

Evolution of the Tabla

Why in News?

Recently, the death of Ustad Zakir Hussain provided an occasion for the reopening of debates among the origins and evolution of the tabla.

- **Word 'tabla'** - It comes from the Arabic word 'tabl' which means Drum.
- **Origin** - while some trace its origin to Persian Naqarra, Hussain traced the origin story of the tabla through the evolution of the styles of dhrupad and khayal.

***Dhrupad**, a form of Indian Classical music, its origin can be traced back to the chanting of vedic hymns and mantras. It is a form of the Gandharva Veda, the Vedic science of music, which is a branch of Sama Veda.*

- The most common disagreement concerns whether or not the tabla originated in pre-Islamic India.

Persian Naqarra



Indian Pakhawaj



- **Evolution** - The classical tabla is a relatively recent tradition, most likely beginning sometime in the 1700s.
- It became the main accompaniment instrument for the vocal style known as khayal which helped to raise tabla's status and popularity.

Khayal

- It is the most dominant North Indian classical vocal music offers the performer more freedom and a greater scope for improvisation than the older vocal genre 'Dhrupad'.
- **Origin** - Khayal emerged during the Mughal period, when Persian music influences blended with local Indian traditions.
- It came into being after the temple traditions of dhrupad & prabandh gayaki were fused with qalbana, the Sufi music (later called qawwali), by the 14th century Sufi saint & musician Amir Khusrau.

Amir Khusrau was patronised by Sultan Alauddin Khalji (1296-1316) of Delhi.

- **Major developments** - It took place during the reign of Emperor Muhammad Shah of Delhi (1719-1748), whose court host the launch of the sitar and maturation of khayal vocalism.

Muhammad Shah was an aesthete, and a great patron of music and the other arts, because of which he was referred to as "Rangeela", the Colourful.

- **Tabla gharanas** - they are different from vocal and other instrumental gharanas and rest on 3 broad principles
 - The technique.
 - The style of composition - Language/ construction/ phraseology of the tabla syllable in various compositions.
 - The individual philosophy of the great masters of each school.
- **6 gharanas of tabla** - They are known by the places where they evolved.
 - Punjab, Purab (also known as the Banaras gharana), Delhi, Ajrara, Lucknow and Farrukhabad.
- **Baaj (playing style)** -It is more pakhawaj-based for the 1st 2 gharanas.
- Purab's crisp and clear sounds are very well suited to Kathak.
- **Punjab gharana** - A mathematical approach, with difficult divisions of beats, is preferred.
- It had offshoots or sub-gharanas such as Talwandi and Naiwala.



Reference

[The Indian Express| Evolution of the Tabla and its Various Gharanas](#)



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