

Carnatic Music- Karnataka and Hindusthani music

By Smitha K. Prasad

Dear readers, it is interesting to go back in history and look at the birth of the two main styles of classical music in India- Carnatic and Hindusthani. The origin of Indian music can be traced back to the Vedas (a large body of text originating in ancient India), particularly the Sama Veda. The Sama Veda consists of hymns set to musical tunes; these musical tunes initially had 3 notes or *swaras* and then later included 7 *swaras*. Until the 12th century A.D., only one form of music prevailed all through India. With the establishment of the Islamic Sultanates in Delhi, musical practice in North India came under the influence of Persian and Arabic cultures and this became known as Hindusthani (Uttaradi) music. In southern India, the original music was preserved and handed down to the current generation and is known as Carnatic (Dakshinadi) music.

Despite being one of the southern states, Karnataka has the distinction of being one of the very few states that is home to not only some of the greats of Carnatic music but also Hindusthani music. Prominent Hindusthani musicians such as Dr. Gangubai Hangal, Pt. Bhimsen Joshi, Pt. Mallikarjun Mansur, and Pt. Sawai Gandharva are among those who hail from Karnataka. Hindusthani music is more prominent in Northern parts of Karnataka like Dharwad and Belgaum while Carnatic music continues to dominate the southern parts.

What made Dharwad such an important hub of Hindusthani music? The Dharwad region became part of the British East India Company's Bombay Presidency in 1818 and was thus influenced by the culture of Bombay and Pune- rather than Madras, the seat of Carnatic music. Also, when royal musicians from the Mughal courts were invited to perform in their courts by the Maharajas of Mysore, Dharwad was a popular rest stop where impromptu *kutcheris* of these visiting musicians were arranged. Classical Hindusthani music thus flourished in Dharwad.

Today, cities in the south, like Bangalore, allow the confluence of both Carnatic and Hindusthani styles of music. A number of modern day Hindusthani musicians call Bangalore home and here they have set up both their teaching institutions as well as performing centers.

Till we meet next time, I encourage readers to listen to both classical styles of music- Hindusthani and Carnatic- each of these styles is unique in the way that it interprets and presents music.

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