




🎵 Music's Sacred Origin: The Vedic Roots of Sangeeta Shastra

 General Collection

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 **Description:** Exploring how the entire system of classical music, including the seven notes and ragas, is fundamentally derived from Vedic chanting

 **Tags:** vedic-music, samaveda, sapta-svaras, sangeeta-shastra, vedic-intonations, tyagaraja, classical-music, gana-shastra

ॐ Introduction

Yes, music (Sangeeta Shastra) is fundamentally derived from the Vedas, particularly the **Samaveda**. The sources emphasize that the entire musical system, including the basic structure of melodies and notes, finds its origin in the ancient Vedic methods of recitation and chanting.

🎵 Origin of the Seven Notes (Sapta Svaras)

The classical seven musical notes (Sapta Svaras) are directly derived from the intonations used in Vedic chanting.

🗨️ Vedic Intonations

Vedic recitation utilizes specific tones, primarily: - **Udatta** - Level tone - **Svarita** - High tone - **Anudatta** - Low tone

🎹 Derivation of the Seven Notes

The Vedic intonations are explicitly linked to the seven primary musical notes:

Musical Note Sanskrit Name Derived From

Sa	Shadja	Svarita
Ri	Rishabha	Anudatta
Ga	Gandhara	Udatta
Ma	Madhyama	Svarita
Pa	Panchama	Svarita
Dha	Dhaivata	Anudatta
Ni	Nishada	Udatta



The Pattern

- **From Udatta:** Nishada and Gandhara tones
- **From Anudatta:** Rishabha and Dhaivata tones
- **From Svarita:** Shadja, Madhyama, and Panchama tones



The Meaning of Shadjam

The note **Shadja** (first note) is named as such because it is the **birthplace (Janam)** of the next **six notes (Shad)**. Hence, Shad (six) + Ja (birth) = Shadjam.



The Role of the Samaveda

The **Samaveda** is intrinsically linked to music, as it consists of hymns intended for melodic chanting (Gana Shastra).



Gana Shastra

The system of music (Sangeeta Shastra) is derived from the Vedas. The Samaveda is rooted in musical and melodic chanting (Gana Shastra), making it the most musical of all the Vedas.

Pranava Connection

The derivation of the Pranava (Omkara) from the three major Vedas (Rig, Yajur, Sama) supports this musical link:

- The **Makara (M)** component of the Pranava (**A U M**) is derived from the **Samaveda**
- The Samaveda embodies the principle of musical chanting (Gana)
- The difference between the **72 Mela Karta ragas**, such as **Ma 1 and Ma 2**, relies on the **Makara sound**
- This reinforces the Samaveda's musical authority in classical music theory

Tyagaraja's View

The poet-saint **Tyagaraja** (one of the greatest composers of Carnatic music) states:

"Tararuk Sama" - The essence of the Rik and Sama Vedas, which is the Gayatri, is the heart of the seven notes (Sapta Svaras)

This profound statement by one of music's greatest masters confirms the inseparable link between Vedic wisdom and musical practice.

The Sanctity of Vedic Chanting

The manner in which Vedic verses must be chanted contrasts sharply with non-Vedic texts, confirming the specific, inherent musical structure required by the Vedas.


Fixed Tune (Svara)


Text Type

**Ramayana/
Mahabharata**

Vedas

Flexibility in Chanting

 Tunes and rhythms can be varied (e.g., singing a shloka in Kalyani or another Raga)

 Must be chanted using the exact tune (Svara) prescribed by the Rishis

Consequence of Deviation

The importance of correct Vedic intonation cannot be overstated:

Critical Rule: If the **Svara or syllable (Varna)** is used incorrectly: - The mantra becomes ineffective (**Mithya Prayukto na tamarthamaaha**) - It may even **harm the performer** - This is demonstrated by the famous story of **Indra Shatru**

The Story of Indra Shatru

The cautionary tale of Indra Shatru illustrates what happens when Vedic pronunciation and intonation are incorrect. This story serves as a powerful reminder that Vedic mantras carry inherent power that must be handled with precision and respect.

The Comprehensive Connection

From Veda to Music

The progression can be understood as:

1. **Vedic Intonations** (Udatta, Svarita, Anudatta) ↓
2. **Seven Musical Notes** (Sapta Svaras) ↓
3. **Ragas and Melodic Structures** ↓
4. **Complete Musical System** (Sangeeta Shastra)

A Warning Against Separation

The sources are emphatic: any attempt to separate musical practice from its origins in the Vedas is labeled as "**foolishness**" (**asattuthanam**).

This strong language emphasizes that: - Music is not a secular art independent of spirituality - The Vedic foundation gives music its power and structure - Understanding music's sacred origin deepens both musical and spiritual practice

Summary

The system of music, including its theoretical components like the seven notes and the melodic structure of Ragas, is fundamentally derived from the core principles of Vedic recitation. The **Samaveda**, as the musical Veda, stands at the heart of this connection, with its emphasis on melodic chanting (Gana Shastra). The seven notes (Sapta Svaras) emerge directly from the three Vedic intonations (Udatta, Svarita, Anudatta), and even the subtleties of raga classification (such as the difference between Ma 1 and Ma 2) trace back to the Makara sound of the Pranava.

Unlike other texts where musical interpretation is flexible, the Vedas demand precise adherence to prescribed tunes, highlighting the sacred and powerful nature of these sounds. Great musical masters like Tyagaraja recognized this truth, declaring that the Gayatri—the essence of the Rik and Sama Vedas—is the very heart of the seven musical notes. To understand music is to understand its Vedic roots; to practice music with this awareness is to engage in a spiritual discipline as ancient as the Vedas themselves.

Reference

YouTube Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YzCWeIKtGHU&list=PLUCe17-wlYr-zIRfRt1m6fyPy2r-wjcXl>

Acknowledgment & Disclaimer

These articles are based on discourses by **Sri Dushyanth Sridhar**, who renders discourses in English & Tamil on Rāmāyana, Mahābhārata, Bhāgavata, Vishnu Purāna, Bhagavad Gitā, Vishnu Sahasranāma, and Divya Prabanda in the upanyāsam, pravachanam, or kālakshepam style. Visit <https://desikadaya.org> for more information. These notes are presented solely for educational purposes to help viewers download and benefit from these teachings. Any incorrect interpretations or inaccuracies are mine and unintentional—please forgive me. For any feedback, please send an [email](#).

