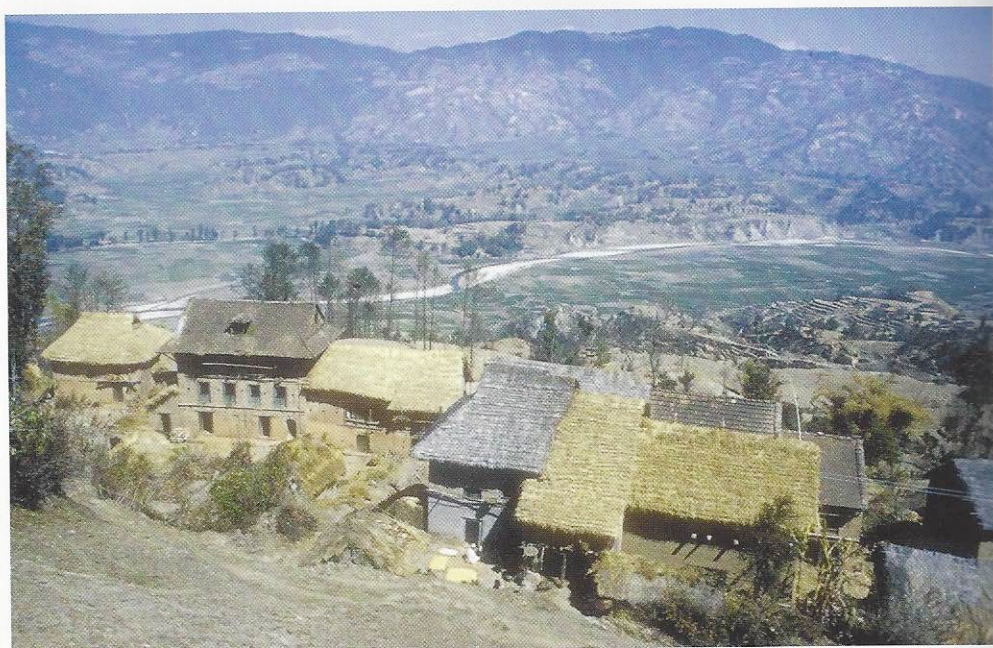


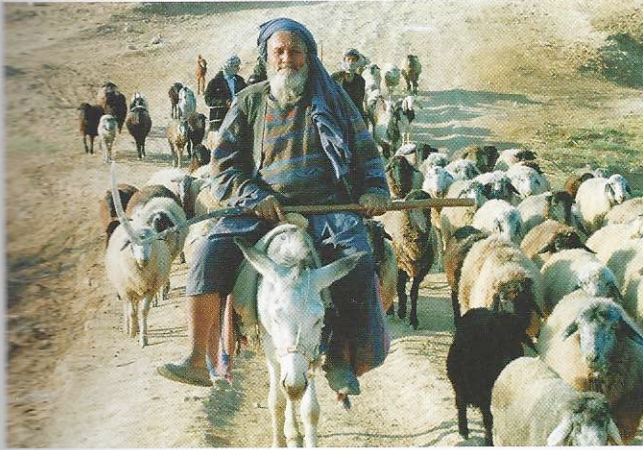
Background Preparation

There are two areas of the world that can easily overwhelm someone wishing to explore their musics. The first is East Asia, where approximately one quarter of the world's people live. The second is South Asia, an area with 1.5 billion people, again nearly a quarter of the world's people. One nation—India—dominates South Asia demographically (population 1.1 billion) and in landmass, but the region also includes Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and even Afghanistan (in some groupings). India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh all have extensive coastlines stretching to the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal, leaving the other countries landlocked—except for Sri Lanka, which is an island to the southeast of India. In addition, a few island groups, though having slight populations, are also considered part of South Asia, including the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, the Maldives, and the Seychelles. Parts of Afghanistan and Pakistan and most of Nepal and Bhutan are mountainous, but unlucky Bangladesh is not only flat but also only a little above sea level, leaving it vulnerable to numerous typhoons each year during which up to half of the country may flood.

Much of the region experiences fairly harsh climates, varying from the intense heat of India to the tropical moisture of Bangladesh and Sri Lanka to the arid winters of the northern and upland areas. Temperatures in India can reach as high as 127° Fahrenheit/53° Celsius; conversely, temperatures in India's snowy northern mountains are frigid in winter. Numerous great rivers drain the Himalayas through India and Bangladesh, including the well-known and sacred Ganges (or Ganga), along with the Indus and Brahmaputra. Parts of Pakistan and Afghanistan, however, are desert. Populations tend to be the greatest and most concentrated where water is most plentiful; most great civilizations began and flourished along rivers, and this principle holds true for South Asia.

Village in the hills near Kathmandu, Nepal, from which could be seen the tops of the Himalaya Mountains





A sheep herder in Afghanistan
(Shutterstock)

In South Asia, India is the country no one can ignore. It is a nation of striking contrasts. India has riches in the form of palaces, treasures, and temples that are beyond imagination, but it also has great poverty. Many in the West are familiar with the plight of the underclass in places like Kolkata (formerly Calcutta), where Mother Theresa worked to alleviate suffering. India is the world's largest democracy, but struggles to maintain a balance among competing religions and ethnic groups. It is a nation where hundreds of millions of farmers work in conditions that have changed little over the centuries, but which also is home to



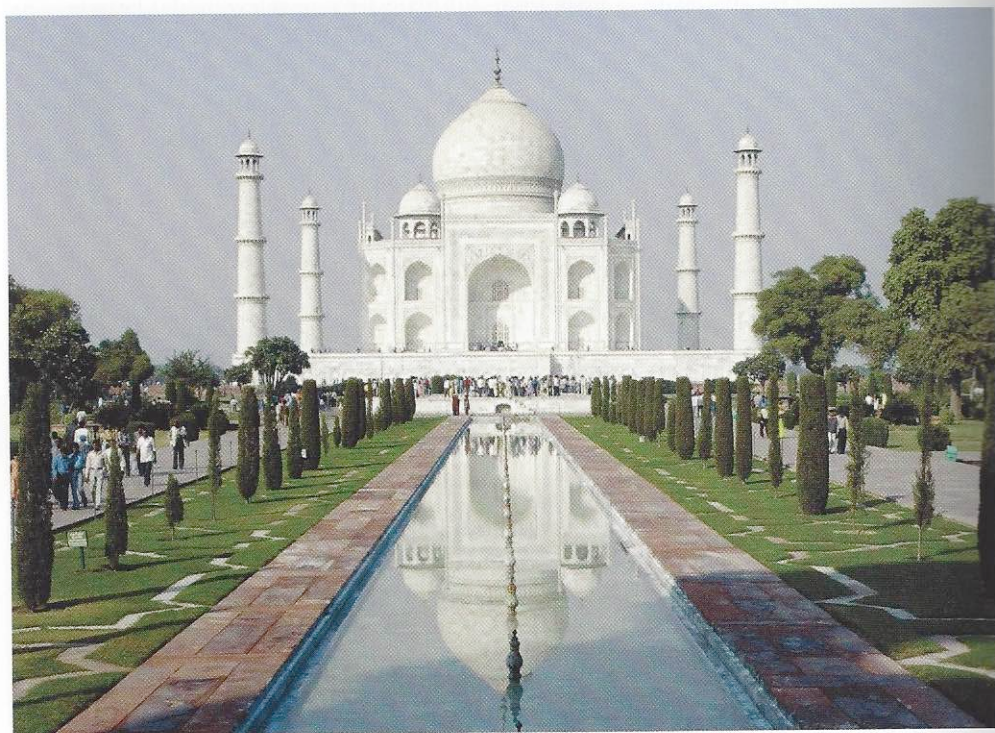
In Old Delhi, Jama Masjid Delhi or Masjid-i-Jahan Numa, the largest Muslim mosque in Asia (N. Scott Robinson)

the world's largest computer programming industry, clustered around high-tech Bangalore. India is home to several of the world's great religions, all having the common goal of peace—but it is also a place where tragic interethnic violence has been known to break out.

While South Asia is dominated by a small number of large countries, these monolithic political groupings belie the diversity of the region's populations. During the colonial era prior to the independence of both India and Pakistan in 1947, the British collected together some 562 small states into a single Indian colony, which originally included Pakistan and Bangladesh. While modern-day India uses only two main languages—Hindi and English—the constitution recognizes sixteen official languages. Some 25 percent of the population, mostly in the South, speak a variety of Dravidian languages. In reality there are some 1,652 languages and dialects spoken in India today. In addition to India's many languages, Persian (Farsi) and several Turkic languages are spoken in Afghanistan, Urdu and English are officially spoken in Pakistan, and Nepali in Nepal. Most of these languages are part of the vast family of Indo-European languages.

Many different religions can be found throughout South Asia. Hinduism is the major religion of India (82%). Islam is also found within India (12%), principally in the north, and is the dominant religion of Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. When Britain granted independence to the Raj in 1947, Pakistan was formed as a separate Muslim state and originally consisted of eastern and western portions flanking India. In 1971 Pakistan's Eastern Province seceded to become Bangladesh. Theravada Buddhism is the primary religion of Sri Lanka, though the country has a Hindu minority as well. Mahayana Buddhism predominates in Nepal and Bhutan, but some Hinduism is also found in both countries. Finally, Jainism,

The *Taj Mahal* in Agra, Uttar Pradesh, the most famous tomb in the world, built by Shah Jahan and completed in 1652 (N. Scott Robinson)





Indian street musician “charms” two cobra snakes with his *puṅgi* (also called *bīn* or *murlī*), consisting of two pipes with single reeds (a drone pipe and a melody pipe with finger holes) inserted into a gourd windchest (Max T. Miller)

Sikhism, the Baha’i Faith, and Christianity, not to mention a small community of Jews, are also found in India along with small congregations of animistic practitioners.

Traditionally, social organization in South Asia was hierarchical. This was especially true in India, where the population was organized into **castes** or groupings—ranging from the highest or priestly class to the lowest or “untouchable” class—to which an individual was assigned based on their status at birth. This system, which is tenuously related to Hinduism, has now been abolished in India, though it still influences many spheres of life, such as marriages and occupational opportunities. Certain castes or sub-castes were closely associated with specific kinds of music. For example, only Brahmin priests are permitted to recite the highly sacred *Vedic* chant, while non-Brahmins normally specialize in the playing of instruments, particularly ones that involve skin (drums) or saliva (flutes and reeds). In addition, gender plays a major role in determining who can perform what kinds of music or play what kinds of instruments.

CASTE SYSTEM

A hierarchical system of social organization based on one’s hereditary status at birth, found in India and associated with Hinduism.

Shanti Raghavan

AN INSIDE LOOK

I have been teaching Carnatic music for the past twenty-five years in the Cleveland area and am an exponent of the *Karaikudi* style of *Veena*. I started learning *Veena* at age seven and trained under Shri [honorific title] Viswanathan, a direct disciple of the legendary Shri Karaikudi Sambasiva Iyer, and then briefly under Mrs. Rajeswari Padmanabhan, granddaughter of Shri Sambasiva Iyer. From the beginning, because I displayed an innate talent for music, my teachers were delighted to see me progress quickly from one level to the next. I hail from a family of musicians. My mother, a devout lover of Carnatic music, was an excellent violinist. My sister, Mrs. Mohana Santhanam, was trained under Shri Jayarama Iyer (who was a disciple of Shri Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer). Thus, my childhood years were inundated with these two very powerful styles of music.

When first approached to teach music, I was hesitant and unsure if this would work out. But once I started, I have never looked back. I saw teaching Carnatic music as an opportunity to introduce Indian culture to children growing up in the United States. Therefore, I have never turned away any student for lack of apparent talent. Instead, I have taken a disciplined approach to developing talent in all students who show an interest and instilling in them an awareness of Indian culture. I have a sincere belief that music is a truly spiritual experience that brings people closer to the Almighty. I also believe that learning music brings balance to academics and enriches all facets of life. This passion and dedication has had a significant impact on the students and their parents. Not only passing on the art form has been important, but also making music part of the very being of my students has been my goal.

In 2008 my daughter, Mrs. Shruti Aring, and I founded a non-profit organization called *The Ragapriya School of Carnatic Music*. Its goal is to teach and promote Carnatic music in Northeast Ohio. The school seeks to provide a high-quality musical education by combining music theory with vocal, violin, and *veena* classes. Disciplined training increases my



Shanti Raghavan, teacher of South Indian Music

students' confidence and self-esteem, and they learn not only to appreciate music but also to perform in social and cultural events. *Bhajans* and *sloka* classes, as well as music appreciation classes, are also available for those interested. The school sponsors performances by both community members and professionals to make music a regular part of their lives. While the primary focus is on children, this school reaches out to everyone who is interested in learning music. The goal is to fill a need for structured and comprehensive musical instruction. My daughter, who is well trained in both Carnatic vocal and Carnatic violin, also gives lessons in the Cleveland area.

In keeping with the school's goals, the *Ragapriya School* has produced several thematic music programs. The inaugural program was entitled "Great Composers in Carnatic Music" and covered the lives and compositions of a dozen composers. Other programs included the "Dasavatara (the ten avatars of Vishnu)" and a fund raising program on "Devi (the life force and energy)." The school has also trained one student in music *arangetram*, which is a two-hour concert demonstrating the student's ability in all the advanced techniques of Carnatic music.

It is my hope that I have made a difference in the lives of all the children I touched through the power of music.

Aashish Khan

AN INSIDE LOOK

I was initiated into North Indian classical music at the age of five by my grandfather, the legendary Acharya Baba Allaiddin Khan Sahib, exponent of the Senia Beenkar and Senia Rababiya Gharana founded in the sixteenth century by Mian Tansen, court musician to Emperor Akbar. I also learned music from my father, Ustad Ali Akbar Khan, and aunt, Smt. Annapurna Devi, both leading musicians in India. In 1953, I gave my first public performance at age thirteen with my grandfather on the All India Radio National Program in New Delhi. In 1961, I accompanied my father as a representative of the Government of India to the East-West Music Encounter in Tokyo, Japan. By 1967, I was performing the sarod internationally at such places as the Hollywood Bowl in Los Angeles (for an audience of over 20,000 people) as well as throughout India. In 1978, my brother, Pranesh Khan, and I founded the "Allaiddin Academy of Music and Performing Arts" in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. In 1989, I was appointed to the prestigious post of Composer and Conductor for the National Orchestra, Vadya Vrinda of All India Radio, New Delhi, succeeding such musical stalwarts as Pandit Ravi Shankar and Pandit Pannalal Ghosh. A few years later, I traveled to South Africa on a concert tour organized by the governments of India and South Africa. I was the first Indian musician to represent India as an ambassador of Indian culture and classical music. My work can be heard in numerous films, such as Sir Richard Attenborough's *Gandhi*, John Houston's *The Man Who Would Be King*, Clint Eastwood's *Breezy*, and David Lean's



Aashish Khan, concert artist, composer, and teacher of North Indian Classical Music

A Passage to India, as well as Tapan Sinha's *Aadmi aur Aurat* and *Joturgriha*, for which I received the "Best Film Score Award" from the Bengal Film Journalist's Association. I have collaborated with such diverse Western musicians as John Barham, George Harrison, Ringo Starr, Eric Clapton, Charles Lloyd, John Handy, Alice Coltrane, George Brooks, Emil Richards, Dallas Smith, Don Pope, Jorge Strunz, Ardeshir Farah, and the Philadelphia String Quartet. I have been a music guru (teacher) for many years and have been on the faculties of the Ali Akbar College of Music, Ravi Shankar's Kinnara School of Indian Classical Music, the University of Washington, and the University of Alberta. I teach students throughout the United States, Canada, Europe, South Africa, and India while pursuing a busy career as a concert artist and composer. I am a true believer and follower of the "Guru Shishya Parampara," one of the oldest methods of teaching Indian classical music in an oral, practical, theoretical, and traditional manner. My true belief and objective is to pass on for generations to come the sixteenth-century traditions and culture from which I descend.

South Asia exhibits striking contrasts in terms of level of development. Afghanistan, a thinly populated and mountainous country with little infrastructure or internal unity, remains the least developed, while the urban areas of Pakistan and India are highly developed. Indeed, India and Pakistan have produced many of the world's greatest scientists and thinkers, and today India is a leader in the high-tech world. With its crushing population statistics, however, India must struggle to keep much of its population fed, clothed, housed, and employed. As in most developing countries, there are great contrasts between the wealth of the few and the poverty of the many. In Afghanistan and Sri Lanka, and sometimes in Pakistan as well, political instability has made modernization and development difficult to

maintain. India, often described as the world's largest democracy, has remained stable even with one of the most diverse populations in the world.

Planning the Itinerary

HINDUSTANI

A term referring to the cultural traditions of North India.

CARNATIC (ALSO, KARNATAK)

A term referring to the cultural traditions of South India.

Each of the nations that comprise South Asia offers exciting and distinctive musics, but it is the “classical” music of India that has gained most of the attention of outsiders. A visit to any large record store offering “international” releases will demonstrate this. Culturally, India is divided into a northern region and a southern region, with the former comprising two-thirds and the latter one-third of the country. Northern culture is called **Hindustani** and southern culture is called **Carnatic** (also spelled **Karnatak**). The north of India was deeply influenced by Indo-European invaders who brought the Aryan civilization from the northwest between 2000 and 1500 B.C.E. No one religion dominates the north, a situation not only giving rise to many coexisting faiths (Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism, the Baha'i Faith, Islam), but also resulting in a more secular society. Hindustani music reflects this diversity and has far fewer relationships to religion than Carnatic music. Most northern languages are related to Hindi, while southern languages are mainly Dravidian, having been derived from layers of people who preceded the Aryans. The South in general has experienced less outside influence, and as a consequence Hinduism predominates—leading to a society that makes little distinction between the sacred and the secular.

Not surprisingly, Carnatic music is closely tied to Hinduism, though it has little to do with temple activities per se. Classical music in both traditions can be vocal or instrumental. The North Indian classical music with which Western audiences are much more familiar is primarily instrumental. Carnatic music, on the other hand, is primarily vocal. Indeed, much of the instrumental music of South India consists of transcriptions of vocal compositions.

Indian classical music, unlike the communal music of Africa or the ensemble music of Southeast Asia, is individual and often virtuosic. One attends a concert to hear a particular artist, rather than specific compositions or ensemble types, because most Indian classical music is composed spontaneously during performance through a process called *improvisation*. These improvisations usually unfold at a very leisurely pace: a full performance of a single improvisation can last anywhere from thirty minutes to two hours, and Indian classical concerts can easily last four or more hours.

In spite of the fact that Indian classical music is widely disseminated both in and outside India, the majority of the Indian population prefers to sing or listen to other kinds of music. Hindu lay people often sing devotional songs called *bhajans*, which can be popular in style. Music written for and transmitted by the movies is widely popular; in fact, the term for much of India's popular music is *filmi*; and because India's film industry produces more films per year than that of any other country, the number of *filmi* songs is understandably vast. Beyond that is a great variety of popular styles collectively called “Indo-pop,” while *bhangra*, a new form of popular music and dance derived from traditional Panjabi sources, first flourished among the Indian community in the United Kingdom in the 1980s and 1990s.

A musical tour of South Asia might also lead us to eastern India—known as Bengal—and to Bangladesh as well as to the west, to Pakistan. Most striking in Bengal and Bangladesh are the Bauls, free spirits who comment in their songs on topics as diverse as society, philosophy, and the joys and pains of daily life—and who can perhaps be thought of as the

FILMI (ALSO, FILMI GIT)

Popular music taken from films in India.

equivalent of America's "singer-songwriters." Although Pakistan is an independent nation with a Muslim majority, no single type of music epitomizes its culture. Depending on the region, its music alternately reveals relationships with Afghanistan, Iran, or India. One kind of Pakistani music has, however, attracted a following outside Pakistan, a Sufi-Muslim devotional song genre called *qawwali* (sometimes spelled *kawwali*).

QAWWALI
(ALSO, KAWWALI)
Sufi-Muslim
devotional songs.

Arrival: North India

India's northern cities—especially Mumbai, Pune, Delhi, Varanasi (Benares), and Lucknow—reflect the diversity of the peoples who together created modern Hindustani culture. What made North Indian culture distinctive were the many waves of people migrating or attacking from the Northwest, especially Persia. Consequently most people in the north are described as Indo-Aryan. This influx eventually brought Islam to India. Northern India offers visitors many great mosques, along with Sikh and Jain temples, the sixteenth-century palaces of the Mughal emperors, and the many governmental and celebratory edifices left by the British colonials. The region's vast cities are also home to North India's complex and sophisticated classical music tradition.



Site 1: Hindustani (Instrumental) *Raga*

First Impressions. Hindustani instrumental improvisations, called *raga*, are normally quite long. Because a piece of an hour or more would not be practical to study here, we have chosen an example that lasts less than five minutes—but that is nonetheless a “complete” *raga* performance. If you listen carefully to the very beginning, you will hear a buzzing timbre emanating from a plucked chordophone. Almost immediately, a more prominent and



North Indian
(Hindustani) music
played by
Buddadev das
Gupta, *sarod* lute;
Zakir Hussain,
tabla drums; and
Elizabeth Howard,
tambura drone lute

commanding stringed instrument asserts itself, while the first instrument continues in a slowly repetitious manner. The rather dreamy introduction music gradually grows more excited until there is a sudden deceleration, an exhale, if you will—followed by the entry of drums and return of the solo instruments. This new phase continues to the end.

Several elements stand out to the first-time listener: the “twangy” buzz of the introductory instrument, the constant ornamentation and pitch-bending of the main melodic instrument, and the steady tempo of the drums, one of which has a distinctive “scooping” sound. Noticeable changes in the level of relaxation and an increase in tension also occur as the performance proceeds.

Aural Analysis. Few other areas of the world’s music require as much technical explanation as does Indian classical music. That is because an appreciation of this fascinating blend of fixed and improvised elements involves an understanding of several important musical aspects. Even as it employs a highly systematic compositional process, Indian classical music also allows for endless variation, and the genius of a performer is not in how well he or she follows established conventions but in how those conventions are manipulated for the purposes of individual expression.

The word *raga* (or *rag*, meaning “color” or “atmosphere”) denotes a comprehensive system for the simultaneous composition and performance of music in both North and South India. Because the English word *improvisation* suggests a near total degree of spontaneity, it fails to capture the control, predictability, and bounded nature of *raga*. The creation of a *raga* is indeed a highly controlled compositional process, with established constructional boundaries—even if it allows for nearly unlimited individual variations within these boundaries. Western ethnomusicologists use the term *mode* to describe such systems. Think of them as *composition kits*; the elements of each *raga* provide the tools for the musician’s performance. Whereas most Western music is notated on paper by “composers” before its performance, Indian classical music is unwritten, even though a *raga* unfolds in highly predictable ways. The length of a performance can vary from a few minutes to a couple of hours, depending on time constraints and the interest of the audience as sensed by the musicians.

Raga comprises several elements, the first being tonal material (what might be called a “scale”). These “scales” consist of a hierarchy of strong and weak notes, a set of typical melodic figures, and a set of extra-musical associations with such things as moods, times of the day, and magical powers. *Ragas* are sometimes represented pictorially as individual human beings or deities in miniature paintings called *ragamalas*.

The pitches of a *raga* are expressed in *solfège* syllables, a mnemonic system of names for each degree of the scale. The Indian equivalent to the West’s *do-re-mi-fa-sol-la-ti-do* is *sa-re-ga-ma-pa-dha-ni-sa*, with which students of Indian *raga* can sing melody. As in the West, there are actually more pitches in the total tuning system than these seven because some pitches can be flatted or sharpened; in India the total is usually said to be twenty-two, whereas only twelve pitches are used in the West. More than one *raga* may use the same set of pitches, but identical pitch sets are differentiated in practice from *raga* to *raga* due to differences in pitch hierarchy, typical melodic units, and extra-musical aspects. The two most important pitches are *sa* and *pa*, always a fifth degree apart.

The “buzzing” pitches briefly heard alone at the beginning of our audio example are played on the *tambura*, a four-stringed, long-necked lute with a large gourd body. The buzz timbre is produced due to small threads being placed under each string, causing them to

RAGA

A mode or system of rules and procedures for composition and improvisation in Indian classical music.

MODE

A set of rules and customary procedures used to compose or improvise music in a particular tradition.

SOLFÈGE

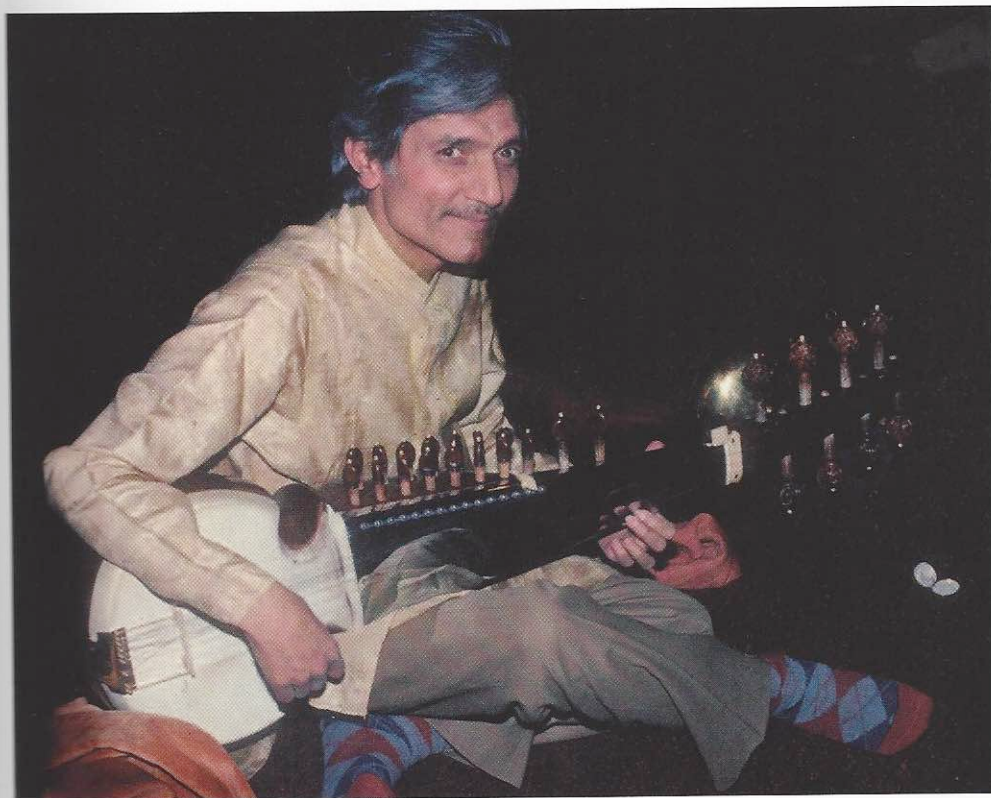
Mnemonic syllables corresponding to individual pitches in a scale.

TAMBURA

A round-bodied gourd lute used to provide the “drone” element in Indian classical music.

vibrate against the bridge when played. The person who plays this instrument, often a young disciple or a spouse of the lead instrumentalist, simply plucks the four strings successively throughout the *raga*. The four pitches reinforce the two most important pitches of the *raga*, usually the fundamental or “home” pitch (*sa*/pitch I) and another an interval of a fifth above (*pa*/pitch V), and are generally played in the order V (upper), I (upper), I (upper), I (lower). This continuous sound of the *tambura* helps solidify the tonal center of the *raga* and can be likened to incense permeating a room, except through sound rather than smell.

The main melodic instrument in our example is the **sarod**, also a long-necked lute. The *sarod* is generally around 40 inches (approximately 1 meter) long and has a large wooden body covered with goatskin. Its neck is tapering and hollow. The sarod has six main strings of metal running over a fretless metal-covered fingerboard to large tuning pegs, but there are also eleven to fifteen “sympathetic” metal strings running from within the neck (out through small, ivory-lined holes) to a series of smaller pegs on the side of the neck. These latter strings are tuned to vibrate in sympathy with the main strings, and provide a background of ethereal ringing. Sometimes the player will strum them briefly, mostly at the beginning of the piece, but otherwise they are not directly plucked in order to sound. Holding the instrument horizontally (similar to the way a guitar is held) and using a triangular pick of wax-covered coconut shell held in the right hand, the player can simply pluck the main melodic strings or pull (stretch), in the case of fretted instruments like the sitar, them to the side with the left hand to create the tone-bending and ornaments that practically define Indian *raga*.



SAROD

A fretless plucked lute from northern India.



The *tambura* lute has an unfretted neck, four strings, and is played throughout a *raga* to produce drone pitches (N. Scott Robinson)

The late Indian musician Vasant Rai plays the *sarod* lute