CHAPTER 6
SARASWATHI VEENA - TUNING AND PLAYING
TECHNIQUES

_Saraswathi Veena_ is today one of the foremost concert instruments. The Veena in the South has risen to greater heights than ever before in popularity just as the technique of playing it has advanced.

The main component that is used in making the Saraswathi Veena is wood. The resonator or Kudam is a deep vessel carved out of wood and covered with a wooden plank. This Soundboard protrudes into a neck to which is fixed the long fingerboard that ends in the mythical figure of the _vāli_ (not be confused with the _yāzh_).
The bridge that stands centrally on the sound box is a complex unit. The principal section is a wide wooden piece slightly sloping in the direction of the strings, a construction so typical of many of our Veenas. On the upper surface of this is glued a brass lamella which seems to be a continuation of the traditional structure present in the ancient Ekatantri. Attached to – rather growing out of – the main bridge is a curved auxiliary part of wood, which is also a bridge. Four strings of metal go over the main bridge and they are used for playing the melody. Three strings, called the Sārani, pass over the side bridge and these are employed as the drone and for striking the Tala. While the melody strings are plucked downwards with the first two fingers, the Tala strings are flicked with the little finger of one hand. The strings are pressed with the fingers of the other hand just over the brass frets that are
fixed to the Danda with wax. Beneath the Danda, at the beginning of the neck leading to the Yāli, there is a secondary gourd.

The body of the Saraswathi Veena is generally made of jack wood, rose wood or sandalwood. But most often jack wood is used. In the present day Veena, the frets are made of bronze or steel. A wood or ivory bridge is fixed on top of the main resonator. Acoustic uniformity and balance are strictly observed along with geometrical accuracy in the case of measuring the length of the strings, so as to produce distinct sweet and pleasing sound. Normally, there are seven strings, four main and three Tala strings. But in some Veenas, artistes have added more strings than the basic seven strings to enhance resonance and harmony. The fundamental frequency of the sounds is always observed in the method of playing to produce accurate vibration of the tones. The tonal values of the basic strings are multiplied and enriched by the harmonics of the additional parts too. The main intervals of just intonation in the SAPTAKAS are observed to realize the exact frequency ratio from the fundamental and upon it depends the real temperament and spirit of the tones and tunes of the Veena.
PARTS OF VEENA

1. Yali (The face curved in the shape of a Lion or Dragon)
2. Birade or Keys
3. Kankana
4. Kuppe
5. Tumbu or Sorekaye
6. Tala Birade or keys
7. Frets (Twenty four)
8. Dandi
9. Koda or Sound box
10. Meru
11. Shikhamani
12. Langers
13. Nagapasha
14. Nadarandhra
15. Kudure or Bridge
16. Tala Pakkareku
17. Joint of the Koda and Dandi
18. Sarini String
19. Panchama String
20. Mandara String
21. Anumandara String
22. Lines on the Koda
23. Mela or Swaras fixed on Bees wax
24. Ivory decoration Border, flower
25. Reku (Metal plate)
There are various postures adopted for playing the instrument, but the most common ones are the **URDHVA** or vertical posture and the **SAYANA** or horizontal posture. The oblique posture is virtually non-existent today in the South, though it is probably the oldest and is represented in many sculptures.

The most common way of holding the Veena is the horizontal position. The musician sits cross-legged on the floor, the large Kudam is placed on the ground with the secondary gourd resting on the lap of the player. However, a generation ago there were Vainikas who used to hold the Veena vertically – a practice that was seen sometimes in Andhra, Mysore and even Tamilnadu.

The Veena technique, having attained such subtle sophistication, has developed into different styles. One major style is the Tanjavur Style where great stress is laid on certain slowness of tempo and on gamakas, the Andhra and Mysore approach relies more on variations in plucking, staccato phraseology and simultaneous playing of more than one string. One important fact, not confined to the Veena but all instruments, is that in Carnatic Music, all playing relies heavily on vocal music. There are no special instrumental compositions apart from songs meant for singing.
TUNING OF THE SARASWATHI VEENA

Tuning being the basic requirement in any kind of music, the Indian Music also follows the golden rule, ‘Sruthi – Mātha, Laya – Pitha’. Regarding the tuning of the Saraswathi Veena, the player can choose any pitch that is comfortable for him and that suits his style of rendition. If the player wants a bass tone, he can choose either C# (C Sharp or 1 ½), D (2), D# (D Sharp or 2 ½). If the player wants a high-pitched tone for his Veena, he can go for E, F or F#, which is 3, 4 and 4 ½. It is said that Veenai Dhanammal used to play in 4(F) and sometimes even in 5 (G), while many male Vainikas who came later had played in C#. Therefore, the choosing of a convenient pitch is entirely up to the artiste’s discretion and personal preference. The most common pitch adopted for the Saraswathi Veena is D#, which is 2 ½.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.of the string</th>
<th>Name of the playing string</th>
<th>British Wire gauge No.</th>
<th>MM</th>
<th>Female Tone</th>
<th>Gauge No.</th>
<th>MM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sārini(Steel string)</td>
<td>29.</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>30 or 31</td>
<td>0.30 or 0.25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Panchama(Steel string)</td>
<td>26.</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mandra (Brass string)</td>
<td>22.</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>AnuMandra (Brass String)</td>
<td>20.</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The above table has been taken from the Book “VEENA” written by G.N.Subramanyam.

**TUNING OF THE PLAYING STRINGS**

1. The first string from the player’s side, which is the steel string Sārini is tuned to the Adhara Shadja or the Madhya Sthayi Shadja (S).

2. The second string Panchama, which is also a steel string, is tuned to the Mandra Sthayi Panchama (P).

3. The third string is Mandhara; a brass wound string, which is tuned to the Mandra Sthayi Shadja (S).

4. The fourth string is Anumandra, also a brass wound string, which is tuned to Anumandra Panchama (P).
TUNING OF THE TALA STRINGS

1. Pakka Sārini, which is a steel string, the first of the Tala strings from top to bottom is tuned to the pitch of Madhya Sthayi Shadja, just like the first main playing string.

2. Pakka Panchama, which is again a steel string, the second from top to bottom is tuned to the Madhya Sthayi Panchama.

3. The third of the Tala strings from top to bottom is the Tara Shadja, which is again a steel string and is tuned to the Tara Shadja.

Adjustment of the strings on the Saraswathi Veena is done through the help of the Birudais (tuning pegs, which are made out of wood). There is a provision to make minor adjustments, with the help of small spring-type knobs, which are movable and are attached to the Langars. The wooden Birudais react to the change in the outside weather conditions. To overcome this problem, nowadays, Guitar tuning pegs are used so as to give more precision in tuning and also to make tuning more efficient, easier and faster.

OBSERVATIONS

PLAYING STRINGS

- When the open strings are played without keeping the left hand on any particular fret, the entire length of the string vibrates.
- When the player presses his fingers on the fingerboard, on any particular fret, then, only a portion of the string’s length, i.e., the length between the finger and the bridge vibrates.

- Increasing the tension of the string increases the pitch.

- For lower pitch, thicker strings are used, for higher pitch, thin strings are used.

- If the length of the string is short, it tunes to a higher pitch and if the length is long, it tunes to a lower pitch. We notice that in the Tala strings, the Tara Sthayi Sārini is the shortest string used in the Veena.

The present day Veena with the **24 fixed frets** set on the bee’s wax is said to have been innovated some three hundred years ago. The credit for this is attributed by many, to Govinda Dikshitar (17th Century), father of Venkatamakhi. Carnatic Music is greatly indebted to him for the fixation of the twenty-four frets on the Veena. It is a well-known fact and a maxim oft quoted by our music veterans that a vocalist should learn the art of Veena playing if he were to acquire a complete knowledge of the Science and Aesthetics of Carnatic Music.

In the fretting of the Veena, no hard and fast rule has been practiced by the tuners, excepting in the case of the frets fixed by hearing the upper partials on the vibrating string. Most of the frets are fixed based on musical hearing.
instinct, i.e., by trial and error method. If this method were the main method in the procedure of fretting, it would be ideal if the tuners were musicians of a high order. The distinction between Sruthis plays an important part in the process of Veena fretting. It requires a lot of concentration and sharpness in hearing to distinguish between a Trisruthi and a Chathusruthi or an Ekasruthi and a Dvisruthi.

Of the twelve Swaras, Suddha Rishabha, Chathusruthi Rishabha, Sadharana Gandhara, Antara Gandhara, Suddha Madhyama, Prathi Madhyama, Panchama, Suddha Dhaivata, Chathusruthi Dhaivata, Kaisiki Nishada, Kakali Nishada and Tara Shadja, the frets for Tara-Shadja, Panchama, Suddha Madhyama and Antara Gandhara are easily fixed as these Swaras occur at the upper partials heard at definite points on the string. For the rest of the Swaras, except the Suddha Rishabha and the Suddha Dhaivata, as a general principle, the lower Sruthi of the Swara is accepted for the positioning of the frets. The main reason for this is that when a Swara is fixed at the lower Sruthi value, its higher value can be reached by a slight stress on the fret. There are other advantages also, for, a clean Trisruthi level of Tivra Rishabha is preferred in most of the Suddha Madhyama ragas. Also when the Veena is switched over to Madhyama Sruthi, i.e., when the Suddha
Madhyama is taken as the Aadhara Shadja, the natural varieties of the Antara Gandhara and Suddha Madhyama occur precisely on the frets Chatusruthi Daivatha and Kaisika Nishadha.

Antara Gandhara in Madhyama Sruthi will be $4/3 \times 5/4$ or $5/3$ which is Chatusruthi Dhaivata of the original Sruthi and – Suddha Madhyama in Madhyama Sruthi will be $4/3 \times 4/3$ or $16/9$ which is Kaisika Nishadha of the original Sruthi.

However, the trisruthi Rishabha would not be obtained in Madhyama Sruthi, as the Rishabha obtained on the Panchama fret will have a frequency of $3/2$ divided by $4/3$ or $9/8$ which is Chatusruthi.

In the case of Suddha Rishabha and Suddha Dhaivatha, since they are next to the Achala Swaras – viz., Sa and Pa, it is desirable to play the lower Sruthis of these Swaras on their previous frets that are steady notes or play them on the open strings, stressing behind the Meru. Incidentally, it is suggested that the strings, Sārini and the Panchama, are fastened to the pegs farthest behind the Meru. The frequencies of the Swaras, Sudha Rishabha and Suddha Dhaivatha placed on the frets will be of the higher variety.
Taking into consideration the above facts, the values of the Swaras on the fingerboard of the Veena on the Shadja string will be –

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R1</td>
<td>16/15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R2</td>
<td>10/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G1</td>
<td>32/27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2</td>
<td>5/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M1</td>
<td>4/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M2</td>
<td>45/32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>3/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D1</td>
<td>8/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D2</td>
<td>5/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N1</td>
<td>16/19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2</td>
<td>15/8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Usually, in the process of fretting the Veena, the following is done: -

The four main strings are tuned to Shadja, Mandra Panchama, Mandra Shadja and Anumandra Panchama. The pakka Sārini or the three side strings act as a drone. For the initial placing and the later positioning and checking of the frets, with Sa – Pa or Sa – Ma relationships, these side strings are intermittently twanged either individually or simultaneously while in the process of fretting.

To enable the process of fretting the Veena to be done on a Scientific basis, proceeding from the known to the unknown and also to be sure of the frequencies of notes obtained on the Veena, the following method is

“In this method, the side strings are completely done away with, during fretting for the following reasons –

- Firstly, neither the placement nor the checking of the positioned frets depend on the Shadja – Panchama or the Shadja Madhyama relationships; the procedure is conducted on Octave Relationship.
- Secondly, when more than one string is set in vibration, discrimination between Sruthis becomes more difficult, and coalescence of Sruthis get blurred.

The suggested method is as follows –

The first main string is set with a convenient tension giving the Aadhara Sruthi or Shadja. Slightly touching the string at the positions of a half, a third, a fourth and a fifth of the string, and plucking it, the upper partials S, P, S and G can be heard. At these points, the frets are positioned, giving the Swaras, Tara Shadja, Panchama, Suddha Madhyama and Antara Gāndhara.

The second stage in the process is the tuning of the three strings that are behind the Sārini or the first string. The second string that is just behind the Sarini is tuned to Mandra Panchama, checking with the Panchama fret
already fixed. Following this Octave relationship, the string behind the Panchama string is tuned to Mandra Madhyama, checking with the Madhyama fret already fixed. Similarly, the last string is tuned to Mandra Gāndhara, checking with the Gāndhara fret already positioned. Thus, the four strings are tuned in the same relationship as that of the frets positioned so far viz., Antara Gāndhara, Suddha Madhyama, Panchama and Shadja.

On the positioned frets of these strings, the Swaras produced are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ga fret</th>
<th>Ma fret</th>
<th>Pa fret</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pa string</td>
<td>Ni2</td>
<td>Sa</td>
<td>Ri2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ma string</td>
<td>Dha2</td>
<td>Ni2</td>
<td>Sa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ga string</td>
<td>Dha1</td>
<td>Dha2</td>
<td>Ni2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Considering these values with those determined earlier for the Swaras on the fingerboard of the Veena on the Shadja string, the common ones are:

15/8 ... N2
5/3 ... D2
16/9 ... N1

Those that do not fit are:
9/8 – R2 and 25/16 – D1.
Hence the frets for the Swaras N2, N1 and D2 can be fixed following the octave relationship as follows –

The Swara N2 is heard on the Pa string on the Ga fret as well as on the Pa fret on the Ga string. The position of N2 fret is just behind the Tāra Shadja. Hearing the Swara emitted at the Gāndhara fret on the Panchama string, N2 or the Kakali Nishadha is fixed. The position of N2 on the Panchama string or the Swara produced on the Panchama string at the Kakali Nishadha fret will be Prathi Madhyama. The frequency of this Swara M2 will be $15/8 \times 3/2 \times 1/2$ or 45/32.

This is the value needed for M2. Hence the M2 fret is fixed, its position being just behind the Kakali Nishadha fret.

The position of M2 on the Pa string will yield the Swara, Komal Rishabha. The value for this Swara will be –

45/32 divided by $4/3$ or $45/32 \times 3/4 = 135/128$. This value is lower than 16/15, the value already noted for Suddha Rishabha. Hence this is an additional Sruthi for Sudha Rishabha. As the value of R1 needed for the purpose of fretting is only 16/15, the R1 fret is not fixed at this juncture.

The placement of the frets N1 and D2 is respectively done in the manner in which the N2 fret was fixed, checking with the Swaras produced on Ma.
string on the Ga fret and Ma fret and positioning the frets N1 and D2 on the Shadja string. Placing two more frets for the Swaras N1 and D2 on the Pa string, the Swaras G1 and R2 are obtained on the Sa string.

The frequency ratios of the Swaras obtained on the frets so far fixed are:

N1 – from Ma string on Ma fret – $\frac{4}{3} \times \frac{4}{3} = \frac{16}{9}$

D2 – from Ma string on Ga fret – $\frac{4}{3} \times \frac{5}{4} = \frac{5}{3}$

G1 – identical position of N1 on Sa string – $\frac{16}{9} \times \frac{4}{3} \times \frac{1}{2} = \frac{32}{27}$

R2 – identical position of D2 on Sa string – $\frac{5}{3} \times \frac{4}{3} \times \frac{1}{2} = \frac{10}{9}$

To position the frets for R1 and D1, the procedure is as follows –

On the Ga string, the fret yielding the Swara in unison with the adjacent string, viz., the Ma string, is fixed. This will be the first fret i.e., the one next to the Meru. This will give the Swara R1, on the Sa string. The value of this R1 will be the relationship of M1 to G2 i.e., $\frac{4}{3}$ divided by $\frac{5}{4}$ or $\frac{4}{3} \times \frac{4}{5}$ or $\frac{16}{15}$. On the Pa string, the Swara at this position will be D1 whose value will be $\frac{3}{2} \times \frac{16}{15}$ or $\frac{8}{5}$.

The fret for D1, which is the one next to the Panchama fret, can be now fixed by the Octave relationship of the Swara D1 positioned on Pa string.
Thus, the first twelve frets on the fingerboard of the Veena are fixed. The following set of twelve frets belonging to the Tāra Sthāyi can be fixed by the Octave relationship of the Swaras in the Madhyama Sthāyi.

Having positioned the frets on the Veena, it could be noted that different frequencies for the Swaras, R1, R2 and G1 are obtained from the Sārini and the Panchama strings as noted below –

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Swara</th>
<th>Sa String</th>
<th>Pa String</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R 1</td>
<td>16/15</td>
<td>135/128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R 2</td>
<td>10/9</td>
<td>9/8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G 1</td>
<td>32/27</td>
<td>6/5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The main factors to be observed before the commencement of the process of fretting the Veena are: -

- The Veena should be provided with a new set of Strings without any dent.
- The Sārini or the Shadja should be tuned to the pitch at which the Veena is likely to be used later, tension being an important factor in determining pitch; the other strings are tuned correspondingly.
- The wax applied on the ledges of the fingerboard should be semi-hard.
The gradual slope of the spread wax should be examined so that the frets of higher frequency notes do not touch the vibrating string when the Swaras on the frets of lower frequency are played.

In the method suggested for the fretting of the Veena, some auxiliary clip like contrivance would be necessary. For instance, while positioning the N2 fret, the clip could be fastened at the fret of the Pa string, so that while the right hand plucks the Sa and Pa strings, the left hand would be free to determine the appropriate point for fixing the N2 fret.”

Though this is a very scientific and well-perceived method that calls for systematic calculation and analysis, we find that many traditional Veena makers from Trichy and Thanjavur still go by their musical instinct, hearing sense and experience.

**PLAYING TECHNIQUE OF THE RIGHT HAND – “MEETU”**

‘Meetu’ is a special term used for plucking the strings in a stringed instrument. The Veena has to be played with the right palm resting on the main resonator with the fingers free to pluck the strings between the bridge and the frets. This is an ideal place meant for Meetu as we get the best sound here. The thumb must be kept separate and can hold the side of the
resonator. First, the plucking or the ‘Meetu’ with the right hand forefinger and middle finger is done alternatively. The little finger moves upward and touches the three Tala strings, quite close upon each other, so that all the Tala strings chime together with no regular dingdong.

The Veena is the only instrument that sounds Sruthi and Laya together. If the Tāla strings are used meaningfully and with discretion it adds to the liveliness and tunefulness of the music. It is said that the right hand should be kept like the hood of a snake and a perfect harmony between the forefinger, the middle finger and the little finger is really essential to produce continuity. The movement of the plucking fingers is downward. It is an inexorable rule that they descend upon the strings alternately and that the forefinger and the little finger act together and relieves the middle finger. The Tāla strings are sounded one after the other in the intervals during raga elaboration. During Tānam, the right hand follows different Nadas of Ta ki ta, Ta ka ta ki ta and weaves different and intricate Tānam patterns.

While playing Sol-fa passages, every note takes a Meetu. This is known as Swara Meetu. The other Meetu, the Sāhitya Meetu, covers more than one note and is used only in places where the Sāhithyam syllables occurs.
Another variety in plucking is Oli or Kaarvai Meetu and Tadai or Tattu Meetu. The former keeps the sound of the notes lingering on, while the latter renders them staccato – one finger stops the sound produced by its companion. The device punctuates the sound and eschews monotony. The use of plectrums, or artificial nails to enhance the loudness of sound depends upon the choice and will of the player. Many players use neither plectrums nor artificial nails, they simply use their fingers with real nails.

Coming to the left hand, the fore finger and middle are the most important ones that are used. The ring finger is also occasionally used. Of the two left hand fingers, the middle one has a very important role. The other is a little more than an auxiliary. Plucking the strings and fingering the frets are complementary. Meetu and Gamaka cannot be treated as separate items of technique. After all, Music is an organic whole like the human body.

Throwing more light on the left hand technique, its possibilities are innumerable. A glide from one note to another is a basic step. This can be done either with both the forefinger and middle finger in the same fret and then gliding to another note with a right hand Meetu without separating both the fingers in the left hand. In some schools, the separating of fingers is a
very integral part of their technique. For ‘R G’ in Shankarabharanam, they
would prefer to keep the forefinger in R and with continued sound of the
Meetu, would keep the middle finger with a slight thud in the ‘G’ note.
Again as already mentioned, gliding both the fingers together from ‘R’ to
‘G’, or from any note to any note can also do this. Another important left
hand technique is the deflection of the strings, which is nothing but
gamakas.

There are also special exercises for ‘pulling’ of strings to reach a particular
note. The curved surface of each fret provided in the wax allows scope for
pulling of the strings. At least a minimum of four notes can be reached by
pulling in each fret. From Madhya Sthāyi ‘R’ the player can practice pulling
till Madhya Sthāyi ‘P’. When more notes can be produced with ease in a
single fret, there will be more continuity in the music presented. The right
amount pressure on the strings from both the left and right hand is very
essential to produce the real ‘Naada’ of the Veena.

Coming to ‘Separating finger’ technique, there are many varieties and
exercises that will help us in producing any difficult or complicated phrase,
passage or piece of music on the Veena.
A sensitive ear, creative mind and deft fingers can evolve many interesting fingering techniques to produce the music created by the mind on the Veena.

Different kinds of plucking or ‘Meetu’ used in Veena playing as mentioned in ancient musical works are: -

- Tarjani Meetu – Plucking the strings with the right hand index finger.
- Madhyama Meetu – Plucking the strings with the right hand middle finger.
- Kanishtika Meetu or Laya Meetu or Pakka Meetu – Plucking the Tāla strings with the right hand little finger upwardly.
- Lo Meetu or Keezh Meetu or Ull Meetu – Striking the strings downwardly with the right hand forefinger.
- Veli Meetu or Mel Meetu – Striking the strings upwardly with the right hand forefinger.
- Periya Meetu – Plucking the strings forcefully.
- Sanna Meetu – Plucking the strings softly.
- Gotu Meetu – Lo Meetu and Laya Meetu played simultaneously.
• Pattu Meetu – Plucking the string with the right hand index finger and stopping it immediately with the right hand middle finger.

• Vidpu Meetu – Letting the strings free after the Pattu Meetu.

• Kodi Meetu – Placing the finger lightly on the first playing string and then lifting it.

• Kuttu Meetu – Plucking all the four playing strings with the right hand index, middle and ring fingers simultaneously.

• Vidi Meetu – Plucking the third, second and first strings one by one.

• Kathiri Meetu – Plucking with the right hand index finger and middle finger sharply one after the other so as to produce a tremulous effect.

• Swara Meetu – Plucking the strings for all the Swaras.

• Sāhitya Meetu – Plucking the strings for Sahitya letters alone.

Some interesting points of Veena technique call for attention as they throw light upon the unlimited capacity of the Veena in revealing subtleties in musical expression. They also emphasize the status of the Veena as the Queen of Instruments. ‘Raga Vibodha’ by Somanatha Kavi mentions more than twenty points pertaining to Desi Music in the middle and higher octaves.
• **PRATIHATI** – A clear, sparkling note produced by a pluck and taken to its octave with a second plucking with a neat, crisp Jaru, the forefinger and the middle finger pluck the string with a minimum of interval between them.

• **AHATI** – The same note ascending to its octave without a second plucking.

• **ANUHATI** - The basic note followed by its octave with neither a Jāru nor an additional pluck.

• **PEEDA** - A note produced by a pluck with the middle finger on the fret repeated by a quick movement of a forefinger from the previous fret.

• **DOLANA** – An ascending or a descending Jaru.

• **VIKARSHA** – An ascending Jāru.

• **GAMAKA** – A slow shake.

• **KAMPA** – A quick shake.

• **GHARSHANA** – Sound a note with the middle finger on the fret. Let go the finger with a ticking sound in order to ensure its continuity. Simultaneously, place the forefinger on the previous fret with a thud, so that the lower note sounds clear and distinct. Follow the note by shifting the middle finger from the first note to
its next higher note. This is very important. It involves three notes, Y, X, Z, two fingers and one plucking. The function of the two fingers needs careful attention and practice.

- **MUDRA** – Gharshana with the first note and its previous (lower) one. The first note is only an auxiliary and the second primary. The first, therefore, is only a fourth of the second in unit length.

- **SPARSA** – A slight variant of Mudra in fingering, but the two notes are of equal length, resulting in a slow Kampita Gamaka.

- **NAIMNYA** – Sound a note and augment its volume through a little pressure on the fret. Deflection will produce the higher note. Too much pressure can also have the same result. The objective is only a stress on the note.

- **PLUTI** – A musical phrase covered in one beat by a mechanical shift of the playing fingers on the frets. This has no Gamaka and lacks intensity of tone. It will sound like GottuVadyam or Vichitra Veena.

- **DRUTI** – Pluti in accelerated tempo. It has poor melodic value, though it is spectacular.
PARATA – Producing the next higher note by deflecting the string.

UCHCHATA – Producing the note of the next (the third) by deflecting the string.

NIJATA (a) – Parata followed by a descent to the next lower note in the same beat.

NIJATA (b) – Uchchata followed by the same as (a).

SAMA – Restrained play

MRUDU – Soft and flowing, rather lusterless

KATHINA – Virile and forceful play.

may be ‘Sakala’. When the strings of the Veena are struck to produce a fairly strong note, it is Sakala. ‘Karanikalu’ may perhaps refer to six Karanas enumerated by Sāranga Deva namely, ‘Rupa’, ‘Kruthaprathi krutha’, ‘Prathibhedha’, ‘Rupa Sesa’, ‘Ogha’ and ‘Prathi Suksa’. ‘Talapatte’ may be taken as one of the Dhātus referring to playing of Tāla. ‘Dandi’ appears to be similar to ‘Dandaka’ mentioned in the ‘Sangeetha Ratnakara’. It is a combination of different plectral modes such as ‘Sakalitha’, ‘Murchchana’, ‘Repha’ and ‘Khasita’. This blending was probably adhered to in order to embellish the notes and to produce the gamakas that had been developed by them. Since most of the olden types of Veenas were only harp types of Veenas, the gamakas could be produced only by the manipulation of strings by the fingers of both the hands.

Ref: ‘Music through the Ages’ Page 218 by Dr. Premalatha

Many of these techniques are not in Vogue in today’s Veena playing. It is most probable that there are sets of new techniques that have evolved now, over the period of years. The Gāyaki School of playing and the instrumental schools of playing have all explored the Veena in many dimensions thereby creating various new and different techniques. We will discuss more about these in the forthcoming chapters.
Another very important aspect of Carnatic Music and a very integral part of Veena Music is **GAMAKA**.

The word Gamaka can be derived from the root gam - gachch meaning ‘to go’. It can be associated with the words gama or gamana to imply the process of going, moving or reaching. In music it connotes the process of the movement of a Swara from its original position to another region. In practice, Gamaka does not cease with the conveying of the idea of oscillation. Each raga has a distinct form. The presence of the various gamakas is responsible for establishing the individual shade and colour of the Raga. The same Swara may occur in different forms in the same raga. Eg. ‘Ga’ in Thodi. But a sound knowledge of Gamakas and the Techniques of playing it is very essential to produce these Gamakas on the Veena.

Gamakas may be classified into two categories –

1. **Gamaka – Sambanda - Gamakas**: those of a wavy type wherein the oscillations of the Swara is apparent and

2. **Janta-Sambhanda Gamakas**: those that approach the Swara with a slide or a stress. In the former, the shake of the Swara is felt whereas in the latter, the approach of the Swara is steadier.
### Kampita:

Kampita means a shake. Generally, Kampita gamakas is taken to be an oscillation from a higher Swara to a lower one. For Eg. The phrase ‘g M p’ in the Raga Shankarabharanam, ‘M’ is produced as ‘p m p m’ in a wavy manner.

The next variety of Kampita is the gamakas wherein the Swara is oscillated in its own sthāna or region. (R R R r r – Madhyamavathi)

### Sphuritha:

Sphuritha is the stress given to the second note of a Janta Sambanda Prayoga or a phrase of double notes. In the phrase ‘s s r r g g m m’, the second note is pronounced with a stress. In ‘s s’, the effect produced is ‘s ns’. Sphuritha means throbbing. The positions of the Swara before and after the Sphuritha are absolutely clear and steady. In playing the phrase ‘s s n n d d p p’ on the Veena, the techniques of some schools are as follows. The first Swara ‘ni’ is

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<tr>
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played with the forefinger and for the second ‘ni’, the forefinger is drawn back to the previous fret and the middle finger takes its position on the Swara, producing the effect of the stress. Though the fingering technique on the Sphuritha is different in Aarohana and in Avarohana phrases of Janta Swara, the effect produced is the same.

Pratyahata:

‘Pratyaghata’ means ‘strike back’. Later texts mention this Gamaka as ‘Pratyahata’ only. When a Swara is obtained from a higher one in a Janta Swara prayoga, invariably it is accompanied with a Gamaka sambhanda touch. Pratyahata may be considered as a Gamaka Sambhanda Gamaka produced from the higher note in a Janta Swara Prayoga.

Nokku:

This is the simplest of all gamakas. In Kampita Gamaka of this first type (where the oscillation starts from the higher note) when the time given for the first movement is very short, the effect of a free oscillation is not got; but a pronounced stress is produced. This is just a pull given from the Swara above. This gamakas is termed Nokku.

In the raga ‘Mayamalavagowla, in the phrase, ‘s r g m’ the Swara ‘ga’ arises from ‘ma’ and is usually given a pull on the Swara ‘ ga’ itself when rendered on the Veena.
**Ravai:**

In some combinations of Swaras as ‘p m’ before coming to ‘ma’ the ‘pa’ is repeated softly with a touch of Sphurita, ‘p m’ is produced as ‘P pm’. This gamakas generally occurs in the Avarohana or descend.

**Khandippu:**

Khandippu is also more common in descend. It is practically a Nokku with a pause between two alternate Swaras backward. The intermediate Swara to which the Khandippu is given marks the pause. For Eg. In the raga ‘Surutti’, ‘m g p m R’ the Swara ‘R’ is produced with a slide from ‘ga’ that becomes an anuswara here. Also, the slide comes after a break from the intermediate Swara ‘ga’.

**Etrajaru and Errakkajaru:**

Jāru means a slide. Etrajaru is a Jāru in Arohana, or ascend, and Errakkajāru is a Jāru in Avarohana or descend. These slides may take place between any two Swaras. The Jāru is a very powerful Gamaka, as it can change the very form of a group of Swaras. For Eg: the Raga Madhyamavathi can assume the form of the Raga Devakriya with emphasis on the slides and with greater emphasis can assume the form of the Raga Brindavana Saranga.
**Odukkal**

Just as Nokku resembles the first type of Kampita, Odukkal resembles the second type of Kampita. There is only a single oscillation in this Gamaka. A strong landing on the lower Swara is given and the Swara to which the Odukkal is given, is reached by a slight deflection. An example can be quoted from the last Swara passage in the Charanam of the famous Ata Talam Varnam in the Ragam Bhairavi: ‘G G R S’, Here the second ‘GA’ is played on the Veena with a steady landing on the RI- fret, followed by a pull on ‘RI’ itself.

**Orikkai**

Orikkai is a Janta Sambhanda type of Odukkal. The Gamaka Swara is just touched upon with a similar landing in the previous Swara. An example: In the commencement of the Krithi ‘Tulasidala’ in the Raga ‘Mayamalavagowla’, the words ‘TU LA SI’ falls under the Swaras ‘ NI DA PA’ respectively. Here the ‘NI’ is first rendered with a ‘NOKKU’ and the ‘DA’ is rendered as a ‘PD’ and ‘PA” as ‘MP’ in the second speed, with a steady push from below.

Another type of Orikkai is that wherein the Anuswara is the next higher Swara approached with a slight ‘ETRAJARU’ just as the lower Swara with a
tinge of ‘ETRAJARU’ was given in the above example ‘TULASIDALA’. This may be introduced as a second variety of Orikkkai.

**Vali:**

This Gamaka occurs generally on a long Swara with two or three mātras. The Swara by itself is not given any oscillation. It has anuswaras hovering around the gamakas Swaras. Stabilizing on one Swara, there is a circular movement by which the effects of one, two or three Swaras are produced. In Ragas like Aahiri, Asaveri and Punnagavarali, this gamakas occurs profusely.

There are some gamakas that are used in instrumental music. A Gamaka may be produced with the combination of two, three or more Swaras, sometimes, even from two octaves, all produced simultaneously. The Gamakas ‘Tribinna’ is played on the Veena by plucking two or three strings with a sweep at one stroke. This is used with great effect while rendering the ‘Kuta Taana’ in the Veena or GottuVādyam. However, the Gamakas are explained here only theoretically in an analytical and scientific angle. Unless proper training and practice is given both on voice and instrument, a clear understanding of the gamakas will elude grasp. One has to understand, appreciate and go beyond science to reach the parameters of ART.

Ref: ‘Art and Science of Carnatic Music’ by Smt. Vidyashankar published by Parampara based on pages 152 to 161
Tanam is one of the most beautiful and mesmerizing manodharma (improvisational) components of Carnatic music. It is all the more attractive and significant as a musical form when performed on the Veena.

"tānyatE iti tAnaH" says Sārangadeva in ‘Sangeetha Rathanakara’, the encyclopedia on music. tānyatE, means elaboration, hence Tānam is that which is capable of being elaborated. The connotation of the term ‘Tānam’ and the method of rendering this particular musical entity have changed drastically from Bharata's period to what it is today.

Tānam sounds best on the Veena. The Tālam strings, the technique of fingering and plucking and the wealth of gamakas come in quite handy for the development of this wonderful feature of Veena music that has scaled undreamt of heights in aesthetic beauty.

Many musicologists are of the opinion that Tānam has come to Vocal music from Veena only. The phrases used for singing Tānam are ‘ANANTHA’ & ‘THAANAMTHA’.

Just as there is a laya for Raaga Aalapana, Tānam too has a laya and is Layapradhanam. Usually in concerts Tānam is played or sung sans
percussion accompaniment but in some instances soft percussion accompaniment is also in vogue.

The Ghana raaga Tānam is an important item played on the Veena.

1. The first Ghana Raga Panchakam is Nattai, Gowla, Arabhi, Varali and Sriragam.

2. The second Ghana Raga Panchakam is Ritigowla, Bowli, Narayanagowla, Sāranga and Kedaram.

In playing Tānam, the work of the right hand fingers and the technique plays a very important role.

**OBSERVATIONS**

While playing Tānam, Prasthara should be done on the Jeeva Swaras of that particular raga.

- The Graha and Nyasa Swaras of the Raga should be kept in mind while doing Tāna Prāstara. This means that the player should be well versed in the raga lakshanās.

- Sancharas should start from Mandra Sthayi and proceed to the Madhyama Sthayi, elaborate the Sancharas on the Jeeva Swaras
and Raga Chāya Swaras only and then proceed to the Tara Sthayi.

- Even at the Tāra Sthayi, Sancharas should be done on the Jeeva Swaras and then slowly come down in Avarohana order and complete the Tānam.
- From the beginning to the end, the Tānam should maintain a balance in exposition, virtuosity, Bhava and rakthi.
- Raga Bhāva should not be lost till the completion. Tānam has been divided into many varieties and separate names have also been given.

There are different types of Tānam based on the characteristic gait of animals and birds. Ashva (horse), gaja (elephant), markata (monkey), mayura (peacock), kukkuta (cock) and manduka (frog) are some of these Tanams, other than of course, mānava Tanam!

Tānams are also classified on the basis of figurative patterns, says Prof. Sambamurthy. They are chakra (cyclic), vakra (zig zag), mishra (mixed), malika (garland), gambhira (majestic) and vidya Tanam.

Chakra Tānam: s g m – g m p - p d n – d n s – n s r , g m p d p- m p d n d – p d n s n . The Swaras are grouped in the form of Chakra.
**Vakra Tānam**: Sancharas in this are Vakra. Eg. S g – s m – r p- m n- s d-n p – n m – p r

**Mishra Tānam**: Mixing of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 Swaras or notes.

**Gambheera Tānam**: Playing on the Mandra Sthayi.

**Malika Tānam**: Tanam played in Various Ragas one after the other.

**Viddyuth Tānam**: Playing Tānam in Drutha Kālam (Third speed).

Bharatha has stated 84 Varieties of Tānam. It is doubtful as to how many of them are in practice today.

Two more Varieties of Tānam have also been mentioned in some books.

1. Suddha Tānam

2. Koota Tānam.

Tānam played in Melakartha and Upanga ragas is known as ‘Suddha Tānam’ and Tānam played in Bhashanga ragas is known as Koota Tānam. In the book written by Govinda Dikshitar, page 74, it is said that if Sapthaswaras are played in Vakra Sancharas, it is called Koota Tānam.
and if only 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 Swaras are combined and played, it is Sampoorna Tānam.

Conclusion: This is but an eagle’s eye view of the GREAT SAGA called ‘THE ART OF VEENA PLAYING’. Every instrument has an individual personality that transcends the mechanics of its technique. Hard work does achieve a measure of Virtuosity. But only a genius awakens the personality of an instrument. In fact, he/she and the instrument become one and indivisible.