

Sursingar, Mandolin & Karakattam

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In news– In his Mann ki Baat address recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke of several musical instruments and folk artists including Sursingar, Karakattam, and Mandolin.

Sursingar-

- It is **a stringed musical instrument that is similar to the sarod**, but which is older and produces deeper notes.
- The instrument is **made of wood and has a gourd attached to a hollow wooden handle** with a metal fingerboard.
- The strings of the instrument, usually four in number and made of brass or bronze, are plucked with a metal pick.
- The Sursingar **can be played either holding it vertically in front of the musician and supported by his left shoulder like the Veena**, or holding it parallel to the ground like the Sarod, or like the Sitar, which is held at an angle of 50-60 degrees to the ground.
- **The Sursingar (along with the Rudra Veena and the Surbahar) usually accompanies Dhrupad**, the genre of Hindustani vocal music which has a low, deep, and thoughtful pitch.
- With very few artisans now making the Sursingar, the instrument is rarely used in performances.
- **Kolkata-based multi-instrumentalist Joydeep Mukherjee is credited with reviving the Sursingar**, along with another “lost” stringed instrument, the Radhika Mohanaveena, named after its creator, Radhika Mohana Maitra.
- Joydeep is among the youth honoured with the Ustad Bismillah Khan Award.

Mandolin-

- It is also a **stringed instrument, usually with eight strings that are plucked with a pick, similar to a lute.**
- The Mandolin is a **moderately sized instrument, smaller than the Veena, Sitar, or guitar,** and was **developed in Europe in the 18th century** as an evolution of the older Mandora (Mandola).
- **The instrument's modern form and proportions were strongly influenced by its maker Pasquale Vinaccia of Naples (1806-82),** and in the 20th century, it was built in a family of sizes from soprano to contrabass. Well known Mandolin compositions include a concerto by Vivaldi, the serenade in Mozart's opera Don Giovanni, and parts of Stravinsky's ballet Agon.
- The Mandolin has long been part of the Indian film music tradition, having been used by several great composers including Shankar Jaikishan, Ilaiyaraja and A R Rahman. Hits like Tujhe dekha to ye jaana sanam (Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge), Tum bin jaaun kahaan (Pyar ka Mausam), Lehron pe leher (Chhabili), and Jai Ho (Slumdog Millionaire) have prominent Mandolin pieces, and Shah Rukh Khan memorably carried a red mandolin in DDLJ.
- **The greatest exponent of the Mandolin in Indian classical music was the late Uppalapu Srinivas (Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar 2021 for Carnatic Instrumental), often known as 'Mandolin' Srinivas** who, however, used the electric instrument rather than the acoustic one.
- A great classical Mandolin player before him was Sajjad Hussain; and Bollywood's greatest was Kishore Desai who played the instrument for countless numbers.
- India's best known Mandolinists today are Snehashish Mozumder, Pradipto Sengupta, and N S Prasad.

Karakattam-

- Karakattam is an **ancient folk dance of Tamil Nadu in which performers in colourful saris dance with a pot (karakam) on their head to invoke Mariamman, the goddess of rain.**
- The dance form became well known with the success of the Tamil film Karakattakaran (1989), but has been criticised by purists for becoming allegedly low-brow and vulgar of late.
- V Durga Devi of Salem is a well known Karakattam dancer.