

Hindustani

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Hindustani classical music is an Indian classical music tradition originating in the North of the Indian subcontinent circa the 13th and 14th centuries CE. Developing a strong and diverse tradition over several centuries, it has contemporary traditions established primarily in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. In contrast to Carnatic music, the other main Indian classical music tradition originating from the South, Hindustani music was not only influenced by ancient Hindu musical traditions, Vedic philosophy and native Indian sounds but also by the Persian performance practices of the Afghan Mughals.

Outside India, Hindustani classical music is often associated with Indian music in general, as it is arguably the most popular stream of Indian music outside India.

When artists, usually performers (as opposed to writers) have reached a distinguished level of achievement, titles of respect are prepended to their names. Hindus are referred to as Pandits and Muslims as Ustads.

History

Music has long been important to Hinduism, especially for many Vaishnavite sects. The advent of Islamic rule under the Delhi Sultanate and later the Mughal Empire over northern India caused the traditional musicians to seek patronage in the courts of the new rulers. These Islamic rulers had strong cultural and religious sentiments focussed outside of India; yet they lived in, and administered kingdoms which retained their traditional Hindu culture. This helped spur the fusion of Hindu and Muslim ideas to make qawwali and khayal. Perhaps the most legendary musician of this period is Amir Khusrau, who is credited with systematizing the Hindustani methodologies by studying the forms of Vedic music theory and spurring a chain of creative composition that melded Indian with Persian sensibilities. He is also credited with inventing most of the major genres of Hindustani music (such as qawalli), and some of its most important instruments (such as the sitar).

Later, the Mughal Empire intermarried with Indians, especially under Jar ad-Din Akbar. Music and dance flourished during this period, and the Hindu musician Tansen is still well-remembered. Indeed, his ragas (which are based on times of the day) were reputed to have been so powerful that according to legend, upon his playing a night-time raga in the morning, the entire city fell under a hush and clouds gathered in the sky.

In the 20th century, the power of the maharajahs (Hindus) and nawabs (Muslims) declined, and thus so did their patronage. The Indian Government-run All India Radio helped to stop this development and replaced the patronage system. The first star was Gauhar Jan, whose career was born out of Fred Gaisberg's first recordings of Indian music in 1902.