



*Guitar Styles
from Around the Globe*

India



Your passport to a new world of music

- ▶ The most important elements of Indian music, including:
 - Folk Music
 - Devotional Music
 - Ragas, the classical music of India
 - Ornamentation, modes (thaats) rhythms (taals)
- ▶ Examples in standard music notation and TAB

SANJAY MISHRA



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This One



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A compact disc is included with this book. This disc can make learning with the book easier and more enjoyable. The symbol shown at the left appears next to every example that is on the CD. Use the CD to help ensure that you're capturing the feel of the examples, interpreting the rhythms correctly, and so on. The track number below the symbol corresponds directly to the example you want to hear. Track 1 will help you tune your guitar to this CD.

Have fun!

About the Author

Born in India and residing in the United States, guitarist-composer Sanjay Mishra plays with an eclecticism well suited to his multicultural background. After completing his studies at The Peabody Conservatory of Music, he began composing music that combined Eastern and Western influences. In an interview with The Washington Post, he explains "I come from a tradition that has a lot of improvisation. Sometimes Western classical music can seem a little rigid, I had to find some middle ground."

Sanjay came to public acclaim with his highly-praised recording "Blue Incantation" with Grateful Dead guitarist Jerry Garcia. His music has been released on Ryko, PolyGram-Philips, Melodia (France), Putumayo World and others, as well as his own label, Akar.

For more information on the music of India, please visit Sanjay's Web site:
<http://www.mishra.net>.



PHOTO: COURTESY OF SANJAY MISHRA

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Introduction

The lines between East and West are increasingly crossed and occasionally obliterated. In this spirit, we will explore the modalities of the East on an instrument generally thought of as Western. Not that it matters; music is an international language—like mathematics, but with much more heart.

Before we can appreciate the emotional component of any style of music, we must learn the rational aspects. This is the point of this book. It is a point of departure from which you can take this music and give it life and meaning through your performance.

The musical examples presented in this book are arrangements. It assumes you:

- Read standard music notation and/or tablature.
- Have the ability to fingerpick simple arpeggios and chord/melody.
- Have a basic knowledge of music theory (scales and intervals).

This book is divided into three parts, each of which focuses on a different aspect of Indian music: folk, devotional and classical. The first two parts, concerning folk and devotional music, focus on songs with chordal accompaniment or repeating bass lines and do not require extensive knowledge of the Indian system of music. The guitar is very popular as an accompanying instrument in many forms of music in India.

The third part deals with the raga system of classical music—the “art music” of India. To learn raga thoroughly, one must find a teacher. The nuances of this music cannot be written down. Thus, the purpose of the raga chapter in this book is not to enable one to perform a raga in the traditional sense, but to provide an insight into various modes and their usage in a non-Western context. You can then use them as new colors in your improvisation. Some Indian theory and historical background is provided, as well, to help you understand some Eastern musical concepts. This chapter can only serve as an introduction to this large body of music.

These three broad divisions of the book are almost independent of each other. Use them in any order you like. The first two parts are more suited to a fingerstyle technique, the third part can also be played with a pick.

A CD provides performances of all the examples in the book. The songs are played as notated to help you get a feel for the sound and style. The performances of the ragas on the CD will be very close to what is written in the book, but may not be exact. The notation is just a skeleton, in keeping with the spirit of the music. Also, keep in mind that real performances of ragas are quite extended, and these brief examples are just little windows into the style. The CD also provides drones and backing percussion tracks for the reader to improvise over. Feel free to try your own ideas!

Chapter 1

GETTING STARTED

TUNINGS



If you have heard much Indian music, you have probably noticed the use of *drones* (long sustained notes over which musicians improvise). We can use altered tunings to easily simulate a drone on the bass strings while playing melody on the top three strings. Here are two such tunings that are used in this book:

Drop D tuning

Lower the 6th string one whole step to the note D by matching the harmonic on the 12th fret to the open 4th string. Indicated 6=D.


Drop D and G tuning

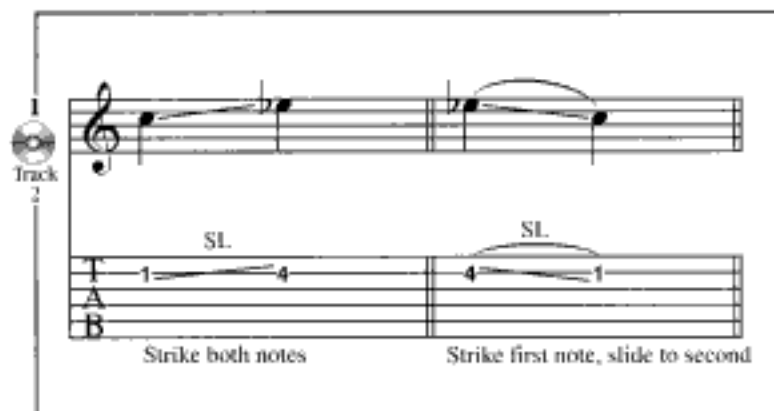
Tune the 6th string as in Drop D tuning and lower the 5th string to G by matching the harmonic on 12th fret to the open 3rd string. Indicated 6=D, 5=G.

ORNAMENTS

Indian music has an elaborate system of ornamentation and bends. Here are some of the most commonly used ones:

Meend

Meend refers to sliding from one note to another, which can be approximated on the guitar with a *slide* (*glissando*). It is indicated with an oblique line and "SL" above the TAB. If there is a slur (), pluck only the first note. On a steel string or electric guitar, a bend can be used instead of a slide.



In determining the speed of the meend, one must be sensitive to tempo and context. The slide could be gradual or rapid. Ornamentation can vary from one region to another and one *gharana* (school of playing) to another, making standardization difficult. The tradition of handing these down has remained oral for centuries; the subtleties of such ornaments are impossible to notate. Use the CD for this book as a point of departure.

Kan

The same as a pull-off and hammer-on before or after the played note, a *kan* is indicated with a small grace note and a slur.

There are many more ways of ornamenting that you will discover as you continue your adventure into Indian music.

NOTATION

This book uses standard music notation and TAB. In some instances a “proportional” type of notation, as in the example below, is used for the more free sections. There are no specific note values.

Though Indian music is mostly an oral tradition, there is a system of notation (which is not used in this book). It is provided here for information. Below are the main notes and their Western equivalents.

Indian:	SA	RE	GA	MA	PA	DHA	NI
Western:	C	D	E	F	G	A	B
Traditional:	स	र	ग	म	प	ध	नी

GUITAR FINGERING

Numbers refer to left-hand fingers:

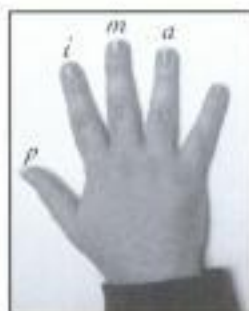
- 1 = index
- 2 = middle
- 3 = ring
- 4 = pinky

For right-hand fingerings, standard classical guitar terminology is used:

- p* (*pulgar*) = thumb
- i* (*indice*) = index
- m* (*medio*) = middle
- a* (*anular*) = ring



The left-hand fingers.



The right-hand fingers.

Circled numbers refer to strings. For example, ① means the 1st string.

ABOUT THE DRONE

Most Indian music does not change key or have chord progressions. There is, however, often a drone or layer of sound on top of which the soloist plays. This drone serves as a tether, and in classical music, the raga or composition is locked to it. The following tracks will give you a feeling for drones. You can also use these to practice your Indian-style improvisation as you progress through the book. You may have a setting on your CD player that will enable you to *loop* (repeat endlessly) a track, which is very useful for practicing improvisation over drones.

Drone in D



Drone in G



You can also create your own drone with a synthesizer or with the drop tunings on a guitar. The drone should be based on the tonic note, so if you were playing in Drop D tuning, your drone should have the note D. Double it an octave above, as well. Then add a 5th (the note A). Other variations can include the 4th (G) instead of the 5th. On a synth, select the "sustain" setting to keep the notes sounding. Use a pad patch or sound that lends itself to being sustained.

As you explore Indian music you will discover the following:

- The main notes in Indian music are the same seven notes as music in the West. But the notes often tend to gradually slide from one to another in a constant state of oscillation. Notes are rarely played "straight." They are approached with a slide from another note. This gives the music its unique style, sound and feel. The Indian term for notes is *swara*.
- There is considerable amount of improvisation, depending on the skill and experience of the performer. Especially in the classical music of India, the goal is not to present a polished performance of an unalterable score, like a piece by Mozart, but rather a spontaneous creation. The composition is of secondary importance to the musician's capacity for creative improvisation. Thus the same composition sounds different in each performance or in the hands of different performers. In North Indian classical music (also called *Hindustani* music), the composer and performer are often the same person; there is no distinction between the two.
- A drone made up of the tonic and 5th (or 4th) in different octaves, is present all through ragas (as in page 36 onwards in this book). This provides the canvas on which the composition and improvisation is created. There are no "chord changes" so the tonic, once fixed, remains the same for the raga, usually the entire performance.
- Indian instruments have lots of strings! These are usually *sympathetic* strings, located below the main strings. The sympathetic strings resonate in unison when the note it is tuned to is played on the main string. This gives the instrument more resonance, helps emphasize notes and prevents dead spots in acoustic instruments.
- It is mostly a solo music. There are no orchestras.
- There is a large Indian pop and music video industry, courtesy of such corporations as MTV Asia, as well as a large movie industry. Movie soundtracks outsell every other category—this is the most popular music in India. It is a mix of everything imaginable and its purpose is to entertain the masses, most of whom have a difficult life, from which these movies provide a welcome escape.



Sitar

PHOTO - COURTESY OF SANJAY MISRA



Picture of sitar close up, showing the sympathetic strings underneath the main strings. Note the "scalloped" fretboard to allow efficient string bending.

PHOTO - COURTESY OF SANJAY MISRA

Chapter 2

FOLK MUSIC OF INDIA



"All music is folk music. I ain't never heard no horse sing a song."

Louis Armstrong

The folk music of India comes from the villages and reflects the many regions, languages, dialects and religions that make up India. Of course, there are no formal schools of folk music; songs are passed on from one singer to another from generation to generation.

Sometimes the same melody is heard in various regions, with some variation, and different words. Sometimes the melodies are exchanged across genres. For example, a folk melody might be used by a classical musician, or a folk singer may use a classical mode to create a song.

There are innumerable instruments, most locally crafted out of items easily available, and they vary from one region to another. Much of the music is rustic sounding. The musicians are generally not professionals, though folk music enjoyed the patronage of kings during Medieval times and has even been sung in royal courts! Some styles of folk music have gained more than regional popularity. The folk music and dance of Rajasthan, in North India, and of the Baul singers of Bengal, are two examples.

In general, all folk music, no matter where it comes from, tells a story. It's usually a story of the lives of ordinary people, or some universal experience.



Purna Das Baul, folk musician from Bengal (in front), is one of the most famous singers of the Baul style. He is even on the cover of Bob Dylan's record, John Wesley Harding. Though the guitar is not usually used in this style, the author performed with Purna Das Baul for this concert. Typically, the singer would accompany himself with the one-string instrument he is holding in this photo.

PHOTO - COURTESY OF SANJAY MISHRA

This folk song comes from the tea growing region of Darjeeling and Assam. The song was sung by tribal people and tells the story of exploitation of tea laborers by the British during the *Raj* (British rule in India). It uses a *pentatonic* (universally used five-note scale) melody over a simple drone and beat. Allow the notes on the open 6th, 5th and 4th strings to ring freely, creating a drone to accompany the melody.



CHOL MINI ASSAM JABO

(COME LET US GO TO ASSAM)

♩ = 45

© - D

First system of musical notation for Chol Mini Assam Jabo. It consists of a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The melody is written in a pentatonic scale. Below the staff is a guitar tablature for the first three measures, with strings T, A, and B labeled. The tablature uses numbers 0, 2, 3, and 4 to indicate fret positions.

Second system of musical notation for Chol Mini Assam Jabo. It continues the melody from the first system. The tablature for the next three measures is provided below the staff, using numbers 0, 2, 3, 4, and 10 to indicate fret positions.

Third system of musical notation for Chol Mini Assam Jabo. It continues the melody from the second system. The tablature for the next three measures is provided below the staff, using numbers 0, 2, 3, 4, and 10 to indicate fret positions.

10

T 0 3 0 2 0 0 0 0 0 2 2 2

A 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

B 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

13

T 2 0 2 0 0 0 3 3 0 2 0 2

A 0 0 0 2 0 0 0 0 0 2 0 0

B 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

16

T 0 3 0 2 0 0 2 2 0 2 0 0

A 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

B 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

This folk song comes from Bengal, the Eastern region of India, though the lyrics and melody have seen many variations in other regions. In this song, the singer asks the girl to dance under the moon. Notice that in bar 13, the piece begins again with the melody played an octave higher.



SOHAG CHAND BADANI NACHO TO DEKHI (LET ME SEE YOU DANCE IN THE MOONLIGHT)

♩ = 90

A BH₁-----

E BH₁-----

etc.

4

A BH₁-----

E BH₁-----

8

A BH₁-----

D A BH₁-----

E A BII₆ E A BIX₇

12

T 0 0 1 2 2 0 10 12 9 (9) 9

A 2 1 2 2 2 0 9 9 0 11 11

B 0 0 1 1 1 1 0 2 4 1 1 1 0 1 1

0 2 1 2 0 0 3 3 0 3 3

(BIX₇) BVII₇ BVII₇ BIX₇

15

T 9 9 10 9 7 7 9 10 7 10 7 9 (9) 9 9

A 9 9 9 9 7 9 10 7 11 9 10

B 0 11 11 11 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 11 9 10

1 1 1 2 1 0 1 1 0 3 4 0 1 0 0 4 1

0 3 1 1 1 0 0 1 0 2 0 0 0 3 1 2 1 1

3 3 0 0 0 0 0 0

(BIX₇) E rit. BII₆

19

T 9 12 10 9 7 7 9 10 7 2 0 2 2 0

A 9 9 9 9 7 9 10 7 11 9 10

B 0 11 11 11 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

1 1 4 2 1 2 2 2 3 1 0 1 1 1

3 3 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

The folk music of Rajasthan abounds with rustic charm. It is not unusual to see a band of gypsy musicians, usually a family, set up in a village fair performing for tips. Here is a generic melody in $\frac{7}{4}$, a time signature with seven beats per bar, in this case grouped 3+2+2. Notice the use of ornamental grace notes.



FOLKSONG FROM RAJASTHAN

$\text{♩} = 170$

③ = D

SL SL SL SL

4

SL

8

SL

Bill.

E B B G D A D

T A B

2 7-5-7 7 9 9 11 12 11 (11) (11) 7

0 2-2-2 2 0 2 2 2 3 2- 0 0 0-2-2

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

6-7 6 2 7 7 5 5 7 8 7 7 7

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

2-2 1 0 2 2 2 1 1 1 2 1 0 0 0 0

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

7-5 10 10 10 8 7 5 3 (3) 2 0 2

0 0 0 0 2 0 0 0 0 0 2

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

1-1 3 3 3 3 4 4 1 0 0 0 0 1 0 1

0 0 0 0 0 1 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 1

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Chapter 3

DEVOTIONAL MUSIC IN INDIA



Devotees chanting and performing a fire ceremony.

PHOTO - COURTESY OF SANJAY MISRA



Devotional hymns were part of formalized music centuries ago, when scholars believed in attainment of spiritual states through music. From the incantation of ancient *Vedic* (a body of ancient wisdom) hymns dating back thousands of years to chanting, sound was said to contain mystical properties capable of awakening the spiritually enlightened areas of the consciousness. With all the various religions, gurus, gods and goddesses, and with each one having numerous songs dedicated to them, one can only imagine the vast number of compositions!

The music one might hear at an actual ceremony (such as the one in the photograph above) could range from adaptations of popular songs to the work of well-known classical singers. The music is often loudly amplified on low-quality speakers, but is sometimes performed live. Live performances are usually accompanied by hand cymbals and other percussion instruments.

PHOTO - COURTESY OF SANJAY MISRA



A religious temple in India.

In the town of Rishikesh in the Himalayas, known for its meditation centers, this song can be heard by the banks of the Ganges river at dusk during the *Aarti* (fire ceremony, see photo page 15).



OM JAI JAGDISH HARE (PRAISE BE THE ALMIGHTY)

$\text{♩} = 98$

(6) = D

BH, ———

BH, ———

Musical notation for the first system, featuring a treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 4/4 time signature. The melody is written on a single staff with various notes and rests. Dynamics include *p* (piano), *m* (mezzo-forte), and *a* (forte). The lyrics "OM JAI JAGDISH HARE" are written below the staff.

Tablature for the first system, showing fret numbers (0-7) for the Treble (T), Alto (A), and Bass (B) staves. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-3. A "SL" (slide) instruction is present above the Treble staff.

Musical notation for the second system, continuing the melody from the first system. Dynamics include *p* (piano), *m* (mezzo-forte), and *a* (forte). The lyrics "OM JAI JAGDISH HARE" are written below the staff.

Tablature for the second system, showing fret numbers (0-7) for the Treble (T), Alto (A), and Bass (B) staves. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-3. A "P" (pull-off) instruction is present above the Treble staff.

Musical notation for the third system, continuing the melody from the second system. Dynamics include *p* (piano), *m* (mezzo-forte), and *a* (forte). The lyrics "OM JAI JAGDISH HARE" are written below the staff.

Tablature for the third system, showing fret numbers (0-7) for the Treble (T), Alto (A), and Bass (B) staves. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-3. Instructions "SL" (slide) and "P" (pull-off) are present above the Treble staff.

11

SL H P SL SL

5 3 3 5 3 3 5 5 5 7 5 5 3 2 0 3 7 5

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

2 2 2 2 2 2 3 1 1 1 2 2 2 4 2 2 2 1 0 0 2 3 3 0 0 0

0 0

15

SL SL SL SL SL SL SL SL SL

5 7 5 7 8 8 7 5 7 5 3 5 7 5 7 8 8 7 5 7 5 3

0 0

2 2 2 2 3 3 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 3 3 3 3 2 2 2 2 2 2

0 0

18

P SL SL P

0 0 0 2 0 3 2 0 5 5 5 7 5 3 2 3 0 2 0 0 0 0 0 0

0 0

0 0 0 2 0 2 2 0 0 2 2 2 2 2 2 1 2 0 0 1 0 0 0 0

0 0

4



Track
10

(GLORY TO LORD RAM, THE MOST GLORIOUS ONE OF RAGU'S RACE)

 $\textcircled{6}=\textcircled{1}$

The image shows a musical score for the song "The Wind" by The Beatles. It includes a guitar part (top staff) and a bass part (bottom staff). The guitar part is written in standard notation with a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a 4/4 time signature. The bass part is written in standard notation with a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a 4/4 time signature. The score is divided into measures, with chord names (Dmin, Amin, C, Dmin, Amin, Dmin) and fret numbers (0, 1, 2, 3, 4) indicated above the notes. The guitar part includes a solo section marked with a 'P' (Palm Mute) and a 'H' (Harmonics) section. The bass part includes a solo section marked with a 'P' (Palm Mute) and a 'H' (Harmonics) section.

The image displays a musical score for the song "The Wind" by The Beatles. It includes a guitar part with a treble clef and a bass part with a bass clef. The guitar part features a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a 5/4 time signature. The bass part is in standard notation with a key signature of one flat. Chord diagrams for Dm, A7, G, and C are provided above the guitar staff. The guitar part includes various musical notations such as eighth notes, quarter notes, and rests, with some notes marked with a 'p' (piano). The bass part includes a tablature section with numbers 0-5 and a 'P' (piano) marking. The score is divided into four measures, each corresponding to a different chord.

Qawwali, the devotional music of *Sufism* (a religion related to Islam), is a melting pot of many influences. Sung by a group composed of one or more lead singers and a small ensemble of percussionists, singers, harmonium and handclaps that complement the lead singer. Vocal virtuosity and lyrical skill are the highlight of this style. Usually the lead singer will sing a line which will be repeated by the ensemble, similar to gospel *call and response*, where the preacher or leader calls out something and the congregation responds. The late Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, introduced to the West by Peter Gabriel, was one of the most well-known performers of *Qawwali*, collaborated on some East-West fusion performances.



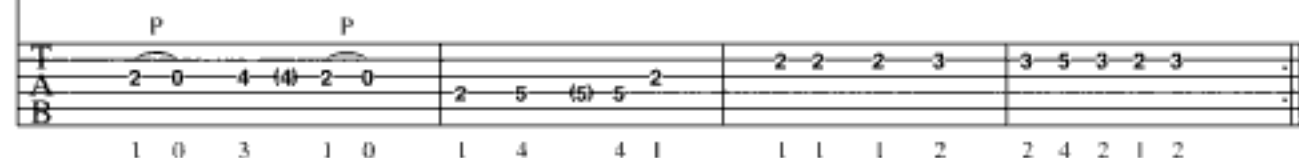
QAWWALI TUNE

♩ = 116

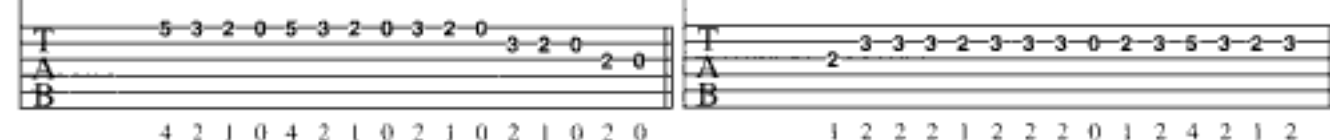
Bill. -----



(A soloist and chorus may sing this together, or there may be two bars of solo and two bars of chorus.)



(A soloist may perform improvisations like these:)



Dadra is a song form that can be classified as "light classical," which has many song forms, like *thumri*, *tappa* and so on. They can be sung or played instrumentally, and are generally highly ornamented. Unlike classical music, in "light classical" there is considerable latitude and freedom both for the soloist and percussionist to use rhythms and notes outside of the accepted form of the composition for variety. The rhythms associated with this style are *kaharwa* or *dadra* (see pages 34–35) and are generally played at a medium tempo. Below are some melodies one might typically hear in this style. Various ideas written in the music can be repeated at will.

Tips

Play very freely, without a steady beat. Perform as if speaking or telling a story, and group notes together as shown with the *phrase marks* (slurs).



DADRA

Track 12

⑤ = G
⑥ = A

Musical notation for the first system of *Dadra*. The staff shows a melody in treble clef. Below the staff is a tablature for a stringed instrument (T, A, B strings) with fret numbers (0-10) and phrasing marks (P, SL). The tablature includes a sequence of notes: 0 0 0 0 0 3 2 0 1 1 2-2 2-2 2 2-2 2.

Musical notation for the second system of *Dadra*. The staff shows a melody in treble clef. Below the staff is a tablature for a stringed instrument (T, A, B strings) with fret numbers (0-10) and phrasing marks (SL). The tablature includes a sequence of notes: 1 2 2-2 2-2 0 1 1 3-3 3-3 3 3 3 2-2 2.

Musical notation for the third system of *Dadra*. The staff shows a melody in treble clef. Below the staff is a tablature for a stringed instrument (T, A, B strings) with fret numbers (0-10) and phrasing marks (SL). The tablature includes a sequence of notes: 1 2 2-2 2-2 2 0 1 1 1 1 3 3 3 3-3 3-3 2-2 2-2.

Musical notation for the fourth system of *Dadra*. The staff shows a melody in treble clef. Below the staff is a tablature for a stringed instrument (T, A, B strings) with fret numbers (0-10) and phrasing marks (SL). The tablature includes a sequence of notes: 1 3 3 3 3-3 3-3 1 1 2 4 2-2 2-2 2-2 2-2 2-2 2-2 2-2 2-2.

Chapter 4

HINDUSTANI MUSIC—

THE CLASSICAL MUSIC OF NORTH INDIA



A BRIEF HISTORY

The classical system of Indian music is over 3000 years old. References in Vedic literature (ancient religious and philosophical text of the Hindus from around 4000 B.C.) and Buddhist scriptures depict music as a highly developed art form and set the standards for the rudiments of scale and meter.

The works of Kalidasa (an Indian poet and dramatist in the 5th century A.D.) are examples of the high level of sophistication found in early Indian music. This early period of music was very strict and was practiced mainly by the priest classes. Later, in the 8th century, there was a shift from religious to secular music, which moderated some of the rigidity of the formal music.

From the 11th century onward, various cultures—most significantly, the Persians—invaded India and left their mark on the music. Musicians came in from Turkey, Persia and Arabia. Since the foreign invaders found the strict rules of formal Indian classical music too difficult to comprehend, they simplified it. The life of poet and musician Amir Khusro (1253–1325) serves as an example. Born to an Indian mother and Turkish father, he served five kings in his lifetime. He was fascinated by Indian art music, and in his memoirs he states that the music of India, though he studied for it 40 years, was too difficult to comprehend.

Following the Islamic invasions, Indian music developed two distinctive systems: North Indian Music (Hindustani) and South Indian Music (*Karnatic*). We are only going to discuss Hindustani music.

Starting in the 14th century, theory and practice began to part ways. The theory remained static, the performance practice kept changing, with deviations from and modification of the style, structure and modes of expression becoming more commonplace. Some important forms that developed over time were *dhrupad khayal*, *tappa* and *thumri*. Famous musicians, like Swami Haridas (1486–1575) and his student Tansen, taught compositions that can be heard even today, basically unchanged!

While music in the Western hemisphere moved in a direction calling for *equal temperament*, or 12 equal divisions of an octave with harmony, counterpoint and the symphony orchestra, Indian classical music remained based on *natural temperament* (see page 25 for more about temperament) in which unequal divisions of the octave can exist. In natural temperament, there can be intervals smaller than a half step. This cannot be reproduced consistently on an instrument with fixed frets such as a guitar without great difficulty.

Throughout history, scholars have written many treatises on Hindustani music. Even with all their efforts, this music has never been really unified into a standardized system. Many differing, unique styles have been developed and encouraged by a family system called *gharana*, making standardization extremely difficult.

RAGA

The centerpiece of the music of India and its most significant contribution to the world of music is the *raga* (also called *raag*) and *tala* (*taal*, meter) system.

In Sanskrit, the word “raga” means “to color” or “that which colors the mind.” Musically, it is a framework for improvisation and composition within a *mode*. A mode is like a key. As a guitarist, you likely know several major (Ionian, Mixolydian) and minor (Aeolian, Dorian) modes. Each mode can yield many ragas, each one with its own melodic pattern, ascending and descending note combinations.

Much as in Western music, Indian pitches are divided into seven main notes and each of them, except for the tonic and 5th can be altered, yielding a 12-note chromatic scale. Here is an Indian chromatic scale starting on D.

The image shows a musical staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The scale is written as a sequence of notes: D, E, F, F#, G, G#, A, A#, B, B#, C, and D. Below the staff, there are three rows of fingerings labeled T, A, and B. The fingerings are: T: 0 1 2 3 4 0 1 2 3 0 1 2 3; A: 0 1 2 3 4 0 1 2 3 0 1 2 3; B: 0 1 2 3 4 0 1 2 3 0 1 2 3.

When lowered a half step, a tone is called *komal* (flat). This can apply to the 2nd, 3rd 6th and 7th scale degrees. When raised a half step, a tone is called *tivra* (sharp). This applies to the 4th scale degree. A natural or unaltered note is called *shudh*.

Some notes can be further altered by 20 cents*. The *komal* (flat) notes then become *ati komal* (extra flat); *tivra* (sharp) notes become *tivatar* (extra sharp). These notes are called *shrutis*.

Select any combination of five notes or more within an octave (in the following examples, D–D is used), and you have a raga! In other words, a raga exists with that combination. Using the 12-note scale, 35,000 combinations are possible. Thankfully, at any given time, only a small fraction of this vast body of ragas are in common practice.

A Few Rules

Here are a few rules you need to know to build a raga:

- A raga must have at least five notes of the 12 possible main notes within an octave.
- Once the notes are selected, you can only use those notes; *no other notes can be used*. If another note is used, it becomes a different raga. One can have “mixed” ragas but it requires considerable knowledge to keep the identity of each intact in the process.
- The raga must include either the 4th or the 5th. So if the starting note is D, then G or A must be present.
- You cannot skip two successive notes (so if you start on D, you can’t skip both E and F or G and A, or any two successive letter names).

* A cent is a logarithmic measure of relative pitch or intervals. 200 cents are equal to one octave.

The examples below will help clarify the rule about skipping notes.

5

Not good Better

T
A
B

0 2 0 0 3 0

- The raga has a fixed ascending (*arohana*) and descending (*avrohana*) note order. This may be non-linear. The ascending and descending patterns may also be different from each other.

6

Ascending Descending

T
A
B

0 0 0 4 2 1 2 0 2 1 2 1 4 1 4 2

The chosen notes can then be classified as follows:

- Vadi* or (sonant)—The most important or dominating note, like the tonic in Western music.
 - Samvadi* (consonant)—The second most important note (4th or 5th)
 - Anuvadi* (assonant)—The notes in a raga that are neither vadi or samvadi.
 - Vivadi* (dissonant)—Referred to as an “enemy note” and is not used, except by a musician of great skill to enhance the raga through dissonance.
- A wrong note not present in the mode.

Due to regional variance and custom, exceptions to the rules above exist. Since most of the subtleties cannot be notated, it has remained an oral system. Regional identities, called *gharana* (which usually relate to a place, signifying the lineage of the musician) are embodied within schools of playing.

For a concert performer of traditional music, a raga is more than a mode, just like a song is more than a few chords. Just as the Greek modes were meant to convey ethos, so each raga creates a mood.

SOME IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF RAGA

The "composition" or *pakad* (main tune) in a raga is used by the musician as a framework to develop his or her own creative imagination; it is only a shell to build on. The main idea is a single-line melody. Any note can serve as tonic. Below, we are using D as a tonic. In India, C \sharp is often used.

Notes are typically approached from above or below. For example, here is how the Indian equivalent of the major scale, *bilawal*, is written and played.

Written

Played

Time/Season Theory and Raga

Specific periods of day and night are assigned to different ragas. Though not based on a scientific reasoning that can be proved, the time/season theory has a definite impact in creating the mood of the raga.

The raga does not necessarily try to express the emotions of life on the material plane, but has a higher spiritual nature, dealing with body and soul, man, nature and God. Thus each raga can have associations with a color, a particular deity, Vedic *chakra* (energy points within the body), position of the planets, season and hour of the day.

About Microtones and Temperament in Indian music

You may have heard of Indian music having *microtones* or *quarter tones*, as much has been made of this. Terms relating to this issue were introduced on page 22 (*atikomal* and *tivatar*). The usage of microtones is primarily to help locate the main notes in the process of sliding from one note to another. As one note is approached from another by a slide, the tones surrounding the “correct” note help the musician in tuning it properly, much like the vibrato used by a violinist or vocalist in Western music. Generally, string players that play fretless instruments will tell you that they play sharp notes a little extra sharp and flat notes a little flatter, thus in their mind a sharp and flat are not really the same thing (enharmonic). As guitarists, we play microtones when performing a bend or vibrato. Indian music recognizes and formalizes such practices.

Temperament, on the other hand, involves fixing the notes of a scale to a tuning. For example, on a piano, the notes are fixed to an equal temperament (discussed on page 21); there are 12 equal divisions of each octave. This means the distance from C to D is the same as the distance from D to E; all whole steps are of equal distance. This also applies to half steps. The frets on a guitar are also set to equal temperament.

The Indian system, on the other hand, is very different. It is based on *natural temperament*, which means the distance between notes can be variable and are not equal, dependent on the raga itself; not all whole steps are the same. Rather, they are unequal and need to be considered on a case-by-case basis. In addition, the Indian system recognizes 22 divisions (called *shruti*, see page 22) within an octave, so any note can be set at more than one position.

In Western music, the relationship between the note D and note C is constant. Regardless of the key or composition, the distance between C and D will always be the same. The position in the scale those notes occupy, whether they are the 1st and 2nd or 5th and 6th, makes no difference. They are exactly the same.

In the Indian system, the interval C to D is not fixed in the same, absolute sense as in Western temperament. Either note can be set normal or a little sharper or flatter through the use of *shrutis*, so the relationship will change. How the interval is played will depend upon the raga, the *gharana* and the skill of the musician. Even the time of day and season, which is related to raga, will affect the temperament of a scale. It is a fascinating and extensive system that requires great knowledge, and the Indian system provides the depth and profundity to sustain a lifetime of learning (and more!).

Guidelines vary with each raga, and with each teacher. Indian fretted instruments such as the sitar have moveable frets to accommodate these variances, and it is one of the most important distinctions between Indian and Western music. It is to be noted, however, that the influence of the tempered scale, and its introduction to Indian culture through the *harmonium*, a very popular accompanying instrument for singers, has raised much debate. Some have even declared that the whole system of 22 divisions is being replaced by the Western model of 12 tones to the octave.

FORM OF A RAGA

Traditionally, a raga opens with an un-metered *alap*, or introduction to the notes. This is the most difficult section to play. To unfold the raga gradually, and reveal its identity artfully, requires a thorough knowledge of the subject. The *alap* transitions to a metered section called *jod*, and then the *jhalla*. These subsections of the overall first section are all played solo.

The second part, called *gat*, introduces meter and the accompanying percussionist. It includes a set composition or hook, called *pakad* (means "to catch or capture," first discussed on page 24) or a more extensive set of notes with a melodic outline called *chalan*, highlighting the main notes and phrases that make up the identity of the raga. Set in a fixed time signature, the *gat* functions as a framework for improvisation and extrapolation ending in the finale (*jhalla*).

Although the *pakad* embodies the "seed" of the raga, to develop the ragas full potential as an improvisational framework, various techniques may be employed for development and improvisation. They are as follows:

Taan—Riffs, in multiples of the time signature, ending on the first beat. In $\frac{4}{4}$, for example, the improvised runs would be in multiples of 4, such as 16 beats in length, ending on the one or first beat of the cycle. Remember to end on the first beat and not the last sixteenth!

Layakari—or playing in various multiples of the time signature, such as one and half times, double speed, three times and four times the original speed.

Sawal-jawab—Question and answer, where the percussionist imitates the soloist, echoing the melodic phrase with a percussive response.

Tebai—Ending a phrase by repeating a fixed line three times, with the third time finishing on the 1st beat.

Various musical forms may also be used to express the raga, such as *dhrupad*, *dhamar*, *tappa*, *thumri*, *zilla* and many more. Each have their unique compositional characteristic which is used as a framework within the confines of the raga scale.

Three registers or octaves are used: *mandra* (low), *madhya* (middle) and *tar* (high).

Each octave can then be divided into a lower tetrachord (D–G) and higher tetrachord (A–D).

PERFORMING A RAGA

First, one must become familiar with the concept of playing within a mode. A good way to learn a mode is to first play it both ascending and descending. Play it slowly against a drone or the tonic note, noticing the various degrees of tension and release and the sound created by each note against the tonic or drone. Try to get a feel for the tonality the mode creates. Know where the whole and half steps lie. Then practice various permutations to become fluent with the mode. Some permutations are demonstrated on pages 222–225. Do the same for all the modes shown in this book.

Listening will help you understand concepts of melodic phrasing in Hindustani classical music, but to learn how to perform a traditional raga, one must study with a teacher. In its traditional form, raga is a very complex subject. The *rasa*, or essence of a raga, can take years to understand! References for further study are provided on page 239. Indian cultural organizations exist in every major city, and can help with finding a teacher. The author's Web site provides extensive links as well.

The purpose, then, of this section in this book is to provide an introduction to this system of improvisation, so it can be used in a non-traditional context, entirely up to you as a musician. Good examples can be heard in the works of many raga-influenced musicians of various styles. Jazz saxophonist John Coltrane, rock groups such as the Beatles and classical composers like Terry Riley (and other minimalists) experimented with Indian music with some success. The next generation of Indians that grew up in the urban sprawls of major metropolises with a large South Asian population created their own music—a sort of fusion combining all kinds of influences, ranging from techno and re-sampling techniques to rap and hip hop.

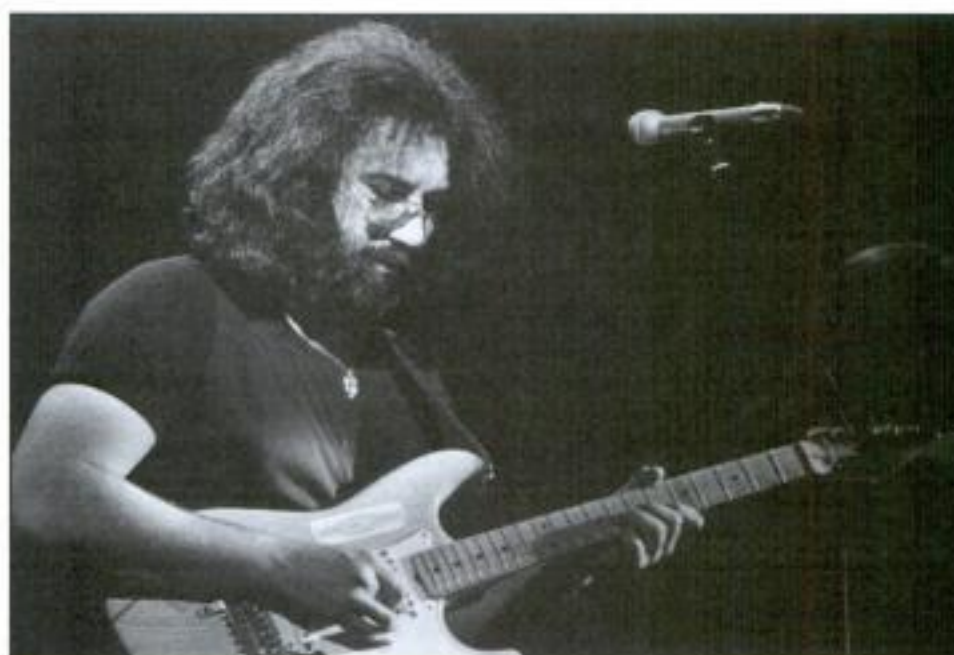


PHOTO BY JEFFREY MAYER • COURTESY OF STAR FILE PHOTO INC.

Famous guitarists such as Jerry Garcia (1942–1995), of the Grateful Dead, have been attracted to Eastern music. In fact, one of Garcia's last recordings was as a guest on the author's CD, Blue Incantation, in 1995.

CLASSIFICATION OF RAGAS

V.N.Bhatkhande (1860–1936) postulated that ragas are based on, or are variations of, ten *parent scales* (scales from which other scales are derived). This classification of ragas is called *thaat* and is just one theory of many. Below are the ten *thaats* according to Bhatkhande. Western equivalents (where applicable), with distinguishing scale tones (compared to the major scale) are given in parentheses.

Bilawal (Ionian or major scale)

8
Track 13

T
A
B

0 1 3 0 1 0 1 2

Khamaj (Mixolydian, $\flat 7$)

9
Track 14

T
A
B

0 1 3 0 1 0 1 3

Kafi (Dorian, $\flat 3$, $\flat 7$)

10
Track 15

T
A
B

0 1 2 0 1 0 1 3

Asavari (Aeolian, $\flat 3$, $\flat 6$, $\flat 7$)

11
Track 16

T
A
B

0 1 2 0 1 2 1 3

Bhairavi (Phrygian, $\flat 2$, $\flat 3$, $\flat 6$, $\flat 7$)

12
Track 17

T
A
B

0 1 3 0 2 3 1 3

Kalyan (Lydian, $\sharp 4$)

13
Track 18

T
A
B

0 2 4 1 2 0 2 3

Todi ($\sharp 2$, $\flat 3$, $\sharp 4$, $\flat 6$)

14
Track 19

T
A
B

0 1 3 1 2 3 2 3

Purvi ($\sharp 2$, $\flat 6$, $\sharp 4$)

15
Track 20

T
A
B

0 1 4 1 2 3 2 3

Marwa ($\sharp 2$, $\sharp 4$)

16
Track 21

T
A
B

0 1 4 1 2 0 2 3

Bhairav ($\sharp 2$, $\flat 6$)

17
Track 22

T
A
B

0 1 4 0 2 3 2 3

Another theory traces ragas to 72 parent scales called *melas* from which ragas are derived. No one theory of raga classification has been developed that is complete and can explain all ragas. For example, ragas exist that do not fall within any of Bhatkhande's ten *thaats*.

Each *thaat* has a name and can yield many ragas, each distinguished from the other by its ascending and descending pattern, characteristic melodic phrasing, notes emphasized and so on. All these nuances separate one raga from another, so two different ragas can have the same notes yet maintain their own individual characters.

Note that the names of the *thaats* are the same as names of ragas, though they are different things! A *thaat* is the parent scale from which the raga, with all its characteristics, is derived.

Since knowing the structure of a mode (in terms of whole steps and half steps) is so helpful, the following chart shows the ten main *thaats* (page 28) and their whole (W) half (H) steps. Notice that some have an interval larger than a whole step, called an *augmented 2nd* (A2, equal to three half steps).

Interval Structure of Bhatkhande's Ten Thaats		
Bilaval	W W H W W W H	(Ionian or Major)
Khamaj	W W H W W H W	(Mixolydian, $\flat 7$)
Kafi	W H W W W H W	(Dorian, $\flat 3, \flat 7$)
Asavari	W H W W H W W	(Aeolian, $\flat 3, \flat 6, \flat 7$)
Bhairavi	H W W W H W W	(Phrygian, $\flat 2, \flat 3, \flat 6, \flat 7$)
Kalyan	W W W H W W H	(Lydian, $\sharp 4$)
Todi	H W A2 H H A2 H	($\flat 2, \flat 3, \sharp 4, \flat 6$)
Purvi	H A2 W H H A2 H	($\flat 2, \flat 6, \sharp 4$)
Marwa	H A2 W H W W H	($\flat 2, \sharp 4$)
Bhairav	H A2 H W H A2 H	($\flat 2, \flat 6$)

W	=	Whole Step
H	=	Half Step
A2	=	Augmented 2nd

PERMUTATIONS

Permutations such as those presented in this section should be practiced for all the ragas.

Practice the following permutations on *thaat* Kalyan slowly at first, such as 60 beats per minute (bpm). Pick a tempo that feels very comfortable and unhurried, that allows you to think and anticipate every upcoming note. Once this feels secure, the speed can be increased very gradually. Playing double-time (the eighth notes becoming sixteenth notes) will further increase the speed.

Strive to reach 132 bpm, which is a respectable tempo to start developing speed. Eventually you want to reach speeds of 180–208 bpm, playing sixteenth notes. Once you are there, you may consider quitting your day job!

18
Track
23

♩ = 90-134

i m i i m i etc.

T *etc.*

A 0 0 2 0 0 2 | 4 2 0 0 2 4 1 | 4 2 0 0 2 4 1

B 0 0 2 0 0 2 | 4 2 0 0 2 4 1 | 4 2 0 0 2 4 1

4

T 4

A 2 1 4 2 0 0 2 | 4 1 2 0 2 1 4 2 | 0 0 2 4 1 2 0

B 2 1 4 2 0 0 2 | 4 1 2 0 2 1 4 2 | 0 0 2 4 1 2 0

7

T 2 0 2 1 4 2 0 | 0 2 4 1 2 0 2 3 | 2 0 2 1 4 2 0

A 2 0 2 1 4 2 0 | 0 2 4 1 2 0 2 3 | 2 0 2 1 4 2 0

B 2 0 2 1 4 2 0 | 0 2 4 1 2 0 2 3 | 2 0 2 1 4 2 0

19
Track
24

T
A
B

0 4 2 1 4 2 1 0 1 1 3 2 1 4 2 2 3 1 1 0 1 2 4 1 2 4 0 2 4 0

20
Track
25

T
A
B

0 0 1 1 3 4 1 2 1 2 3 4 1 1 2 3 0 4 4 0 3 2 1 1 4 3 2 1 2 1 0 3 1 1 1 0 4 3 0

21
Track
26

T
A
B

0 1 1 0 3 1 1 4 2 0 0 1 1 3 2 4 4 2 3 1 1 0 0 2 3 1 2 4 0 2 2 0

Sheet music for guitar, featuring a treble clef and a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The music is written in a single system with a treble clef and a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The guitar part is written in a single system with a treble clef and a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The guitar part is written in a single system with a treble clef and a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#).

Tablature for the guitar part, showing fret numbers (0-4) and string numbers (T, A, B). The tablature is written in a single system with a treble clef and a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The guitar part is written in a single system with a treble clef and a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#).

0 2 4 0 2 4 1 2 4 1 2 4 1 2 0 1 2 0 3 2 0 1 2 0

2 3 0 2 3 0 2 3 2 3 0 2 0 2 3 0 2 0 2 2 1 2 0 1

4 1 2 4 2 4 1 2 0 2 4 0 0

Sheet music for guitar, featuring a treble clef and a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The music is written in a single system with a treble clef and a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The guitar part is written in a single system with a treble clef and a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The guitar part is written in a single system with a treble clef and a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#).

Tablature for the guitar part, showing fret numbers (0-4) and string numbers (T, A, B). The tablature is written in a single system with a treble clef and a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The guitar part is written in a single system with a treble clef and a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#).

0 0 2 4 2 2 4 1 4 4 1 2 1 1 2 0 1 1 0 1 0 0 1 2 1 1 2 0 2 3 3

2 0 2 2 0 2 0 0 2 1 2 2 1 4 1 1 4 2 4 4 2 0 2 2 0 4 0

Musical notation for measures 1-3 (Treble clef, key of D major, 4/4 time). The notation shows a melody line and a guitar accompaniment line with fret numbers (0-4) and fingerings (1-2-3-4).

Measure 1: D4 (1), E4 (2), F#4 (3), G4 (4), A4 (1), B4 (2), C#5 (3), D5 (4).
Measure 2: E4 (1), F#4 (2), G4 (3), A4 (4), B4 (1), C#5 (2), D5 (3), E5 (4).
Measure 3: F#4 (1), G4 (2), A4 (3), B4 (4), C#5 (1), D5 (2), E5 (3), F#5 (4).

Guitar accompaniment (T, A, B strings):
Measure 1: 0 2 4 0 1 4 2
Measure 2: 2 4 1 2 2 1 4
Measure 3: 4 1 2 4 0 2 1

Musical notation for measures 4-7 (Treble clef, key of D major, 4/4 time). The notation shows a melody line and a guitar accompaniment line with fret numbers (0-5) and fingerings (1-2-3-4-5).

Measure 4: E4 (1), F#4 (2), G4 (3), A4 (4), B4 (1), C#5 (2), D5 (3), E5 (4).
Measure 5: F#4 (1), G4 (2), A4 (3), B4 (4), C#5 (1), D5 (2), E5 (3), F#5 (4).
Measure 6: E4 (1), F#4 (2), G4 (3), A4 (4), B4 (1), C#5 (2), D5 (3), E5 (4).
Measure 7: F#4 (1), G4 (2), A4 (3), B4 (4), C#5 (1), D5 (2), E5 (3), F#5 (4).

Guitar accompaniment (T, A, B strings):
Measure 4: 1 2 0 1 2 0 2
Measure 5: 2 0 2 2 3 2 0
Measure 6: 0 2 3 0 5 3 2
Measure 7: 2 3 5 2 2 0 3

Musical notation for measures 8-10 (Treble clef, key of D major, 4/4 time). The notation shows a melody line and a guitar accompaniment line with fret numbers (0-5) and fingerings (1-2-3-4-5).

Measure 8: E4 (1), F#4 (2), G4 (3), A4 (4), B4 (1), C#5 (2), D5 (3), E5 (4).
Measure 9: F#4 (1), G4 (2), A4 (3), B4 (4), C#5 (1), D5 (2), E5 (3), F#5 (4).
Measure 10: E4 (1), F#4 (2), G4 (3), A4 (4), B4 (1), C#5 (2), D5 (3), E5 (4).

Guitar accompaniment (T, A, B strings):
Measure 8: 0 2 3 0 5 3 2
Measure 9: 2 0 2 2 3 2 0
Measure 10: 1 2 0 1 2 0 2

Musical notation for measures 11-13 (Treble clef, key of D major, 4/4 time). The notation shows a melody line and a guitar accompaniment line with fret numbers (0-4) and fingerings (1-2-3-4).

Measure 11: E4 (1), F#4 (2), G4 (3), A4 (4), B4 (1), C#5 (2), D5 (3), E5 (4).
Measure 12: F#4 (1), G4 (2), A4 (3), B4 (4), C#5 (1), D5 (2), E5 (3), F#5 (4).
Measure 13: E4 (1), F#4 (2), G4 (3), A4 (4), B4 (1), C#5 (2), D5 (3), E5 (4).

Guitar accompaniment (T, A, B strings):
Measure 11: 4 1 2 4 0 2 0
Measure 12: 2 4 1 2 2 1 4
Measure 13: 0 2 4 0 1 4 2

RHYTHM IN INDIAN MUSIC

One of the most fascinating aspects of Indian music to a listener is the rhythmic variety and complexity one hears, especially in classical music.

Taal, or *tala*, is the name of the rhythmic element of Indian music, which runs parallel to the *raga* system representing the melodic element. The unique feature of *taal* is its cyclic patterns. Each *taal* comprises a given number of beats and once the last number is reached, it goes back to the beginning and cycles again to the end. This cyclic pattern continues to the end of the song or piece unless changed intentionally. Each *taal* is expressed through a set group of recognizable sounds (*bol*s) produced from different places of the drumhead with different strokes, alone or in combination. This group of sounds is referred to as *theka*. A *taal*, however, is not confined merely to its application on a percussion instrument. *Taal* can be expressed and felt through a variety of devices, such as a vocal or instrumental composition, rhythmic dance movements, etc.

Once a certain pattern is established within a song, it becomes a rule that should be adhered to until the end. Irregularities in a *taal* cycle within a song have never been accepted in Indian music. In fact, any irregularity in maintaining the cyclic count is considered a flaw on the part of the musician.

Taals offer a tremendous amount of elasticity in *tempo* (speed), which is referred to as *laya*. Each *taal* can be played in any tempo chosen by the musician. But, once the tempo is chosen and set, it is required to be maintained throughout the piece unless changed intentionally. Tempo can only be increased. There is not a tradition of slowing down, although there are a few examples of retards performed in recent times.

Each *taal* comes with a built-in rhythm of its own. What contributes to this rhythm are: 1) a stipulated bar pattern within the cycle; and 2) the stressed beats within those bars. For example, one of the most popular *taals* in North Indian music is *tintaal*, which is comprised of 16 beats. These 16 beats are divided as 4+4+4+4, with stress on the 1st, 5th and 13th beats. The 9th beat also marks the beginning of a bar, but it is not stressed.

Each *taal* is marked with set markings of clapped or not-clapped bars, which is known as the *tali-khali* system. In *tintaal*, the 1st, 5th and 13th beats are clapped and the 9th beat is not. Rather, it is expressed by a waving of the hand. In ancient times, *taals* were commonly expressed without a percussion instrument through its pattern of *tali-khali*. In any case, clapped or not, *tintaal* produces a "regular four" feel, simply because it has four groups of four beats.

The example below shows how a *tintal* might be written. The hands show where one would clap hands, and the syllables are traditional terms for specific tabla techniques.



Tintaal

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
dha	dhin	dhin	dha	dha	dhin	dhin	dha
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
na	tin	tin	na	ta	dhin	dhin	dha

There is always a steady, even rhythmic pattern as soon as a taal is introduced. For example, in *jhaptaal*, there is a 10-beat cycle divided 2+3+2+3. *Roopak taal* is a 7 beat-cycle divided 3+2+2. Although the rhythmic *theka* is always simple, what happens within the *taal* can become extremely complex and intense. There is a wide scope for improvisation or pre-composed movements based on rhythmic transposition, mathematical breakdowns, a calculated ending, and so on. For example, a popular rhythmic device, called *tehai*, is used as an ending of a long phrase or a composition. *Tehais* can start from anywhere but are targeted to end on the first beat of a cycle.



Tehai

To compose a *tehai* of *tintaal*, one simply needs to cover 16 beats over as many cycles as one plans to play, being sure to end on the first beat. For example, in order to conceive a *tehai* covering two cycles, one needs to compose something of 33 beats $[(16 \times 2) + 1 = 33]$. Since it has to be the same measure repeated three times within these 33 beats, one can compose a measure of 11 beats and repeat it three times. This will safely land on *sam*, the first beat of the third cycle.

Here are few often-used talas:



Dadra = 6-beat cycle divided 3+3



Rupak = 7-beat cycle divided 3+2+2



Kaharwa = 8-beat cycle divided 4+4



Jhaptaal = 10-beat cycle divided 2+3+2+3



Ektal = 12-beat cycle divided 2+2+2+2+2+2



Dhamar = 14-beat cycle divided 5+2+3+4



Dipchandi = 14-beat cycle divided 3+4+3+4



Sitarkhani = 16-beat cycle 4+4+4+4

Tablas are the most popular Indian percussion instrument. Consisting of two drums—one pitched low the other high—the tablas are capable of producing complex rhythm patterns called *bols*.



Tablas being played by Samir Chatterjee.

SAMPLE RAGAS

Bageshri is a romantic raga often expressing the emotion of separation. It is performed around midnight.

25

Track
40.1

Bageshri

Emphasize the tonic, 4th and 6th scale degrees. The 5th is omitted. The drone is tuned accordingly, with the 5th (A) being replaced by the 4th (G). Some musicians use the 5th sparingly, and when done well it can add great poignancy to this raga. Play freely; do not keep a steady beat.



RAGA BAGESHRI

Track
40.2

(THAAT KAFI)

⑤=D
⑥=D

[Alap or intro. (Un-metered over a drone)]

First system of musical notation. Treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The staff contains a sequence of notes with slurs and ties. Below the staff, the guitar tablature is shown for strings T, A, and B. The tablature includes fret numbers and techniques such as SL (slide) and SL SL SL SL (slide slide slide slide). The B string has a capo at the 3rd fret.

SL SL SL SL SL SL

T
A
B

0 1 3 2-2 2-2-2-2 2-2-2 2 0 0 0 0

Second system of musical notation. Treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The staff contains a sequence of notes with slurs and ties. Below the staff, the guitar tablature is shown for strings T, A, and B. The tablature includes fret numbers and techniques such as SL (slide) and SL SL SL (slide slide slide). The B string has a capo at the 3rd fret.

SL SL SL SL

T
A
B

5 7 5 7 5 4 5 3 2 0 4 5

2-2-2-2-2 2 2-2 1 0 2 3

Third system of musical notation. Treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The staff contains a sequence of notes with slurs and ties. Below the staff, the guitar tablature is shown for strings T, A, and B. The tablature includes fret numbers and techniques such as SL (slide) and SL SL (slide slide). The B string has a capo at the 3rd fret.

SL SL SL SL SL SL

T
A
B

0 4 5 7 9 7 9 9 12 10 12 10 9 7 5 7 7 5 4

0 1 2 4 2-2-2 2-2-2-2 2-2-2 2-2-2 2-2 2 2 2

Fourth system of musical notation. Treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The staff contains a sequence of notes with slurs and ties. Below the staff, the guitar tablature is shown for strings T, A, and B. The tablature includes fret numbers and techniques such as SL (slide) and SL SL (slide slide). The B string has a capo at the 3rd fret.

SL SL SL SL SL SL

T
A
B

2 4 2 5 4 5 3 2 0 5 4 5 7 0 0 0 0

2-2-2-2-2 3 1 1 0 2-2-2 1 0 0 0 0

Following is a short sample of a raga using raga khamaj, which is just like the Mixolydian mode. This very popular raga is usually performed at night and conveys the emotion of sensuality.

Raga Khamaj

26
Track
41.1

T: 0 4 0 2 0 2 3 3 1 0 2 0 4 2 0

A: 0 4 0 2 0 2 3 3 1 0 2 0 4 2 0

B: 0 4 0 2 0 2 3 3 1 0 2 0 4 2 0

The prominent notes in raga khamaj are the 3rd (F#) and 7th (C#). The 2nd (E) is weak and often not played in ascent. The 7th is normal in ascent but often lowered (C) in descending lines.

RAGA KHAMAJ (THAAT KHAMAJ)

Track
41.2

©-D

Intro (short Alap). Free and un-metered.

SL SL SL SL SL SL SL SL SL

T: 7 7 8 10 7 9 10 9 10 10 12 10 12 8 7 5 3

A: 7 7 8 10 7 9 10 9 10 10 12 10 12 8 7 5 3

B: 1 1 2 4 1 3 3 2 3 2 2 2 2 2 1 1 1

SL SL SL SL SL SL SL SL SL

T: 7 5 7 8 7 5 3 3 2 3 2 3 2 2 5 3

A: 7 5 7 8 7 5 3 3 2 3 2 3 2 2 5 3

B: 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2

SL SL SL SL SL SL SL SL SL

T: 0 0 0 2

A: 0 0 0 2

B: 0 0 0 2

♩ = 86-100

Composition (pakad or bandish)

PH

T 3 5 (5) 3 3 2 3 2 3 3 5 7 (7) 5 3 3 3 3 3 5 5 (5) 3 2 3 3 5

A

B

2 4 2 2 1 2 1 2 2 4 2 1 1 1 1 3 4 2 1 2 4

T 7 2 2 (2) 2 3 7 (7) 5 7 2 0 3 1

A

B

4 1 1 1 2 3 1 3 1 0 3 1

T 2 2 (2) 2 3 2 (2) 0 2 2 0 3 2 5 3 (3) 3 5 7 8 7

A

B

1 1 1 2 1 0 1 1 0 2 1 3 1 1 1 3 4 3

T 5 7 5 3 2 5 3 (3) 3 5 7 8 7 5 7 5 3 2

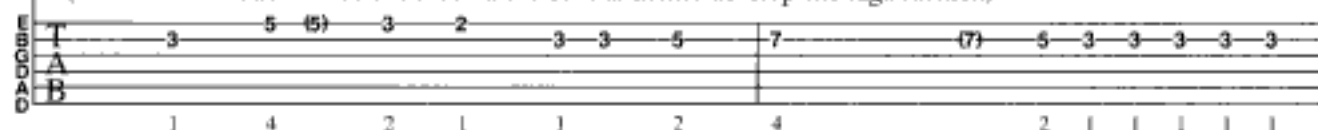
A

B

1 3 1 2 1 4 1 1 1 3 4 3 1 3 1 4 3



(Taans or riffs. Such variations around the central theme develop the raga further.)



FRETTED INSTRUMENTS IN INDIAN MUSIC

PHOTO • COURTESY OF SANJAY MISHRA



The sitar is the most revered of Indian instruments today and perhaps the most well known. Notice how the instrument is built to accommodate bending of notes, by having a scalloped fretboard, with the frets raised high above it and movable by sliding. Pumpkin gourd serves as the resonating chamber, as does the hollow neck.

PHOTO • COURTESY OF SANJAY MISHRA



*This is an **hansaveena**, an Indian slide guitar. "Hansa" means "swan;" the headstock is shaped like the head of a swan. A "veena" is an ancient stringed instrument, which was used in Indian classical music.*

A fretless guitar. Fretless instruments are capable of playing shrutis (quarter tones).

PHOTO • COURTESY OF SANJAY MISHRA



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Generally, Indian stringed instruments have two bridges, one for the main strings and one smaller bridge below the main bridge for the sympathetic strings. The main bridge often touches the strings in such a manner as to give them a buzzy quality. This is called jawari.

RAGA SCALES

Following is a sampling of some raga scales, all built on C. You can transpose them to any key as long as you maintain the interval patterns.

m3 = Minor 3rd
M3 = Major 3rd
P4 = perfect 4th

Raga Asavari

27
Track 42

H M3 W P4 W W H M3 W H

T
A
B

3 4 3 0 1 1 3 1 0 1 4 3

Raga Basant

28
Track 43

M3 W W A2 H H A2 H H W A2 H

T
A
B

3 2 4 1 0 1 1 0 1 0 4 2 4 3

Raga Behag

29
Track 44

M3 H W M3 H H W W H W H H W W

T
A
B

3 2 3 0 0 1 1 0 2 0 4 2 3 2 0 3

Raga Bhairavi

30
Track 45

H W W W H W W W W H W W W H

T
A
B

3 4 1 3 0 1 3 1 1 3 1 0 3 1 4 3

Raga Bilaskhani Todi

31
Track
46

m3 H W M3 H M3 H m3 W m3 W W H

T
A
B

0 3 4 1 0 1 1 2 3 1 3 1 4 3

Raga Chandrakosh

32
Track
47

m3 W m3 A2 H H A2 m3 W m3

T
A
B

3 1 3 1 0 1 1 0 1 3 1 3

Raga Durga

33
Track
48

W m3 W W m3 m3 W W m3 W

T
A
B

3 0 3 0 2 1 1 2 0 3 0 3

Raga Hansadhvani

34
Track
49

W W m3 M3 H H M3 m3 W W

T
A
B

3 0 2 0 0 1 1 0 0 2 0 3

Raga Jaijaiwanti

35
Track
50

H W W H H W m3 W M3 H W H W W H W H H W

T
A
B

2 3 0 2 3 2 0 3 0 0 1 1 3 2 0 3 2 0 1 0 3

Raga Kafi

36
Track
51

W H W W W H W H H H W W M3 W H W

T
A
B

3 0 1 3 0 2 3 1 0 3 2 0 2 3 1 0 3

Raga Kirwani

37
Track
52

W H W W H A2 H H A2 H W W H W

T
A
B

3 0 1 3 0 1 0 1 1 0 1 0 3 1 0 3

Raga Lalit

38
Track
53

W A2 H m3 A2 H H W A2 W H H W W

T
A
B

2 4 2 3 1 0 1 2 0 1 4 3 2 0 3

* Could also be D[♯].

Raga Kirwani

37
Track
52

W H W W H A2 H H A2 H W W H W

T
A
B 3 0 1 3 0 1 0 1 1 0 1 0 3 1 0 3

Raga Lalit

38
Track
53

W A2 H m3 A2 H H W A2 W H H W W

T
A
B 2 4 2 3 1 0 1 2 0 1 4 3 2 0 3

Raga Malkosh

39
Track
54

m3 W m3 W W W W m3 W m3

T
A
B 3 1 3 1 3 1 1 3 1 3 1 3

Raga Pilu

40
Track
55

m3 W W M3 H H H m3 H H W W H H W H H W W H W

T
A
B

3 1 3 0 0 1 1 0 1 2 3 2 0 3 2 3 0 1 0 3 1 0 3

Raga Soheni

41
Track
56

M3 W m3 W H H H H W m3 W a2 H

T
A
B

3 2 4 2 0 1 2 1 1 0 2 4 2 4 3

Raga Yaman

42
Track
57

W W W m3 W H H W W H W W W

T
A
B

3 0 2 4 2 0 1 1 0 2 0 4 2 0 3

Final Word

Congratulations! You have reached the end of this introduction to the music of India. As you can see, exploring this huge body of music could be a lifetime pursuit. But even if you never go beyond a little experimentation, those mind-opening experiences will forever influence your playing, and you can follow in the footsteps of such towering musical figures as Jerry Garcia, George Harrison and John McLaughlin. Keep learning and exploring. Below is some information to help you in your exploration.



Have fun!

REFERENCES FOR FURTHER STUDY

Listening

Folk: Purna Das Baul

Qawalli: Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan

Devotional: Pandit Jasraj

Classical:

Slide Guitar: VishwaMohan Bhatt, Debashish Bhattacharya, Barun Pal

Sitar: Nikhil Banerjee, Vilayat Khan, Shahid Pervez, Shujaat Khan Ravi Shankar,

Sarode: Buddhadeb Dasgupta, Ali Akbar Khan, Amjad Ali Khan

Vocal: Kishori Amonkar, Dagar Brothers, Jasraj, Bade Ghulam Ali Khan

Tabla: Zakir Hussain, Samir Chatterjee, Shafar Khan, Alla Rakha

East-West Fusion Albums with guitar:

Sanjay Mishra-Jerry Garcia: *Blue Incantation*

John McLaughlin and Shakti: *The Believer*

Reading

"The Raga Guide: A Survey of 74 Hindustani Ragas" (with 4 CDs), Nimbus records

"Musical Heritage of India," M. R. Gautam, Munshiram Manoharlal, India.

"Musical Instruments of Tribal India," Dilip Bhattacharya, Vedam books

"Penguin Dictionary of Indian Classical Music," Raghava R. Menon,
South Asia Books

"The Ragas of Northern Indian Music," Alain Danielou, South Asia Books

"On the Sensation Of Tone," Hermann Helmholtz. (Has good discussion of temperament, tuning and acoustics.)

DVD-VHS

"Raga (Ravi Shankar)," VHS, Mystic Fire Video

"Ravi Shankar in Portrait," DVD, Opus Arte Media Productions

WEB

On line: The author's website provides lots more information and extensive links:

<http://www.mishra.net/india.html>

Pronunciation Guide

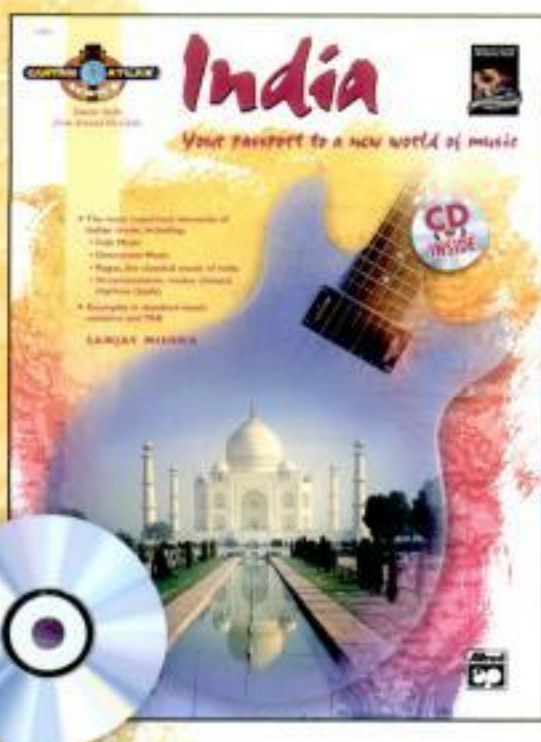


aarti	= AHR-tee
alap	= ah-lap
Amir	= ah-MEER
arohana	= ah-RO-han
Asavari	= a-SAH-varee
Assam	= as-SAM
ati	= Ah-ti
avrohana	= ahv-ROH-han
badani	= bo-DOH-nee
Bageshri	= bah-GAY-shree
Basant	= bah-SAHNT
Baul	= BAH-uhl
Behag	= bay-HOG
Bengal	= ben-GAHL
bhairavi	= BHI-ro-vee
Bhatkande	= bhat-KAHN-day
Bilaskhani	= be-LAHS-khan-ee
bol	= bohl
chalan	= CHA-lahn
chand	= chahn
Chandrakosh	= CHAN-drah-kohsh
chol	= chohl
dadra	= DAH-drah
Darjeeling	= dahr-jee-ling
dekhi	= DEH-khee
dha	= dtah
dhamar	= drah-MAHR
dhrupad	= dtroo-PHAD
dipchandi	= DEEP-chan-dee
durga	= DHUR-gah
ektal	= AYK-tahl
ga	= gah
gat	= gahr
Hansadhvani	= Hahn-sadt-vahn-ee
hare	= HAH-ray
Hindustani	= hun-doo-STAH-nee
jabo	= JAH-boh
Jagdish	= jahg-DEESH
jai	= ji

jaijaiwanti	= ji-ji-wahn-tee
jawari	= jah-WAH-rhee
jhalla	= JHA-lah
jhaptal	= JHAP-tahl
jod	= johr
Kafi	= kah-fee
kaharwa	= kah-HARE-vah
Kalidasa	= kah-lee-DAH-sah
kan	= kahn
Karnatic	= kahr-NAH-tik
Khamaj	= kah-MAHJ
khayal	= khah-YAHL
Khusro	= KHUS-ro
Kirwani	= keer-WAHN-ee
komal	= KOH-moh
Lalit	= LAH-lit
layakari	= LAY-kah-ree
ma	= mah
madhya	= MAH-dhee-ya
Malkosh	= MAHL-kohsh
mandra	= MAHN-dra
meend	= MEERh
mela	= MAY-lah
mini	= meen-ee
nacho	= NAH-choh
ni	= nee
Om	= ohm
pa	= pah
pakad	= pah-KHARD
Pilu	= PEE-looh
qawwali	= kah-WAH-lee
raag	= rahg
raga	= RAG-gah
raghav	= RAH-guv
raghupati	= RAH-guv-PAH-tee
raj	= rahj
raja	= RAH-jah
Rajasthan	= rah-jahs-TAHN
Ram	= rahm

rasa	= ruhs
re	= ray
Rishikesh	= RISH-ee-kesh
rupak	= ROO-puk
sa	= sah
sawal-jawab	= sah-WAHL-ja-WAHL
shruti	= SHRUH-tee
shudh	= should
sitar	= si-TAHR
sitarkhani	= si-TAHR-kah-nee
sohag	= sho-HAHG
Soheni	= so-HAY-nee
Sufi	= SOO-fee
swara	= swuhr
taal	= tahl
taan	= tahn
tala	= TAH-lah
tali-khali	= TAH-lee-KAHL-ee
tanpura	= tahn-PUH-rah
tappa	= TAH-pah
tar	= tahr
tehai	= tay-HI
thaat	= taht
theka	= TAY-kah
thumri	= tum-RHEE
tintal	= teen-TAHL
tivra	= TEEV-rah
tivratar	= TEEV-rah-tahr
Todi	= TOH-dee
Vedic	= vahy-dik
Yaman	= YAH-mahn
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