

Instruments of traditional Sikh music

© Inderjit N Kaur

Sikh music is essentially vocal music, and the role of instruments is in accompaniment.

Guru Nanak began Sikh music with the accompaniment of the *rabab*, a stringed melodic instrument. The third Sikh Guru, Guru Amar Das introduced the stringed instrument, *saranda* (*serundaa*), in Sikh music. The fifth Guru, Guru Arjan Dev, developed the *jori*, a two-headed drum derived from the *pakhawaj* (*pukaavaj*) or *mridang* (*mridung*), the barrel drum traditionally used in devotional music. The *jori* is distinct from the *tabla* in its form, rhythmic patterns and accompaniment style. The sixth Guru, Guru Hargobind, developed the peacock shaped stringed instrument, *taus* (*taa-oos*). The *daadh-saranga* (*daad saarungaa*, similar to the *sarangi*) and *daadh*, a small handheld drum, were used by the *dhaadis* in their singing of *vaars*.

The traditional Sikh musicians - *rababis*, *raagis* and *dhaadis*, used these instruments up until the early 1920s. Unfortunately, a sharp decline in their use made them almost extinct. The harmonium took the place of stringed instruments and the *tabla* replaced the *pakhaavaj* and *jori*. Fortunately, a strong revival is now under way.