

# Saraswathi Ranganathan

## Teacher Resource Guide Lotus Blossoms 2025



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## About Saraswathi Ranganathan

Saraswathi is a renowned musician who has performed and taught all around the world. Saraswathi plays the veena, an instrument similar to the lute. She learned how to play the veena from her mother and from her teacher in Bangalore, India.



Saraswathi is the first Indian woman to ever win a Chicago Music Award and has performed in the orchestra for Disney's *Jungle Book*, among many other performances. She attributes her path-carving success to the inclusive energy in her music and in her life. Her goal? Bring artists and listeners together as one community united in music and understanding.

## Carnatic Music

Carnatic music is a system of music from early southern India that is systematic, scientific, artistic, and spiritual all at once. Carnatic music encompasses several thousand songs called *krithis* (*kree-tees*) by various composers in many languages: but primarily in the Southern Indian languages of Tamil (*ta-muhl*), Telugu (*teh-luh-gu*), and Kannada (*kuh-naa-duh*). Aside from these *krithis* (*kree-tees*), within Carnatic music there are many sub-genres of song-types each with their own distinct styles of presentation.

## Raga

*Raga (Rah-gah)* is the fundamental unit of melody in Carnatic Music. It is a Sanskrit word meaning “that which makes us happy” or “that which adds color”. In other words, raga is capable of bringing out the colors of our emotions. Carnatic Music has a melody system with 72 primary *ragas* called *Mela Ragas (May-la Rah-gahs)* and over fifty thousand non-primary Ragas.

*Tala (tah-lah)* is the fundamental unit of rhythm in Carnatic Music. There are unique syllables that are specific to the *tala* system. The recitation of these syllables is called *Konnakkol (kah-na-coal)*. *Talas* are counted in different cycles - with as little as three beats in a cycle going up to 108 beats for just one cycle!

*Cutcheri (kuh-cherry)* is a typical Carnatic music performance. Performances typically last at least 3 hours and include a combination of written compositions and extended improvisation that takes the performers and audience on a shared journey through melody and rhythm.

## Veena

*Veena* refers to a variety of plucked string instruments played in India - the instrument that you will hear in Saraswathi's performance has a history dating back to 1700 BCE! Saraswathi's *veena* is made out of jackfruit, has a long hollow neck as well as a large pear-shaped resonator. It has four strings plucked - like a guitar - and three additional strings vibrating while the *veena* is being played.

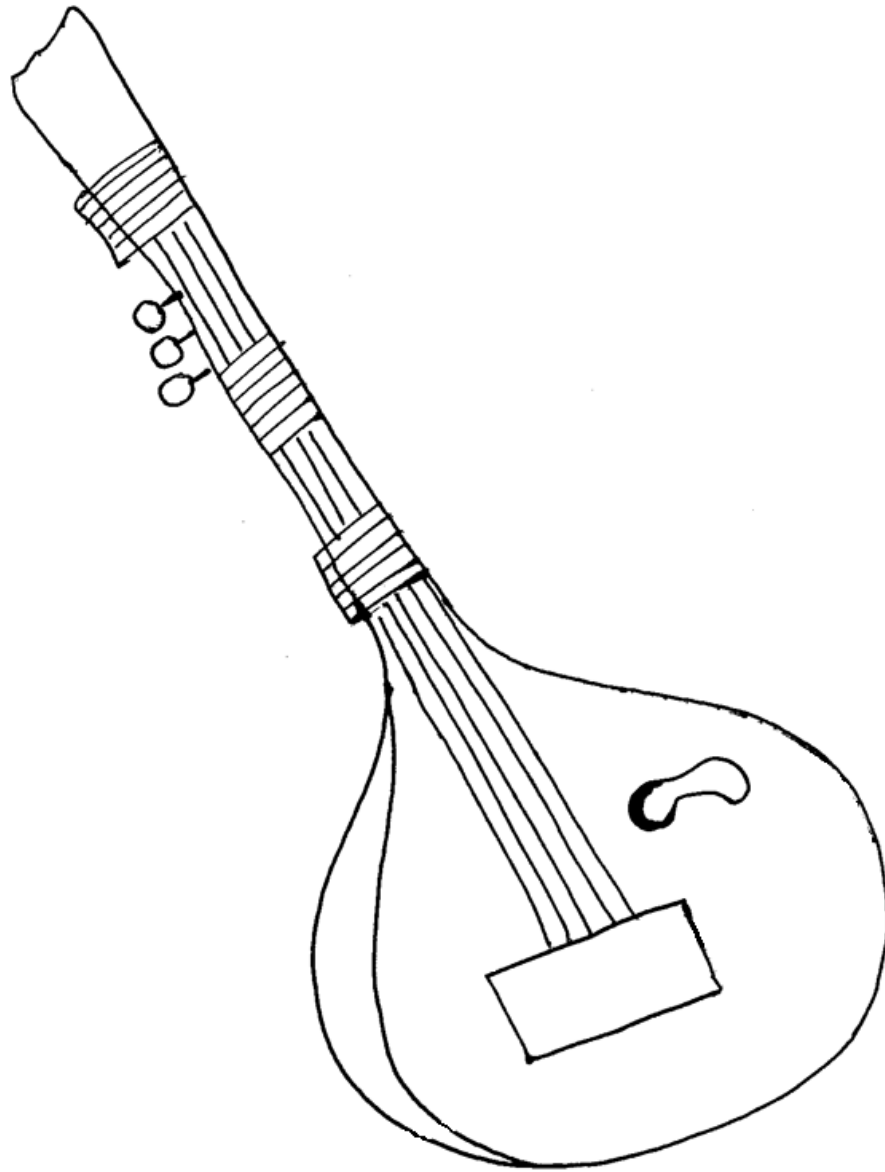


## Make a String Instrument!

You will need an empty Kleenex box and a variety of large rubber bands. Stretch the rubber bands around the box, making sure they're over the hole in the top. With a bunch of different rubber bands, you can make a song! Do the bands sound different when you pluck them? Can you change the sound in any other ways? What happens if you put something inside the box? Explore how sound vibrates and reflects back to you.

### Helpful Links & References

- <https://saraswathiveena.com/>
- [Saraswathi explains the veena](#)
- [Veena Performance](#) featuring Saraswathi



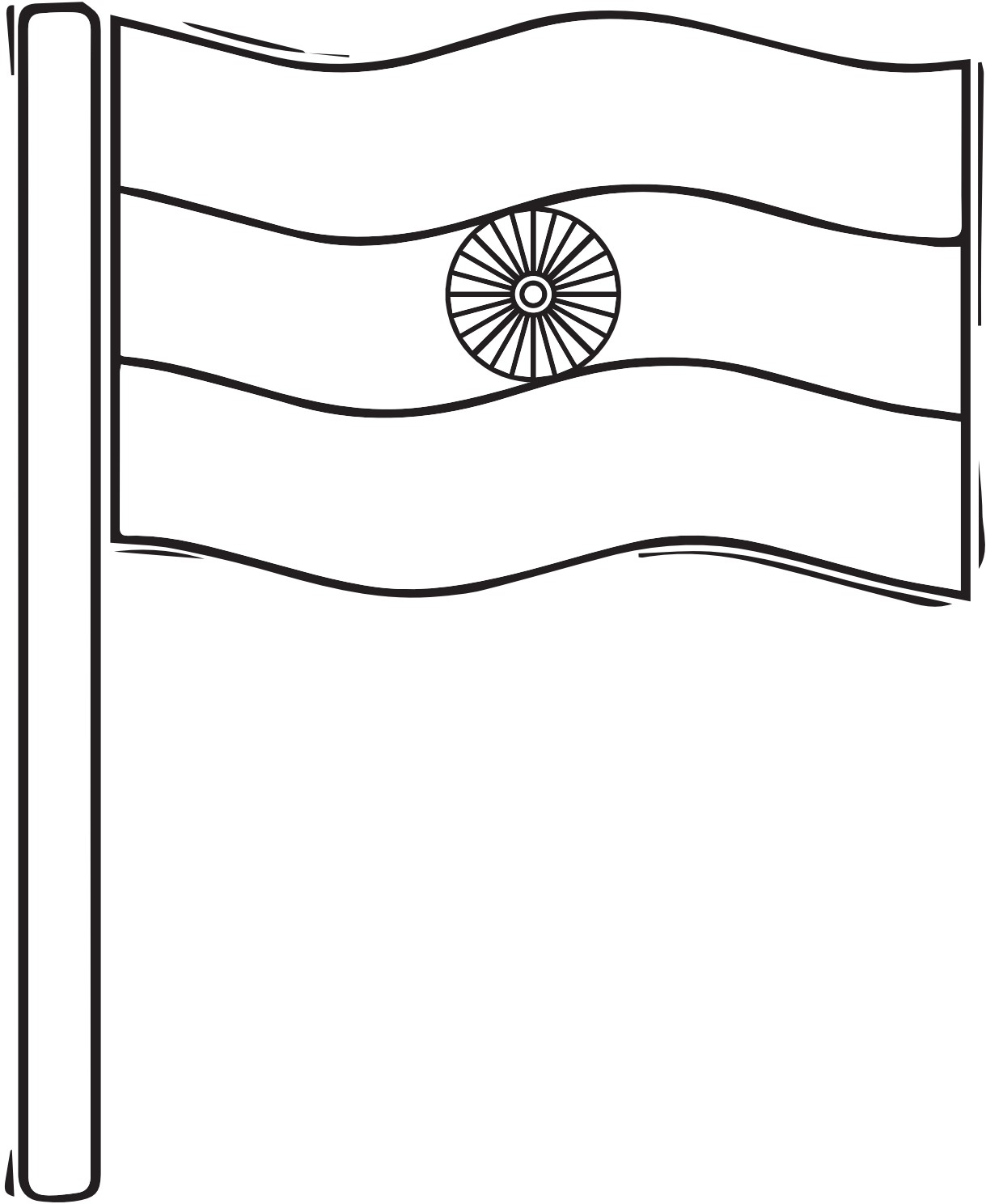
# Veena

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# India Flag-Color the Indian flag

Name : \_\_\_\_\_ Date : \_\_\_\_\_



- The National flag of India is a horizontal tricolor of deep saffron (kesari) at the top, white in the middle, and green at the bottom, in equal proportions.
- In the center of the white band is a navy blue wheel which represents the chakra. It's called "Ashok Chakra".

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