



Introduction to Indian Music

The foundation for Indian music is Sangeet which is a combination of three art forms: vocal music, instrumental music and dance. These three forms have differentiated into complex and highly refined individual art forms.

The present system of Indian music is based on two important aspects that are: ~

- ❖ the “Raag” (melodic form)
- ❖ the “Taal” (rhythmic form)

The interpretation of the raag and the taal is different in both Hindustani Sangeet and Carnatic Sangeet. Sangeet comprises of the following: ~

- ❖ the “Swaras”
- ❖ the “Octaves”
- ❖ the “Jhatis”
- ❖ the “Arohana” and the “Avrohana”
- ❖ the “Vadi” and the “Samvadi”

The Swaras

The Swaras are the seven notes of the Indian music scale. They are similar to the sol-fa of Western music. Two of these Swaras, the “Shadj” (Sa) and the “Pancham” (Pa) are immutably fixed and form the tonal foundation for all the Indian classical music. These two Swaras are known as “Achala Swara” whereas the others are known as “Chala Swara”. The abbreviated form of notes (i.e. Sa, Re...) is known as “Sargam”. The Swaras are put together to form scales known as “Saptak”. The seven notes repeat in both the upper and lower directions. While ascending the scale when one reaches “Ni”, the scale starts all over again with “Sa”. This is known as upper register. Likewise, while descending the scale, it does not stop at “Sa” but continues down with “Ni”. This is the lower register.

The seven Swaras are as follows: ~

- ❖ Shadj : Sa
- ❖ Rishabh : Re
- ❖ Gandhara : Ga
- ❖ Madhyam : Ma
- ❖ Pancham : Pa
- ❖ Dhaivat : Dha
- ❖ Nishad : Ni

The Octaves

There are three octaves in Indian music. They are as follows: ~

- ❖ The “Mandra” (the lower octave)
- ❖ The “Madhya” (the middle octave)
- ❖ The “Taar” (the higher octave)

The predominant octave that is used by most musicians is the Madhya or the middle octave.

The octaves are denoted by the following musical notations: ~

- ❖ Mandra : Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Dha Ni
- ❖ Madhya : Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Dha Ni
- ❖ Taar : Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Dha Ni