

# UPSC Preparation

## Avanaddha Vadya (Percussion Instruments)

In the Natya Shastra – an ancient treatise of performing arts, compiled by Bharat Muni dated 200 B.C.- 200 A.D., the musical instruments have been divided into four main categories on the basis of how sound is produced with the help of the instrument. This article provides details of 4 categories of musical instruments and focuses on 4 types of Avanaddha Vadya.

### 4 Major Categories of Musical Instruments

The 4 major categories of musical instruments which has been classified on the basis of sound it produces with the instruments has been listed below.

1. **Avanaddha Vadya** or Membranophones- Percussion instruments
2. **Ghana Vadya** or Idiophones- Solid instruments which do not require tuning.
3. **Sushira Vadya** or Aerophones- Wind instruments
4. **Tata Vadya** or Chordophones- Stringed instruments

### Avanaddha Vadya – 4 Different Categories

Avanaddha vadya are percussion instruments. Such instruments are made by Stretching the animal skin across a metal or earthen pot, wooden barrel or frame. The sound is produced by striking the animal skin that has been stretched across the body. The earliest reference to such instruments could be found in the Vedas. The Vedas have a mention of a hollow pit dug in the ground and covered with a buffalo or ox hide that was stretched across the pit. The sound was produced by striking the hide with the tail of an animal.

The percussion instruments can be classified by modes of playing:

1. played by hand like mridangam;
2. played using sticks like nagara;
3. played partly by hand and partly by stick-like tavil;
4. self struck like damaru;
5. where one side is struck, and the other side-stroked like a perumal madu drum.

The main types under Avanaddha Vadya are - Ankya, Alingya, Oordhwaka and the waisted or the Damaru family of drums.

### Ankya Drums

Ankya drums are covered with the animal hide on both sides. They are held horizontally by the musician and the sound is produced by striking both the sides with fingers or sticks. The musician may sit on the floor while [playing the instrument or hang it from the neck while dancing or standing. Prominent varieties of Ankya that can be seen today are Mridangam, Khol, Pakhawaj etc.

Seals discovered from the Indus Valley sites show men playing horizontal drums hung around their neck.

### Alingya Drums

Alingya drums have the animal hide fixed to a wooden round frame and are embraced or held close to the body with one hand while the other hand is used for playing on the instrument. Under this category, the Duff, Dufflies, etc. are very popular.

### Oordhwaka Drums

The Oordhwaka drums are placed vertically before the musician. The sound is produced by striking the instrument with fingers or sticks. Prominent varieties among these are the Tabla pair and Chenda.



Source - CCRT India website

#### *Tabla*

- The Tabla pair is a set of two vertical Oordhwaka drums.
- The right side is called the Tabla and the left, the Bayan or Dagga.
- It has a wooden body covered with animal skin, which is held together with leather straps.
- The tabla pair is used as accompaniment to vocal and instrumental Hindustani music and with many dance forms of northern India.
- The complicated talas of the Hindustani music are played with great virtuosity on the tabla.

- Prominent musicians are - Ustad Alia Rakha Khan and his son Zakir Hussain, Shafat Ahmed and Samata Prasad to name a few.
- Oblong wooden blocks which is placed between the straps and the wooden body are used for tuning the drums.
- There is a syahi paste applied in the centre of the animal skin, the tabla can be tuned accurately by striking the rims with a hammer.
- The body of the bayan is usually made of copper and sometimes clay or metal
- It is usually made of copper, but may also be made of clay or wood.

### Damaru

Damarus are also known as hourglass varieties of drums as their shape is similar to that of an hourglass. The instruments in this category range from Timila of the Southern region to the Huddaka of Himachal Pradesh. The small Huddaka is stuck with the hands while the larger instrument Timila is hung from the shoulders and is played with fingers and sticks.