

The History and Origin of Carnatic Music

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Indian classical music can be divided into two subgenres of music- Carnatic and Hindustani. Hindustani music is from the northern parts of India while Carnatic music is native to the southern states of India: Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, and Telangana. Carnatic music originates from the Sanskrit word 'Karnatakam'. This word can be split into 'Karna' which means 'ears' and 'Ataka' which means jewelry/ornament. Both Hindustani and Carnatic music are similar in their structure. They both use 'ragam' and 'talam'. Ragam is the melodic structure and talam is the rhythmic structure. Carnatic music also an 'arohanam' and an 'avarohanam' to each song. The arohanam is a set of notes going up the scale and the avarohanam is the set of notes going down the scale. Each song has both of these scales which decides what set of notes in what pattern can be used in a song. Carnatic music has also evolved and changed throughout history due to many composers. Some of these are Papanasam Shivan, Gopala Krishna Bharati, and Narayan Tirtha. However, three particular composers enriched Carnatic music significantly and brought a new era of change to the music. This trio consists of Thyagaraja, Muthuswami Dikshitar, and Syama Sastri who are collectively known as the Trinity of Carnatic music or the Three Jewels of Carnatic music.

There are many theories as to how and where Carnatic music first originated. One is that this type of music has a divine origin- it came from the gods and goddesses such as Krishna and Saraswati. It is also believed that the sounds in Carnatic music came from nature. Some say that ancient man heard the sound of air flowing through bamboo and from that, created the first flute. Also, it is said that ancient people heard the sounds of the birds and animals around them and tried to mimic those sounds which evolved into swaras. Carnatic music is also said to have evolved from folk music which influenced the development of the ragas. Lastly, Carnatic music is also said to have originated from the Vedas which is the main theory of its origin. The Vedas are chants that are dedicated to the Hindu gods/goddesses and rituals. The word 'veda' means knowledge and the foundation of Carnatic music is said to be the Sama Veda (one of the four vedas).

Over the time of India's history, there have been many invasions and wars that have had an impact on the culture and lives of the Indians. Hindustani music was affected by Persian and Islamic influence due to the Mughal invasion of India. However, the invasion was primarily in north India. Carnatic music (in south India) remained untouched from Muslim and other foreign influence. Although Carnatic music was kept safe from foreign invaders, it has experienced many periods of growth and evolution. One of these times was during the

Vijayanagar Empire. During this time, Purandara Dasa (known as the father of Carnatic music) created the system used for teaching Carnatic music. In addition to this, an Indian poet and musician, Venkatamakhin invented the formula for the melekartha system of classifying ragams in his creation, the *Chaturdandi Prakasika*. During times like these, Carnatic music flourished and evolved into what it is today.

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