



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)

PDF Refernece URL: <https://www.drishtiias.com/printpdf/evolution-of-music-system>

