

EVOLUTION OF SVARA IN  
INDIAN CLASSICAL MUSIC

By

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## DECLARATION

The work described in this thesis was carried out by me under the supervision of Prof. Pradeep Ratnayake, University of Sri Jayawardenepura and Dr. T. P. B. Rathnayake Madawala, University of the Visual and Performing Arts and a report on this has not been submitted in whole or in part to any university or any other institution for another Degree/Diploma.

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# EVOLUTION OF SVARA IN INDIAN CLASSICAL MUSIC

Rudriguge Harshani Dilrukshi

## ABSTRACT

‘*Svara*’ is the name used in Indian music which has a history that dates back to thousands of years. India is known to have one of the most ancient civilizations in the world. Music was an integral part in that civilization. Therefore the study of *Svaras* of Indian music has been widely popular among researchers all the time. But still the story of *Svaras* in Indian music has some uncovered areas.

Musicians in Indian music believed on the theory of the influence of Vedic (sacred) *Svaras* on the *Svaras* of secular music. But a close observation on the latest geographical findings proves that the Vedic and Laukika or secular music have had developed parelleyly over the years. This proves that the *Svaras* of secular music had their own identity.

The origin of *Svaras* as well as their names is still a mystery. Various authors in Indian music commented on this and gave their opinions. However none of their commentaries on the origin of *Svara* names carry any common denominator. When they related the origin of *Ṣaḍja* i.e. the first musical note to physical organisams, they related the second musical note i.e. *Rṣabha* to the sound of the bull. This is one of the examples that triggered the curiosity to embark on this research project.

Even though the number of *Śuddha Svaras* was seven in number from the beginning, the number of displaced notes or *Vikṛti Svaras* changed in number, names and frequency because of the complexity in describing the practical aspects in Indian music.

When the musicians in Indian music started to build up a theoretical framework on this subject, they came up with different opinions. But one after another their opinions changed as none of the opinions would satisfy the complexity. But still the authors of Indian music were trying to build up a more practical framework on describing their music.

It is, therefore, a highly interesting matter to study the hard efforts to provide a theory on describing such a complex subject these musicians came up with numerous calculations, scientific experiments and laboratory tests for the sake of building up this theoretical framework. Giving an exact frequency on musical notes can be an important requirement for a music system like of Europeans, which are based mostly on group performances. But in Indian music each *Svara* takes a different feature when they put into difference *Rāgas*. The mood of the *Rāga* referred by authors in Indian music, the mood of the performer, the time of the day, the season of the year changes the features of *Svaras*. Therefore the scientific experiments may be helpful for a student to grasp the outline of Indian classical music. But to understand the depth of it one has to attain a higher practical knowledge.

This research also focuses on why, when and where the *Svara* in Indian music lost its divinity as earlier it was not just a mere subject but a religion, a language, and a science which connected human beings with the metaphysical world.