

Basic terminology of Indian Music

The notes in Indian Music are called :

Sa , Re , Ga , Ma , Pa , Dha and Ni

The notes will be represented with the initial letter (for example Sa=s , Ga=g) , and if a note is flattened the letter will be a capital.

* In Indian music all the notes are only flattened and only the 4th degree (Ma) can be sustained (Tivra).

The exact note of the tonic (SA) can change between different instruments or vocalist and is not really important.

In the notation I write I use Sa as the note D(re) because that's how my instrument is tuned.

There are 3 main elements that define a Raag :

1 - One of the basic ideas of a Raag is the Arohi and Avarohi – Ascending and descending in the scale.

What does it mean? For example take a minor scale and imagine I tell you the second degree is skipped on ascending. It means if you play D-E (Sa Re) , then you can't continue to F (Ga). If you reach the second degree then you have to go back to the first (or other) and from there continue to the third degree. Or you can just play D-F-G... (Sa Ga Ma).

2 – The **Pakar** are common movements, which are very typical in a certain Raag. Many times the common movements have a lot to do with the ascending descending of a Raag.

3 - Sa – Pa / Sa – Ma - A Raag can have the fifth or the fourth degree as a dominant (not as a western dominant but as a note with a secondary importance after the tonic). This obviously changes totally the feeling of a Raag. The tanpura – the drone instrument on the background – will change it's tuning according to that, and emphasize even more the difference.

You can see an example for this in the pdf called “3 Raags with the same scale” on this link : www.idosegal.com/scores-partituras

More terminology for the following documents :

(There is a lot of material on the web about Indian music terminology – I will just write the ones I use in my documents).

Alankar : Exercise used to assimilate the movement of the Raag. I always write my Alankars in a 4/4 cycle so it will help me later with the rhythmical improvisation.

Than : A rhythmical improvisation on a certain cycle.

Sam : the first beat of the cycle.

Mukra : The beat where the composition starts from.

Tihai : a phrase that repeats itself 3 times and finishes on the Sam or Mukra.