

Statement of Case

A) Name of the Applicant : The Thanjavur Musical Instruments
Workers Co-operative Cottage Industrial
Society Limited, Thanjavur
(Reg. No.T1270. Estd. 1952)

Facilitator:

Tamil Nadu State Council for Science
& Technology,
C/o. Directorate of Technical Education
Campus, Chennai 600025.

B) Specification:

- The Thanjavur veena is one of the most ancient and revered South Indian instruments.
- The Thanjavur veena has an interesting construction. They are of two types viz. the "Ekantha Veena" and "Sada Veena". "Ekantha Veena" is carved from a single block of wood, while "Sada Veena" has joints and is carved in three sections (i) resonator, (ii) neck and (iii) head.
- The veena has 24 fixed frets (Mettu), so that all ragas can be played.
- Thanjavur veena has seven strings, four are playing strings and three are drone strings (thalam). It has no sympathetic strings.
- In Thanjavur Veena, the main bridge is a flat bar made of brass. This bar has a very slight curve. It is this light curve which gives the veena its characteristic sound.
- The body of the Veena is beautifully painted, carved and chiselled by hand. It is this which makes the Thanjavur Veena distinct and elegant from other Veenas.
- **Other Features:**
 - 52" Long
 - 24 brass frets
 - 7 strings.
 - Painted and carved peg box.
 - With wooden shell case.

C) Name of the Geographical Indication (and particulars):

THANJAVUR VEENAI (Tanjore Veena)

D) Description of Goods:

1) The Thanjavur Veenai is about four feet in length. It has a large, round body with a thick, wide neck, the end of which is carved into the head of a

dragon. A small resonator is attached to the underside of the neck. Thanjavur veena has 24 fixed frets (Mettu), so that all ragas could be played. These 24 metal frets are embedded with hardened bees-wax, mixed with charcoal powder.

ii) Thanjavur veena has seven strings, four are playing strings and three are drone strings (Thalam). It has no sympathetic strings. Melody is produced on four metal strings that run above the frets. These are stretched over a wide bridge that sits on the body of the veena. Three other strings run alongside the neck of the instrument. These are used for maintaining time and for playing the drone. Thus the Thanjavur veena has an interesting construction.

iii) The performer, sits cross-legged on the stage, rests the small resonator on the left lap. The fingers of the left hand are used to press, pull and glide on the frets, while the fingers of the right hand are used to pluck and twang the strings.

iv) There are two types of Thanjavur Veena. They are "Ekantha Veena" and "Sada Veena". "Ekantha Veena" is carved from a single block of wood, while "Sada Veena" has joints and it is carved in three sections (i) resonator, (ii) neck and (iii) head.

v) Thanjavur Veena is beautifully painted and carved, which makes its distinct and elegant from other Veenas'.

E) Geographical area of production and map:

Thanjavur lies on the South East coast of Tamil Nadu. Thanjavur district is situated between 10° 8' and 11°25' North Latitude and 78° 47' and 79° 52' East Longitude. The production of the Thanjavur Veena is mainly done by the local artisans who have domicile in an around the town of Thanjavur. The overall area spread of the production area is as mentioned in the map enclosed herewith.

F) Proof of Origin (Historical records):

Background:

Rhythm comes naturally to man, since everything in creation moves to it. It is man's oldest impulse. This basic impulse of rhythm in him led him to standardise the various forms of emotional expression he was familiar with and to create and design rhythmic instruments.

The first stringed instrument invented by man was the hunter's bow. When the hunter shot his arrow, he must have noted that the bowstring produced a pleasant humming sound. If he twanged the bowstring near the cavity of the month, the sound was amplified. If he rested the bow on some hollow object, the resonance increased still further. The next discovery probably was that the sound varied with the length of the string. Strings of varying length must

then have been attached to the hunting bow. Thus must have evolved the basic principle of the world-famous harp. The fact that a piece of skin stretched over a hollow body such as a pot produces a sound of relatively great volume when caused to vibrate was known to man very early. He used this principle to increase the volume of sound by fastening one end of the string to a drum and thus invented a kind of resonator. He gave one end of the bow the shape of a hollow boat and stretched a skin tightly over it. Several strings were merely tied round the bow shaft and could be tuned only by an elaborate process of unfastening and refastening. This type of bow-shaped veena was apparently very widely used in ancient India as it is frequently represented in sculpture dating from the 3rd Century B.C. Such an instrument was called yazh in Tamil. The yazh is mentioned in several works of Tamil literature. This indicates that musical instruments were extensively used by the Dravidian people of southern India.

History:

Veena is one of the three celestial musical instruments, having references from Vedic times (along with Flute and Mridangam). The fact that Saraswathi, the Goddess of Arts, is always identified with Veena, only symbolises that Music (synonymous with Veena) has primary importance among all forms of fine arts.

In the ancient Indian epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata musical instruments are frequently mentioned. As Lakshmana enters the inner apartments of Sugriva, he hears singing and the ravishing strains of the music of the veena and other stringed instruments. It is to the Veena's music that Lava and Kusa sang the Ramayana during the Asvamedha in Valmiki's Ramayana.

Some references from scriptures and literature to manifest the fact how divine this musical instrument is.

- Legends have it that Sage Agastya was also a Veena exponent and once had a competition with Ravana in Veena, wherein Mount Maha Meru stood in judgment.
- Lankeswaran Ravana, who was highly musically inclined, was also an accomplished Veena player. As per a legend, to appease Lord Siva, he once cut one of his heads and also his body nerves, made a Veena and played Samaganam. So much was his love for the instrument that he had Veena in his flag and was called "Veenaikodiyon".
- Sage Narada, who is believed to have blessed St. Thyagaraja with his treatise on Sangeetha Shastra (St. Thyagaraja has acknowledged the

Teacher status of Narada by Guruswamy) was himself an exponent in Veena and played one called Mahathi. It is interesting to note that the scriptures and puranas have called the Veena by various names.

- In Soundarya Lahari's Sloka 66 there is a beautiful anecdote which goes on like this: Goddess Saraswathi is "singing" praise of Pasupathi in her Veena (it is said that when Saraswathi plays the Veena, one gets to hear the lyrical form itself and that is why the word "singing" is used-gaayanthee) in the presence of Devi Parvathi, who at an exhilarated moment vocally exclaims at the beauty of the music. That simple exclamatory Aaha! of Devi is sweeter than the music itself making Saraswathi to simply blush and stop playing and She even silently wraps up her instrument! (Vipachyaa gaayanthee).
- In Lalitha Sahasranamam, Lord Hayagreeva refers to the same incident in Sloka 11, by saying "Nijasallaba mathurya vinirbarthsitha kachabee".
- Mahakavi Kalidasa is believed to have commenced his poetic streaks with his famous "Manikya veenam upalalayantheem". Also in his Navaratnamala, he has mentioned that parasakthi was playing Veena "Sarigamapadani rathaam tham veena sankraantha kaantha hasthaanthaam". There are five references to the Veena in that sloka of 9 verses.
- In Rajarajeswari Ashtakam, Adi Sankara has mentioned "veenavenu vinotha mandithakara veerasanaa samsthithaa".
- Interestingly, though we always refer to Goddess Saraswathi as the custodian of the Arts, (Aayakalaigal aruppthu naangu) Mahaans like Adi Sankara, Kalidasa, Abirami Bhattar etc. have identified Parasakthi herself as the supreme commander of all forms of Fine Arts, amply demonstrated by God Hayagreeva, who in Lalitha Sahasranamam, calls Her "Chathushshashti kalamayee"(personification of 64 art forms).
- Coming to Tamil, perhaps the early reference can be traced to Tirukkural in verses 66 & 279, wherein the pure Tamil word (Yaazh) is used to refer to the Veena.
- "Kuzhal inidhu Yaazh inidhu enbar tham makkal Mazhalai choll kelaadhavar – Kanai kodidhu Yaazhkoodu sevvidu aanganna vinaipadu paalaal kolal".
- In Abirami anthathi, in song No 70, Bhattar extols the beauty of Parasakthi who is seen by him, among other things, "veenaiyum kaiyum".

- Appar, who wrote "Masil veenaiyum maalai madhiyamum" refers to the blemishless Veena music, along with things like the twilight moon, gentle breeze, lily pond etc. as the forms of bliss that one can get at the feet of the Lord. He has also mentioned that Lord Siva himself is adept at the instrument in another of his poems. (Em Irai nal veenai vasikkumme).
- Lately, of course, Bharathiyar has sung "Nalladoor veenai sayde" and also when he sang in praise of Saraswathi, he wrote "Vellai thaamarai poovil iruppal – veenai seyyum oliyil iruppal".

The instrument is elaborately described in the Silappadikaram. It appears to have been very popular in southern India. The kings of the early Tamil royal houses, the Cheras, the Cholas and the Pandyas, as well as several petty chiefs, patronised minstrels called panas, who, with the yazh on their shoulders, went from court to court singing songs describing the adventures of kings and nobles in war and love.

The strings of the yazh were tuned to absolute pitch and the instrument itself was played on open strings. Each string was named after the note to which it was tuned. Different ragas could be played by shifting the tonic. Since the strings produced only the pure notes, it was not possible to play the gamakas (graces) as can be done on the modern veena or the sitar. Originally the voice was closely accompanied by the flute which played the various gamakas and embellishments.

Among the many theorists and musicians who were responsible for the development of music in the 16th Century, Pandit Ahobala, the author of Sangita Parijata (early 17th Century) deserves special attention. He seems to be the first musicologist to describe the values of note in terms of lengths of the string on the veena. Sangita Parliata is one of the important works relating to the Hindustani system.

The Raghunatha Nayak, Ruler of Tanjavoor (1614 - 1632), and his prime minister and musicologist Govinda Dikshita modified the then existing Veena i.e. the Saraswati Veena with 24 fixed frets (Mettu), so that all ragas could be played, Hence it is called as "Thanjavur Veena". In fact today Raghunatha Nayak is considered to be the Father of the Thanjavur Veena. Thus the current form of the Saraswati Veena with 24 fixed frets evolved in Thanjavur, during the reign of Raghunath Nayak and it is for this reason the Thanjavur (Tanjore) veena is sometimes called the Raghunatha Veena. Prior to his time, the number of frets on the Veena were less and also movable. This according to sources from: a. Thanjavur Nayakar History by Kudavayil Balasubramaniam, b. Padmabhooshan Prof. P. Sambamurthy, Musicologist.

Thus the earlier version of the Veena (i.e. Saraswati Veena) had less than twenty movable frets which had to be adjusted. The fixing of the frets (twelve for each octave) paved the way for the development of the famous scheme of seventy-two melakartas of the Karnatak system. The style of presenting Carnatic music has grown largely around the Thanjavur Veena technique and many of the noted south Indian musicians, musicologists and composers of the past have been Thanjavur Veena players.

Source: S. Krishnaswami, "Musical Instruments of India", 3rd Revised Edition, Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, New Delhi, 1993, pp. 9-16.

Source: Dr. Jayanthi Kumaresh, "Veena"

G) Method of Production :

The process of carving the Thanjavur veena is painstaking, delicate, time consuming and involves superior craftsmanship. As mentioned supra the Thanjavur veena has an interesting construction. There are two types of Thanjavur Veena, they are "Ekantha Veena" and "Sada Veena". "Ekantha Veena" is carved from a single block of wood, while "Sada Veena" has joints and it is carved in three sections (i) resonator, (ii) neck and (iii) head.

Raw material - Wood

The wood obtained from the Jackwood tree is mainly used in making of Thanjavur Veena. However, occasionally Rosewood and Champak wood is also used. Wood from the fully grown Jackwood tree without nodes is usually chosen for making Thanjavur Veena. The Jackwood trees found in and around Thanjavur is of fine and superior quality. Prior to usage the wood should be seasoned for a minimum period of six months.

Construction:

Thanjavur Veena is about four feet in length, its design consists of: 1. A large resonator (Kudam) the functional one, 2. A small table-like wooden bridge (Kudurai), 3. A tapering hollow neck (Dandi), 4. Non-functional resonator, 5. Seven strings of the Veena. The various parts of the Veena are highlighted in the figure enclosed as Annex. herewith.

The Kudam is carved and hollowed out of a log. It should be one foot to one and a half feet high, and the diameter should be 14 inches for a full sized veena and twelve to thirteen inches for the medium sized veena. The Kudam is scooped out with a uniform thickness of half an inch to three fourth of an inch. The top plank of the Kudam is glued and nailed at required places. The Kudam is attached to a tapering hollow neck (Dandi) topped with 24 metal frets which are embedded with hardened bees-wax, mixed with charcoal powder on wooden tracks, and a tuning box culminating in a downward curve and an ornamental dragon's head (the Yali). There is another resonator at the

top of the neck. It is not a functioning resonator, but is mainly used as a stand to facilitate the positioning of the instrument when it is played. Because it is no longer functioning it is not unusual to find that this upper resonator may be made of acoustically neutral materials.

A small table-like wooden bridge (kudurai)—about 2 x 2½ 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 stretch from fine tuning connectors attached to the end of the resonator across the bridge and above the fret board to four large-headed pegs in the tuning box. Three subsidiary drone strings tuned to the tonic, fifth, and upper tonic 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 either solid thick gauge wire or round wound.

Carving:

The body of the Thanjavur Veenai is painted and engraved with delicate wood work which usually consists of picture of god and goddess, motifs of flowers or birds, give it a elegant beauty of appearance.

Playing:

The Thanjavur veenai is played by sitting cross-legged with the instrument held tilted slightly away from the player. The small gourd (non-resonating) 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 functional resonator is placed on the floor, beyond the right thigh.

Quality:

The greatest of art and craftsmanship is involved in the making of the Thanjavur Veena, since the least flaw in workmanship will spoil the tone and reduce the value of the instrument. Traditionally the artisans belong to a community of people viz. the Viswakarma sect, who till date have a unbroken heredity in making quality Veena's.

H) Inspection Body:

An expert committee represented constituted by the Musical Instrument Workers, the Tamil Nadu Handicrafts Development Corporation, the local Thanjavur Fine Arts Paadukaapu Sangam and other related Veena Sangams propose to prescribe the quality and production parameters for Thanjavur Veena. The Quality & production parameters prescribed by the Expert

Committee would be in accordance with the general practice of production and would be binding on all the Musical Instrument Workers. The Quality and production parameters as recommended by the Expert Committee would be binding on the Inspection Committee.

I) Uniqueness:

- i) The handiwork on the Thanjavur Veena is unique to the artisans here.
- ii) The Thanjavur Veena was the first modified Veena with 24 fixed frets that evolved in Thanjavur during the time of Ragunatha Nayak. Consequently by fixing the frets the same Veena could be used to play all the Ragas in one Veena. The fixing of the frets (twelve for each octave) paved the way for the development of the famous scheme of seventy-two melakartas of the Karnatak system. The style of presenting Carnatic music has grown largely around the Thanjavur Veena technique and many of the noted south Indian musicians, musicologists and composers of the past have been Thanjavur Veena players. This was the forerunner of the "Tanjore Baani" i.e. the Tanjore style of music. Prior to this the frets on the Veena i.e. the Saraswati Veena were movable hence for each Raga a different Veena had to be used.
- iii) The variety of wood used from a particular strain of matured Jackwood tree is unique to Thanjavur, hence the Veena made from the said Jackwood tree is unique.
- iv) Traditionally since the 17th Century the Viswakarma sect of persons have been involved in the manufacture of the Veena and thus the heritage as regards this has been handed over from one generation to the other.
- v) The craftsmanship and the skill in making the functional resonator (Kudam) is unique to the Thanjavur Veena for no other Veena has a similar construction to that of the Veena here.

J) Others:

Veena represents the system of Indian music. The veena is a complete instrument, it has strings to play the raga and that too in a wide range of pitch, it has the drone so necessary for Indian music, and these drone strings are also placed on them and provides the basic components, sruti, laya and sahitya, which no other instrument has. Its main attraction is the mellow tonal quality which is capable of evoking a meditative atmosphere.

The Nobel Prize winning physicist Sir C. V. Raman has described the Veena as having a unique construction. The string terminations at both ends are curved and not sharp. Also, the frets have much more curvature than any other instrument. Unlike in guitar, the string does not have to be pushed down to the very base of the neck, so no rattling sound is generated. This design enables a continuous control over the string tension, which is important for glissandi, produces more harmonics than any other instruments.

As a state party to the UNESCO Convention 2003, India has identified Veena as an element of Intangible Cultural Heritage and proposed its inscription in the Representative list of UNESCO.

The Veena is the instrument associated with Goddess Saraswati, the goddess of learning and the arts. This instrument is common in south India and is an important instrument in 'Carnatic Music'. It is commonly referred as 'vina', 'veena', 'veenai' the "Saraswati" part being implied.

Though the Veena is made in several regions in South India, those made by makers from Thanjavur are to date considered the most sophisticated. Thanjavur Veena deservedly occupies this exalted position not only because of its elegant beauty of appearance, but also by the virtue of the tone.



(P.SANJAL GANDHI)