

## Usage of Musical Instruments in Telugu Film Music with Reference to Veena, Violin and Flute

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### I. Introduction

Indian classical music is a rich tradition that originated in South Asia and can now be found in all corners of the world. It's origins date back to sacred Vedic scriptures over 6,000 years ago where chants developed a system of musical notes and rhythmic cycles. In this way, Indian classical music is very closely connected to nature, taking inspiration from natural phenomena including the seasons and times of the day to create 'ragas' or musical moods and many time cycles or 'Taalas' that have been further codified. There are two distinct traditions that are generally geographically divided between North and South India. They have similar roots and concepts and their elaboration is beautifully contrasted and many different instruments are used.

### II. Music and Musical instruments

A musical instrument is a device created or adapted to make musical sounds. In principle, any object that produces sound can be considered a musical instrument—it is through purpose that the object becomes a musical instrument. Early musical instruments may have been used for ritual, such as a horn to signal success on the hunt, or a drum in a religious ceremony. Musical instruments evolved in step with changing applications and technologies. Musical instruments developed independently in many populated regions of the world.

### III. Usage of musical instruments in Telugu film music

Telugu Music is made and listened across entire India, but the biggest commercial use is in the Tollywood Film Industry. When a new Telugu film gets made, for each scene there is a song specifically made for the opening and closing soundtracks, theme- songs. For each song made for specific occasions/purpose say a sad song - an instrument such as violin is used exclusively for backing the situation. Below are few instruments which are being used since a long time in Telugu films and the study would be on the usage of these instruments since 1960's-20's.

A) **Veena** – The Veena comprises a family of chordophone instruments of the Indian subcontinent. Ancient musical instruments evolved into many variations, such as lutes, zithers and arched harps. The many regional designs have different names such as the Rudra Veena, the Saraswati Veena, the Vichitra Veena and others.



*Veena* is a plucked stringed instrument used in Camatic music. There are several variations of the veena, which in its South Indian form is a member of the lute family. One who plays the veena is referred to as a *vainika*.

During 1960's, Veena was not only used for background music but also actors used it as a performing instrument on screen. To elevate a happy emotion in a movie, Veena Thanam was used at-most. But now-a-days, Veena is being used for fast beats and melodies as a fusion instrument.

**B) Violin** - The violin, sometimes known as a fiddle, is a wooden chordophone (string instrument) in the violin family. Most violins have a hollow wooden body. It is the smallest and thus highest-pitched instrument (soprano) in the family in regular use. They are most prominent in the classical tradition, both in ensembles (from chamber music to orchestras) and as solo instruments. The violin has come to be incorporated in many film music cultures, including Indian films and Iranian films.



The violin is a bowed string instrument with four strings tuned in perfect fifths. It is the smallest and highest-pitched member of the violin family of string instruments, which also includes the viola and cello. A violin is sometimes informally called a fiddle, no matter what kind of music is played on it. The word "violin" comes to us through the Romance languages from the Middle Latin word *vitula*, meaning "stringed instrument"; this word may also be the source of the Germanic "fiddle". A person who plays the violin is called a violinist or fiddler, and a person who makes or repairs them is called a luthier, or simply a violin maker.

In earlier days, violin in movies was used as a voice following instrument and for most of the re-recordings group violins were used a lot

**C. Flute** - The Indian Bamboo Flute also known as Bansuri or Murali is one of the oldest musical instruments of India, developed independently of the Western flute. The flutes made in India have different kinds and their lengths and number of holes varies. The flute is handled in oblique position and air is blown with upper lip into the main hole. Thumbs are used to hold the flute in position while the fingers are used to manipulate the finger holes. Different octaves are produced by covering the holes with the fingers. The Indian Bamboo Flute is most often used in Classical music.



The flute is a musical instrument of the woodwind family. Unlike other woodwind instruments, a flute is a reedless wind instrument that produces its sound from the flow of air against an edge, instead of using a reed. A musician who plays the flute can be referred to as a *flute player*, a *flautist*, a *flutist* or even a *fluter*.

Flute is an evergreen instrument in film music. It is used in multiple music genres i.e., in folk music, classical, melodies and also in re-recordings. It is not only used in film music but at present being used in fusion musical bands.

**IV. Classification of Musical Instruments as per Natya Sastra**  
*Natya Sastra* classified musical instruments (vadyas) into four types: and those struck against each other such as cymbals (*ghana*: autophones). The last



are time-keeping instruments and are the earliest.

Flute is ancient instrument. The earlier flutes were direct flutes. The side blown instruments came later. Prapancham Seetharam and N.S. Srinivasan have been popular flutists.

Initially mridanga, the most ancient drum, as the very name suggests, used to be made out of clay. Gradually they came to be made out of wood and animal membrane. Several Andhra artists have mastered this instrument. Aswadhati Rama Murthy in the early part of the century, Kolanka Venkataraju, Dandamudi Rama Mohan Rao and Yella Venkateswara Rao in the present generation have earned wide acclamation for their art.

Veena also is one of the most ancient musical instruments mentioned in Vedic and post-Vedic literature. In Andhra stalwarts like Venkataramana Das, Tumurada Sangameswara Sastry, Emani Sankara Sastry and his disciple Chitti Babu are some of the noted

1. Stringed Instruments or Chordophones (Tata Vadya)
2. Wind Instruments or Aerophones (Sushir Vadya)
3. Percussion Instruments or membranophones (Avanaddha Vadya)
4. Solid Instruments Idiophones (Ghan Vadya)

The history of evolution of music and musical instruments has not been preserved on leaves, papers and stones which are the ancient writing materials. Music being auditory, it is not possible to listen to-day the music of the ancient time. However man has sought to express something beyond the mundane through the medium of the art throughout the ages; and music is one of the most important fine arts that enabled man to express stirrings of his soul. And for that

purpose he used any object, which can produce music, from a piece of stone or a leaf to the most complicated tone synthesizer. Musical instrument can therefore be defined as any object or instrument which produce music.

Thus the classification of Indian musical instruments is done on the basis of the above-mentioned four melodious sounds, which are produced in different four ways. Most of the scholars are of opinion that there are four divisions of Indian musical instruments.

And this four-fold classification of the instruments determined by Bharat is accepted by many of his successors. So almost all the Indian musical instruments are covered up in the above-mentioned four classes. Whereas in western countries, mainly three classes are prevalent and they are-

- (1) Stringed Instruments
- (2) Wind Instruments
- (3) Percussion Instruments.
- (4) Solid Instruments

In west, there is no separate class for *ghana* instruments; *ghana* and *avanaddho* both are included in the class of percussion instruments. In western countries, many new instruments have come into existence from mediaeval period, and it has become a problem to the world of musicians to classify them in some particular class. It may be noted that in the Western sense of the term, India does not have an Orchestra but it has produced a rich variety of musical instruments known as solo, accompanying, classical, folk, etc.

The Indian classification of musical instruments given below is not only ancient but is widely accepted by the Musicologists even to-day.

## V) Different Instruments

Regular musical instruments are of four kinds, such as 'stringed' (tata), 'Wind' (suşira), 'Percussion' (avanaddha) and 'solid' (ghana).

**String Instruments:** Some string instruments are mainly plucked, such as the **Veena and Violin**. In the scheme of musical instrument classification, used in organology, string instruments are called chordophones. Other examples include the 1. Veena, 2. Violine, 3. Sitar, 4. Acoustic Bass Guitar, 5. Banjo, 6. Bass Guitar, 7. Classical Guitar, 8. Ektara, 9. Electric Guitar, 10. Organ, 11. Piano, 12. Santoor, 13. Sarangi, 14. Sarod, 15. Slide Guitar, 16. Steel Guitar, 17. Harp, 18. Piano, 19. Mandolin.

## VI) Usage of Veena in Telugu film music from 1960's to 2020's

### VEENA

*Veena* is a plucked stringed instrument used in Camatic music. There are several variations of the veena, which in its South Indian form is a member of the lute family. One who plays the veena is referred to as a *vainika*.

**Historical Development:** The design of the veena has evolved over the years, probably from the form seen in Indian Medieval paintings and temple sculpture: a string instrument with two gourd resonators connected by a central shaft, possibly of bamboo, and held diagonally from lap to shoulder. Sangeet Ratnakar calls it *Ektantri Veena* and gives the method for its construction. The North Indian *rudra veena* and *vichitra veena*, technically zithers, demonstrate this genealogy. The South Indian or *Saraswati veena* was developed in the 1600s. Made in several regions in South India, by hereditary makers from Thanjavur.

**Manufacturing and Usage:** *Construction:* About four feet in length, its design consists of a large resonator (*kudam*)

carved and hollowed out of a log (usually of jackwood), a tapering hollow neck (*dandt*) topped with 24 brass or bell-metal frets set in scalloped black wax on wooden tracks, and a tuning box culminating in a downward curve and an ornamental dragon's head (*yali*). A small table-like wooden bridge (*kudurai*)--about 2 x 21/2 x 2 inches--is topped by a convex brass plate glued in place with resin. Two rosettes, formerly of ivory, now of plastic or horn, are on the top board (*palakai*) of the resonator.



Four main playing strings tuned to the tonic and the fifth in two octaves (for example, B-flat E-flat below bass clef-B-flat E-flat in bass clef) stretch from fine tuning connectors attached to the end of the resonator. across the bridge and above the fretboard to four large-headed pegs in the tuning box. Three subsidiary drone strings tuned to the tonic, fifth, and upper tonic (E flat-B flat- E flat in the tuning given above) cross a curving side bridge leaning against the main bridge, and stretch on the player's side of the neck to three pegs matching those of the main playing strings. All seven strings today are of steel, with the lower strings often wound like those of the lower strings of a guitar.

The chromatic distribution of frets (12 to the octave) points to a possible adoption of the fretting of the guitar, which had certainly been brought to India by the 17th century by the Portuguese.

**Playing Technique:** The veena is played by sitting cross-legged with the instrument held tilted slightly away from the player. The small gourd on the left rests on the player's left thigh, the left arm passing beneath the neck with the hand

curving up and around so that the fingers rest upon the frets. The palm of the right hand rests on the edge of the top plank so that the fingers (usually index and middle) can pluck the strings. The drone strings are played with the little finger. The veena's large resonator is placed on the floor, beyond the right thigh. Like the *sitar*, the left hand technique involves playing on the frets, controlled pulling on the strings to achieve higher tones and glissandi through increased tension, and finger flicks, all reflecting the characteristics of various *ragas* and their ornamentation (*gamaka*). Modern innovations include a circular sound hole (like that of the guitar), substitution of machine tuners for wooden pegs for easier tuning, and the widespread use of contact microphones in performance. Unfortunately, contact mikes (often combined with poor amplification systems) greatly distort the remarkable acoustics of the *veena* and its rich mix of overtones. Cultural Associations: The patron Hindu goddess of learning and the arts, Saraswati, is often depicted seated upon a swan or peacock playing a *veena*. According to the *Puranic* scriptures of Hinduism the demon-king Ravana and the monkey-god Hanuman were great *veena* players, as is the sage Narada.

#### VII) Usage of Violin in Telugu film music from 1960's to 2020's



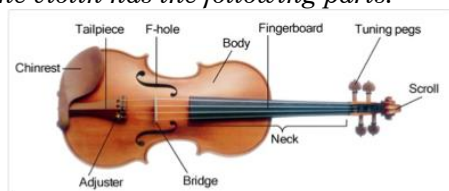
**Violin:** Violin, by name **fiddle**, bowedstringed musical instrument that evolved during the Renaissance from

earlier bowed instruments: the medieval fiddle; its 16th-century Italian offshoot, the *lira da braccio*; and the rebec. The violin is probably the best known and most widely distributed musical instrument in the world.

Like its predecessors but unlike its cousin the viol, the violin has a fretless fingerboard. Its strings are hitched to tuning pegs and to a tailpiece passing over a bridge held in place by the pressure of the strings. The bridge transmits the strings' vibrations to the violin belly, or soundboard, which is made of pine and amplifies the sound. Inside the instrument, beneath the treble foot of the bridge and wedged between the violin belly and back, which is made of maple, is the sound post, a thin stick of pine that transmits the string vibrations to the instrument's back, contributing to the birthplace, where the earliest makers—Gasparo da Salò, Andrea Amati, and Giovanni Paolo Maggini—had settled its average proportions before the end of the 16th century. During its history the violin has been subject to modifications that have progressively adapted it to its evolving musical functions. In general, the earlier violins are more deeply arched in the belly and back; the more modern, following the innovations of Antonio Stradivari, are shallower, yielding a more virile tone. In the 19th century, with the advent of large auditoriums and the violin virtuoso, the violin underwent its last changes in design. The bridge was heightened, the sound post and bass bar were thickened, and the body became flatter. The neck was angled back, giving greater pressure of the strings on the bridge. The result was a stronger, more brilliant tone in place of the delicate, intimate tone of the violin of the 18th century.

The earliest violins were used for popular and dance music. During the 17th century it replaced the viol as the primary stringed instrument in chamber music. The Italian composer Claudio Monteverdi included violins in the orchestra of his opera *Orfeo* (first performed in 1607). In France the king's orchestra, *les 24 violons du roi*, was organized in 1626. Arcangelo Corelli, a virtuoso violinist, was among the earliest composers to contribute to the new music for the violin, as did Antonio Vivaldi, J.S. Bach, and the violinist Giuseppe Tartini. Most major composers from the 18th century on wrote solo music for the violin, among them Mozart, Beethoven, Robert Schumann, Johannes Brahms, Edvard Grieg, Paul Hindemith, Arnold Schoenberg, and Alban Berg. Such virtuosos as Francesco Geminiani, Niccolò Paganini, Joseph Joachim, Fritz Kreisler, David Oistrakh, Yehudi Menuhin, and Isaac Stern stimulated the composition of fine violin music. The violin was assimilated into the art music of the Middle East and South India and, as the fiddle, is played in the folk music of many countries. The tenor violin, known from the 16th century through the 18th century, was midway in size between the viola and cello. It was tuned F<sup>1</sup>-c-g-d'. "Tenor violin" also occasionally referred to the viola.

*The violin has the following parts:*



### VIII) Usage of Flute in Telugu film music from 1960's to 2020's FLUTE

The flute is a musical instrument of the woodwind family. Unlike other woodwind instruments, a flute is a reedless wind instrument that produces its sound from

the flow of air against an edge, instead of using a reed. A musician who plays the flute can be referred to as a *flute player*, a *flautist*, a *flutist* or even a *fluter*.

**Historical Development:** The flute appeared in different forms and locations around the world. A three-holed flute made from a mammoth tusk (from the Geillenklosterle cave in the German Swabian Alb and dated to 30,000 to 37,000 years ago) was discovered in 2004, and two flutes made from swans' bones excavated a decade earlier (from the same cave in Germany, dated to circa 36,000 years ago) are among the oldest known musical instruments. The flute has been dated to pre-historic times. A fragment of the femur of a juvenile cave bear, with two to four holes, found at Divje Babe in Slovenia and dated to about 43,100 years ago, may also be an early flute.

**The Indian Bamboo Flute:** The Indian Bamboo Flute, one of the instruments of Indian classical music, developed independently of the Western flute. The Hindu god *Krishna* is traditionally considered a master of the instrument. Krishna's flute is called *Vamsi*. The Indian flutes are very simple instruments when compared with their Western counterparts; they are made of bamboo and are keyless. The Indian concert flutes are available in standard pitches. In Carnatic Music, the pitches are referred by numbers such as 1 (C), 1-1/2 (C#), 2 (D), 2-1/2 (D#), 3 (E), 4 (F), 4-1/2 (F#), 5 (G), 5-1/2 (G#), 6 (A), 6-1/2 (A#) & 7 (B) (The above is assuming the tonic note is C). However, the pitch of a composition is itself not fixed and hence any of the flutes may be used for the concert (as long as the accompanying instruments, if any, are tuned appropriately) and is largely left to the personal preference of the artist.



Two main varieties of Indian flutes are currently used. The first is the *Bansuri*, which has six finger holes and one blowing hole, is used predominantly in Hindustani music, the music of Northern India. The second is *Venu* or *Pullanguzhal*, which has eight finger holes, and is played predominantly in Carnatic music, the music of Southern India. Presently, the 8-holed flute with cross-fingering technique, is common among many Carnatic flautists. This was introduced by the eminent flautist T. R. Mahalingam in the mid-20th Century. Prior to this, the South Indian flute had only seven finger holes, with the fingering standard developed by Sharaba Shastri of the Palladam school, at the beginning of the 20th Century.

### **Conclusion**

The above discussion about the use of various instruments in film industry in general and Veena, Violin and Flute in particular gives us the idea that these three instruments played an important role in music in general and telugu film music in particular.

The Author (Researcher) has music background. As a playback Singer, the Author (Researcher) has sung more than 500 Songs in Telugu, Tamil, Kannada languages. The Scholar performed in 18 Countries, with various music bands.

As an Assistant Music Composer, the Researcher also worked as Assistant Music composer with legendary music composers like Manisharma Garu, Keervani Garu, Anuop Rubens Garu,

Thaman Garu, Mickey J Mayer Garu and others.

As a Performer, while working with them and performing in the concerts, the Scholar had the opportunity to closely observe and learn various nuisances of music and its usage of various instruments in the film music.

As a Composer, the Researcher had an opportunity to compose music as Sole Composer for Web Series, Short Films and Music Videos.

This rich experience gave the Researcher, the passion to acquire more knowledge in the study of Film Music.

The Researcher estimated and understood in-depth the tonality, range, textures of various instruments in general, and Veena, Violin and Flute in particular and their impact on Telugu Film Music industry.

As a an Instrument Player, the Researcher has also learned various instruments like Piano, Guitar, Flute and Harmonium. The Researchers ability to practically play all these instruments and also theoretically understand the structures in these compositions and usage of instruments in the right context is helpful to understand the importance of Veena, Violin and Flute in a systematic way.

Finally studying the Usage of Musical Instruments Viz. Veena, Violin and Flute in Telugu Film Music from 1960's to till date gives us a strong opinion that without these three instruments, music is not complete. Even though various electronic musical tones were developed in the recent past which influenced the music much, the three traditional instruments have their special place in music industry. So the presence of Veena, Violin and Flute is forever to have a complete music, a divine gift to the people.



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