



## Evolution of Music System

**For Prelims:** [Sama Veda](#), [Hindustani and Karnatak \(Carnatic\) music](#), [Muslim rulers in North India](#), Bhakti Movement, ragas and talas, saptaswaras, Gharanas', Thaat', Khayal, Thumri, and Tarana

**For Mains:** Indian Music System, Evolution and Development.

[Source: TH](#)

### Why in News?

A recent study revealed chimps' ability to dance in tune with rhythmic music suggesting an evolutionary link in our sense of rhythm. Archaeological evidence, **including a 40,000-year-old flute made from animal bone**, provides insights into the origins of human musical expression.

### What are the Findings of the Recent Study?

- **Origin of Music in Humans:** According to this study, humans likely began singing after the development of speech during the **Old Stone Age, approximately 2.5 million years ago**.
  - Evidence suggests that the ability to play musical instruments emerged around **40,000 years ago, exemplified by the discovery of a flute made from animal bone** with seven holes.
- **Musical Notations:** In India, musical notes ('**sa, re, ga, ma, pa, da, ni**') are believed to have originated during Vedic times (**1500-600 BCE**), forming the basis of Indian classical music traditions.
  - Musical notation systems were established **independently in Europe** and the **Middle East** around the **9th century BCE**, using spaced notations ('**do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, ti**').
- **Evolution of the Indian Music System:** Indian music evolved in the ancient, medieval and modern periods.

### How Indian Music Evolved in the Ancient Period?

- **Origins in the Sama Veda:** The roots of Indian music stretch back to the [Sama Veda](#), where slokas were harmonized with music.
  - **Narada Muni** introduced the art of music to humanity and imparted knowledge of **Naada Brahma**, the cosmic sound that permeates the universe.
- **Development of Vedic Music:** Initially centred around single notes, Vedic music progressively incorporated two and then three notes.
  - This evolution **culminated in the establishment of the seven basic notes (saptaswaras)** that form the basis of Indian classical music.
  - Vedic hymns were integral to **religious rituals such as yagas and yagnas**, where they were sung and danced to the accompaniment of string and percussion instruments.
- **Early Tamil Contributions:** Scholars like **Ilango Adigal and Mahendra Verma** contributed significantly to the musical ideas in ancient Tamil culture, documented in texts such as **Silappadi Kaaram and Kudumiyamalai** inscriptions.

- Ancient Tamil treatises, like **Karunamrita Sagara**, provided insights into **ragas represented by various 'pans'** and the understanding of sthayi (octave), srutis, and swara sthanas.

## How Indian Music Evolved in the Medieval Period?

- **Unified Musical System:** Up until the **13th century**, India maintained a **cohesive musical system** grounded in fundamental principles such as saptaswaras (seven notes), octaves, and sruti (microtones).
- **Introduction of Terms:** Haripala coined the terms [Hindustani and Carnatic music](#), marking the distinction between northern and southern musical traditions
- **Impact of Muslim Rule:** With the arrival of [Muslim rulers in North India](#), Indian music assimilated influences from **Arabian and Persian musical systems**. This interaction broadened the scope of Indian musical expression.
- **Regional Stability and Flourishing:** While North India experienced **cultural exchanges**, South India remained relatively insulated, fostering the uninterrupted **growth of classical music supported by temples and Hindu monarchs**.
- **The Emergence of Distinct Systems: Hindustani and Carnatic music** evolved as distinct systems, each rooted in Vedic principles yet exhibiting unique regional flavours and stylistic nuances.
- **Influence of Bhakti Movement:** The **7th century onwards** saw the rise of numerous saint singers and religious poets across India, including **Purandara Dasa** in **Karnataka**, who systematised **talas (rhythmic cycles)** and contributed significantly to devotional song compositions.
  - During this era, classifications of **ragas became clearer**, laying the foundation for the **melodic structure** that defines Indian classical music.
- **Expansion and Refinement:** This era witnessed significant growth in the **quality and quantity of musical forms, including Ragas, Talas (rhythmic cycles)**, and musical instruments.
- **Emergence of Musical Forms:** Composition forms such as **Khayal, Thumri, and Tarana** gained prominence during this period, contributing to the diverse repertoire of Hindustani classical music.
- **Gharanas:** Distinct musical traditions known as gharanas, such as **Agra, Gwalior, Jaipur, Kirana, and Lucknow**, flourished during this period, each contributing unique stylistic elements to **Hindustani music**.

## How Indian Music Evolved in the Modern Period?

- **Legendary Musicians:** Renowned musicians like **Ustad Alladia Khan, Pt. Omkarnath Thakur, Pt. Vishnu Digambar Paluskar and Ustad Bade Gulam Ali Khan** emerged as icons of 20th-century Hindustani music, enriching the tradition with their mastery and innovations.
- **Preservation through Notation:** The advent of **notation systems** ensured the preservation and accessibility of musical compositions across generations, safeguarding invaluable musical heritage.
- **Systematization of Hindustani Ragas:** **Pandit Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande** played a pivotal role in systematising Hindustani Ragas under the '**Thaat**' system, laying a structured foundation for musical education and performance.
- **Scholarly Compositions:** Numerous scholarly musical forms such as **Kritis, Swarajatis, Varna, Pada, Tillana, Jawali, and Ragamalikas** were composed.
  - These compositions drew inspiration from ancient prabandhas while evolving in musical and lyrical sophistication.

### Read more:

- [Hindustani Music](#)
- [Carnatic Music](#)

### **Drishti Mains Questions:**

Discuss the evolution of the Indian music system from traditional roots in classical music to its

contemporary forms, and discuss the factors that have influenced its transformation over the centuries.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

### **Prelims:**

**Q. A community of People Called Manganiyars is Well-Known for their (2014)**

- (a) Martial arts in North -East India
- (b) Musical tradition in North -West India
- (c) Classical vocal music in south india
- (d) Pietra dura tradition in central India

**Ans:(b)**

### **Mains:**

**Q.1** What are the groups into which musical instruments in India have traditionally been classified? (2012)

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