

CHAPTER 2

STRUCTURE AND PARTS OF THE VICHITRA VEENA

A clear introduction to the instrument's body, strings, bridges, tuning system and playing slide.

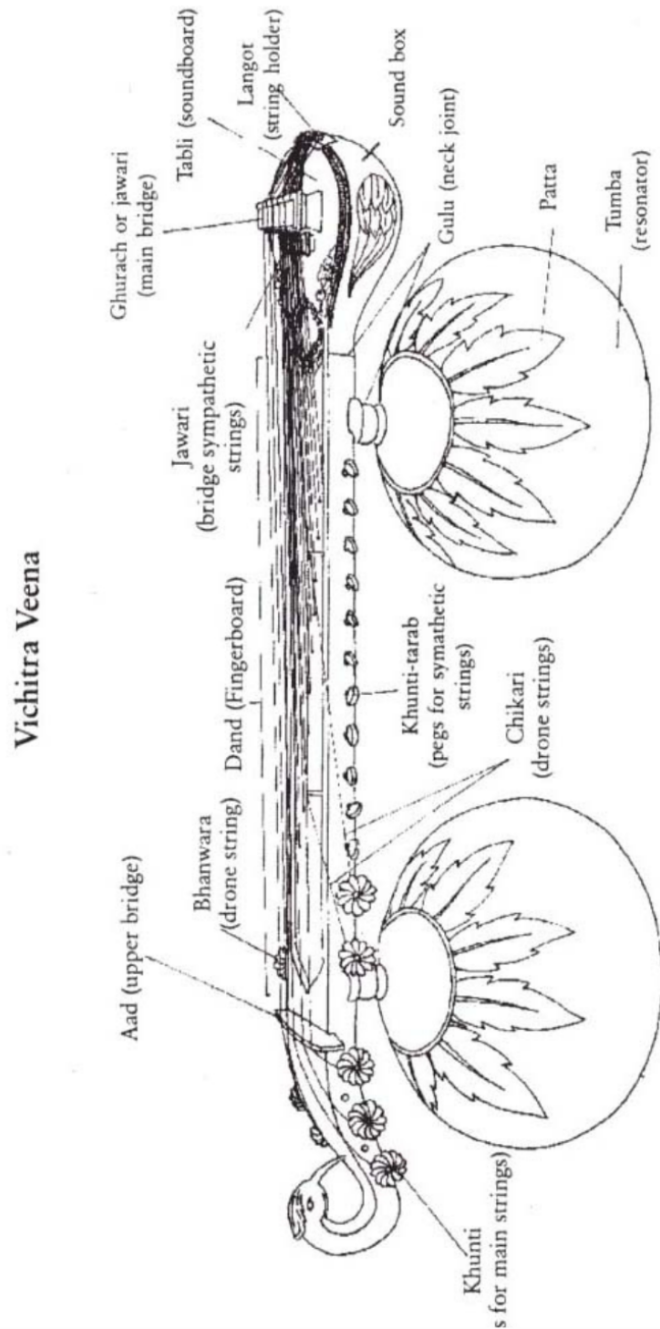
The Vichitra Veena has:
a long fretless dand, two large tumbas, 9 main strings including chikari strings, 13 sympathetic strings, two bridges, khuntis, manka or moti, and a glass paperweight used as the playing slide.

THE COMPLETE PARTS DIAGRAM

The following original diagram is reproduced exactly as provided. Its instrument drawing, arrows and labels have not been redrawn or altered.

Turn to the next page and study the labelled parts before reading their explanations.

Parts of Vichitra Veena



THE TWO BRIDGES AND JAWARI

1. The Main Bridge

The large main bridge supports all the main playing strings, including the chikari strings. The chikari strings do not have a separate bridge; they also rest on this same main bridge.

The beauty and quality of the sound are created to a great extent by the precise rubbing, cutting and shaping of the bridge surface. This specialised tonal adjustment is called jawari. A well-prepared jawari gives the Vichitra Veena a clear, rich, sustained and beautiful voice.

The main bridge of the Vichitra Veena is larger than the bridge used on instruments such as the sitar. Its size and carefully shaped surface are important to the instrument's tonal depth and resonance.

2. The Sympathetic-String Bridge

A second, smaller bridge is placed below the main bridge. It is used only for the 13 sympathetic strings, also called taraf strings. These strings respond naturally to matching swaras and enrich the resonance of the instrument.

Remember: One large bridge carries the main and chikari strings. One smaller lower bridge carries the sympathetic strings.

KHUNTI, STRINGS AND FINE ADJUSTMENT

Khunti: The Tuning Pegs

The tuning pegs of the Vichitra Veena are called khunti. Different sets of khuntis are used for different groups of strings.

The main strings have larger khuntis. The chikari khuntis are smaller, finer and more delicate. The sympathetic strings have their own separate khuntis, generally arranged along the side of the instrument.

The Strings

The Vichitra Veena has 9 main strings, including the chikari strings, and 13 sympathetic strings. The main strings carry the principal melody and rhythmic support. The chikari strings add brightness, pulse and resonance. The sympathetic strings vibrate in response to matching swaras and deepen the overall tonal field.

Manka or Moti

Manka or moti are small bead-like elements used in the string arrangement and for fine adjustment. Their exact position and function depend on the construction of the instrument.

Other Important Parts

Dand: the long fretless playing surface. Tabli: the soundboard.

Langot: the string holder. Gulu: the neck joint. Tumba: the resonator. Patra: the decorated surface around the resonator.

THE GLASS PAPERWEIGHT



The Vichitra Veena is played by moving a smooth glass paperweight over the strings. The paperweight travels continuously across the fretless dand and allows the performer to create meend, shruti and flowing transitions between swaras.

It must be smooth, comfortable to hold and suitable for precise control. It is not pressed against frets, because the instrument has no frets.

Note: Dr. Radhika Veenasadhika uses a Shivling gatta. That personal playing form will be shown and explained in the separate chapter on the Radhika Model and her innovations.

CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY

- The Vichitra Veena has one large main bridge for the main and chikari strings.
- Jawari is the specialised rubbing, cutting and shaping of the bridge surface that creates tonal beauty.
- A smaller lower bridge is used for the 13 sympathetic strings.
- The main khuntis are larger; chikari khuntis are smaller and delicate; taraf strings have separate khuntis.
- The instrument has 9 main strings including chikari, and 13 sympathetic strings.
- A smooth glass paperweight is used as the playing slide.

QUICK LEARNING CHECK

1. Which strings rest on the large main bridge?
2. What is jawari?
3. Which bridge carries the sympathetic strings?
4. What are the tuning pegs called?
5. How many main and sympathetic strings does the instrument have?