CHAPTER SIX
OTHER INSTRUMENTS WHICH HAVE BEEN INFLUENCED BY THE NAGASWARAM

Nagaswaram music influenced not only the style and thought process of many vocalists but also several instrumentalists in the field of Karnataka classical music. Apart from the Veena it was perhaps the only other powerful lead instrument which played Karnataka classical music and commanded an accompanying ensemble of its own till the 18th and early 19th century. It had its own audience and niche crowd (quite large in number since its music was also open to the public) that centred on the Temples and rich households. Till the emergence of the Sabha’s from 1920’s, the Nagaswaram was the most iconic instrument of Karnataka classical music along with the Veena. Added to that was the fact that it catered to the realm of public music and that Classical music was still a popular means of entertainment. This ensured that its music was heard in large numbers by lay audiences as well as other instrumentalists who were exposed to it during all religious and state ceremonies. According to many musicians, the Nagaswaram was often looked up for having achieved a brilliant instrumental technique before other instruments such as violin and flute which emerged much later in the history of Karnataka classical music. It is, as has been mentioned earlier, an ancient instrument which had plenty of time to formulate a music format which best suited its making (structural and contextual making).

By the turn of the 19th century, instruments such as the violin and flute emerged as lead instruments in the able hands of talented instrumentalists. These instruments were discovered to be very versatile during the process of developing their own unique playing techniques for Karnataka classical music. Initially, since both the violin, Flute and even the Veena were used to accompany vocal music, the primary focus was to evolve a playing technique closely modelled on vocal Karnataka classical music. The aim was to reproduce all the nuances of vocal music on the instruments (since the Karnataka classical singing voice had gained a very advance technique and often dictated the identity of the Karnataka classical idiom). However with every generation producing talented and visionary instrumentalists they started looking towards the Nagaswaram not just for its music but also as an instrument which has explored all its parameters. The influence of the Nagaswaram could thus
have been transmitted indirectly from accompanying vocalists who were following the Nagaswaram Bani and from the direct exposure to Nagaswaram music. The Nagaswaram was thought to be a supreme example of instrumental brilliance which transcended any dictates on the control of speed, mathematics, time and Sahithya which was dictated by the earlier traditionalists (who later became the main stream, the majority stream of Karnataka classical music). Its most noteworthy influence is believed to be on the violin, which was also the most capable of inculcating the Nagaswaram Bani in terms of versatility and continuity of sound.

THE VIOLIN

During the dawn of the violin as a formidable accompaniment to vocal (it gradually replaced the Veena) two famous violinists are said to have played an important role in laying the foundation for its journey. One was Tirukodikaval Krishnaiyer and the other was Malaiotai Govindaswamy Pillai. Tirukodikaval Krishnaiyer (1857-1913) was one of the most sought after violinist of his time. Some of the musicians he lent his violin accompaniment to were Maha Vaidyanatha Iyer, Patnam Subramania Iyer and in his later years even Konerirajapuram Vaidyanatha Iyer. He was also the maternal uncle of Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer. He again hailed from the town of Madurai which was the bastion of Nagaswaram music and most probably was greatly exposed to it. His initial training in vocal music was under the renowned composer of Tana Varnas’, Vidwan Kotthavassal Venkatrama Iyer. He later trained in the Violin under Fiddle Subbarayar. However his most formative training years were spent under the apprenticeship of Vidwan Sathanur Panju Iyer a direct descendent of Muthuswamy Dixitar’s parampara. While learning under Sathanur Panju Iyer, Krishnaiyer also came into direct contact with many Nagaswaram players and their music. (There were many Nagaswaram players and Isai Vellalas’ under Dixitar’s tutelage). The other two outstanding disciples who were under Panju Iyer’s tutelage along with Krishnaiyer are Veena Dhannamal and Nagaswaram maestro Tiruppambaram Nataraja Sundaram Pillai. One must also remember that another famous contemporary, Nagaswaram Tirumarugal Natesa Pillai also lived during his time. The uncle of TN Rajarathinam Pillai he too was a huge influence and a star performer during Krishnaiyer’s time. (As has been mentioned earlier even Maha Vaidyanatha Iyer was a deep admirer of Natesa Pillai). This constant association with Nagaswaram music must have made a deep impact on Krishnaiyer’s music who was
known to have made a lot of innovations in the rendition of Karnataka classical music on the violin. He has been credited with taking huge steps in the evolution of the technique of Karnataka classical violin playing at a time when it was still considered inferior to the Veena (the technique of Karnataka classical violin was just evolving) (Iyer G. N., 1930). One of the most famous elements in his violin playing which received many glowing accounts, was his effective rendition of the Jaru gamaka or gliding notes. He is credited to have introduced and taken the Jaru to great heights on the Karnataka classical violin. This could have been a result of a direct exposure to Nagaswaram music (which was the only instrument which exploited the Jaru gamaka to its fullest at that period of time) or through an indirect influence from accompanying vocalists who were deeply influenced by the Nagaswaram such as Maha Vaidyanatha Iyer and Konerirajapuram Vaidhyanatha Iyer.

The Music academy journal also talks about another great violinist called Govindaswamy Pillai of Kumbhakonam or Malaiottai Govindaswamy Pillai (1879 – 1931) as he was popularly known, whose style was quite different from that of Tirukodikaval Krishnaier (Iyer G. N., 1930). Born in a village called Achyutha Mangalam in Tanjore District Tamil Nadu (near Mudicondan) he was considered a worthy colleague and (younger) contemporary of Tirukodikaval Krishan Iyer. However his style was more flamboyant than that of Krishnaiyer’s in terms of improvisation (Manodharma Sangita). While Krishnaiyer was scrupulous in his search for classicism, Govindaswamy would take a few liberties in style and would display his fertile imagination with great élan. GV Narayanaswamy Iyer (father of GN Balasubramaniam) describes his as having a “fertile imagination”. Being an Isai Vellala himself he had an innate artistic consciousness which he would express through his brilliant raga alapana and swara kalpana. The Madras music academy journal mentions that he is credited with enhancing the form of Karnataka classical violin (by pushing the boundaries of style) considerably at a time when it was very hard to please the traditionalists. This was possible due to the rich music heritage he could tap into being from an illustrious family, in which Karnataka classical music passed from generation to another as inheritance. While writing about his style GV Narayanaswamy Iyer talks about the numerous contributions of the Isai Vellalas i.e.

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180 Music Academy Journal 1931 – Pg. 60
181 Music Academy Journal 1931 - Pg. 58
the Pillais’ (name of the clan) to the field of Karnataka classical music and violin when they picked up the instrument. Decades of music legacy being passed within the family as part of tradition and profession gave them, especially Govindaswamy Pillai an instinctive sense of rhythm, and “Sukha Bhava” (aesthetics or proportion). What made his style so dynamic was also the influence of Nagaswaram music on his own. This made him very adept in reproducing any Raga Tana Pallavi and any other musical challenge thrown to him. He was capable of holding the audience’s attention for very long hours, six hours solo at one instance according to GV Narayanaswamy Iyer (this was one of the earliest solo violin concerts, perhaps preceded only by Tirukodikaval Krishnaiyer) with his music which had a “poetic sense” to it.

Govindaswamy Pillai was also known to have made many innovations in playing the Tana and elaborate Pallavis’ on the violin. While playing raga alapana he was known to play in the Nagaswaram style and he closely modelled it as an inspiration from his contemporary Nagaswaram Tirumarugal Natesa Pillai (Iyer G. N., 1931)\(^\text{182}\) (1874-1903), who finds many a mention (Ayyangar, 1972)\(^\text{183}\) as being a huge influence on the Karnatak classical music scenario during his life time like Nagaswaram Vidwan TN Rajarathinam Pillai was, later on. Needless to say both Tirukodikaval Krishnaiyer and Malaikottai Govindaswami Pillai lived their days during the times when the classic pipers flourished and it couldn’t have been too impossible for them to have been influenced by the music of the Nagaswaram.

The next generation saw the emergence of another Isai Vellala violinist who trained under a Nagaswaram guru and also took the violin to great heights. **Vidwan Kumbakonam Rajamanikyam Pillai (1898 – 1970)** rose to great heights as one of the most popular musicians of his time along with Violin Vidwan T Chowdiah. He was born on August 5\(^\text{th}\) in a village called Alangudi near Needamangalam, which was famous for its Nagaswaram players and eminent Tavil players such as Meenakshi Sundaram Pillai. He came from a family of Isai Vellalas’ where the men usually picked up the Nagaswaram as part of their tradition. However a chance discovery of an unused violin in the house led him to experiment with it. Tirukodikaval Krishnaiyer who happened to know his family would hear him practising every day. Krishnaiyer decided that Rajamanikyam Pillai should be trained in the violin and

\(^{182}\) Music Academy Journal 1931 – Pg. 61

\(^{183}\) R. Rangaramanuja Ayyangar mentions Natesa Pillai as a great architect of music in Page 59 of his book titled History of South Indian (Carnatic) Music
spoke to his family accordingly. He had undergone training in vocal music first under Nagaswaram Vidwan Kandaswamy Pillai, Pallavi Narayanaswamy Iyer (Tiruvisanallur) and then from Pandanallur Chinnaswamy Pillai before undergoing apprenticeship for violin training under of Violin Vidwan Tirukodikaval Ramaswamy Iyer, who was the foremost disciple of Tirukodikaval Krishna Iyer. He went on to achieve great success as a leading violinist and was proclaimed the Asthana Vidwan of many royal houses and religious centres such as Ettayapuram, Ramanathapuram, Trivandrum and Mysore. He went on to gain the title of Sangita Kalanidhi from the Music Academy in 1948 and was awarded the Sangeet Natak Academy Award in 1959. He became one of the most sought after accompanists of his time and accompanied stalwarts such as Konerirajapuram Vaidyanatha Iyer, Ariyakudi Ramanuja Ayyangar, Maharajapuram Vishwanatha Ayyar, Chittoor Subramania Pillai, Alathur brothers, GN Balasubramaniam, Ramnad Krishnan, Manakkal Rangarajan etc. One can say that the prototype for an effective Karnataka classical violin technique had definitely arrived in his playing. He was known for his unobtrusive accompaniment. The influence of the Nagaswaram could have come form his own family heritage where most of the male members of his clan chose the Nagaswaram and his own constant exposure to it. He was known to favour following the “vocal bani” in his violin however many of the vocalists he accompanied, from Konerirajapuram Vaidyanatha Iyer to GN Balasubramaniam, had imbibed elements of Nagaswaram music into their style. Rajamanikyam Pillai was known for his shadow like accompaniment however when his turn to play raga alapana he would come out blazing guns. His style was known to be assertive. Semmangudi would often fondly refer to him as a “Chanakya on and off stage” (P.C. Jayaraman, 1998)\textsuperscript{184}. Many a times while accompanying youngsters he would often prod them with music ideas asking them to experiment and render it. Rajamanikyam Pillai felt that while accompanying a vocalist when he was singing in madhyama kala the violinist should anticipate the swara combinations and fill in the gaps rather than just shadowing. Talking about his insistent style of playing Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer has mentioned to Sruti magazine that Rajamanikyam Pillai was not a passive accompanist. He was known to prod and bring the best performance out of the vocalist, “Toondi viduvar”. He was very sharp according to Semmangudi. His style was flamboyant and

\textsuperscript{184} Sruti magazine – ISSN 0970-7816, Issue 170 November 1998, Pg. 22
sometimes also referred to as pleasantly leading. He was also known to be a specialist in free flowing swaras or the Sarvalaghu pattern and graceful glides (jaru) in alapana. It is said that he was many times a show stealer with his robust yet instinctive raga alapanas and kalpana swaras garnered more audience appreciation than the vocalist. This of course was done without malice or intent from him. He was very closely associated with many Nagaswaram Vidwans who also gained from his friendship. Nagaswaram Vidwan Kulikkarai Pitchiappa was one of his famous disciples who sought his guidance for enlarging his song repertoire (Bhaskaran, 1998).

The Archive of Indian Music (the brain child of Vikram Sampath, the author of many biographies such as that of Gauhar Jan and S Balachander) has a 78 rpm recording of a brief rendition of raga Begade by Rajamanikyam Pillai. One can see that the bowing forceful and the whole style is quite assertive. The entire bhava of raga is presented within a nut shell. There are quick sangathis, brisk fingering which all indicate a possible influence of the music of the Nagaswaram. While rendering the Krithi he follows the vocal style quite closely. This is followed by a quick succession of swarakalpana. The phrasing of the sangatis and some interesting usages of notes in the raga (raga sanchara) also seems to indicate a Nagaswaram influence.

In another popular solo recording he renders Bilahari raga alapana preceding the Tyagaraja Krithi ‘Inthakannanda’. One notices that he plays a few fast paced progressive sancharas around the Sadja with same powerful bowing. He plays many purely instrumental phrases while rendering the various sangatis of the Krithi. The last Sangathi of the Pallavi takes a lot of embellishment and has beautiful uruttu at the sahithya ‘memi’ of the line ‘Inthakannada memi’ (AUDIO R6.36). The Mrudangam accompaniment hasn’t caught on to that phrase. The entire anupallavi and charana section is filled in with fast paced staccato notes or viraladi and uruttu phrases in this solo rendition of his. The entire Krithi is played with a lot of ornamental phrases. There is also a sense of continuity of sound which gives the impression of a Nagaswaram influence. One must also keep in mind his musical background and heritage. The music of the Nagaswaram which was so popularly practised by members of his clan could not have been alien to him. Rajamanikyam

185 Sruti magazine – ISSN 0970-7816, Issue 170 November 1998, Pg. 29
186 Archive of Indian Music
Pillai’s violin can be called as an important milestone in the history of Karnataka classical violin where he achieved a breakthrough in terms of technique and application. With the emergence of All India radio in the late thirties’, Rajamanikyam Pillai was among the popular violinists who were invited to give solo concerts. While artists such as Tirukodikaval Krishnaiyer stuck to the vocal style of rendition, as the number of opportunities for solo concerts increased and opportunities to explore ones instrument increased, the influence of Nagaswaram music might have played a vital role in enabling violinists to push the capabilities of their own instrument. The Isai Vellala violinists’ played a great role in the evolution of the violin from taking influences from vocal and Nagaswaram to creating a unique style for the violin. Rajamanikyam Pillai was one such violinist who spared no efforts in exploring the true potential of the violin. He also played a key role in shaping the music of young TN Sheshagopalan. Noticing his prodigious talent and natural flair for powerful singing, he took Sheshagopalan to Vid CS Sankar Sivan for advanced training. He was a mentor and huge source of encouragement for Vidwan TN Sheshagopalan. Rajamanikyam’s violin disciple VR (Mayavaram) Govindaraja Pillai (12th May 1912 – 2nd February 1979) also became a very popular violinist and took his Guru’s legacy forward. He was considered a great Pallavi Vidwan and specialised in laya patterns during swarakalpana, due to which he was the most favoured accompanist of Madurai Mani Iyer and the Alathur Brothers. He was also stock accompanist to MS Subbalakshmi. Mayavaram Govindaraja Pillai too trained under a Nagaswaram musician first, Vidwan Vazhavoor Veeraswamy Pillai who was his maternal uncle before becoming Rajamanikyam Pillais disciple. He went on to marry Veerasamy Pillai’s daughter. A recording of his accompaniment for Ramnad Krishnan gives us ample proof of not only his prowess as a violinist but also shows us glimpses of the influence of Nagaswaram Bani in his accompanying. Ramnad Krishnan was another vocalist who was quite influenced by the music of the Nagaswaram and had traces of the Nagaswaram Bani in his singing before he came under the influence famous Vainika and Vocalist T Brunda. He came from the same school of music as Vidwan TN Sheshagoplan. He was a senior disciple of CS Sankar Sivan. During his early years of performing his singing had a strong flavour of Nagaswaram music especially in his Brugas. However his style of singing is said to have undergone a change after he came under the influence of Vid T Brunda’s music. A concert recording of his along with the accompaniment of Mayavaram Govingarajan’s accompaniment has
him render the ragas Devamanohari, Kalyani and Mukhari in a style which carries evidence of the Nagaswaram Bani for various factors such as continuity of sound, brisk flourishes, continuity of sound etc. Govindarajan’s accompaniment shows traces of a Nagaswaram Bani is evident in the way he renders the beautiful Datu swaras and Jaru sancharas during his turn of Devamanohari raga alapana. However this is a much smaller raga and offers limited scope for development. More evidence of a Nagaswaram Bani can be seen in his rendition of the raga Kalyani for the bright fingering and long bow (holding the bow for a longer period to maintain continuity of sound). His Mukhari raga alapana has a lot of pointers to a Nagaswaram style especially in his coining of the sangatis.

During Rajamanikyam’s era the violin was in the process of evolving its own playing technique, however to do that it first had to catch the core essence of Karnataka classical music on this instrument. Already a difficult instrument to master (it has no frets but a plain finger board, which is also its advantage), it required genius to be able to produce the intricate gamakas on an instrument. There was no precedent to this kind of technique in western music. Earlier Karnataka classical violinist closely observed the nature of the gamakas, stress points, modulation, speed and phraseology in vocal and Nagaswaram music. Mayavaram Govindaraja Pillai was perhaps the last link before the earlier era when the Karnataka classical violin was in its developmental stage. This changed with the arrival of the stars of the field, Lalgudi G Jayaraman (17 September 1930 – 22 April 2013), Parur MS Gopalakrishnan (10 June 1931 – 3 January 2013), TN Krishnan (born 6 October 1928), who were often referred to as the trinity of violinists during their time and Violin Vidwan M Chandrashekaran. With their arrival the violin had completely taken over the Veena as accompaniment to Vocal and it also establishes itself as a prominent lead instrument. By then it had transcended from looking to other instruments for inspiration to establishing its own near perfect technique in the able hands of the above mentioned violinists.

LALGUDI G JAYARAMAN (17th September 1930 – 22 April 2013)

The emergence of Lalgudi Jayaraman, MS Gopalakrishnan and TN Krishnan marks an important milestone in the history of the Karnataka classical violin. With their arrival the violin established it’s self as one of the most sought after instruments in Karnataka classical music both as a lead instrument and as an accompaniment to
vocal. Renowned violinist Vid Bangalore HK Venkatram feels that among three famous trinity violinists, traces of the Nagaswaram influence can be found in Lalgudi Jayaraman’s music. However the way he used this influence into own style is very different from Violinists of the previous generation. By his time, the evolution of violin playing in Karnataka classical music was near complete, especially in the polished rendition of gamakas. Lalgudi was known to have a perfect, complete violin rendition. Thus all other influences can be traced as elements within a style which was completely original. Lalgudi Jayaraman’s style was entirely his own. His style was so unique that it even led to the genesis of a “Lalgudi Bani” in Violin playing. However, years of accompanying most of the leading vocalists had definitely left an impression of his music. Probably the influence of Nagaswaram in his rendition was an indirect influence as a result of his accompanying three of the top most vocalists who had a strong flavour of the Nagaswaram Bani on their singing namely Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, GN Balasubramaniam and Madurai Somasundaram. He could have also been inspired by the music of his famous contemporary, Nagaswaram Vidwan TN Rajarathinam Pillai who was a great inspiration on most musicians. However Lalgudi himself mentions that when he picked up the violin his first intent was to take it as close to the “vocal method” or the technique of vocalizing Karnataka classical music as possible. His aim was to be able to incorporate all the nuances of a singing voice, which was an important step in the journey of the Karnataka Violin. GNB and Lalgudi Jayaraman shared a special bond and some of GNB’s fascination for TN Rajarathinam Pillai’s music must have definitely rubbed off on Lalgudi Jayaraman. As a child he was frequently exposed to music especially Nagaswaram. He remembers the concerts of Madurai Ponneswamy Pillai who would often visit his uncle Kandaswamy Bhagavathar (who was his first guru). Renowned Vainika Vidushi Dr Jayanthi Kumaresh (the niece of Lalgudi Jayaraman) talks about Lalgudi’s style as one having the most pronounced influence of the Nagaswaram Bani she has seen or heard on a violinist during her time. This influence was most evident in Lalgudi’s rendition of the ragas Thodi and Natakurinji according to her. Lalgudi’s playing gave shades of a Nagaswaram inspiration whenever he accompanied GNB, Semmangudi and Madurai Somu. He even accompanied TN Sheshagopalan who was establishing himself as a promising young talent. He maintained a striking continuity of sound on the violin, exploiting its ability to do so to the fullest. One could say that perhaps the
Nagaswaram’s strong point of continuity of sound seemed to have made a deep impact on his musical sensibilities.

The best example for this comes in a recording of GNB’s famous Kalyani RTP “Taraka Brahma Swaroopini” accompanied by Lalgudi Jayaraman on the violin and Palani Subramania Pillai on the Mrudangam (AUDIO R6.37). Here one can clearly perceive the Nagaswaram Bani of violin playing in many elements starting with the forceful bowing itself. The Sangatis are framed to suit the GNB’s alapana style have an additional Nagaswaram likeness especially in phrases like nsrg…rsrg…rsrg…..r where there is a stress on the bowing to indicate the force of the Sangathi. There is continuity of sound and speed in his rendition. Similarly he would follow the same principles while following Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer and even there one can perceive the assertive playing associated with a Nagaswaram influence. Lalgudi was such a versatile violinist that he mould his playing suit the style of any vocalist, however he went one step further while accompanying Madurai Somasundaram. Somasundaram being a flamboyant, persuasive singer had many of the forceful elements of Nagaswaram Bani in his music. Also he gave full freedom to his accompanists on stage and many a times sang the concert as a collaboration with the violinists, especially Lalgudi Jayaraman and Vidwan M Chandrashekaran (who later became his stock accompanist). One could say that Lalgudi’s ability to play in the Nagaswaram Bani were utilised the most in Somasundaram’s concert. In his most famous rendition of the song ‘Enna kavi padinalum’ one can see Lalgudi in a completely different form, totally in sync with the earthy feel so characteristic of Madurai Somasundaram’s rendition. He almost pushes his violin into filling the song to take it to a whole new level. However to best understand between Lalgudi’s style is to compare it with his equally great contemporary Parur MS Gopalakrishnan. A comparison of a rendition of Raga Kalyani by each artist clearly shows the difference in approach, force of playing, ornamentation of Sangatis and raga vision. It brings to light the Nagaswaram influence in Lalgudi’s playing.

However not all ragas got the same treatment. Rather one caould say that his concerts show an artist who revolutionised violin playing, steering it away from having to follow any particular “Bani” with the help of his deep emotional, instinctive playing. Lalgudi Jayaraman’s sense of aesthetics completely revolved around what suits the violin especially when he played solo concerts, which were very successful.
For example he was capable of rendering a very majestic Natakuranji at the same time his alapana of raga Charukeshi was filled with tenderness and delicate raga progressions. Even here he chooses the most exquisite raga phrases to build a raga alapana. The case of the Karnataka classical violin makes for a very in-depth study and a separate research dedicated to it. In its journey to effectively render all the nuances of Karnataka classical music the violin gave rise to many distinct styles of interpretation. There were Vocal oriented styles, then there were Violinists influenced from Nagaswaram style, the purely instrumental Karnataka classical style, and the influences of Hindustani style. Lalgudi’s was an eclectic mix of Karnataka classical violin rendered with a flavour of Nagaswaram music derived from the vocalization of the Nagaswaram style (commonly referred to as Nagaswaram Bani). However the greatness of Lalgudi Jayaramans was such that he developed a practice of being able to mould himself into any style. Thus while his accompaniment for GNB had a heavy slice of the Nagaswaram Bani, his accompaniment for Alathur brothers or MD Ramanathan may not show the same inclination. The Sruti magazine foundation had formed a study group to analyze and observe Lalgudi Jayaramans (in his august presence) contribution to the field of Karnataka classical music and they too wrote about his remarkable ability to mirror any Bani. "This came out strikingly in a study of his responses to the alapanas of the same raga - shanmukhapriya rendered by three different musicians" (Pattabhiraman, 2013)187. I would like to quote Lalgudi Jayaraman's interview for the Sruti magazine where he is conversation with N Pattabhiraman. To questions from Pattabhiraman on his evolution of a unique and individual style of violin playing Lalgudi replies "these new techniques I introduced brought about a revolution in the art of playing the violin: or you may call it a renaissance. The main feature of this novel style is that the same response is evoked through the violin as through vocal music. The changes in fingering and bowing techniques shifted the accent to bring out all the subtleties and intricacies of singing. The second most important feature is that the art of accompanying the vocalist reached a new peak. Before my time, most violinists had a fixed style of their own and followed it all times, with the result that their playing could implement only certain vocalists. For example Papa Venkatramaia was a perfect foil for Ariyakudi but not for GNB. But with my new style, I could play for anyone and everyone. I

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could support Madurai Mani's sarvalaghu sukham and discrete alapana, GNB's effortless briga-laden sparklers, or Alathur's laya fire works. Listeners themselves began to notice the birth of a new tradition of violin accompaniment” (Aslesha, 2013).

However his quest to reproduce all the elements of a vocalization also led to the elements of the Nagaswaram music (which was so deeply ingrained in many of the vocalists he accompanied) getting incorporated into his own. According to Dr. N Ramanathan, Lalgudi's style was marked with powerful bowing which in turn has a positive effect on the volume of sound produced. Also he would render gamakas or oscillations in swaras with an "exaggerated shake" according to Dr N Ramanathan. The Nishadha in Bhairavi is a good example. Perhaps it is this deliberate shake that makes his music so close to the Nagaswaram music which also does not shy away from vibrant gamakas. Thus when he answers MDR's raga alapana, it was a reflection of MDR’s ideas but it did carry the properties of the reflector in this case being his own personality. Also it is impossible for a violinist of his stature to not include some of his personality into the music he exhibits even if it is during accompaniment. His intrinsic style had developed aspects such as bold gamakas, speed, distinct phraseology etc. He rose to become one of the most influential musician of his time.

Violin Vidwan M Chandrashekarar is one of the senior most violinists we have today. Born on 11 December 1937 he had his entire music training under his mother Smt Charubala Mohan. A child prodigy he quickly rose to the frontline giving his first performance at Tyagaraja Vidwath Samaj, in 1949. He went on to become a highly sought after accompanist for many leading vocalists including Sri Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer, Sri G.N.Balasubramaniam, Sri Madurai Mani Iyer, Chembai Sri Vaidyanatha Bhagavathar, Sri Ramnad Krishnan, Sri T.K.Rangachari, Sathur Sri A.G.Subramaniam, Mayavaram Sri Rajam, Alathur Brothers, Flute T.R.Mahalingam, Sri Musiri Subramania Iyer, Sri Madurai Somasundaram, Semmangudi Sri Srinivasa Iyer, Flute Sri N.Ramani, Dr.M.Balamurali Krishna and many other leading artistes. Madurai Somasundaram was especially fond of his flamboyant style of accompaniment and engaged him as his accompanist for most of his concerts. Later on he became the most favoured accompanist of another vocalist known for his Nagaswaram Bani, TN Sheshagoplan. Dr. M Balamuralikrishna goes

188 Sruti Magazine special E Edition “The Lalgudi story” Issue 14, May 2013 Pg. 36
on to say that he is one of those violinists who could quickly catch on the Raga tana Pallavis’ sung by the vocalist on stage no matter the raga or tala in which it was set. TN Sheshagopalan while talking about M Chandrashekaran goes on to say that his raga alapana was very superior in content and he could show the raga bhava (the crux of the raga) of even rare ragas within the first two phrases itself. TN Sheshagopalan goes on to fondly call him “essence Chandrashekaran” for his uncanny ability to bring out the core of any raga. I was extremely fortunate to secure an interview with the great master himself during which he indicated that he was directly influenced by the music of the past masters of Nagaswaram. During the course of my interview, Vidwan M Chandrashekaran went on to say that he was able to hone his Manodharma skills especially raga alapana by extensively listening to the music of Nagaswaram vidwans’ of the previous generations. He was especially fond of TN Rajarathinam Pillai and Veeruswamy Pillai. He went on to confirm that listening to Nagaswaram helps one “elaborate the raga with Manodharma” and that he developed his entire raga alapana by constantly imbibing the core elements of the great Nagaswaram maestros of the yester years. He remembers following temple processions where Rajarathinam played a raga alapana for three hours. He was deeply inspired by Vidwan Karaikurichi P Arunachalam’s Nagaswaram music. Vidwan Chandrashekaran was so fond of TN Rajarathinam that he would try to play his composition ‘sivaguru parane’ in Kalyani raga and the Tamil classical songs Chinnanjiru killiye (Bharathiyar), Taamarai pootha thadagamadi (Dandapani Desikar) etc. exactly the way Nagaswaram Vidwans would, especially Rajarathinam Pillai, religiously following the Nagaswaram patantharam. Chandrashekaran would reproduce the same nuances of Rajarathinam’s style of rendering these songs and the same Sangatis which were very popular. His faithful rendition of TNR’s repertoire in the same style has been acknowledged by many Nagaswaram artists itself. He shared a close association with many other Nagaswaram Vidwans. TN Rajarathinam even played for his marriage. At the marriage after his own Nagaswaram recital he asked Chandrashekaran to play on the violin for which he rendered raga Kadanakuthuhala. TNR was very pleased with his music and blessed him with a bright future. Senior Vid Dr Pinakpani summed up M Chandrashekaran’s style as the right confluence of “Vocal, Veena and Nagaswaram”. To be able to understand the vocal and Nagaswaram influence one has to observe his rendition of the Krithi ‘Manavyalakinchara’ in raga Nalinakanti as pointed out to me by Violin Vidwan HK Venkataram. His approach to the Krithi rendition is very close to the
vocal and Nagaswaram Bani, especially in the phrases ‘kinchara dhate’ which takes the swaras ‘sg,,,,sg,,,,sg,,'. A popular Krithi this has been rendered by many violinists including MS Gopalakrishnan and TN Krishnan. The way TN Krishnan, approaches the Krithi during his solo rendition is very different. Similarly MSG’s rendition is a totally different approach, much more mellow and the pace is much softer. A recording of M Chandrasekaran sir accompanying Nagaswaram Maestro Namagiripettai Krishnan bears ample testimony the the deep influence of Nagaswaram on his own violin rendition (AUDIO R6.38\textsuperscript{189}). Here the type of sancharas, the framing of the sangathis have a distinct likeness to the Nagaswaram Vidwans vision of the Raga. HK Venkatram sir also demonstrated very beautifully the unique style of M Chandrashekharan. In his playing the bowing and fingering technique is very different and has a certain force to it. There are a lot of Janti swara prayogas in the music of violinists influenced by the Nagaswaram, which can be seen in Chandrashekaran’s playing. Another element which points of a Nagaswaram influence in Chandrashekaran’s playing is the use of Viraladi or staccato phrases along with the usage of the cut bow technique according to HK Venkatram. There is a certain added force to the bowing that can result in a slight increase of volume, which gives a feel of boldness and vibrancy in the method of Vid Chandrashekharan’s violin playing. However apart from these individual elements, it is this overall effect where one finds his vision and rendition of a raga having resemblance to Nagaswaram music. Another contributing factor to his style could be his long association with Madurai somasundaram with whom he played many concerts almost till the vocalist’s demise. M chandrasekaran has been deeply influenced by Somasundaram’s Nagaswaram style soaked music and considers him one of the greatest musician he had the good fortune to accompany. One can play the violin from a vocal-influence perspective, from a Nagaswaram influence perspective and also from purely a violinist’s perspective according to Vidwan HK Venkatram. Many a times there is a certain overlap in the case of playing from a vocalists and Nagaswaram influence, since many of the vocal traits have been influenced by Nagaswaram music. The violin is one of the most versatile instruments in today’s world music, which is why the approach to violin playing can be multi-pronged and complex. However there has been a huge contribution of the Nagaswaram to the technique of Indian violin

\textsuperscript{189} Raga Ravichandrika
according to Vid HK Venkatram. The violin, like a blotting paper, could absorb any style, any nuance and it did so in such a way that all the characteristic traits of Karnataka classical music became an integral and indistinguishable part of it. The reason one finds the highest amount of influence of the Nagaswaram Bani on the violin is because, among most of the other instruments, it is most capable of sustaining the continuity of sound, which is a core element of Nagaswaram music. The violin can also pull off the speedy brugas rendered by the Nagaswaram with great clarity and precision in the hands of an able violinist.

According to Vid HK Venkatram, his maternal uncle, Vid LS Narayanaswami Bhagavathar (1908-31st March 1970) himself was deeply influenced by the Nagaswaram. He had his initial vocal training under Late Vidwan Krishnappa. Soon after his matriculation examination, he left for Chennai where he became the disciple of Vidwan Namakkal Narasimha Iyengar. Later he underwent intensive training under Vidwan Kanchipuram Nayana Pillai who was known for his bold and original style of Pallavi elaboration and swaraprastara. Narayanaswami Bhagavathar was known as a wizard in mathematics during swara kalpana, probably a result of his training under Naina Pillai. His vocal concerts especially in Bangalore Gayana Samaj were a great success, along with the accompaniment of Rajamanikyam Pillai on the violin (Ramarathnam, 2006). However LS Narayanaswami Bhagavathar also underwent advanced training under Malaikotai Govindaswamy Pillai in the violin (1879 - 1931). HK Venkataram also goes on to demonstrate how his uncle played the Bhairavi Varna, where the force of the fingering and bowing is very different from a usual violin-based approach.

**Vidwan Kunnakudi Vaidyanathan (March 2, 1935 – September 8, 2008)** was one of the most beloved and popular violinists of our time. He took the classical violin from the Sabhas to cinema and even remote villages. He modelled his music in such a way that it would appeal the connoisseur and the lay man. He was also a highly sought after accompanist to many great Vidwans. Through an analyses of his music I have come to believe that he too was very greatly influenced by the Nagaswaram music. His style and vision of ragas seem to be very close to the Nagaswaram Bani. Born in the temple village of Kunnakudi in Tamil Nadu which was famous for its Nagaswaram music and Lord Murugan temple, he would have been exposed to

190 'A Musician’s Reminiscences’ by Prof Mysore V Ramarathnam, Pg. 68
Nagaswaram music during his growing and formative years. Trained entirely by his father Vidwan Ramaswamy Sastri, at the tender age of twelve he went on to accompany main stream vocalists such as Ariyakudi Ramanuja Ayyangar, Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, AKC Natarajan, Shankara Shivan, Chittoor Subramania Pillai, Kalyana Krishna Bhagavathar, Madurai Mani, Maharajapuram Vishwanatha Iyer Maharajapuram Santhanam etc. However his most important accompaniment was for two giants in the field of Nagaswaram, Vidwan TN Rajarathinam Pillai and Vid Thiruvengadu Subramania Pillai (Correspondent, ‘Kunnakudi Vaidyanathan Dead’, 2008)\(^ {191} \). This was a time when the Nagaswaram vidwans’ were looking to make a transition from an aalaya vazhivadu vadhyam to a Sabha Vadyam. TN Rajarathinam who was the first successful and highly sought after Nagaswaram Vidwan in the Sabha circles including the Madras Music Academy wanted to make many changes in the format of Nagaswaram music to make a smooth transition. From wearing a Sherwani to fixing violin as an accompaniment, he tried it all. At this point, Kunnakudi Vaidhyanathan became a highly sought after accompanist for TNR and Subramania Pillai, two Nagaswaram Vidwans’ who inspired generations and musicians across all categories. When vocalists were deeply inspired by their Nagaswaram music one can only imagine the influence they would have had on their stock accompanist Kunnakudi Vaidyanatha Bhagavathar. In the 1970’s Kunnakudi stopped accompanying vocalists and went on to play many solo concerts. By then Nagaswaram music had made a very deep impact on his playing style. His most notable solo concerts were played along with the Tavil accompaniment of the great Tavil wizard, Valayapatti Subramanian. His solo concerts with Tavil accompaniment gained much more popularity than his concerts’ with Mrudangam accompaniment. In an interview with Janaki Subramaniam for the Coimbatore daily paper Kunnakudi mentions that he went on to perform three thousand four hundred and sixty two concerts of which majority have been along with Tavil Vidwan Valapatti Subramanian. A popular recording of Raga Shankarabharanam has many pointers to the Nagaswaram Bani in Kunnakudi Vaidhyanathans style. The bowing is assertive, and the bow falls at points which has striking resemblance to the tha tha kara (the blowing points) of the Nagaswaram. Even the framing of the Sangatis in this raga seem to be strongly suggestive of a confluence of folk and Nagaswaram traditions.

\(^ {191} \) The Hindu ‘Kunnakudi Vaidyanathan Dead’ – September 9\(^ {th} \) 2008.
The Krithi “Arul Seyum” is accompanied by Valayapatti’s accompaniment which is seamless. The Violin and Tavil combination sounds almost normal and not like an innovation. His musical sensibilities were so deeply entwined in Nagaswaram music that he also went on to adopt the Mallari, a traditional Nagaswaram composition into his repertoire and rendered it beautifully on his violin in many temple concerts. He also used the Mallari as an opening piece for his album ‘Nada Vinodham’ released by Geetanjali records in 2006 which has been accompanied on the Tavil by Valayapatti Subramanian.

To trace back the origins and phrases in violin music could be very tricky but the advent of the brilliant violin technique we see today happened post- TN Rajarathnam pillai according to Vid HK Venkatram. Before TNR, violin playing was most certainly not as advanced as it is today. Even Vocal music was in a process of constant change. The music of the Nagaswaram had reached great heights in terms of manodharma and technique quite early on. One cannot say that the music of TN Rajarathinam Pillai was solely responsible for the advancements made in the violin. However the music of popular Nagaswaram Vidwans such as Tiruvengadu Subramania Pillai, Karaikurichi P Arunachalam, Vedaranyam Vedamurthy, Namagiripete Krishnan, Kulikkarai Pitchiappa and most importantly TN Rajarathinam Pillai left a very deep impact on a lot of instrumentalists who perhaps considered his music as a hallmark for the instrumental technique. In this regard HKV feels that many aspects such as the usages of Jaru, long bow and urruttu’s came from the Nagaswaram music. He is of the opinion that the Nagaswaram influence has led to many important steps in the evolution of violin playing techniques. One can at many instances notice the rendition of fast-staccato notes resembling the Viraladi in today’s violin. For this the fingering of the violinist has to be very unique to bring out this effect. HK Venkatram also talks about the Tana rendition we have today. It is generally accepted that the technique of Tana came from Veena. However in today’s Tana rendition most instrumentalists and vocalists include a lot of urruttu prayogas. These prayogas do not figure into the Tana rendition of the earlier Vainikas. So then from where and at what point did such addition come into our rendition? Vid HKV believes that, this practise of adding Anuswaras, came from the music of the Nagaswaram. The Nagaswaram showed the way of how to utilise one’s vocal or instrumental technique to the fullest possible extent. Vid HK Venkataram as a keen
observer of styles even demonstrated certain phrases in raga Todi which many violinists’ play today that are a direct inspiration of the Nagaswaram music, especially in the case of the Jaru sangathis and uruttu. Apart from these great past master violinists’, todays popular violin virtuosos such as Ganesh-Kumaresh Rajagopalan (violin brothers) and Vidwan Mysore M Nagaraj and Dr Mysore M Manjunath (popularly known as the Mysore Brothers) have also been known to have drawn inspiration from the Nagaswaram into their playing. Vidwan Kumaresh believes that the music of the Nagaswaram has played a huge role not just in the evolution of violin playing techniques but on the entire field of Karnataka classical music. He is an avid listener to Nagaswaram music and regularly looks up to the recordings of the earlier Nagaswaram Vidwans’ (during TN rajarathinam Pillai’s period) for inspiration especially for the development of raga alapana. World renowned Karnataka classical violinists, Mysore M Nagaraj and Mysore M Manjunath are known for their brilliant violin technique and most importantly for their extensive Manodharma Sangita. They have taken the art of improvisation to a whole new level with their elaborate raga alapana. Their swara kalpana is known to have scholarly mathematical progression and they are known to compose complex Pallavis at the drop of a hat. It is my opinion that one can find the influence of Nagaswaram music on their own especially during raga elaboration. The evidence of such an influence comes out in the form of intricately woven interconnected music phrases combined with a long bow. Another element is their bold treatment of gamakas, especially in ragas such as Bhairavi which is very similar to how the Nagaswaram vidwans would highlight each note. Apart from which one can find sweeping jaru swaras, datu swaras and brugas played at tremendous speed which indicate not only the brilliance of their violin technique but also a possible Nagaswaram influence. An element which one finds in their raga alapanas is the generous janti swara prayoga in phrases such as ‘nsnnd dlndmm’. This extensive usage of janti swara can be commonly found in most musicians influenced by the Nagaswaram music. this coupled with the effective usages of repetitive circular phrases such as g,mp mp,m g,mp mp,m g,mp,,g,mp,, seem to indicate a deep inspiration from the way Nagaswaram Vidwans would repeat a phrase to create the maximum raga imprint on the audience. The Mysore brothers have also incorporated ‘musical silences’ i.e. silences which are packed with reverberating sounds of musical thought. The progress of their alapana and the method of building pace is highlighted by the intelligent use of silences and continuity of sound. Another
factor I have observed is the lack of a template, especially while opening the raga alapana. analyses of three Bhairavi raga alapana rendered by the Mysore brothers has revealed that each alapana is opened with a different catch phrase, which was prevalent among the Nagaswaram Vidwans and even vocalists before raga alapana started having a fixed progression found in most of the Karnataka classical concerts at present. A study of the kind of Sanatis and coining of phrases especially in ragas such as Anandabhairavi show us an intricate ornamentation. It is a relatively assertive treatment of the raga which otherwise is given a predominantly mellow handling. I have heard this kind of treatment of the raga Anandabhairavi most commonly in Nagaswaram and in the hands of vocalists such as TN Sheshagoplan who in turn have been influenced by Nagaswaram music. Along with the influence of Nagaswaram music the “Lalgudi Bani” too seems to have made a deep impact on the style of the Mysore Brothers. However the inclusion of all the above features is very intrinsic to their own original style and occurs very naturally. Dr Mysore M Manjunath has personally spoken about the huge influence Nagaswaram music has on his musical style and on the deep impact it made on the way he conceives an alapana of a raga. Apart from a Bhairavi or Todi even a raga like Keeravani gets very intricate gamakas and ornamentation which give the otherwise delicate raga an added dimension of stateliness.

THE FLUTE

The flute is one of the earliest instruments to have evolved south India and has found mention in many treatises which deal with Karnataka classical instrumental music. However for a long time, till the early 18th century it was considered a folk instrument and was not used to expand Karnataka classical music. The flute was only used as an accompaniment for Harikatha and the Sadir or in folk tunes. It was given the status of a classical instrument by the innovation of a genius Flautist Sarabha Sastrigal (1872–1904). Born in a village called Tiruvadi, his maternal family was said to have lived next doors to the composer Tyagaraja. Sarabha sastry’s family shifted later on to the town of Kumbhakonam. All these villages were the epicentre of Nagaswaram music, especially during the 18th and 19th centuries. One must understand that to be able to render the classical idiom on the Flute required Sarabha Sastrigal to invent a new approach to playing the flute. He brought in many new fingering techniques to be able to produce the Karnataka classical ragas as effectively
as possible (for his time) on the flute. The Nagaswaram being another Susheera Vadya itself, was perhaps the closest reference material that was available to the flautists. It was only natural that even Sarabha Sastry drew inspiration from the Nagaswaram for many elements apart from his training under Manambuchavadi Venkatasubbaiyer, a direct disciple of Tyagaraja. Sarabha Sastry was a great admirer of his contemporary Nagaswaram Tirumarugal Natesha Pillai and they enjoyed a great camaraderie amongst themselves. They had the opportunity to listen to each-others music on plenty of occasions and play on the same platform at the same occasion (in succession). As I have mentioned earlier, Nagaswaram Tirumarugal Natesa Pillai was one of the most influential musicians of his time and he was admired by all the musicians of his generation. Sarabha Sastry also greatly admired and was inspired by the music of another great Nagaswaram exponent, Kumbhakonam Shivakozhundu. They lived in the same village and Shivakozhundu was already a hugely popular artist who would draw large crowds at many venues like the Triplicane Parthasarathy temple (Pillai T. L., 1930)\(^{192}\). Sarabha Sastry’s tradition was carried ahead in the hands of his disciple Palladam Sanjeeva Rao (1882–1962), who also rose to great heights as a flautist. A 78 rpm gramophone recording of Palladam Sanjeeva Rao playing the Krithi ‘Kaligiyunte’ a vilamba tala Tyagaraja Krithi shows that it wasn’t too close to the ‘vocal’ bani or the way vocalists would render it (\(\text{AUDIO R 6.39}\)\(^{193}\)). The pace at which it has been rendered belies any indication that it is a vilamba tala Krithi. Also it is peppered with brugas and the rendition has an uncanny resemblance to the way in which the Nagaswaram artists handled the krithis in the earlier days, without having to adhere to the intent of vocalisation. The flute was raised to the level of a lead concert instrument and its potential was exploited by Sarabha Sastrigal and his able disciple Palladam Sanjeeva Rao. However they were not known for intricate gamakas. What shone in their music was their brilliant technique of “Viraladi” or staccato notes which could be called as a contribution of the Nagaswaram to the Karnataka classical music world. The Sruti magazine goes on to say that Sanjeeva Rao would play in the same manner as his guru Sarabha Sastry. Describing his style, the Sruti magazine goes on to say that he always preferred playing in a fast tempo. His blowing was marked with the dominant use of

\(^{192}\) The Madras Music Academy Journal – 1930 – Pg. 241
\(^{193}\) Sourced from the Archive of Indian Music
"thuthukaram" this produced a staccato effect (Sheshadri, 2010). A recording of a short alapana in raga Devagandhari by Palladam Sanjeeva Rao bears testimony to the assertive style of rendition and the usages of staccato notes. Before TR Mahalingam, three musicians attained great fame as Karnataka classical musicians. They were Sarabha Sastry, Palladam Sanjeeva Rao and Tiruppambaram Swaminatha Pillai. Other well regarded flautists were Kumbakonam Nagaraj Rao, Paravakkarai sinivasa Iyer and Azhiyur Narayanaswami Iyer. Tiruppambaram Swaminatha Pillai (September 12th 1899-February 8th 1961) came from an Isai Vellala family which had attained great fame and had a lone lineage of outstanding musicians (their family line is traced with concrete records to at least seven generations), comprising mostly Nagaswaram players and vocalists. However their family was also known to have played an impressive variety of instruments other than the Nagaswaram. One of his ancestors, Sesha Pillai became an exponent of the Saranda (which is a rare stringed instrument similar to the fiddle found only in the northern regions of Asia form Sindh to Kandahar). His father Tiruppambaram Nataraja Sundaram Pillai was the first musician to publish the Krithis of Mutthuswamy Dixitar in Tamil. A recipient of the Sangita Kalanidhi title in 1953 he was also awarded the Sangeet Natak Academy Award (posthumously) in 1961. He was a trained Vocalist and Nagaswaram player and picked up the flute a little later (early teens) in his life. He made his debut at a young age and it was arranged by Karaikudi Subbarama Iyer (the elder of the Karaikudi Veena brothers). While senior artist Pudukottai Dakshinamurthy Pillai agreed to play for the then young Swaminatha Pillai, Subbarama Iyer had to muster his persuasive powers to convince Malakottai Govindaswamy Pillai (Violin) and Kumbakonam Azhaganambi Pillai (Mrudangam). However the concert was a great success and it immediately catapulted him into the league of greats. His reputation grew not just as a performing artist but also as a teacher par excellence. A professor at Annamalai University (Chidambaram) he gave the Karnataka classical music world brilliant musicians such as T Viswanathan, SR Janakiraman, S Narasimhulu etc. TN Rajarathinam Pillai insisted that Swaminathan Pillai’s tunes for Muthuthandavar’s Krithis be used at the University which was previously using the tunes composed by another musician till then. Prof Sambamoorthy often praised his concerts for being filled with Raga Bhava. Not only was he the custodian of many unknown Dixitar

194 Sruti magazine – ‘Flute Mali special’ E – Issue 2 November 2010; Pg. 42 Ch. 4 ‘flautists before Mali’.
krithis but he also had (and often played in the presence of other musicians at Sabhas like the Music Academy) a formidable stock of complicated Pallavis’ (RTP). He was highly regarded by all Karnataka classical musicians. TR Mahalingam (who was very sparing in his praise for others) had a special regard and great respect for Swaminatha Pillai. In a rare gesture he agreed to unveil Swaminatha Pillai’s portrait at Krishna Gana Sabha, Chennai. Speaking about the senior Vidwan Mali went on to say that he had great admiration for the music legacy Swaminatha Pillai had inherited along with his Patantharam, and his mastery of laya. It is believed that before Mali it was Swaminatha Pillai who first introduced gamakas on the flute, which was pretty much played like a harmonium before his time. Which is why TR Mahalingam was in great admiration of Swaminathan Pillai. However an important point about Swaminathan Pillai was that he gained reputation for his brilliant fingering (Correspondent, Brilliant falutist, teacher, composer, 2011). This unique fingering was probably what enabled him to introduce gamakas into the flute technique. Which means that he could have not possibly used the parallel fingering which hinders free movement of fingers. Being form a family of Nagaswaram Vidwans (apart from his father his brothers were Nagaswaram Vidwans of repute themselves) it cannot be too impossible to think that he adopted the cross fingering technique used to play the Nagaswaram on the flute. Was he the first to do so? Also having being surrounded by so much Nagaswaram music it surely could have translated into his music on the flute. He would have grown up (in age and as a musician) with a Nagaswaram artist’s sense of aesthetics (and taste) which ran so deeply in his family.

According to V Sriram, Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer held three musicians as the greats in field of Karnataka Classical music, who were Nagaswaram TN Rajarathinam, Flute TR Mahalingam and Mrudangam Palghat Mani Iyer. Gamaka’s in the rendition of the flute is said to have been crystallised in the stylised playing of the next generation flute maestro TR Mahalingam (Shankarabharanan, 2015) (6 November 1926 – 31 May 1986). TR Mahalingam finished what Swaminatha Pillai had started and took the flute closer to the Gayaki or vocal style (which was

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196 The Hindu – FRIDAY REVIEW – March 4, 2011
197 Sruti magazine– January 2015 Issue 364, Pg. 2
previously played only using staccato keyboard like notes) (Manirangu, 2010)\textsuperscript{198}. He was born in Tiruvidaimarudur in Tanjore District to Ramaswamy Iyer and Bruhadambal, which had a strong temple culture and echoed with Nagaswaram music. He undertook music lessons from his maternal uncle Jalra Gopala Iyer. According to international Karnataka classical flautist Vidwan S Shashank, Vidwan Mahalingam completely changed the game for the flute and took it to a whole new level. One of the most noteworthy features of his music was his ability to render the most graceful gamakas on the flute, (the earlier flautists were not very vocalised in terms of gamaka structure) its likeness to the finesse of vocal music and most importantly the ‘sense of continuity’ like that of a Nagaswaram player according to Vidwan P Shashank. This sense of continuity refers to the constant relationship of one phrase to another, one sangatis leading and melting into another with the help of Karve. This Karve which was previously absent in the flute was blended beautifully into Mahalingam’s style to create seamless music. Continuity of sound was the biggest advantage the Nagaswaram had over all other forms of Karnataka classical music due to their circulatory breathing technique and the otthu nayanam. The Karve laden phrases were very challenging to produce on the flute where fifty percent of the air escapes unlike the Nagaswaram which has a more channel funnel like structure, which enables air to be retained for longer periods (also the mouth is closed over the mouth piece in the Nagaswaram unlike a partially opened blow hole of the flute). Mahalingam seems to have been deeply influenced by the Nagaswaram music and incorporated the continuity of sound in his playing which took his to great heights. He developed an amazing breath control in order to be able to hold on to and produce long phrases. It is said that he could hold on to a note on the flute for as long as 40 seconds without having to gasp for breath (Manirangu, 2010)\textsuperscript{199}. This continuity of sound can be observed in his Kalyani alapan for the Kalyani Krithi “Shive Pahimam” (\textbf{AUDIO R6.40}). This Krithi is a Madhyama kala Krithi, which also lends itself beautifully to a fast rendition. However he chooses to render the preceding raga alapana in the most elaborate tranquil manner, with frequent halts and Karves. The continuity of sound is maintained throughout, weaving beautiful swara sancharas at the panchama (\textit{m,.,dn,,d m,,d m,,dnrdp,,}) and nishada(\textit{n,,sn,,,rn,,,gn,,,mn,,}) Once he arrived on the music scene, the popularity of artists such as Palladam Sanjeeva Rao

\textsuperscript{198} Sruti Magazine – Mali special Edition, Nov 2010, Issue 2 Pg. 76

\textsuperscript{199} Sruti Magazine – Mali special Edition, Nov 2010, Issue 2 Pg. 77
started to wane. Mahalingam rose to become the most sought after musician of his time along with TN Rajarathinam Pillai and GN Balasubramaniam. According to Flautist S Shashank, the ability of the Nagaswaram to produce a continuous flow over music connecting phrase after phrase inspired every vocalist and instrumentalist (I would say till the 1970’s) and TR Mahalingam was no exception. The finesse in TR Mahalingams music was because of his knowledge of vocal music and the influence of the Nagaswaram. While the earlier flautists used parallel fingering, Mali developed the Karnataka classical flute technique using cross fingering. This cross fingering often called the parrot clutch marks an important breakthrough in the evolution of flute playing techniques. It enabled the flautist to develop an effective fingering technique which could reproduce all the Gamakas of Karnataka classical music (by freeing the front fingers). He personally told the young Shashank (who met the senior Vidwan shortly before he passed away) that he adopted this cross fingering technique by observing the fingering technique of Nagaswaram artists. Mahalingam was a great admirer of TN Rajarathinam Pillai and TNR shared the same love for him. They were known to have exchanged ideas at Mali’s house and he often played all of TN Rajarathinam Pillais personal requests of raga alapana for him. Once after hearing a Bhairavi rendered by TR Mahalingam, the Nagaswaram maestro is known to have embraced him and said that ‘you are one of us, not them’ (obviously referring to him as one of his own Isai Vellala clan not the others (Ramakrishnan, 2010)). TN Rajarathinam might have found a similar thought process in the music of Mali to his own. S Shashank’s father learnt this cross fingering technique form Mali’s first disciple Dindigul S P Natarajan. Today this cross fingering technique has prevailed and not many use the parallel fingering which isn’t very effective for Karnataka classical music. Mali was a genius in laya and engaged in many mathematic progressions during swarakalpanas. For this reason he was very fond of Palghat Mani Iyer, who shared his admiration and often remarked that only (accompanying) Mahalingam’s concerts gave him enough exercise or truly tested his creativity. However an important aspect to be noted is that TR Mahalingam’s music went through a complete change as he grew older and gained more experience as a musician (like many prodigies who successfully grew into geniuses). He was known to have achieved a brilliant playing technique quite early in life. In his days of youth

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he was known to play speedy passages, razor sharp brugas and was known to use the
glide in swaras with lightning speed and smoothness. It was probably these
characteristics which made many musicians find his music akin to that of the
Nagaswaram. His father Ramaswamy Iyer took Mali as a young boy to Annamalai
University in Chidambaram to secure a seat for him. There he was asked to play a few
pieces in front of the then principal Sabhesa Iyer. Upon hearing his rendition Sabesa
Iyer is said to have remarked that Mali should take up the Nagaswaram (Pattabhi
Raman, 2010). It is interesting that Sabesa Iyer found the young Malis’ musical
imagery quite close to that of the Nagaswaram Vidwans. In his later days Flute Mali
came under the influence of the Dhanammal School of music and took coaching from
Dhannamal’s daughter Jayammal to increase his repertoire, add the dimensions of
gamakas. This training served as a major inspiration for the slow tempo he adopted in
his later years according to N Pattabhiraman. He was an intuitive musician who
pushed the boundaries to render ragas particularly their alapanas in a new light. The
usual was given an unusual outlook and the unfamiliar was played in an “acceptable”
way. As he grew in stature his music took a turn to the slower tempo. The whole pace
of the concerts was filled with a quiet pulsating power fuelled by his long breaths and
phrases. It is quite challenging to hold long breaths and swaras in the vilamba kala. It
is at this stage that the continuity of sound and his mastery became more striking.
Describing this element of space in Mali’s music Shashank goes on to say that his
music was very “spread out” with a lot of gaps. There was a very relaxed pace in his
alapana. Another factor that took his ‘spread out’ style to a whole new level (never
once was there a moment of boredom) was his usage of silences. He was known to
use silence (saturated with suspense and anticipation) as a very effective medium of
expression in between his concerts just like the Nagaswaram artists would. The
Garland Encyclopedia of world music goes on to describe “His use of silence was as
eloquent as his mastery of timbre” (Bruno Nettl, 1998). A recording of Kalyani
raga bears ample testimony to his pauses which are heavily impregnated with
anticipation and Bhava. These silences became the most expressive part of his
musical statement. Even during his swara alapana he would include deliberate
pauses, by shortening the rhythmic cycles and leaving several bars in the tala vacant until the

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next sequence would follow. His typical korai’s were those that concluded a few beats before the dupe (in pattern of course) followed by a proactive silence and the thunderous joining in of the Mrudangam and violin at the commencement of the dupe. These silences were often described as “throbbing with the rhythm of music” and even making the listener believe that the music was continuing like “echoes in a canyon” (Manirangu, 2010). These deliberate moments of silence extended into his Krithi rendition too. This was another element which could be most commonly found in the music of Nagaswaram. However at this stage Mahalingam’s music was also very unlike the Nagaswaram in many areas, especially in the rendition of Krithi and rendition of certain gamakas. His music during the later years was characterised by his sparing use if not zero use of Birukas. His music was became very discreet. Many say that this too was a result of his deep admiration for the Dhannamal school of thought. He was very closely associated with the Dhannamal family and spoke very highly of them and that their style of a slower tempo made a deep impact on his music (Ramakrishnan, 2010) (Pattabhi Raman, 2010).

At the same time Mali was also known for his scholarly laya vinyasa during swara kalpana. According to flautist S Venkatarama Iyer, who has been considered an authority in laya, Mali was perhaps the first musician (non-percussionist) who ventured into playing thisthra nade Kalpana swaras in Khanda Chapu tala. An example for this is his swara kalpana for the Bilahari raga Khanda chapu tala Krithis, Tolijanma (composed by Tyagaraja) and Paridana michithe (composed by Patnam Subramania Iyer). This type of calculation was previously rendered most often in Nagaswaram music and was the speciality of Tavil Vidwans who would calculate mohras which would give results in fractions and not whole numbers. In any case the way Mali interpreted the Nagaswaram music was very different from that of his predecessors. While many turned to the Nagaswaram for content, Mahalingam looked into the Nagaswaram for techniques and vocal music for content. At the same time Mali realised the secondary nature of Sahitya in the realm of instrumental music. Thus he composed many extempore Pallvis’ keeping only the swaras or tha tha ka ra. This enabled him to include many mathematical combinations within the structure of the Pallavi itself, without having to worry about the Sahitya being fragmented. It is also

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interesting to note that both Tiruppambaram Swaminatha Pillai and Mali added an extra hole (the eight hole) to enable the playing gamakas and maintain the continuity of sound. Mali went one step forward and started using flutes made heavier by the increased thickness of wood to make it sound more sonorous combined with smaller holes. The desired to achieve continuity of sound fuelled him into making many structural changes on the flute (Pattabhi Raman, 2010). The result was a balanced and completely original style which stayed on permanently as the next step of evolution for the Flute’s journey as a Karnataka classical instrument. Shashank goes on to say that till a certain point in history Nagaswaram was way ahead of other instruments in Karnataka classical music (perhaps excluding the Veena) and Nagaswaram players were extremely capable musicians. It was only natural for other instrumentalists to use its techniques as a reference to achieve instrumental brilliance. However the Nagaswaram influence has evolved and intertwined on each instrument and instrumentalist in its own way.

THE VEENA

The Veena has been one of the age old instruments used to express Karnataka classical music in India and it always enjoyed a high place as a Karnataka classical instrument. An instrument which has been considered fit for the gods according to the Hindu mythology, it has been a favourite among the upper class musicians and enjoyed continuous royal patronage. It existed with the space of the royal and upper class households and played a crucial role in the evolution of Karnataka classical music, both in practical and musicological departments. Many principles of Karnataka classical music like the various srutis, graha bheda and gamakas were experimented on and demonstrated on the Veena. It developed very distinct playing techniques throughout its long historical journey and gave rise to many Bani’s within itself. One could say that the Veena made a huge impact on entire Karnataka classical music and singing in the Veena Bani was considered an ideal mode of presentation. However with the emergence of Krithis even the Veena is said to have taken inspiration form Vocal music for correct Krithi rendition. Most Vainikas were known to sing along with their playing and many were excellent vaggeyakaras, composing many Krithis with the vocalisation intent. Vocal and Veena went hand in hand. Though the

Nagaswaram and the Veena share the same antiquity, they had totally different paths cut out for them. They shared the same form of expression, Karnataka classical music however the spaces in which each existed and performed were completely different. Also the Veena being a stringed instrument (plucked) and the Nagaswaram being a wind instrument, have very different structures, sound production, tonal quality and musical vision. The only influence that the Veena could take from the Nagaswaram is from the content of its music.

One great Veena Vidwan who was inspired by the Nagaswaram’s music was Dr S Balachander (18 January 1927 – 13 April 1990). He was born into a family having deep roots into Karnataka classical music. Many stalwarts of the music field often visited and performed at his residence. His brother S Rajam went on to become a great Karnataka classical vocalist and teacher. He was a keen observer all music trends and could play many instruments such as tabla, Mrudangam, harmonium, bulbul tarang, dilruba, and shehnai. He became an AIR staff artist and was known to render many sitar concerts as well. His disciple Veena Vidushi Jayanthi Kumaresh is one of the foremost names in the Veena today. During the course of our interview she went on to talk about the immense influence the music of the Nagaswaram along with vocal music had on her guru Veena Vid Balachander and perhaps was the only Vainika to have adopted certain features of the Nagaswaram into the Veena. Dr Jayanthi Kumaresh has observed the influence of the Nagaswaram can be found, only in his rendition when compared to all the other Bani’s she studied while conducting her doctoral research on the Different Bani’s in Veena rendition. Inspiration from Nagaswaram music led him to adopt certain playing techniques which were an innovation in Veena playing. Being a disciple of vid Balachander she remembers her guru speaking the praises of Nagaswaram Vid TN Rajarathinam Pillai and his music. A great admirer of Rajarathinam he used to speak very eloquently about the Nagaswaram maestro’s music. What captivated Balachander most were the Jaru phrases, the continuity of sound, and long interconnected sangatis which were a hallmark of the Nagaswaram music, especially of TNR’s. He tried and succeeded (as physically possible in the Veena) in including these sweeping phrases into his own Veena technique by ingenious pulling of more than 4 notes on one fret in his left hand. One can see ample examples of his in his rendition of Durbari Kaanada raga also very brilliant rare phrases in this recording. This technique has been passed on to
Jayanthi Kumaresh who herself listens to a lot of Nagaswaram music and imbibes some of its elements in her Raga Alapana. Vid Jayanthi Kumaresh says that the influence of the Nagaswaram on the Veena can be seen essentially on the left-hand technique since any kind of pulling of the strings can be done only on this hand, whereas the right hand in used only for plucking the strings. It is the left hand technique which helps in adding the element of continuity in Veena music. Vid Jayanthi Kumaresh has demonstrated this technique of pulling and rendering a very long sangathi with just a single pluck of the string in many of her concerts and she is one of the very few who can demonstrate this ability (AUDIO R6.41206). She goes on to say that the Nagaswaram effect cannot be produced on the Veena by gliding on the frets. Only when one attempts the Jaru phrases that the shades of the Nagaswaram are perceivable. One can of course take inspiration from their method of developing a raga’s alapana. It is also essential that ones style has to be in tandem to the techniques adopted from the Nagaswaram. The Nagaswaram influence can be perceived in the playing only of Dr S Balachander and Jayanthi Kumaresh. Apart from the above Vainikas I have not personally come across any other Vainika who have been influenced by the Nagaswaram. In today’s music scenario the gap in common spaces between the Nagaswaram artists and other musicians of Karnataka classical music has widened, making it very difficult to come across Nagaswaram music.

THE MANDOLIN

The last significant influence of the Nagaswaram on any other instrument can be seen in the music of the great artist Mandolin U Srinivas (28 February 1969 – 19 September 2014). Born in Pallukolu, Upallapu Srinivasa gave his first concert at the tender age of nine in Andhra Pradesh. Later the entire family shifted to Madras and he gave his first public performance at the Indian Fine Arts society at the age of twelve. He stormed into the Karnataka classical music scenario, taking it by surprise and created waves among the connoisseurs and Rasikas. TN Sheshagopalan one of the leading musicians who follow the Nagaswaram Bani was so impressed by his performance that he (along with Veena Dr S Balachander who was also present) gifted Srinivas his own gold ring after the concert. He was trained initially by his father U Satyanarayana, a mandolin player who would play light music and film songs. He later on trained under Guru Rudraraju Subbaraju, who was a disciple of

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Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavathar. His guru was a vocalist and it was left entirely to the young U Srinivas to figure out how to effectively render Karnataka classical music complete with its nuanced gamakas on the western mandolin. He single handily pioneered the Karnataka classical Mandolin music we hear today. He hailed form an illustrious Isai Vellala family which had a long line of musicians and deep connections with Nagaswaram music in their lineage. His grandfather was also a Nagaswaram Vidwan. Mandolin U Srinivas was a deep admirer of Nagaswaram music and often listened to TN Rajaratnam for inspiration. Among the Vocalists he was most inspired by GN Balasubramaniam, a vocalist with a strong Nagaswaram influence. In a conversation with Rupa Gopal, U Srinivas says that the reason he liked GNB’s style was because of the prevalence of the Nagaswaram Bani in it. “I basically adore Nadaswaram Bani”. He states that the music of TN Rajaratnam was very dear to him and he could see the same progressions and thought process in GN Balasubramaniam’s music. Many scholars are of the opinion that the proximity of Mandolin Srinivas’s music to vocal perfection was the influence of the GNB Bani. Both the inspirations that he draws from Vocal and instrument seem to revolve around the Nagaswaram Bani. Rupa gopal describes Mandolin Srinivas and his music as having “extended the dimension of the GNB Bani with his western instrument” A recording of the young Mandolin Srinivas playing at the approximate age of 15 shows him rendering the Krithi ‘Yentha muddho’ (Bindu malini raga – Adi tala) in the most ornate elaborate manner (AUDIO R6.42). One notices that he fills this Krithi with ornate sangatis and extremely fast bruga flourishes, just like the Nagaswaram vidwans. Similarly his rendition of “siddhi vinayakam” is filled with speedy flourishes which is very close to how Nagaswaram vidwans render this Krithi. The entire pace of his concerts are generally at a Madhya kala tempo or maybe faster. He was also known for his Dhatu swara prayogas, which come in such blinding flashes that one would almost miss it. At the concert which took place at “Parvati” in Mysore he is accompanied by Mysore M Nagaraj on the violin, Vellore Ramabhadran and the Mrudangam and Bangalore Venkatram on the Ghatam. In this concert recording he uses the phrases (adding his Sangatis) PS RGR RGR (tara sthayi rishabha) instead of the conventional PDNSRGR for the Pallavi line “Siddhi” peppered with Datu swaras of RNDMGR at the end of Pallavi. He goes on to render a blitzkrieg bruga at the standing point of the charana ‘Rouhineya mujaarchtham’ (AUDIO R6.43 (Vana, 2011)). During swara kalpana he uses renders Datu swaras DNRG DNRG(Mandra-
madhya- tara sthayi). Similar such EXTENSIVE Datu swaras also feature in this recording. The speed at which he is rendering the swarakalpana and the flow of the entire piece are clear indications that none of the music is rehearsed and it is an awe-inspiring display of powerful Manodharma just like that of the Nagaswaram Vidwans. He was known to create a continuous flow of music, at a breath taking pace along with his favourite accompanists Violin Vid Kanyakumari and Mrudangam Vidwan Tируvarur Bhakthavathsalam. He too fixed the Tavil accompaniment of Sangita Kalanidhi Valayapatti AR Subramaniam for many of his concerts (especially for DD Podhigai) instead of the Mrudangam. It was not just his innovation of rendering perfect Karnataka classical music on the western Mandolin that brought him fame but his ingenious Manodharma or improvisational skills that put him among the league of legends such as Tabla Wizard Zakir Hussain, Guitarist John McLaughlin etc. He received various awards, the Padma Shri from the government of India in 1998 and the Sangeet Natak Academy Award in 2009.