahitya is chosen for rendering neraval there are many factors leading to this. For e.g. the occasion of the performance like a temple, a special festival, a secular event like Independence Day, a private recital etc. When an artist chooses the kritis to which nerval is added all the above said factors are taken into consideration. If say the event is a Ramotsava it is inevitable to choose a kriti with the Rama theme. If for example the kriti Ninne nammitinayya

In Raga Simhendramadhyama Set in Mishra Chapu Tala of Shri Mysore Vasudevacharya is chosen as a main piece for the concert an artist has many choices to choose the sahitya for neraval. The anupallavi with the sahitya Passage Panngendra Shayana or the the beginning phrase of the charana or the later part of the same are all good choices. Here is the fact which is advantageous to a violinist as a pakkavadya. The choice of the sahitya will be established by the main artist and following after is meaningful and there can be no doubt in the mind of a rasika as to what is being presented. Whereas when a Veena artist chooses the same song for rendering and the same phrases to do the neraval there are areas in which there can be a doubt in the minds
of a rasika. If a listener walks in during the neraval he will not be completely aware as to the sahitya. Because the sahitya of the kriti after the charana bears similarity when rendered with meetus on a Veena there can be a little doubt. These are the disadvantages faced by the Veena player. The freedom to render the kriti wholly and then coming back to the phrase of the sahitya chosen for neravl is not always possible in a Veena concert. This is because when a Veena artist tries to connect with the audience he will have to render the neraval as soon as it is rendered in the kriti. In above mentioned instance if the anupallavi is the choice of the day it will be rendered immediately after finishing that part. This is true even when the charana or any other part is chosen. The other problem is when on a rare occasion if the pallavi itself is the choice of manodharma on a given day. For e.g. if in the Tyagaraja kriti sogasuga mridanga, if the pallavi is the choice of a Veena player it can be a challenge to render and get appreciation of a connoisseur. There are numerous occasions when these instances can be a hindrance to the success of a concert. This is the main reason for a Veena artist to choose a familiar format to render neraval. Like in the Kriti, Marive Marivere Dikkevarayya Rama in the Raga Shanmukahpriya In aditala Composed by Pattanam Subramanya Iyer. The part after the charana is most commonly chosen to
render the neraval which has the following sahitya “Sannutanga Shree Venkatesha”. It is common for an instrumentalist while rendering a solo to choose this sahitya for elaboration as it will have a better impact on the audience. There are other areas where the neraval can be done according to the manodharma but to convey this to a larger part of the audience the familiarity is a safe bet. This is one of the main concerns of a Veena player for feeling limited in a concert. Case in point is the pallavi of sogasuga mridanga. When this phrase is chosen to do neraval in vocal concert it sounds beautiful but if attempted on a solo Veena or violin this can be quite a strain on listener and also become meaning less to alay listener.

The sound system and the science of it were discussed in the easrlier part of this work. Just to conclude this section main points are listed here of the advantage and disadvantages to both these instruments.

- The type and make of transducers are easily adaptable to violin as compared to Veena. Veena having a wide resonator, if one has to get the pure strains of Veena while using a said pickup mike the exercise is complicated. The kudam itself changes its vibrations because of many factors. Because of this placing a mike
strategically to get a good sound is tricky to say the least. Whereas the violin is custom made to hold a mike in place. Not only this but the uniformity of sound is easily achievable because of the structural uniformity between violins.

- The placement of Veena on stage is of greatest importance. The delicate nature and the weight of Veena makes it a difficult task to carry and place it on stage. For obvious reasons this problem is not there for a violinist.

- The shruthi of Veena is very varying owing to the external factors like temperature and other such factors. A violin is relatively easily adaptable.

In recent times many artists have strived and put these problems at the minimum. Most artists are experimenting on many areas where they can make improvements while keeping the music chaste and constant. It is but a matter of perception to all people involved as how much of these changes are too much.