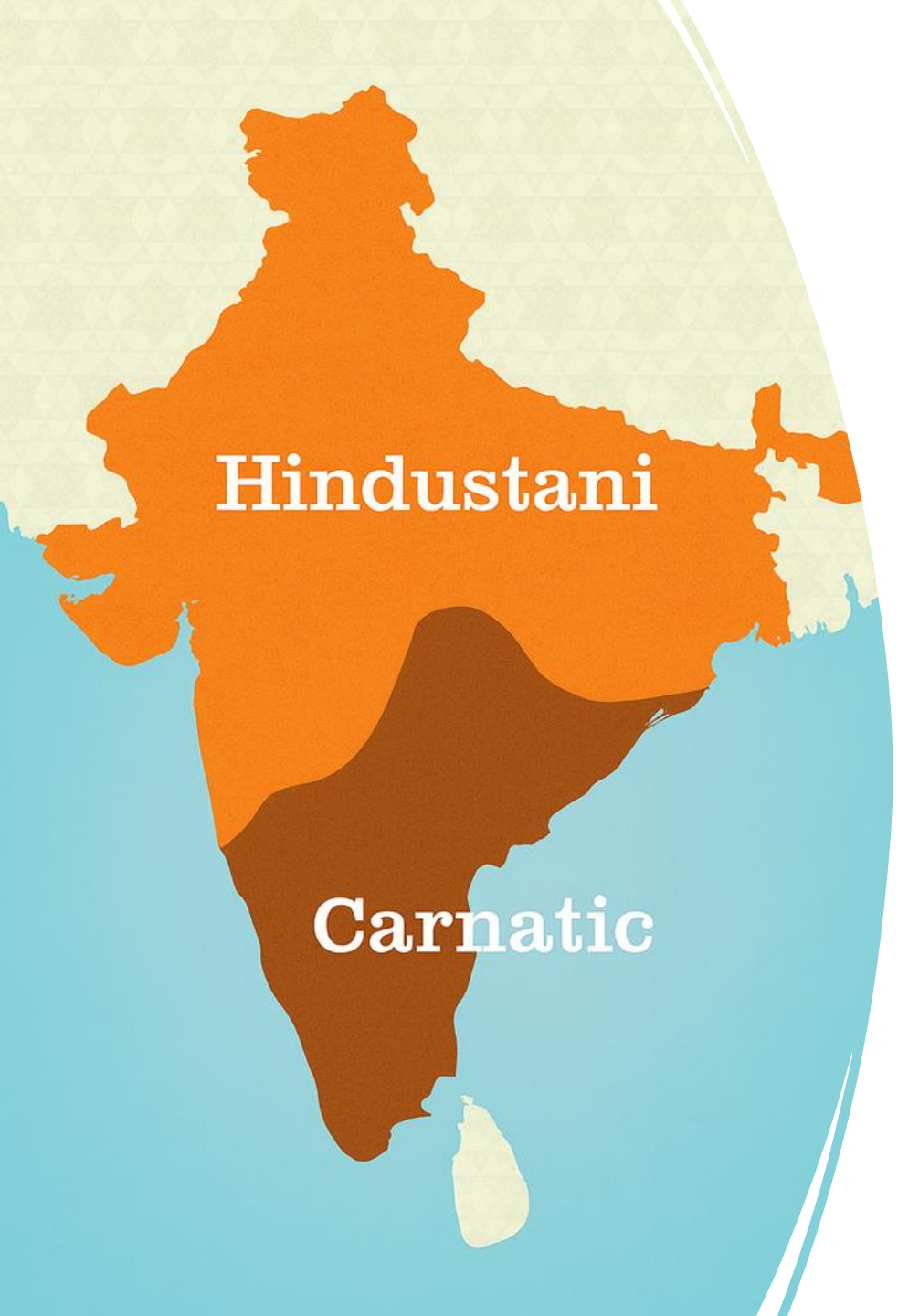


Raga for Starters: A Journey into Indian Classical Music

Dr. Harsha Nagarajan

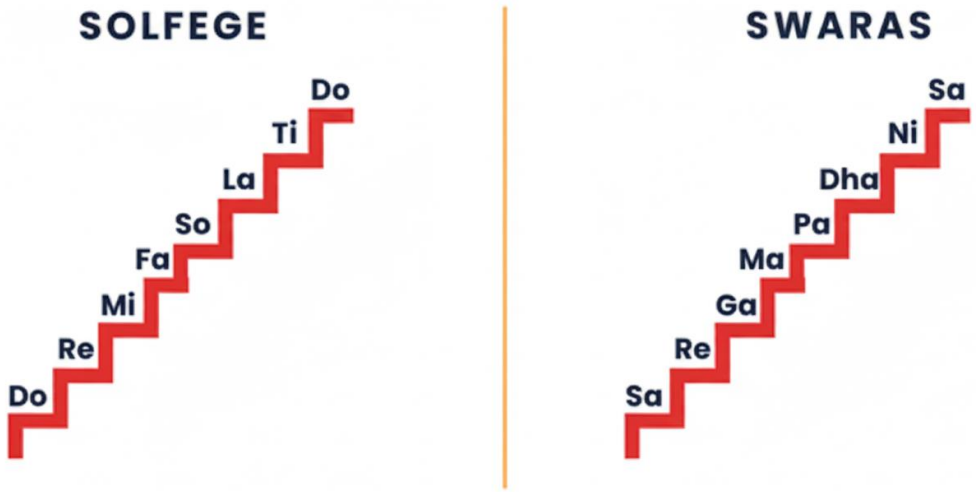
September 6, 2025



Forms of Indian Classical Music

- **Two Major Traditions (siblings)** – Indian classical music has two main forms: Hindustani (North Indian) and Carnatic (South Indian), each with distinct styles, instruments, and repertoire.
- **Raga System (melodic)** – The foundation is the raga, a melodic framework with specific notes and rules that evoke particular moods or emotions.
- **Tala (Rhythm)** – Rhythm is organized through tala, cyclical patterns of beats that guide improvisation and composition.
- **Improvization** – Performance heavily emphasizes improvisation, where artists creatively expand ragas within set structures.
- **Emotional Core + Entertainment** – Rooted in devotion and philosophy, the music is intended to elevate consciousness and connect performer and listener emotionally and spiritually.



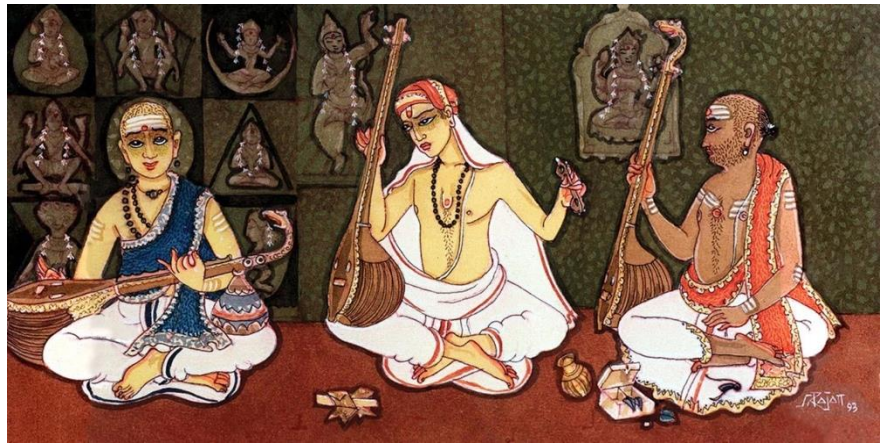


Swaras & Ragas

Western	Carnatic	Hindustani
Major scale	Shankarabharanam	Bilawal
Minor scale	Natabhairavi	Asavari
Lydian scale	Kalyani	Yaman
Pentatonic scale	Mohanam	Bhoop



Mian Tansen - 1493 to 1589



Carnatic music trinity – 18th century

Carnatic vs. Hindustani

- Highly preserved ancient form, with some influences.
- Emphasis on Kritis (compositions) mainly by Carnatic Trinity
- Systematic raga system; ragas are mostly categorized under the Melakarta framework (72 parent ragas)

- Influenced by Persian, Mughal, and Arabic traditions.
- Emphasis on improvisation around Ragas; compositions are fewer.
- Specific ragas are assigned to morning, afternoon, evening, or night.

Carnatic instruments



Mridangam



Veena



Kanjira



Violin

Ghatam



Saxophone



Hindustani instruments


Sitar


Shehnai


Bansuri


Pakhawaj


Harmonium


Santoor


Tanpura


Tabla

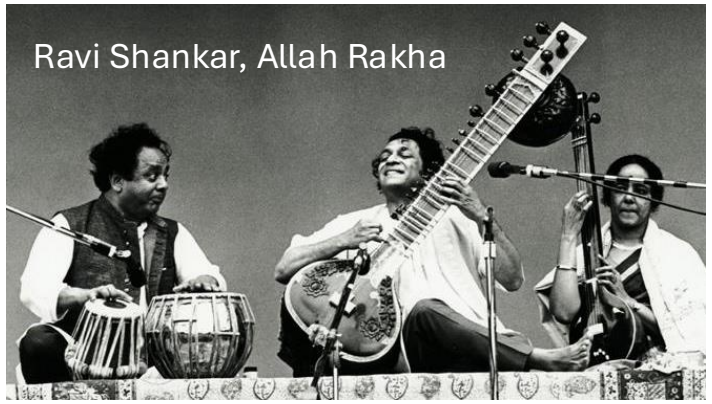

Sarod

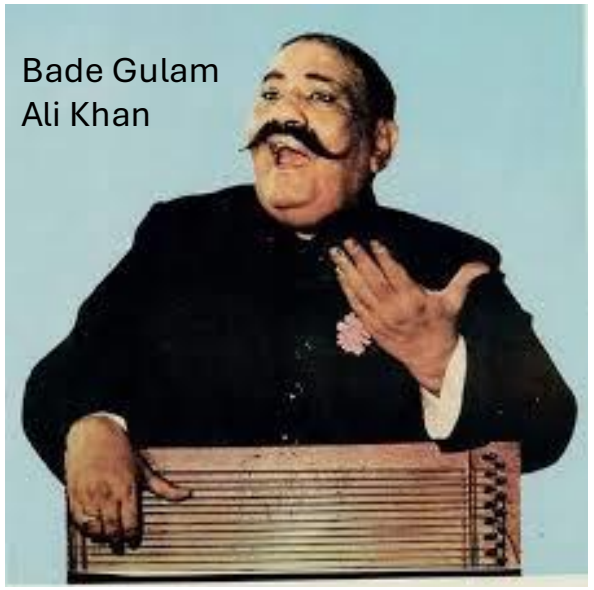


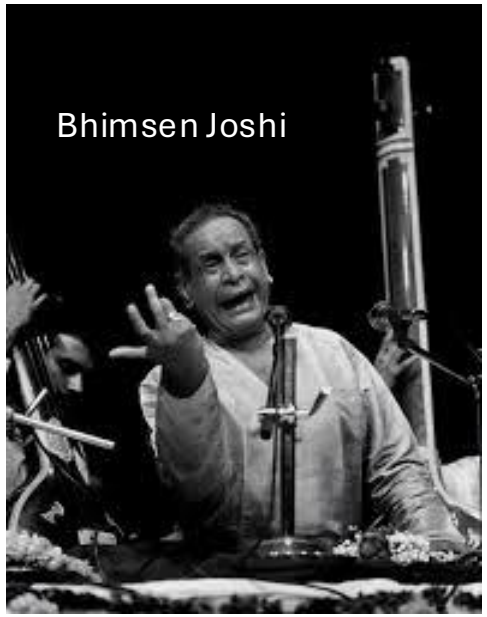
A Typical Carnatic Concert

- Varnam (Opening Piece) – sung in various speeds
- Kritis (Main Body of Concert)
  - Rendered simply or elaborated with Raga Alapana (improvization), Niraval (improvized melodic variation on a line), and Kalpana Swaras (improvized swaras).
- Tukkadas (Lighter Pieces)
  - Includes devotional songs, javalis, padams, bhajans, or even lighter/hindustani ragas.
  - Thillanas – lively rhythmical composition.

Legends of Indian Classical music

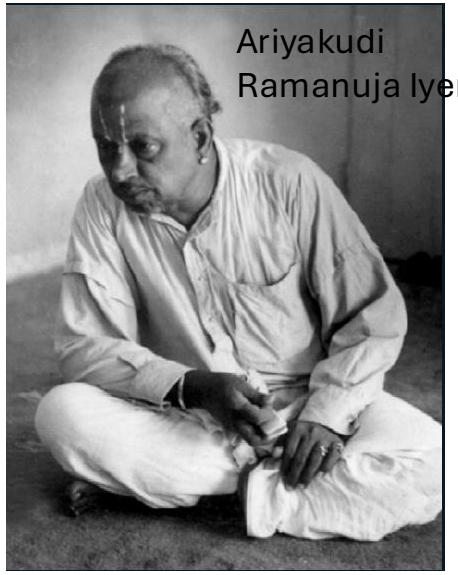

Ravi Shankar, Allah Rakha


Bade Gulam Ali Khan


Bhimsen Joshi

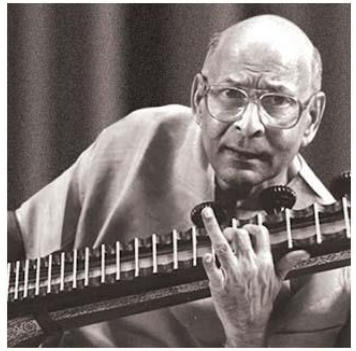
Zakir Hussain

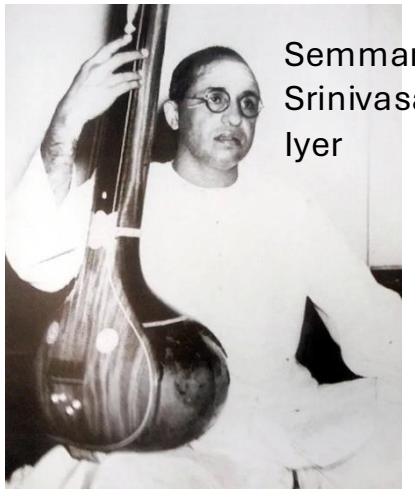



Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar


M. S. Subbalakshmi


M. Balamurali Krishna


S. Balachander


Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer

Note: This is a representative selection, not an exhaustive list.