CHAPTER 2
HISTORY OF CONCERT MUSIC AND
THE ROLE OF VEENA IN THEM

Much of the facts pertaining to the Performances of Art music of ancient India are actually shrouded in mystery. Our musical growth certainly has its strong roots in the ancient temples. There are a great number of temple carvings, paintings and records of ritualistic hymns. By studying these we know that in ancient India Music was a part of religious rituals. The concerts were perhaps heard only in temples during special events of the temple. Music concerts or the baithaks (the chamber orchestra) of classical music rendering were usually held in the king’s courts or nobles. Some of the rich citizens patronised musicians and held concerts in their homes during occasions like marriages, festivals etc.

The study of the history of classical music and the performance practices can be a very vast one. While researching the statuses we come across many mentions of the many musical Instruments used in India from the very early period of courts of kings to today’s stages. Veena, Flute and Gotuvadya always
enjoyed the centre stage as concert instruments. According to Prof. Sambamurthy a violin is just a mere accompaniment.\textsuperscript{10}

Many other instruments get their place in the concert platform purely for utility. The instruments will have to be studied according to the rules of classical music, even to classify them on the circuit of pure music. Many factors such as structure, portability, usage as single or in pairs, evolution, geographical distribution and many such other factors play a role in an instrument to continue in the realm of art music.

Correct understanding of such instruments is crucial in preservation of not only the instrument but then associated usage of the same. By doing this study in depth so many hitherto hidden facts emerge and will only help the practice of preservation easier. The modern usage of Veena when delved into the part it played in orchestras cannot be ignored.

2.1. A Note on Classical Orchestra

The collective presentation of set music by a group of musicians is the Vadya vrinda-a group of musical instruments. This

\textsuperscript{10} South Indian Music, Book 3
included instruments of all the groups namely, percussion, stringed, wind etc. A theatre in Nagarjunakonda in Andhra stands to make this point clear. During sometime in that period of the nayakas (about 1560) the Vadya vrina or Orchestra was popular. Many musical Instruments are a part of vadya vrindas or orchestras. We may note that the number or the variety of these are subject to the music in the period it is played. There appears to be no set pattern in them. But the wide variety and the necessary instruments like stringed, wind, percussion and other forms which could gel together were part of such an ensemble. The Veena is one such early instruments in any of these. We It appears that the wind instruments also could have been the popular choices owing to the volume it produced. Raghunatha nayaka who is instrumental in the Veena evolution the result of which is the saraswathi Veena was a king with a penchant for Veena recital. We get to see many mentions of a Veena concert in Raghunatha Nayaka’s writings as well as historic descriptions of his time. There is the Ramayana kavya created by Raghunatha Nayaka. He mentions many instruments in which the Veena and this other stringed instrument similar to that of Tipiri Dande is mentioned. This instrument could produce sound in Three octaves.But the
Raghunata Veena stood the test of time and the Tipiri Dande slipped into oblivion.

![Image of Palace Band](image1.jpg)

**Figure 2.1 : Palace Band**

![Diagram of Dande](image2.png)

**Figure 2.2 : Dande**

The above said factors clearly shows us the modern day Veena and the concert pattern had its basis on such elective
treatment it received at the hands of patrons such as Nayaka Kings. In fact the Nayakas paid so much attention to this instrument that the Mela which is a central part of musical development into modern and medieval is their contribution. Upto the Nayaka kings time the Veenas came different ones for different ragas or note positions. The fixed mela was the nayakas contribution and a great evolutionary step.

The Veena which was in the Vrinda, In the accompaniment to vocal or a dance gradually came into the centre stage after the advent of frets which were patterned by raghunatha Nayaka on which all the Ragas could be played. Veena stil holds the space of important musical instrument even today. In the temple of Agastiswara and the ramaswami temple at Kumbakonam threr are a number of sculptures of Veena evidently by the behest of raghunatha Nayaka.

Special compositions were composed from medieval times to be played by these orchestras. Another popular name for this kind of presentation is “Mela”. We have many of these mela or bands performing even today. An efficient orchestra is used in many forms. Today the common platform where the two instruments being studied are used is the Dance orchestra. The very classical
nature of the music is the factor which connects the instruments well with the dance. There is ample scope to play all the compositions which are classical. However the individual manodharma pertaining to the other areas of classical music like swara prastara etc will not be possible in these concerts. But the many other areas which require a special kind of planning and practice.

Tuning and adjustments with the sound producing equipments, electronic and otherwise will be given opportunity to familiarise one with the modern day stage requirments. In other words the dance music provides many chances to exercise many aspects to perfect the quality of the sound prosuced. A Veena in a Bharatanatyam concert if used live is a very enriching experience for a player to hone the skills of correcting the shruthi at a given time, co-ordinated performance in tune with other instruemtns will improve the overall quality of musical repertoire. From these stages of performances like the group playing in the time of nayakas upto the current day playing, in all the relams mentioned and some othersnot mentioned the Veena has been a very visible Instrument. The advent of violin has doubtlessely put the Veena in a second place in order of preference but just like the Veena rose
from relative obscurity to the prominence during the nayaka period
the Violin is finding or found its prominence today.

The Sangeetha sabha’s are relatively newer. These came
into vogue sometime in the late 19th century. We have been
fortunate to get the treat of classical music which is of world
standard with very little or no fee being paid to listen to.

In modern times there are many Institutions which have
been supporting the musical sojourn. The preservation and
development of concert music has been possible by these
institutions. Salient among them are

- Music Schools
- Music universities
- Sangitha Sabhas
- Temples
- Bhajana mandirams
- Libraries of music books
- Musical endowments
- Government sponsored programmes
- Organisations from other countries supporting Indian
  music.
- Doordarshan and other private channels telecasting musical events
- All India radio

2.2. Music Conferences

All these above mentioned entities have been propagating music in our country. To understand the chief purpose of this thesis, the evolutionary aspects of the Veena and Violin have to be studied under the katcheri paddhathi and the evolutionary aspects of the same. To do so the above mentioned institutions and their contributions are elaborately discussed further.

Many of the above said organisations not only provide chances to listen and enjoy classical music but also learn the theoretical aspects of the art in a systematic way. In ancient times music concerts were held in the courts of Maharajas and nobles, in temples and sometimes in the houses of rich patrons. The institutions were non-existent where the lovers of art paid to listen or view an art form.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century there was area of change in the way music grew as performing art. The same is true for almost all the art forms in our country. The emergence of sangeetha sabhas, Government organisations like
the culture departments of central government as well as the state governments, All India Radio, Television, Private organisations like the Music Academy, Fine arts society etc. The introduction of music in Universities, colleges and schools, publications of books of music in schools and colleges, are important stages in the history of music as they are mainly responsible for the spread of musical knowledge among people.

The spread of music gathered momentum because of the involvement of more and more number of people in the areas in which the activities spread. Sabhas springing in great numbers is evidence of the change of attitude of general public in the spread of classical music. This phenomenon is very much evident in metropolis. The katcheri or the musical concerts thereby went from good to good in presentations. The early part of twentieth century with the greatest participants in the performers was the golden period according to many experts. The greatest performers like vocalists:

- Alathur brothers- Sivasubrahmanya Iyer and Srinivasa Iyer
- Madhurai Mani Iyer
- Mudicondan C. Venkaram lyer
- Ariyakudi Ramanuja lyengar
- Papanasam Sivan
- M.S. Subbulakshmi
- Maharajapuram Vishwanatha lyer
- Musiri Subrahmanya lyer
- D.K. Pattamma
- M.L. Vasantha Kumari
- Mysore Vasudevacharya

Figure 2.3: Alathur brothers- Sivasubrahmanya Iyer and Srinivasa Iyer
Figure 2.4 : Madurai Mani Iyer

Figure 2.5 : M S Subbulakshmi
Vainikas-

- Karaikkudi Brothers
- Emani Shankara Shastri
- Kalpakkam Swaminathan
- K.S.Narayan Swamy
- Devakottai Narayana Iyengar
- Mysore Doreswamy Iyengar
- Veena Dhanamma

Figure 2.6 : Emani Shankara Shastry
and many other greats brought the dignity and the collective intellectual approach to performing music and made it sail on the path of glory. Many Instrumentalists:

**Violinists**-

- Marungapuri Gopalakrishna Iyer
- Mysore T. Chowdiah
- Malaikottai Govindaswamy Pillai
- Kumabakkonam Rajamanikkam Pillai
- Dwaram Venkataswamy Naidu
- K.S. Venkataramiah (PAPA)
- Tiruvalangadu Sundaresha Iyer

Figure 2.8 : Malaikottai Govindaswamy Pillai
Figure 2.9 : Kumabakkonam Rajamanikkam Pillai

Figure 2.10 : Tiruvalangadu Sundaresha Iyer
Gottuvadyam Players:

- Gotuvadyam Narayana Iyengar
- Budaluru Krishnamurthy Shastri
- A. Narayana Iyer
- Gotuvadyam Savitri Ammal

![Image of Gotuvadyam Narayana Iyengar](image1.png)

**Figure 2.11 : Gotuvadyam Narayana Iyengar**

![Image of Budaluru Krishnamurthy Shastri](image2.png)

**Figure 2.12 : Budaluru Krishnamurthy Shastri**
Flutists-

- Palladam Sanjeeva Rao
- T.N. Swaminatha Pillai
- T.R. Mahalingam

Figure 2.13: Palladam Sanjeeva Rao

Nagaswaram Players-

- Tiruvengadu Subrahmanya Pillai
- Tiruvvidaimarudur P. Viruswamy Pillai
- T.N. Rajaratnam Pillai
• Tiruvizhimalai Brothers

**Mridangists-**

• Tanjore Vaidyanatha Iyer
• Palghat Subba Iyer
• Malaikottai Rangu Iyengar
• Palghat Mani Iyer, Palani Subrahmanya Pillai

**Khanjira Players-**

• Dakshinamurthy Pillai
• Bangary Iyer

**Ghatam Players-**

• Sundaram Iyer
• Umayalapuram Kodandarama Iyer

Vilavadri Iyer

**Tavil Players-**

• Needamangalam Meenakshi Sundaram Pillai
• Nachchiyar koil Raghava Pillai
• Valayapatti Subrahmanya Pillai
These great musicians from around 1928 to the early part of Twenty-first centuries gave such glorious contribution that the path of music was set for centuries. The standard and traditional approach to performing music with very strict adherence to tradition and purity resulted in a glorious tradition. The music concerts of current day almost a century later still follows the basic tenets of this effort.

Coming to the role of Veena in the system, it is evident that the concerts of stringed instruments along with Veena the likes of Violin and Gottuvadyam were also in the coveted places in those days. The very big names and the number of them in the above list are indicative of the way in which these Instruments were treated in the arena of performing music. The great karaikkudi brothers and up to the Veenai Dhanamimal or Mysore Doraiswami Iyengar indicate that the tastes of a music connoisseur was varied as also of a high intellectual order. The fact that the amplification of sound was not as advanced as today is to be remembered when discussing this fact. It is phenomenal that the mellow strains of Veena (also the gottuvadayam) was so well appreciated. If there were no concerts of these then so many players couldn’t have been made famous. The great Veena Dhanammal (Mother of
M.S.Subbulakshmi) is said to play Veena on every Friday in her house and the recital was open to anybody who would want to listen. These kinds of legendary facts are such important aspects of our great continuing tradition that is the performing music.

The current system must have traversed so many of the periods within this span to reach where it is today. The branch of carnatic music where the set pattern of concert presentation is said to be a newer occurrence (Last 40 or 50) years. The divisions within a concert wherein many different compositions are presented with the attendant improvisation part such as the raga alapanas and the neraval, swaraprastaras, tana, pallavis are the end result of invisible mental consultations between the musician and the listener. The content of a concert and the broader pattern it has, is the evidence we have of the evolution of this art. Veena as such and like other musical instruments, had to follow in the tradition fixed by a Vocal katcheri. To conclude that a Veena player or any other instrumentalist got such a success in the scheme itself is heartening.

When at first the concert pattern set in, the veena performances gained currency over vocal music. This is evident because of the number of great vānikas in this period is very
large. The reason could be the existence of the vadya vrinda or orchestral music. This established that a person has to be a master of the instrument that he or she handled to give solo performances so as to gain universal recognition. Although much is documented about the construction, materials used number of strings etc of Veena the technique and adaptation of the Instrument is not much written about. Govinda Dixitar, Ramamatya and Venkatamakhi have made sincere efforts to fill this gap.

The actual tradition of Veena was set forth by Govinda Dixitar. This was put to practice by the illustrious Muttuswami Dixitar- a divine Veena exponent of the Veena. His compositions are the proof of the Vocal aspects entwined in the Veena playing. This is evident when one closely studies his compositions. His brother Baluswami Dixitar happens to be the virtuoso who was adept at Veena and we also know he was also one among the firsts to master the Violin playing.

Both the contemporary and the not so recent as in the case of many Veena players listed below established a style or styles unique to their understanding and tastes. If this was not the case we would not know of their existence.
Figure 2.14 : Muttuswami Dixitar

Veena kuppaiyar, and Umayalapuram Krishna Bhagavat are the foremost Veena exponents and the two prominent shishyas of Tyagaraja. The tradition continues in later players some of who are :-

- Veena Kalahastayya
- Sonti Venkataramanaiah (Also Tyagaraja shishya parampara)
- Pachimiriyam Adippayya
- Veena Subbiah
- Veena Subbukuttiayya
- Ramaswamayya
- Pallvi Gopalayya
- Ckikka Othappayya
- Varahappiar
- Veena Appayya
- Veena Sambiah
- Veena Seshanna
- Veena Subbanna
- Venkataramandas
- Sangameshwara Shastri
- Veena Venkatagiriyappa
- Veena Karigirirao

The contemporary Vainikas have added value and technique suited to the twentieth century. Some of these ideas are the ones like the exploration of amplification. Minor modifications to ease the problem of travelling with this Instrument etc.
Veena Sheshanna (1832-1908 A.D)  
Veena Subbanna (1861-1939 A.D)  
Veena Subramanya Iyer (1864-1919 A.D)
Figure 2.15 : Veena players

Some of the great Vainikas of our times whose playing included the recent times which is relevant to the study:-
- Padmabhushan late S.Balachander
- Padmashri Chitti Babu
- Sangeeta Kalanidhi Padma Bhushana DR. V Doreswamy Iyengar
- Kalaimamani Srimati E.Gayatri
- Kalaimamani Sri. R. Pichumani
- Kalaimamani Rajeswari Padmanabhan
- Kalaimamani Ranganayaki Rajagopalan

The list could be longer than the one presented above. Just this list will demonstrate the work and quality brought about by these artists. The current day’s truth is by far the farthest from the above richness. We can see the veena moving to the very respected and dignified backspaces of concert music.

The above said fact is discussed with facts in the chapter 4. See this section for the evidence presented to establish that the number of concerts with a Veena is far more infrequent as compared to the violin.

The concert music post trinity period admitted a sea of change and the main aspects of this change is not only the
bifurcation as the Carnatic system but also in the way the attending pakkavadyas were arranged. The current practice of having the violin as the pakkavadya is one such glaring change.

It is said that in the south the music itself although 2000 years old the katcheri paddhathi has been established only in the last two centuries. The great musicians responsible for this revolution in the recent century are- Mahavaidyanatha Iyer, Patnam Subrahmanya iyer, Konerirajapuram Vaidyanatha Iyer, Ramnad Srinivasa Iyengar ,Madurai Pushpavanam Iyer and many others.

In the late years musicians who have contributed in no small measure to the formulation of the modern concert tradition are: Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar, Mahrajapuram Viswanatha Iyer, Chittoor Subrahmanya Pillai, and Flute Mali. Jalatharangam Subbaiyer, G.N.Balasubramnyam and Madurai Mani Iyer. Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar deserves the special mention for the planning ,execution and balance in his kacheris. This format is followed even today to the delight of all good rasikas listening pleasure. The modern concert is a well thought-out and schemed arrangement. The segments of pre and post pallavi and the pallavi in the middle is a great way to course through the mellow stream
of classical music. Exploring on the way the laid out themes of raga alpana, kriti, neraval swara and all the other aspects of classical music. From the ragam tanam and pallavi there is a tapestry of the music gradually meandering to light classical and classical so even the newer pieces which catch the imagination of a performer fit perfectly. Even the Hindustani and folk music finds itself sitting pretty in this scheme. Also the laya part of a system also gets sufficient provision in so many places during the concert. The tani avartanam is just one such. There are these so many other places rhythm oriented which a delight of any is given carnatic concert. For e.g. the tillana of a fast pace or even a slow following of a rarer piece played or sung in the first part like a Vilamba kala kriti are all the various components of this part of performance by the percussionists.

Perhaps this system is the only one in the world where the performers are given total freedom to express their styles and own one part of the concert itself. The growth of the system is not yet complete. We are every day presented with newer delightful things presented to us by all these thoughts of the versatile artists of our system.
2.3. Post Trinity System

The permutations and combinations with which the musicians are awarded in the system of performing carnatic system are endless. From a vocal concert with the attendant minimum pakkavadya of a violin and mridanga, there is the array of concerts with flute, veena and violin ensemble, and the percussion ensemble or an orchestra with all these factors put together. The possibilities are endless. After all these experiments are heard and appreciated a real connoisseur is still gravitating towards vocal recital above everything else. This is a very true but strong opinion supported by facts. Any supporter of classical music knows this well.

Coming back to the post period of Tyagaraja – Many of the composers musicians were born in Tanjavur. But there are many other greats in other areas like Karnataka, Andhra, Kerala where there were the seats of music where the carnatic music was nurtured by kings and commons alike. The princely states of Mysore, Travancore and Bobbili etc all patronised this and other forms of art and the tradition continues.
It is relevant while discussing the role of Veena to pay attention to the “Styles” or the “Baanis”. To a lay listener all the Veena concerts or the sounds may seem same. Only a discerning ear can detect the differences among them. We have so many thoughts in these styles some of which are

- The Tanjavur Baani
- The Mysore Baani
- The Andhra Baani
- The Kerala Baani

We will examine these styles one by one.

2.4. The Tanjavur Baani

The Tanjavur Baani is described as the gayaki style of performing. This approach has been developed right from the heyday of the tanjavur court and has been moulded and polished to perfection in this direction. No effort is spared to imitate vocal music.

Vidwan K.S.Narayanaswamy, one of the eminent Veena exponents belonging to this school, says that uccharippu is of utmost importance. The pronunciation and accent on each syllable
of the sahitya is transferred to the Veena exactly as it is sung. The raga alapana, Tanam, rendering the Krithi as well as neraval and sawara prastara are in this mould. Raga alapana is elaborate and replete with deep gamakas. The pace is maintained leisurely. Fast passages are few, for fear that gamakas and finger nuances will be lost. Such types of meetu as kathiri meetu and tribhinna are avoided. It is a stately and dignified style whose classical appeal can never fade. The traditional tanjavur school gave rise to three distinct styles of Veena technique. K.S.Narayanswamy belongs to the vocal or gayaki style described above. The late Karaikudi brothers-Subbaram iyer (who played the Veena holding it vertically) and Sambashiva iyer- developed this style further in their own individualistic manner. They were famous for their elaborate raga alpana and tanam. Delineation of a single raga could go on for hours.
Figure 2.16 : Karailudi brothers holding veena vertically

The one peculiar aspect of the rendering the Sadharana gandhara of Todi is that it is sometimes played on the fret representing the sadharana gandhara unlike the more popular handling of other schools where it is played on the sthana of chatushruthi rishbha by deflecting the string to attain deep gamaka.
Veena Dhanammal also belongs to this school. However she has had her own way and style which is unmistakable in its uniqueness. Some of the contemporary vairikas are all following this theory of achieving the style that most represents their mastery of the instrument and the understanding variety of the ragas and the attendant gamakas.
Figure 2.18: Karaikudi Sambashiva lyer

Note: As a Veena performer I always have wondered about the Baanis. It is my opinion that all the Veena players arrive at their own style of playing eventually. This can be identified as close to this or that style.

Veena Dhanammal had the style which is easy on the ear. In an effort to reproduce the vocal gamaka, she employed an elaborate left hand technique, separation of the fingers, the occasional use of a gentle pluck with the left hand finger, and
various other devices. The fact that her Veena was tuned to a higher pitch (equivalent to the female voice, about G or G sharp enhanced this effect) However this kind of tuning will not be suitable to play a full concert of 3 plus hours. True to the Tanjavur style she presented shorter alapana and tanam encompassing all that needs to be expressed in a concise form. She avoided swara prastara. Her speciality were the padams and javalis which were treated to an elaborate number of sangathis. Every now and then in the midst of rendering these padams she would also sing them there by giving the listener an enhanced experience of the meaning of the sahitya.

Veena S. Balachander is another exponent of this style albeit the many sitar techniques he incorporated. The gamaka where four or five notes were produced by pulling the string on a single note was a signature technique of his. He brought the gayaki style into his playing by this and many other such difficult to imitate techniques. He is considered more aggressive in his rendering among the Tanjavur School.
Figure 2.19 : Veena Dhanammal

Figure 2.20 : Veena S. Balachander
2.5. **The Mysore School**

The Mysore School developed in quite a different direction. It has an equally hoary tradition of great vainikas in Sheshanna, Subbanna, Venkatagiriappa and his disciple Mysore Dareswamy Iyengar. The latter describes the Mysore style as basically an instrumental style, in which the melodic parity of the noted is sought to be retained. Therefore deep gamakas are not generally used. Shallow gamakas, playing the notes on the frets, a pleasing meetu are of the tribhinna are all used frequently. Left hand fingers are separated to facilitate fast passages. The raga alapana is presented on these lines, and the tanam typical of Mysore is full of melodic effects according some players who follow this tradition.

![Veene Sheshanna](image)

*Figure 2.21 : Veene Sheshanna*
2.6. The Andhra School

The Andhra School of Veena playing can be distinguished by the variety of meetus used. Veena Venkataramana Dasa of Vizianagaram was famous for his shatkala or six speed tanam with the Veena is a vertical position. Sabgameshwara shastri was another well-known artiste of this style. It is said that they used to perform Veyisadakam. That is practising the alankaras in the three octaves in three speeds non-stop a thousand times everyday. Emani Shankar shastri although of this Andhra School(his father Achutarama shastri was another vainika who palyed the Veena holding it vertically) had merged to the Tanjavur style. He used wide raged gamaks.he was perhaps the only vainika who plucked the Veena to suit the volume requires and the texture of stuccatto to imitate the human voice. He used all the fingers of his right hand to produce various effects and also the harmonic effect by using the tribhinna. The technique we see by listening to many of the recordings is enough to show us his modern thinking. This style wherein he incorporated the best of all the styles available to produce the desired music which has stood the test of time is enough to show that the styles cannot be a stagnant affair.
Most of the younger generation of Veena players do not rigidly adhere to any one style, but borrow and merge different style. Centre to this process is the availability of the pathantara, the individual ability to stick to one tradition and having a Veena which will have a corresponding tonal quality. The violin here is a dream instrument where a player will never be said to be of a style which is this or that. A violinist is nowadays said to be good if he can follow a vocalist’s rendering complimenting the vocals when needed and playing and showing his or her full capabilities in the solo areas.