Chapter-4

Place of Violin in Karnataka

The Violin Heritage in Karnataka

Culture, the acquainting ourselves with the best that has been known and said in the world and thus with the history of the human spirit—this definition by Mathew Arnold, British poet and critic, is exhaustive and self-explanatory. It is also self-limiting in the sense that anything to be brought within the ambit of the definition definitely needs its strict conformity with moral, intellectual and spiritual standards—a journey from without to within.¹

Fine arts and literature, evolved and devolved through centuries, juxtaposed with the congenial political and social atmospheres have rendered the whole culture an inseparable element in the life of even a common man in Karnataka. Such a redolence of refined passion for Karnataka music, dance, paintings, theatre and literature is a rare occurrence in the history of any land.

Karnataka is the only south Indian state (Dravidian state) where both Hindustani and Karnataka music singers flourish. While composers like Sri Purandaradasa, Kanakadasa, Vyasatirtha, Sripadaraya and Vadirajatirtha established a heritage in devotional Kannada literature, violin maestros like PiteeluTayappa, AlanguduVenkatasubbiah, T.Chowdaiah, R.R.Keshava Murthy and others established a violin heritage in Karnataka. The innumerable number of students trained by Chowdaiah have carried forward the musical heritage in the generations that followed.

To appreciate the continued legacy of a running tradition, the status gaps of

¹Culture and Dogma, preface by Mathew Arnold.
the time, a wide variety of its influences, its lend-lease, the act of taking in some aspects and absorbing it within – all these will have to be taken into consideration. Therefore it is probably not wise to draw a straight line while sketching the violin heritage in Karnataka.

Violin entered our country when India came under the clutches of the Portuguese, The French and The English. Though the proto forms of the instrument were found in various parts of Asia, especially in India and then through the merchants of Arab perhaps reached other countries, the violin that we use today has been adopted from European countries. The violin of today was known in the name of Fiddle or Piteelu in Kannada. Folk fiddle was a popular instrument in Africa, Asia, Europe and in some parts of America. There were two kinds of this type- 1) Spyke fiddle, popular in Arab, Asia and North Africa. This has a long neck and a resonator. 2) Short-neck fiddle, which has a short neck as the name suggests.

Several other bowed instruments were played before too. The musical string instruments used for accompaniment in The Tamil Tevaram songs sung in the temples were later played with a bow. ¹The pinakaVeena was played with the sound box or belly on the lap with the player squatting and the keyboard resting against his left shoulder. The bow was drawn horizontally across the belly beneath the bridge.²

Similarly, ancient instruments of Persia and Arabia like the Rabab is also the former form of violin, according to experts. The glorious period of violin making covers a span of 1600-1750. The architect of today’s violin is said to be Andria Ameti(1505-1580)who was an artist from Italy. Later in the 17th century, Antonio Stradiveri invented various violins, which were quite in demand. Stradiveri, the disciple of Ameti is believed to have made

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¹ ‘South Indian Music’ by Prof. Sambamurthy, vol 3.
² ‘Origin of the violin in Karnataka music’ by R.Satyanarayana,published in the souvenier released on the occasion of the 60th birthday of Sri anoor Ramakrishna, p.no.58.
1116 instruments during his lifetime consisting of violin, viola and cello.\(^1\) (A detail account of the origin and chronology of this instrument is dealt with separately in the previous chapter.)

There are a number of bow instruments today. But Viol is the nearest to our violin. This belongs to 15-16th century approximately and more or less resembles the present instrument with respect to its purity in sound. It is said this instrument gradually gave way to the innovation of the present violin. The persons responsible behind this innovation are Gaspero-De-Salo, Amati and Stradiveri. The violins created by these people more than 250 years ago still hold an invaluable position today and their purity of sound is unparalleled.

**Place of Violin in Karnataka music:**

The violin which has come to stay as the leading instrumental accompaniment in formatic music was, by tradition first adopted by Sri Muttuswamy Dikshitar’s brother, Sri Baluswamy Dikshitar, from the Europian band, to which the Manali Mudaliyar, who patronized the Dikshitar family for some time and was Dubhash to the English Governor, Pigot, introduced the young Dikshitar at Madras, as also by one of the four famous Tanjore brothers Vadivelu, where also the Europian band was in vogue.\(^2\) At Tanjore, it was further popularized by Varahappalyer, Tanjore Subba Rayar and Tiruvengadu Shivarama Krishna Iyer.

The reasons why violin was readily accepted into Karnataka music are-

The tone it offers is rich, steady, voluble and affluent. The length of the tone, the volume and accent may be manipulated.

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\(^1\) ‘The March of The Violin’, An article by B.V.K.Shastri, souvenir released on the 60th birthday of Anoor Ramakrishna, p. no.23.

\(^2\) ‘The Indian Origin Of The Violin’ by Dr.V.Raghavan, article published in the souvenir released on the occasion of the 60th birthday of Anoor Ramakrishna, 1991.
Gamakas can easily be implemented on this instrument as the keyboard offers a wide tonal range unlike other chordophones that have a bigger keyboard.

Techniques of alternative fingering may readily be employed on violin. It offers a wide pitch range and can therefore be played for any pitch of both the sexes.

The nature of the instrument admits vast potential bowing and fingering. It can beautifully be played for accompaniment as well as solo performances.

For the above reasons musicians and music lovers adopted this instrument lovingly, giving it the honor and prestige of nativity. And it has attained prime importance in our Karnataka music today.

Ever since it entered the world of Karnataka music, violin has created wonders and has become a part and parcel of our music both as an accompanying instrument and as a solo instrument. Karnataka music is made rich with this instrument today. It became as popular here as it was in those countries to the extent that it became an inevitable part of a concert in Karnataka music.

During the reign of Britishers, a senior officer of Tanjore Varahappalyer was greatly impressed by the instruments placed at the residence of the Governor and decided that violin suits the Karnataka style of playing well. Acknowledging his interest in the instrument, the Governor presented him with a violin, which was well utilized by Varahappalyer. He gradually learnt to play almost all the songs that he knew on the instrument and began using it as an accompanying instrument for vocal music. A tradition was thus set about 150 years ago and violin has been used as an essential accompanying instrument in Karnataka music concerts since then.

The violin heritage in Karnataka music began with Baluswami Deekshitar, the son of Muttuswami Deekshitar. It was he who brought this instrument which was then in precedence in western music to Karnataka during the
colonial rule. There is another opinion that the credit for introducing violin to Karnataka music goes to Vadivelu, the youngest of the ‘TanjoreQuartette’ the Natyacharya. On witnessing a performance of Isaac Johnson, an Irish violinist in the service of King Sarfoji (1798-1832) in Western music band, he perhaps prophesied the instrument’s adoptability to South Indian music, took lessons from that Irish player and assimilated its use in the classical music parlance. Vadivelu later migrated to Travancore and Swati Tirunal, who was the king presented him with an ivory violin, specially made to order for the purpose.¹

Baluswami Deekshitar (1785-1858), the brother of Muttuswami Deekshitar carried the instrument to the repute and professionalism that it has earned today. He and his brothers were under the patronage of Muttukrishna Mudaliyar and Venkatakrishna Mudaliyar of Manali. They encouraged Baluswami Deekshitar to learn violin from a European violin teacher for eight years—from 1806-1814 successively after which Baluswami Deekshitar made the necessary changes in the playing techniques to suit Karnataka music. It is on account of this background that gamakas were found missing in the violin playing during those days.

Even a casual study of Karnataka music today will show that technical skill has greatly improved and that the performances have become highly interesting.² The ‘notu’ swaras composed by Sri Baluswami Deekshitar’s brother Sri Muttuswamy Deekshitar in Shankarabharana exclusively for violin playing supports this fact. So we can say that almost towards the end of 19th century violin playing is found devoid of Gamaka. The gamakas discerned in Vocal music then came into vogue, especially in the playing of this instrument by the Tamilnadu artists. The violin heritage in Karnataka

¹‘Violin down the Hallowed ages’ by R.Satyanarayana, published in the souvenier released on the inauguration of The Chowdiaiah Memorial Hall, Bangalore., p.no.7

²T.K.JayaramIyer in his presidential address at The Madras Music Academy, Chennai, on 22-12-1960.
started almost half a century later than in Tamilnadu. Therefore violin playing heard during those days was plain and had lack of technicality though there was swarashuddhi and TāLashuddhi. The situation remained so until the end of 19th century. Later several reputed musicians like Vadivelu, Tirukkodikaval Krishna Iyer, MalaikkotaiGovindaswamyPillai, ShemmangudiNarayanaSwamyIyer and others carried the instrument to great heights with their music. Gradually, though considered a western instrument, violin became an inevitable part of Karnataka music with the necessary innovations and suitable changes. And thus, the formation of a new style of playing was evolved that established itself in Karnataka music.

The quality of ‘Nada’ in this instrument and the adoptability of adjusting the shruti to any required pitch made it all the more suitable for vocal accompaniment for both men and women artists. By its special construction, the full tone of the violin could be felt especially when it was tuned to a high pitch, which is why violin goes well with a high-pitched female voice or the flute. That it can bring out any delicacy of music without letting go of the original beauty made this instrument utmost popular. The violin is said to be closest to human voice and therefore is able to successfully express ‘Bhava’ which is the soul of music. ‘The violin is one of the most remarkable of all instruments, being that in which the art of instrument making has achieved its greatest triumph in terms of simplicity of material, beauty of tone and appearance and acoustical effect, in which the emotional expressiveness and flexibility of the human voice are combined with a special brilliance and agility quite of its own’, Says David D. Boyden

To these it owes its wide appeal musicians, music lovers, connoisseurs, historians dealers, speculator, aesthete and snob, all of whom have come under its spell’. And this exactly is the reason for its popularity especially in south Indian music’.

\(^1\)musical instruments through the ages by David D.Boyden.
Violin Heritage in Karnataka:

In Tamil the word Karnataka means tradition. It also means purity. The term Karnataka is used in the dual sense of old and southern part of the Indian Peninsula. The first work to mention the word ‘Karnataka’ is the Brihaddeshi. The word appears in the form of a raga by name Karnata, a desi raga. (verse- 375). Karnataka music and dance material are being talked about in Sarngdeva’s ‘Sangeeta Ratnakara’. Bharata Vatika’ of Nanyadeva also mentions the word Karnataka. In Bhagavatam too we see the name Karnataka. In Bhoja Champu again, this word is referred to.

‘Karne Atati iti Karnataka’, explains A.D. Madhavan, talking about Music and Karnataka.¹ Karnataka music is that which enthralls the ears. That which enters in one's ears & bestow 'Rasa' on them is Karnataka. There is a famous saying in Kannada that goes, ‘Though small in form, great in fame’. This applies to violin which is an important milestone in the history of the art of our music. Nay, it has been the symbol of creativity, craftsmanship and the various emotional thoughts that spring out of human beings.

¹Sangeeta Shastramritam’ by A.D.Madhavan, p. no 253.
In Kannada the exotic origin of violin is revealed in the very name—‘Piteelu’. It is derived by progressive phonetic deterioration—fiddle-fittle-pittle-pitil-piteel-piteelu.¹

Orcheologically speaking, the first appearance of the violin in its present form is undoubtedly in Karnataka. It is first found represented in a mural, edict in Bharatanatyam performance in which violin is shown as accompanying the dance. The mural occurs on the eastern wall of DariyaDaulat in Srirangapatna.

The paintings on this wall were first executed in 1784 A.D. during the reign of Tipu Sultan at Sriranagapatna. The paintings have been renovated three times since but have retained the originals with scrupulous and meticulous accuracy.

The violin also appears in a beautiful wood carving on the right hand corner of the chariot of Sri Ranganatha. This Ratha (chariot) was made during the reign of Krishna Raja Wadeyar-III. The instrument must have been well accepted into the fold of Karnataka music by then. The instrument was unquestionably introduced into the Royal court of Tipu from the Europian Bands which the French brought with their...

¹Violin down the Hallowed ages’ by Dr.R.Satyanarayana, published in the souvenir released on the occasion of The Inauguration of The Chowdaiah Memorial Hall, Bangalore.
army with their officers some of whom must have included violin music as part of their education.¹

There is irrefutable sculptural evidence which proves the occurrence in Karnataka of the violin prototype in the 11ᵗʰ-12ᵗʰ century A.D. A bas relief sculpture carved on a left hand side pillar in front of the sanctrum of the Agastyeshwara temple at T.Narasipura in Mysore district depicts the playing by a woman of a chordophone, which has a semi-circular belly with a long neck and played with a bow in much the same way as it is played today. It was Chowdaiah’s strong conviction that violin originated here. He called it as Dhanurveena.²

A musician sculpture at Halebidu also depicts a musical instrument resembling violin.

Textual evidence for the occurrence of the violin prototype is also available in Karnataka. Haripaladeva in his ‘Sangeeta Sudhakara’ gives a detailed description of violin.³ This description is of special interest because bow is described in detail here, which is the prototype of its modern descendent.

So it cannot be said that violin went from India in a primitive form, evolved into its present state and reemerged in Indian music. It would be perhaps more proper to say that India has had some bowed chordophones too at very early times in art and folk music which could have been the forerunners of the modern violin.⁴

As said earlier, the tradition of violin playing came into Tamilnadu much

¹ ‘Violin down the Hallowed ages’, By Dr. R Satyanarayana, an article on violin published in the Souvenir published on the occasion of the Inauguration of The Chowdaiah Memorial Hall, Bangalore.

² proceedings of the conference at Madras music Academy journal vol 19.

³ slokas 402-411.

⁴ ‘Violin down the hallowed ages’ by Prof. R. Satyanarayana published in the souvenier released on the occasion of the inaugural year of The Chowdaiah Memorial Hall.
before it came to Karnataka. Therefore absolute fidelity in following the vocalist was not possible for the violinist. There was purity in swaras and accuracy in Tala, but there was no technicality and refinement. As Sri Mahadevappa, a senior violinist of Mysore says,1 most of the teachers were vocalists then. In a way, it was Sri Bidaram Krishnappa who was a vocalist and a violinist, who set his own tradition in violin playing in Karnataka. In 1901 at a concert in Tamilnadu, Tirukkodikaval Krishnan accompanied him on the violin. Deeply impressed by the application of Gamakas and swaraprastaras played by him, Krishnappa started implicating them to his disciples in Mysore, especially to the brilliant ones like T. Chowdaiah. On another occasion, on hearing Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar’s concert loaded with melodious gamakas, he insisted that his disciples should follow Ariyakudi’s music.

So it can be said that the music of Tamilnadu had a great influence on the violin playing in Karnataka. Later, on account of T. Chowdaiah, who travelled to Chennai innumerable number of times to accompany the then stalwarts of his time, this instrument attained more refinement and a wider dimension. R.K. Venkatarama Shastri, Chowdaiah’s disciple, ascertains this fact.2 ‘I learnt several techniques about the art of violin playing from my Guru such as- how violin playing should be as an accompanying instrument: how much of accompaniment playing is not too much; And how one can make the accompaniment effective; I also learnt the art of playing tanam from him.’ Venkatarama Shastri remembers with reverence that he learnt all these techniques in his duo concerts with his Guru T. Chowdaiah.3

1 Sri Mahadevappa’s interview with ‘Surabhisinchana’, april 2010 issue.
2 Shruti 1987.
3 As narrated by Venkatarama Shastri to Shruti 2007, Surabhisinchana, April 2010 issue, p no. 12.
The first innovation in violin in its career in Indian music took place in Karnataka in the form of seven strings. And it was the maestro Mysore Chowdaiah who brought out this innovation in 1927. This invention, though subject to controversies initially, was made utmost popular in the hands of the grand maestro, who practised constantly on it to bring it to perfection. The ‘Madras taste’ of music was brought to Karnataka by this man of Karnataka through this instrument. Chowdaiah later innovated it further by adding twelve vibration strings to it as in sitar and created the nineteen stringed violin. But this did not survive as it demanded immense patience in tuning. And the result inplaying was not equivalent to the exercise it involved. A similar experiment by Sri V.G.Jog in Hindustani music also failed for the same reason.

But a few days later another man of Karnataka brought about another innovation in Hindustani music. Bhatta Gulwadi invented a five-stringed violin, in which he used a fifth string tuned to Tara shadja. But this instrument did not gain much popularity either, probably because popular violinists did not use it in either Karnataka music or Hindustani music.

It is also interesting to note that many eminent violinists of Mysore and Karnataka have trained under such stalwarts as Lalgudi Jayaraman, M.S. Gopalakrishnan, and T.N. Krishnan, but have stayed in Mysore maintaining, further developing and passing on the tradition. There have also been violinists of Karnataka who coming under the magical influence of Tamilnadu music, have adopted it and developed it in their own style in violin playing and accompanying. It becomes necessary here to analyse the influence of the major personalities in Karnataka who carved their niches distinctly in the Karnataka music violin scenario. Some such personalities are listed below:
Piteelu Tayappa

He is the first full-fledged concert performer of Karnataka. Piteelu Veerabhadrappa was his father, from whom he learned initially. Though proficient in vocal music, on account of influenza at the age of twenty, he had to give up vocal music after which he took up violin and gave himself to it for the rest of his life.

He accompanied his contemporaries Bidaram Krishnappa, Chikkaramarayaru, B.S. Raja Iyengar (known for his popular ‘Ksheerasagarashayana’ and ‘Adisidalu Yashode’), Tiger Varadachar, Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar, Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavatar, and other famous vocalists of his time. At a concert, Ariyakkudi Ramanuja Iyengar was so impressed by Tayappa’s accompaniment that he acknowledged ‘you are so understanding and kind-hearted to the main artistes that you are a mother to us. Your parents have rightly named you Tayappa (Tayi-mother in Kannada).

Tayappa used to play as accompanist to B.S. Raja Iyengar (of Jagadoddharana fame) in company plays. Spectators were greatly impressed by his style. He was known for his unhurried, smooth style of playing. His chief disciples include son B.T. Rajappa, Anekal Muniswappa, Puttaswamiah, Shambhulingappa and others. He was a star till Chowdaiah came into limelight.
Alangudu Venkatasubbiah (1885-1965):

Born to Gundamma and Sampigeraya on the 5\textsuperscript{th} of October 1885 at Algoodu, Venkatasubbiah learned violin under Guru Shyamanna. The family was well-to-do, and in course of time, Venkatasubbiah was married to Nanjamma. Following the death of Sampigeraya, the family shifted to Mysore and took a house on rent on the VeeneShyamanna Street. Sosale Ramadasaru from Tirumakudalu, who was known for his Keertana recitals, also stayed with them. Venkatasubbiah later came into contact with such stalwarts as Mysore Vasudevacharya, Mysore T. Chowdaiah and T. Puttaswamiah (Moogiah).

It is said Mysore Vasudevacharya took his compositions to Venkatasubbiah for his approval each time he composed them.\textsuperscript{1} Tiger Varadachar respected him greatly and requested for his accompaniment in many a concert. He travelled to Tiruchanapalli and Madras frequently for concerts. The All India Radio also broadcast his solo concerts regularly.

While accompanying a Harikatha concert of Sosale Ramadasaru at the Mysore Palace, the queen was so impressed by his violin playing that he was asked to be the court musician. But basically shy by nature, and spiritually oriented, Venkatasubbiah politely denied the proposal.\textsuperscript{2} It is said at a concert, in a hall full of audience, when Chowdaiah was applauded for his music, Chowdaiah humbly said, ‘why praise me so much, Venkatasubbiah’s playing is much superior to mine.’ \textsuperscript{3} While this shows

\textsuperscript{1}piteelu Vidwan Venkata Subbiah by Dr.T.N.Padma, p. no. 8.
\textsuperscript{2}Piteelu Vidwan Venkata Subbaiah by Dr. T.N.Padma, p. no. 11.
\textsuperscript{3} Piteelu Vidwan Venkata Subbaiah by Dr. T.N.Padma, p. no. 13.
Chowdaiah’s simplicity and appreciation for a fellow musician, this also proves Venkatasubbiah’s calibre as a violinist. It is a pity he did not earn as much fame as he deserved. He lived like a moon hidden behind the clouds. His music was music for the soul. He passed away on the 21st of March, 1995 at the age of 80.

**A.S. Shivarudrappa:**

Born in Anekal on 30th, March, 1892, Shivarudrappa began his violin training under Munishankarappa initially. Blind by birth, he spent his childhood in utter poverty and then due to the kindness showered by his greatness Sri Nalvadi Krishna Raja Vodeyar, he joined the tutelage of BidaramKrishnappa. In later years he too, like Chowdaiah, accompanied his Guru in his concerts. The Maharaja then employed him as a Fiddle boy for a salary of Rs.10. He was later appointed as the AsthanaVidwan in the royal Court of Mysore Palace. The Maharaja was kind enough to get him a horn-fiddle from overseas. Though much younger in age, Chowdaiah encouraged him immensely.

At the University in Kashi, he performed in the presence of Pt. MadanMohan Malaveeyaa. His concerts were broadcast on All India Radio, Bangalore.

He was the recipient of the ‘PiteeluVadanaVisharada’ award, The state academy award, ‘Karnataka Kala Tilaka’ and The Chowdaiah memorial state award from the Academy of Music, Bangalore. He was also elected
president of ‘The All India Music Conference for the Blind’.¹

In the early 19th Century, T. Chowdaiah invented seven–stringed violin and tailored it to suit the nuances of Karnataka Classical Music with vision and skill. He had innumerable disciples who have preserved his violin heritage. Some of whom are:

R.K. Venkatarama

Shastry:

Venkatarama Shastry was born on November 10th 1907 at Rudrapatna in Karnataka. After spending more than a decade learning violin from Veena Subbanna and Mysore Chowdaiah, he moved to Madras. This learning helped him in his later years to play his role of accompanist to the great vocal maestros of his times effectively and optimally.

Thereafter it was a straight career for him as a reliable violin accompanist. He moved to Madras in 1936 to join All India Radio when it was formed and served there for thirty three years.

Venkatarama Shastry came under the influence of Papa VenkataRamiah soon after moving to Madras² and eschewed the seven-stringed instrument in favour of the orthodox four-string violin. His music was predominantly shaped by all the best vocalists of the day.

Shastry insisted that the violin should be based on the vocal style.’ He

¹ ‘Namma Sangeeta Kalavidaru’, Karnataka Sangeeta Nrtya Academy, Bangalore publication, p.no.197.

² R.K.Sriramkumar’s interview on 26-12-2011.
learnt that way and taught that way.’ He performed at the aradhana at Tiruvayyaru for 40 successive years.

As an accompanist, he never resorted to one-upmanship. His pathantara was vast and he followed the vocalist faithfully and carefully. There was no overdoing. He would never mar the imagination of the vocalist.

Spirituality interested Shastry deeply. His Gurubhakti for Chowdaiah, who brought the sophistication of Tamilnadu’s music to Bangalore, and with whom he played many duets, was unquestionable. He was a musician respected by everyone throughout his career.

A principled, non-controversial figure, he brought dignity to whatever he did—whether accompanying MS or Shammangudi on the performance stage or expressing his views as a member of the Experts committee, spending whole days at the Music academy. He taught his students to approach music with respect for its true value—and he practised what he preached all his life. He passed away in 1993 at the age of 86.

**C.R. Mani Iyer (1915-2008):**

He was born in 1915. He was the grandson of violinist Annaswam Bhagavatar. And the elder brother of Mridangam Subba Iyer. Mani Iyer’s father C.A. Ramaswamy Bhagavatar was also a violinist.

His earlier gurus were his grandfather Annaswami Bhagavatar and then Palakkad Rama Bhagavatar. He had advance and rigorous training in violin playing from T. Chowdaiah. For nearly a decade in the Gurukula system. He was trained on the seven stringed violin as well as the four stringed violin.
The much-deserved break in his musical career came when he was forced to return to Palghat due to poor health and he came into contact with the ebullient singer Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavathar. This led him to become a much-sought-after accompanist to leading vidwans of the day like Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar, Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, Madurai Mani Iyer, Alathur Brothers, G.N. Balasubramaniam, Maharajapuram Vishwanatha Iyer, K.V. Narayanaswamy and a host of others spanning over three generations. He also gave solo performances on the violin. The violin trio concerts he played with R.K. Venkatramana Sastri and V. Sethuramaiah, disciples of Chowdaiah, are cherished by connoisseurs.

A music scholar, he was invited to give lecture demonstrations in the Ayyanar college of music in Bangalore established by his Guru Chowdaiah. He also performed jointly with Chowdaiah all over India.

He gave solo performances too. The violin trio concerts he played with R.K. Venkatramana Sastri and V. Sethuramaiah, disciples of Chowdaiah, are cherished by connoisseurs.

In the year 1995, Palghat C.R. Mani Iyer was honoured with the Deviprasadam Trust award instituted by the Olappamanna Mana for his contribution to music.

He passed away in 2008. C.R. Mani Iyer is fondly remembered by music lovers for his deft handling of the violin while he gave melodic accompaniment that enhanced the richness of vocal music, and for the chaste music in his solo performances.
**K.J. Venkatachar (1939-2010):**

Born in Kaniyaru, Arakalgud Taluk, Venkatachar was the grandson of violinist B.S. Srinivasa Iyengar. He had his initial training from B.K. Rangaswamy Iyengar. Later he joined Ayyanar Kala Shale and trained under V. Ramaratnam in vocal music and under Chowdaiah in violin. Later he became the disciple of Chowdaiah and played seven-stringed violin like his Guru. He served as the principal of Ayyanar Kala Shala founded by Chowdaiah, after his death.

Venkatachar performed all-round the country giving a number of concerts with his Guru Chowdaiah. He performed for various sabhas like The Bangalore Gayana Samaja, Mysore Dasara, etc. He was honoured with the title,’ Piteelu Vadana Tilaka’ by the Mysore Sri Maruti Seva Sangeeta Samaja.¹

**T. Gururajappaa:**

He was the cousin of T.Chowdaiah. He was also a disciple of Bidaram Krishnappa. He performed a number of concerts with Chowdaiah all over the country. The trio concerts of Chowdaiah, Gururajappa and R.K. Venkataramashastri were in vogue those days. He was affectionately known as ‘Mysooru Chinnanna’ in Tamilnadu. He was adept in playing violin in a sweet and pleasing style.² Madhurai Venugopal, Keelinallur Rangaswami, Natarajan and Vaidyanathan are his disciples. T.G. Tyagarajan, his son, is a leading violinist today.

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¹ NammaSangeetaKalavidaru’ ,Karnataka Sangeetantarlya academy, Bangalore publication, p.no.226.
² A musician’s reminiscences’-by professor V. Ramaratnam, page no.76.
R.R. Keshavamurthy (1913-2006):

R R. Keshavamurthy was born on 22-05-0914. He hailed from Rudrapatna, a small town near Hassan, Karnataka, which has the distinction of having produced many illustrious musicians. RRK as he was popularly known, was a legend of seven stringed violin. RRK’s father Ramaswamiah was an accomplished vocalist and violinist, and was RRK’s first teacher. Grandfather Dammadi Nagappa was a Khanjara artiste.

He had his initial training in violin from Chikka Rama Rao. Later he came under the tutelage of the famous Bidaram Krishnappa, who was an asthanavidwan in the Royal Court of Mysore. Though well versed in both vocal and violin, RRK later took up violin as the main mode of his musical expressions. He was a violinist of great repute and precision. RRK also practised and mastered the seven-stringed violin, though it was an innovation of T. Chowdaiah, a senior disciple of Bidaram Krishnappa.

RRK was a very learned scholar in several languages like Kannada, Sanskrit, Telugu, Tamil and Hindi through which he was able to interpret the Kritis composed in various languages. He was known for his rigorous practice and discipline. His music was scholarly, brisk, and erudite.

RRK received many awards and participated as an active member of several organizations. Some of the titles conferred on him are Sangeetha
Sahitya Shiromani, Sangeetha Vidyasagara, Sangeetha Shastra Praveena, Sangeetha Kalaratna, Naadabheeshma Vidwan, Sangeeta Sahitya Shiromani, Veena Sheshanna Memorial Award, Kanaka Purandara Prashasti and others.

He was an A top artist of All India Radio. Towards the later part of his life, he settled in Bangalore and started a music school in memory of his Guru. He taught many students like T. Rukmini, Anoor Ramakrishna, Bhuvaneshwariah, Dr. Jyotsna, Jyothsna Manjunath, Dr. Meenakshi Ravi, Nikhil Joshi, Subbaratnam, and Nalina Mohan, who went on to become outstanding musicians later. He is the author of a dozen books on music. Several of his CDs have been released.

RRK presented many papers on the subject of violin playing and fingering techniques. He had commanded a unique position in the field of Carnatic music. He had accompanied many stalwarts during his time. He passed away at the age of 93.

Thus a seven-stringed violin heritage was built in Karnataka, initiated by T. Chowdaiah.

**Anoor Ramakrishna (1931-1995):**

Born in a family of musicians, his grandfather and father being vainikas, paternal uncle Satyanarayana being a vocalist, Ramakrishna underwent arduous training in music first from his father and then from Ratnagiri Subbhashastri and R.R. Keshavamurthy and bloomed into a talented fiddler come singer. There was no front ranking musician that he did not accompany. He also composed a number of overtures that were used by the ‘LayaLahari’ percussion ensemble. He was also an excellent teacher. He headed Ayyanar College of Music founded by
Chowdaiah at Bangalore. He moulded a number of artists to platform singing. He also founded The Sri Krishna Sangeeta Sabha and Sri Purandara Tyagaraja Seva Mandali at Bangalore.¹

There were other senior violinists who firmly established their place in violin through their own cultural heritage:

**Rallapalli Anantakrishna Sharma (1893-1979):**

Sangita Kalanidhi Rallapalli Anantha Krishna Sharma was a noted musician, composer of Karnataka music, violinist, as well as a writer.

Rallapalli means a village of stones. This is a small village in Kalyanadurga taluk of Anantapur district of Andhra Pradesh. Sharma’s father Krishnamacharya was an orthodox Brahmin, well-versed in the vedas, Sanskrit, Telugu and Tamil languages. His mother Alamelamma was a cultured lady. She used to sing well. His father was his first teacher.

Sharma came to Mysore in his 12th year and became a disciple of Sri Krishna Brahmatantra Swamy of Parakala Mutt.

Sharma studied Sanskrit and Prakrit languages at the Chamaraja Pathasala, Mysore; and music with Chikka Rama Rao, Bidaram Krishnappa and Karigiri Rao. He did not make music his livelihood. He kept it only as a past time. He attained mastery over Telugu, Sanskrit, Kannada and Prakrit. He acquired profound knowledge of music and literature. Sharma used to

¹ Interview with Anoo Ananta Krishna sharma on 25-8-2013
attend all the concerts which took place in Mysore.\textsuperscript{1} He was a poet and a composer. Whenever Krishnappa or Sheshanna had a doubt about Sahitya, they would consult Ananta Krishna Sharma. Sharma was appointed a Telugu Pundit (a scholar) by Sir Cattamanchi Ramalinga Reddy, Principal of the Maharaja College of Mysore in 1912 and worked until 1949. After which he joined the Sri Venkateshwara Oriental Research Centre, Tirupathi. The then executive officer of Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams. Chelikani Anna Rao entrusted Sharma with elucidating the compositions of the great songwriter-singer-saint Tallapaka Annamacharya. These compositions (or kritis) were stored for centuries in the Tirumala temple storehouse on copper plates. Sharma received the project after his predecessor, Veturi Prabakara Sastry died. He singularly worked on tuning the songs and helped publish seventh and eighth volumes of Annamacharya’s compositions. Sharma went on to edit nearly 300 compositions and brought out five more volumes of compositions between 1951 and 1956. He also wrote the notation for 108 compositions and 87 of them were published in the Andhra Patrika.

The Tallapaka music was irretrievably lost and when found were just compositions available on copper plates with no musical notations. Rallapalli breathed musical life into them, by first publishing Alarulu Kuriyaga Aadenadhe in Raga Sankarabharanam with notations in Andhra Patrika in the year 1948. He published 49 kritis and the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) later brought out 108 songs into two volumes. Rallapalli’s compositions were immortalised by great singers like M.S. Subbulakshmi, Mangalampalli Balamurali Krishna and Nedunuri Krishnamurthy among others. Dwaram Venkateswamy Naidu played his songs on violin.

\textsuperscript{1} ‘A musician’s reminiscences’ by Prof. V. Ramaratnam, p.no.71.
Sharma became Sangeeta Kalanidhi in 1974 and trained a number of disciples like Kamishetty.

Rallapalli’s 95th anniversary was observed on the premises of Sri Ramakrishna Seva Samithi in Tirupati in February last, which coincided with the auspicious Ratha Sapthami festival at Tirumala. The event was observed under the guidance of the Anamacharya mission’s founder President Kamisetty Srinivasulu, who as the then Director of the TTD’s Annamacharya Project and was instrumental in bringing out 30 compositions of Annamacharya, to which musical notations were made by Rallapalli and Nedunuri. His Birth Centenary Celebrations were organized in 1993. A Centenary Souvenir was edited by Medasani Mohan and published by Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams in 1994.

Among his disciples A.V. Krishnamachar and T.S.Tatachar are noted violinists.

Sharma had a wonderful memory and a great thirst for knowledge. He studied literature under the famous scholar Rama Shastri for some time. Being aware of the deep scholarship of Sharma, Prof. C. R. Reddy of the Maharaja’s College introduced him to English literature. Sharma served in the Maharaja’s College as lecturer and professor of Telugu for 37 years. If Sharma’s one face of life was literature, another face was music. He had a pleasant voice and had learnt music from his mother. After coming to Mysore he underwent further musical training with the well-known court musician Mysore Karigiri Rao and later for 4-5 years under Bidaram Krishnappa. He had an attack of influenza in 1918-19 that affected his voice. On the suggestion of his master Krishnappa, he took up and practised violin.¹

In 1950, the Tirupati Ventakeswara University appointed him as a reader in

¹musician’s reminiscers by Prof. V.Ramaratnam, p. no 72.
the Oriental Research Institute. Sharma had a great scope to carry on his research into music. He regarded all languages emanating from the tongue of Goddess Saraswathi as her gift. He was a bridge between Andhra and Karnataka. His Kannada works are—GanaKale, Sahitya and Jeevana Kale; Telugu works are Saraswatalokamu, Natakopanyasamu, Kavyavalokanamu. Sharma edited about 9000 compositions of Sri Annamacharyafort the first time. They have been published in 23 volumes. Sharma notated about 106 compositions and published them, with a very well researched, authoritative history of each raga for the first time. We do not find such an elaborate description elsewhere. If written by others it can be said that they are imitations of his writing.

He was the vice-president of Andhra Sahitya Academy. In 1972 he received the Central Sangeet Natak Academy award, Sangita Kalanidhi of Madras Music Academy, honorary doctorate from Venkateswara University in 1972, Gana Kala Sindhu from the Music Conference in Mysore and several others.

On his last day of life a strange thing occurred. At about 4 pm, a representative of Tirupati Temple came to his residence and handed over an award—Sangita Sahitya Asthana Vidwan and the Prasadam. Sharma received all these and passed away at 7.15 p.m. Some compositions of Sharma have been published by his son R.A. Phanisayi with notation. Sharma was a devotee of both literature and music. He was well-known for his fine taste and discipline. He led a very fruitful life.

**A.V. Krishnamachar:**

He learnt both vocal and violin from Sri Rallapalli Ananta Krishna Sharma. He was a very popular artist. He
composed a number of compositions with the signature ‘Padmacharan’ in both the classical and the light forms of music. Quite a few music features in his direction have been broadcast by The All India Radio and Dooddarshan.

**T.S. Tatachar:**

He is the son of violinist T. Shreenivasachar. His father, his uncle T. Sheshachar, Krishnamachar and Ralapalli Ramakrishna Sharma were his gurus. He gave violin duet concerts with T. Chowdaiah, T.T. Srinavasan and T.G. Tyagarajan are his sons.

**M.V. Srinavasa Iyengar:**

Veena Maestro V. Doreswamy Iyengar, Flautist V Deshikachar and M.V. Srinavasalyengar were brothers. He learnt Violin from A. V. Krishnamachar and had advance training in Classical Karnataka music from his brothers.

**M.V. Ramiah:**

Ramiah was born in 1904 at Mysore. His father Dodda Venkata Ramaniah was an AsthanaPiteeluvidwan and maternal uncle Govindappa was also a violinist. From his father, uncle and Karur Ramaswamiah, Ramiah learned vocal music and violin, western music from Atosmith of Germany and Hindustani music from Pt. Vilayat Hussain. He was an expert
in Vocal, flute, Dilruba, Harmonium, Piano and accordion.

He served as a band master in the Palace Band at Mysore for many years. His concerts were broadcast by the All India Radio, Bangalore.

**T. Puttaswamiah (1907-1998):**

He was the brother of T. Chowdaiah. He was born on 18th September, 1907 at Tirumakudalu, Mysore. T. Puttaswamaiah was one of the foremost vocalists of Karnataka music in the early part of 20th century.

A torch-bearer of the great Thyagaraja Paramapara, he was a wonderful musician perfecting all sections of Karnatic music. He was the younger brother of the illustrious violin maestro T. Chowdaiah.

He was an ‘A’ grade artist of all India radio. Many top ranking artistes used to accompany Puttaswamaiah in his concerts including his brother Mysore T. Chowdaiah.

He gave performances in every major Sangeetha Sabha and other cultural organizations all over the country. He also excelled as a great teacher belonging to the Bidaram School of Music in the lineage of Sri Thyagaraja Parampara.

Maharaja of Mysore made Puttaswamiah an Asthana Vidwan (court musician) of Mysore palace. Puttaswamaiah was also selected to preside
over thenational level music conference conducted by the Karnataka Ganakala Parishat.

He trained innumerable number of students. His disciples include Mysore Mahadevappa, Dr.K. Varadarangan, Janhavi Jayaprakash, Holenarasipura Venkateshiah, A.K. Muttanna (Venkatanarayana), M. Mahadevappa, and H.K. Narasimhamurthy.

**Mysore Mahadevappa:**

Born in a tiny village called Mudigundam near Mysore, mahadevappa had his formal training in vocal music and violin under the tutelage of NarayanaSwamy of Kollegal. Later he was accepted as student by one of the greatest musicians of Karnataka Sri T. Puttaswamiah, the younger brother of T. Chowdaiah. He went rigorous training at Mysore and was introduced to the great musical ideas of chaste. Mahadevappa’s artistry is the quintessence of the pristine purity of the respected Bidaram school of music.

His outstanding skills in violin were recognised by one and all. He became one of the most successful violinists and teachers. He served as the Head of the department of violin and Professor at the fine Arts College, Manasagangotri for 26 years.

With strict adherence to classism, Mahadevappa created an ideal style to express the great versatility of violin. He taught this new style of violin playing to his naturally gifted sons Nagaraj and Manjunath in a totally traditional manner.

Constantly monitoring the progress of his children and now his
grandchildren, he taught all the intricacies of Karnataka music to them. A tough task master, he is known for strict teaching. He is very actively involved in a great number of Music promotional works in Mysore city organizing various music series, conferences and also being honorary member of many distinguished organizations. He also served as the chairperson of the selection committee of Mysore palace Police Band musicians.

Recognizing his invaluable services in the field of music, Government of Karnataka has honoured him with the highest state music Award ‘State SangeethaVidwan”. He was also nominated a member of Karnataka state Sangeetha Nritya Academy twice. He is been an honorary chairperson of a number of reputed government bodies too. He was nominated the President of the prestigious JSS Music conference and was honored with the title of Sangeetha Vidyanidhi in the year 2001 and Sangeeta Kala Ratna by The Bangalore Gayana Samaja in the year 2013.

Mysore Nagraj and Dr M. Manjunath:

Gifted Violin Maestros Mysore Nagraj&Dr.Manjunath, the sons and disciples of renowned violinist S. Mahadevappa, were child prodigies who matured quickly to emerge as one of the top ranking violinists in India today. Their exceptional musical talents were first revealed at the tender age of 9 when they stormed into the music world and swept the music lovers&critics off their feet by their extraordinary musical acumen and technical virtuosity. Acclaimed as child prodigies with astonishing musicianship, Nagaraj and Manjunath
blossomed into some of the leading instrumentalists in the contemporary musical scene. Their marvellous imagination and technical versatility made them brilliant Violinists in the annals of Karnataka Classical Music.

The Mysore Brothers have created an unrivalled reputation as star performers in prestigious organizations all over the world. Violinists par excellence, their performances feature an extraordinary range of musical expressions from the deepest meditations to astonishing virtuosity with outstanding artistic imagination. Violin Concerts of these Maestros have been featured in innumerable music festivals & conferences all over the world. Nagaraj & Manjunath have been awarded A - Top Ranking at a very young age. The brothers have collaborated with many outstanding musicians from all over the world & have performed Jugalbandhi concerts with many Top-ranking Hindustani artists in contemporary music today including Pandit V.G. Jog, Pandith Vishwa Mohan Bhat, Tejendra Narayana Majumdar, Pandit Ronu Majumdar, Dr. N. Rajam, and others.

The Mysore brothers also have a number of CD albums to their credit. They have repeatedly enthralled audiences in USA, Canada, UK, France, Germany, Austria, Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Philippines, Switzerland, Australia and Gulf countries.

They are some of the youngest musicians to be honored with the prestigious Rajyothsava Award by the Government of Karnataka. Mysore brothers received innumerable awards including the Best Violinist awards from The Music Academy and Indian fine arts society, Excellence award from American Institute of World culture, honours from the American Arts council, Sangeetha Samrat, Sangeetha Rathna, Ganakalashree, Sathyashri, Aryabhata honors, and Meritorious Award from University of Oklahoma-USA etc.

Mysore Nagaraj & Dr. Manjunath, true cultural ambassadors of India, continue to preserve and spread the rich cultural heritage of Indian classical
music, in all its glory.

The legacy continues with the children of these brothers. Manjunath’s son Sumanth and Nagraj’s daughter are blossoming violinists.

**L.S. Narayanaswamy Bhagavatar:**

One of the main pillars in the development of the violin tradition in Karnataka. Chief among his disciples are, A. Veerabhadriah, who is a popular harmonium artist and the son of violinist and owner of ‘Aruna Musicals’, Arunachalappa, H.V. Krishna Murthy, Narayanaswamy Bhagavatar’s nephew and father of H.K. Venkataram and others.

**H.V. Krishna Murthy:**

He learned violin from his maternal uncle Narayanaswamy Bhagavatar and later took guidance from L.S. Sheshagiri Rao. S.V. Ananth, G.V. Neela and his sons H.K. Raghavendra and H.K. Venkataram are his disciples.

**H.K. Venkataram:**

An engineer by profession, he has dedicated himself totally to music. He is known not only as a performer, but also for his lecture demonstrations and scholarly articles.
H.K. Venkatram is one of the most accomplished and sought after violinist in the Karnataka Music field. He has accompanied many top-ranking musicians including Shemmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, Dr. M Balamuralikrishna, R.K. Srikanthan, K.V. Narayanaswamy, D.K. Pattammal, Dr. M. L. Vasanthakumari, Kadri Gopalnath, Dr. N. Ramani, T.N. Seshagopalan, T.V. Sankaranarayanan, Trichur V. Ramachandran, Nedanuri Krishna Murthy, Chitravina N. Ravikiran, Mandolin U. Srinivas, Sanjay Subrahmanayam, T.M. Krishna and others.

He and his family run the institution ‘Vijaya College of Music’, started by Narayana swamy Bhagavatar in Bangalore and keeping up the tradition.

**Seetarama Shastri:**

He is the promoter of another lineage in violin in the state of Karnataka. He was a good friend of Piteelu Tayappa and Piteelu Puttappa. So he sent sons T. Nanjunda Shastri and T. Krishnashastri to Piteelu Tayappa for violin coaching. T Krishna Shastri settled in Bangalore. He performed there regularly and trained several students like T.K. Subramanya Shastri, Vidwan Coffee board Sheshagiri Rao, and K.V. Raja Iyengar.

T.K.Subramanya Shastri, son of T. Krishna Shastri learnt from his father and later trained under T. Gururajappa, brother of T. Chowdaiah. He played the seven-stringed violin too. His son T.S. Krishnamurthy, also a violinist, also trained under T.G. Tyagarajan and M.S. Govindaswamy. His chief disciples are T.S. Anantaram and Lavanya.

In this soil of Karnataka, there is another violin tradition which belongs to
those who belong to Karnataka but have trained themselves under senior violinists of Tamilnadu and so have borrowed their style of playing— to name a few, Sri H.K. Narasimha Murthy and his son Bhaskar who are trained under late Parur M.S. Gopalakrishnan. This too needs to be taken into consideration while analysing the violin tradition in Karnataka.

**H.K. Narasimhamurthy:**

Though from Karnataka, from the point of view of style, it can be said that H.K. Narasimhamurthy is the herald of another style in the history of our violin heritage. He learned vocal music from H.V. Krishnan, T. Puttaswamiah and his father-in-law A.K. Muttanna initially and then went to Chennai to have advanced training from Sri M.S. Gopalakrishnan. He learned from Parur Sri M.S. Gopalakrishnan of Tamilnadu but lives in Mysore and has trained innumerable number of students here. His son H.N.Bhaskar, Smita, Sindhu, Srikanth, Dayakar, A.P. Srinivas and Tandavamurthy are some of his disciples.

**H.N. Bhaskar:**

H N Bhaskar was first trained by his parents Sri H K Narasimha Murthy and Smt H N Rajalakshmi. Then he became a disciple of violin maestro Padmashri Sangeetha Kalanidhi Sri M S Gopalakrishnan.

His first public performance was at the age of eight. He has given solo
performances and accompanied several senior musicians like Sri T V Gopalakrishnan, Sri T. N. Sheshagopalan, Dr N Ramani, Sri Mandolin Srinivas, Smt. Sudha Raghunathan, Smt ArunaSairam.

He has received many awards including the Best Violinist award from the Music Academy of Chennai during Music Festival in 2003. He has traveled widely all over the world for performances.

He has a melodiuous style of playing which has made him a popular accompanist for many leading vocalists.

**M.S. Subramanya:**

He had his first violin lessons from Piteelu Subbarayappa and later from Asthanavidwan Venkataramaniah. In his later years he learned from Devendrappa. M.S. Govindaswamy is his son. He is one of the prominent accompanists of Karnataka today.

**Kanchana Subbaratnam:**

He had his initial training in vocal music from his father Kanchana Subramanya.

He was from the village of Kanchana in Puttur in Dakshina Kannada. Subbaratnam was an Akashavani and Doordarshan artiste.

He developed his own individual style and has passed it on to many of his disciples and children.

In 2003 he was awarded the ‘Artist of the year’ award from the Gayana
Samaja of Bangalore’ He died at a young age of 57 in a hospital at Mangalore.

**M.R. Satyanarayana:**

He is not only a great violinist but has collected about 2000 compositions in brail script to help the visually challenged students of violin.

Other than the ones mentioned above, we see a number of other violinists in the violin heritage of Karnataka, who have richly contributed to the development of the art in the soil of Karnataka.


Thus we see the violin heritage developed and nourished in Karnataka by a number of eminent artistes who have firmly established their heritage in Karnataka.

The composition and content of our music in Karnataka have undergone a healthy evolution over these years. Lyrics, which are cardinal to our music have enriched the art form. At the same time, it is a constraint in a limited way. Absolute music is one which is devoid of lyrics, and attempts to popularize this have been made by the Vadya Vrinda of the All India Radio. Instrumental music as an independent system with Karnataka music as the base is an avenue yet to be exploited fully.

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