FREE SAMPLE

Indian Music Theory, Made Simple

EVEN A DONKEY CAN LEARN MUSIC THEORY

SARGAM VAISH

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MUSIC THEORY

Indian Music Theory, Made Simple

A Simple Guide to Understand
Raga, Rhythm & Sound

SARGAM VAISH

This is a free preview containing 5 complete chapters.
The full book contains 50 chapters across 84 pages.

PREFACE

Let me tell you something. I've been doing music since I was a kid. Lil Champs 2011, Bollywood, All India Radio — I've seen a lot of the music world. And one thing that always bothered me was this: why does everyone make music theory sound so complicated?

I've met people who love singing but are terrified of the word "shruti." I've met guitarists who've been playing for years but have no idea what a raag actually is. And it's not their fault.

So I decided to write this book. In my own style. Simple, direct, no unnecessary jargon. If I can't explain something so that a complete beginner understands it, then I haven't explained it well enough.

This book covers everything from the basics — what is sound, what is naad — all the way to Western music theory, chords, and how it all connects.

My promise to you is this: if you read this book from start to finish, you will understand music theory. Not at a PhD level. But enough to actually know what's happening when you hear music.

Let's go.

— Sargam Vaish

CONTENTS

= Included in this sample = Full book only

Part 1

The Science of Sound

What Even is Sound?

"Music is the universal language of mankind."
— Longfellow

Chapter 1

What is Sound?

Let me ask you something. What is sound?

You'll say — "Sir, jo hum sunte hain." Okay, correct. But that's like saying water is "jo hum peete hain." Technically right, but you haven't really understood it. So let's go deeper.

What is Energy?

Before we understand sound, we need to understand energy. Energy means the ability to do something. You clap — that's energy. You speak — energy. A fan rotates — energy. Everything that happens in the universe involves energy.

Now, sound is also a type of energy. When you hit a table — THAP! — your hand transfers energy to the table. That energy makes the table vibrate. You might not see it, but the table is vibrating. Those vibrations push the air molecules around the table, and those air molecules push the next ones, and the next ones — like a chain reaction. When that chain reaction reaches your ear, your brain says: "Oh, this is sound!"

Hit a table → **Table vibrates** → **Air moves** → **Ear receives**

Sound = Vibration travelling through a medium

The Medium Problem

Here's the important part — sound needs a medium to travel. What's a medium? It's the stuff between the source and your ear. Usually it's air. But sound can also travel through water (that's why you can hear things underwater) and through solids (put your ear on a table and tap it — you'll hear it louder).

Now here's the fun question — why is there no sound in space? Because there's no air! No medium = no way for vibration to travel = no sound. That's why in those Hollywood space movies where explosions make noise? Yeah, that's scientifically wrong. In real space, everything is dead silent.

Think of it this way: sound is like a wave in a swimming pool. You throw a stone, the wave travels. But if there's no water? No wave. Same logic.

Key Properties of Sound

Every sound has three main properties:

Property	What It Means	Example
Frequency	How fast the vibration is (Hz)	High = thin voice, Low = deep
Amplitude	How strong the vibration is	High = loud, Low = soft
Timbre	Unique quality/color of sound	Guitar vs Piano same note

Frequency decides the pitch — whether a note sounds high or low. A woman's voice has higher frequency than a man's. The unit is Hertz (Hz) — how many vibrations per second. Humans hear roughly 20 Hz to 20,000 Hz.

Amplitude is about volume. Hit a drum softly = soft sound. Hit hard = loud. The vibration is bigger.

Timbre (pronounced "tamber") is why a guitar and piano sound different even playing the same note. It's the unique fingerprint of each instrument or voice.

Energy → **Vibration** → **Sound** → **Music**

Sound is vibration energy reaching your ear.

Chapter 2

What is Music?

Now we know what sound is. But is every sound music? Think about it.

A car horn — that's a sound. A dog barking — sound. Construction noise at 6 AM — definitely sound (and definitely annoying). But none of these are music.

Music is a special, organized type of sound. It follows a pattern, it has structure, and most importantly — it creates emotion.

Noise	Music
Random vibrations	Organized vibrations
No pattern or structure	Has clear patterns and rules
Usually unpleasant	Creates emotion
No intention	Created with intention and skill

Music = Sound + Pattern + Emotion

The 3 Pillars of Music

1. Swar (Notes/Melody) — What notes you play. The tune. The horizontal movement of music.

2. Taal (Rhythm) — When you play those notes. The timing and beat pattern.

3. Laya (Speed/Tempo) — How fast or slow you play.

Take away any one and music falls apart. A melody without rhythm sounds random. Rhythm without melody is just someone banging a table. Speed gives music its energy — slow for sad songs, fast for dance numbers.

Next time you listen to any song, try to identify these three elements separately. Hum the tune (swar), tap the beat (taal), notice the speed (laya). Once you start hearing these individually, you'll never listen to music the same way again.

Music is organized vibration that creates emotion.

Chapter 3

What is Naad?

We learned sound and music. But here's a question — is every sound musical? When you drop a glass and it shatters — that's a sound, but you can't use it in a melody. So which sounds can actually be used in music?

That special category is called Naad. Naad is the raw material of music.

3 Conditions of Naad

1. Pleasant (Madhur) — Nice to hear. Screeching chalk? Not naad. Flute? Naad.

2. Stable (Niyamit) — Steady frequency. Singing "Sa" steady? Stable. Baby crying? Pitch goes everywhere.

3. Sustained (Deergha) — Lasts long enough for your ear to register. Quick finger snap? Too short. Harmonium note? Perfect.

Naad = Pleasant + Stable + Sustained

Sound	Pleasant?	Stable?	Sustained?	Naad?
Singing "Sa"	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Car Horn	No	Yes	Yes	No
Tabla "Dha"	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Glass Breaking	No	No	No	No

Naad is the "audition" that sound has to pass to enter the world of music. Not every sound gets selected.

Sound → **Naad** → **Swar** → **Music**

Naad is musical sound — the raw material of music.

Chapter 4

Types of Naad

Chapter 4

Types of Naad

Naad is of two types — Aahat and Anaahat. Aahat is everything we hear in practical music. Anaahat is the philosophical inner cosmic sound from the Vedas. Understanding both gives you the complete picture of how Indian music views sound at the deepest level...

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Chapter 5

What is Swar?

Alright, so we know naad is musical sound. It's the raw material. But when you actually sing a song, what are you singing? Specific notes with specific names and positions. Those are called Swar.

Think of it — naad is like flour. Swar is the roti made from that flour. Naad given a specific identity.

Naad = Raw Material Swar = Finished Product

Every swar has a name (Sa, Re, Ga...), a position (place in the scale), and a frequency. There are 7 swaras: Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Dha Ni. All Indian music is built from these 7 notes.

Sa	Re	Ga	Ma	Pa	Dha	Ni	Sa'

The Two Fixed Anchors

Sa and Pa never change. No matter what raag, no matter what scale — Sa and Pa always stay at their natural position. They are the two fixed pillars of Indian music. The other five (Re, Ga, Ma, Dha, Ni) can be modified — higher or lower. But Sa and Pa? Rock solid. Always.

In Western music, Sa = C (as a reference). But unlike Western where C = 261.63 Hz always, in Indian music Sa can be any frequency. Your Sa might differ from mine. Indian music is flexible, Western is standardized. That's beautiful.

Energy → **Vibration** → **Sound** → **Naad** → **Swar** → **Music**

Chapter 6

The 7 Swaras

Chapter 6

The 7 Swaras

Each swar has a full name and deep meaning connected to nature. Sa comes from the peacock, Re from the skylark, Ga from the goat...

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Chapter 7

What is Shruti?

Chapter 7

What is Shruti?

Between Sa and Re, there are tiny subtle steps called Shrutis — 22 microtones in one octave that give Indian music its incredible richness...

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Chapter 9

What is Saptak?

Chapter 9

What is Saptak?

Saptak is one complete cycle of 7 swar at a particular pitch level. There are three: Mandra (low), Madhya (middle), and Taar (high)...

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Chapter 10

Types of Swar

Chapter 10

Types of Swar

Shuddh, Komal, and Teevra — three types that give us 12 total notes. 7 Shuddh + 4 Komal + 1 Teevr = 12 notes...

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Chapter 11

What is Raag?

This is the big one. If someone asks "what is Indian music really about?" — the answer is Raag.

If you take all 12 notes and play them randomly — will it sound good? No. A raag is a specific set of rules for using swaras to create a particular emotion. It tells you which swar to use, which to skip, which order to play them, and which to emphasize.

Think of swar as ingredients and raag as a recipe. Same ingredients (tomato, onion, spices) but different recipe = different dish. Same swar, different raag = completely different emotion.

Raag = Swar + Rules + Emotion

Rules of a Raag

1. Minimum 5 swar, can have 6 or 7.
2. Must have Sa and at least Pa or Ma.
3. Has specific ascending (Aaroh) and descending (Avroh) patterns.
4. Has a "king note" (Vadi) and "queen note" (Samvadi).
5. Has a signature phrase (Pakad) that identifies it.

The magic: same notes arranged differently create completely different emotions. Raag Yaman and Raag Bhupali share many notes, but feel totally different because of how those notes are used.

Mind-blowing fact: there are potentially hundreds of raags in Indian music. Some books list over 300. Each creates a specific mood — morning peace, evening romance, midnight intensity. That's the power of raag.

That's a taste of what's inside.

The full book continues with 39 more chapters covering:

- Rhythm & Taal: Taal, Matra, Sam, Laya, Dugun-Chaugun
- Practice & Training: Alankar, Daily Practice Routine
- History & Culture: Indian Music History, Instruments, Ancient Texts
- Deep Dive: Shruti, Hindustani vs Carnatic, 10 Thaats, 72 Melakartas, Gharanas, Raag Theory
- Western Theory: Notes, Scales, Chords, Progressions, Intervals, Circle of Fifths, Modes
- Reading Music: Staff Notation, Time Signatures, Dynamics, Articulation

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By Sargam Vaish

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