



# VIDYA SHAH

Spirituality and Indian music, what I practice, are connected to each other like breath and existence. Indian music has many spiritual bearings. The experience of spirituality in Indian music is many hued, layered – it could mean a religious experience, it could refer to mysticism, or just be one way of praying. Indian music has been used over centuries to overcome religious orthodoxy, and as a vehicle to spread syncretic movements all over the region. For women, people belonging to the lower social stratum (caste), peasants, weavers, these movements offered an instant connection with God, through the medium of music. The tradition of Temple music, the Bhakti (to worship) movement and Sufism are perhaps the more obvious manifestations of the same. Also, the very premise on which Carnatic or the South Indian tradition evolved and continues to be practiced today is spiritual.

At a purely abstract level, sound is referred to as the "*Nada Brahma*" or the divine sound, that is to say, in abstraction too there is a connection with the divine. The ancient Vedic scriptures teach that there are two types of sound: un-struck sound and struck sound. Un-struck sound is a vibration of ether, the upper or purer air near the celestial realm. The enlightened yogis seek the un-struck sound called "*Anaahata Nada*", and only they can hear it. The struck sound or "*Aahata Nada*", is the vibration of air in the lower atmosphere closer to the earth. It is any sound that we hear in nature or man-made sounds, musical, and non-musical. The very location of music is in the metaphysical space, in an aura that has the strength and potential to transport one into another sphere of existence – one that is definitely spiritual!



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