

# Violin music and *Mruthanga* music as Subsidiary subjects in Carnatic music

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**Abstract:** Selection of Auxiliary subjects as instrumental music, in Carnatic Vocal music education, is the normal practice in the Universities. The students are allowed to choose one of the Carnatic music instrument as their Auxiliary subject in their each year of study. This sort of flexibility resultant unequal number of students among the Auxiliary Carnatic music instruments learning. This research is to find out the reasons for this inequality. The bachelor degree students for Carnatic vocal music shall choose both the violin or a string instrument and the Mruthangam or rhythmic instrument as their subsidiary Subject, during their four years. The both types of instruments can provide different essential supplementary skills for their Carrier.

**Keywords:** Subsidiary subjects, Carnatic Music, Violin Music, Mruthanga Music, University Education

## Introduction

Selection of Auxiliary subjects as instrumental music, in Carnatic Vocal music education, is the normal practice in the Universities.

Instrumental music is essential for the vocal music Students' expertise in instrumental music shall develop the listening skills in the music notes, subtlety of modes (*Raaga*) and identification skills of different modes. In the past history of Carnatic music, the vocalists were trained and

performed the instrumental music as well. For an example, Saint Thigarajah, Muthuswaamy thidchithar, Somanathar and Saaranka Dhaevar, who were competent authorities of the Carnatic music vocal music and also in the *veena* music (Sellathurai 2010)

Based on the past history, in the department of the music, University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka; the Carnatic vocal music students are expected to opt at least one Carnatic music

instrument for their second, third and fourth years of bachelor of fine arts (music) degree. The students are allowed to choose one of the Carnatic music instrument as their Auxiliary subject in their each year of study. This sort of flexibility resultant unequal number of students among the Auxiliary Carnatic music instruments learning. This research is to find out the reasons for this inequality.

### **Hypothesise of the research**

The pilot study shows that, according to the students' mind-set, if the students opt the certain Carnatic music instruments as their Auxiliary subjects, they can score high marks at the examinations. This statement is considered as the hypothesis for this research.

### **Research methodology**

The 67, third year BFA vocal music students, of the department of the music, university of Jaffna, Sri Lanka; are selected for this study. The following two methods are admitted to collect data from the students.

1. Focus group survey discussion (FGSD) – An introductory Method
2. Questionnaire method

### **Discussion and conclusion**

Out of the 67 respondents, 40 students have opted Carnatic music instruments “*Mruthangam*” as their Auxiliary subject and 27 students have opted the violin. The data gathered from the Questionnaires and focus group survey discussion is shown in the table format in

appendix. The theme of the focus group survey discussion is “the reason behind the selection of this subsidiary subject”.

The 27 students, who have chosen the violin music as their subsidiary subject, were asked the reasons for not selecting the *Mruthanga* music as their subsidiary subject. Responses received from the students are studied in three different categories.

1. The specialities of the instrument violin
2. The specialities of the violin music
3. Benefits of the violin music training

### **The specialities of the instrument violin**

Also according to the response received about the violin music,

100% of the respondents told that they like the instrument violin. The 100% of the respondents also told that they like the tone of the violin. 81% of the respondents told that the violin carrying and handling the violin is easy.

### **The specialities of the violin music**

According to the response received from the students, 93% of the respondents, who have chosen violin music as their subsidiary subject, like to play violin music. (Table 1)

### **Benefits of violin music training**

89% of the respondents like violin music, because playing of violin is easy. 85% of the respondents like the violin music, because the syllabus is easy. 96% of the respondents like the violin music, because the violin can produce the interesting subsidiary

Subject. 81% of them like violin music because of the benefits received by violin music education.

The same focus group survey discussion method is applied on the 40 students, who chosen the *mruthanga* music as their subsidiary Subject. The response are divided in to three categorises.

1. The speciality of the instrument *Mruthangam*
2. The speciality of the *Muthanga* music
3. Benefits of *Mruthanga* music training

### **The speciality of the instrument *Mruthangam***

The tables 4, 5 and 6 show about the response received from the students. A new research method, focus group survey discussion (FGSM) is applied

for the 40 respondents, who chosen the *mruthanga* music as their subsidiary Subject. 100% of the respondents like the *mruthangam* instrument. 100% of the students like the tone of the *Mruthanga* instrument. 85% of the respondents told that, carrying and handling the *Mruthangam* is manageable (Table 4).

### **The speciality of the *Mruthanga* music**

82% of the respondents told that the playing of *Mruthangam* instrument is easy. 77% of the students told that they like the mathematic calculation in the *Mruthanga* music. 72% of the respondents stated that, they can play the interesting rhythmic patterns. According to the response received from the students, 93% of the

respondents, who have chosen violin music as their subsidiary subject, like to play violin instrument.

### **Benefits of *Mruthanga* music training**

The respondents have stated the benefits, which have gained by *mruthanga* music training. 95% of them stated that, they can sing improvisation of music notes by the skills of understanding of rhythmic structures in *mruthanga* music training. 82% like to be *Mruthangam* player as an accompaniment artist. 100% of the respondents told that, they can get the skills to clearly identify the rests. 85% of them told that, these rhythmic skills gained from *Mruthangam* education will assist to sing well. 67% of the respondents told that, they can play *Mruthangam* as solo instrument in the

*Mruthanga* music concerts. 75% of them told that the *Mruthanga* music can be taught. 100% of the respondents told that, with the skills they gained, they can create new rhythmic structures.

According to the above statements, it is clear that, the students who chosen the *Mruthanga* music as their subsidiary Subject, like *Mruthanga* instrument, the playing techniques and the benefits gained by *Mruthanga* music training. Therefore, the hypothesis has been rejected by the results.

Also to validate the above results, a questionnaire with 10 questions has been distributed to the all 67 respondents. All are stated that, they are totally satisfied with the teaching and learning process of the both violin music and *Mruthanga* music

education, of the department. Also these students are asked, whether they agree with the hypothesis of this research? 100% of the respondents unanimously rejected the hypothesis. there for this research conclude that the selection of the violin music or *Mruthanga* music as the subsidiary subjects, by the vocal music students, is completely unbiased, and students are given 100% independents to choose whatever they need, by the department of music university of Jaffna Sri Lanka.

### **Contribution**

The bachelor degree students for Carnatic vocal music shall choose both the violin or a string instrument and the *Mruthangam* or rhythmic instrument as their subsidiary Subject, during their four years. The

both types of instruments can provide different essential supplementary skills for their Carrier.

### **Suggestions for further research**

The same methodology's shall be applied in other universities those have music department.

### **Reference**

1. Sellathurai, P. (2010). *Thennaka isaigijal* (6th Ed.). India: vaikarai printers.
2. Third Year BFA(Music) Violin Students, University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka (Focus group survey discussion and

Questionnaire, May 12, 2014)

3. Third Year BFA(Music)  
*Miruthanga* Students,  
University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka (Focus group survey discussion Questionnaire ,May 09, 2014)

The syllabus is easy	23
The violin can produces interesting sounds	26

**Appendix**

**Table 1**

**The response received about the violin instrument**

Response	Number of response
Violin is their preferred instrument	27
They like tone of the violin	27
Easy to carry and handle	22

**Table 3**

**Benefits of violin music training**

Response	Number of response	
They can gain the skills music notes, fluctuation, significance of each mode (raagaa)	27	
Can serve as an accompanying violinist	25	
Clarity of playing the rests	22	
The violin education shall improve the ability to sing with	27	
Response	Number of response	Percentage of response
Collection of Carnatic music compositions	26	100%
They can play cinema songs	12	100%
They can be stage performing violinists	15	81%

**Table 2**

**The response received about playing of violin**

Response	Number of response
Easy to play	24

**Table 4**

**The response received about the**

Response	Number of response	Percentage
Easy to play	24	88%

Response	Number of response	Percentage of response
<i>Mruthangam</i> is their preferred instrument	40	100%
They like tone of the <i>mruthangam</i>	40	100%
Easy to carry and handle	34	85%

**Table 7**

**Table 5**

**Focus Group Survey Discussions**

The response received about playing of *mruthangam*.

Response	Number of response	Percentage of response
The total response received about playing the instruments	63	
Response receive about attitude of the lectures and the teaching methods	67	
Easy to play	33	82%
The playing of <i>mruthangam</i> is thrilling, because there are mathematical calculation in the rhythmic section	31	77%
Can play interesting Rhythmic Structures	29	72%

**Table 6**

**Benefits of *mruthanga* music education**

Response	Number of response	Percentage of response
Can sing the music notes improvisation, because they can understand the rhythmic patterns through <i>mruthanga</i> music	38	95%
Can be an accompanied <i>mruthangam</i> player	33	82%
Easily understand rests	34	85%