

## **Development of Awadh under the Nawabs (1801 – 1858)**

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### **Abstract:**

This research paper delves into the socio-economic and cultural development of Awadh under the rule of the Nawabs from 1801 to 1858. The period witnessed significant changes in governance, architecture, art, and society, highlighting the unique blend of Persian and Indian influences during this era. By examining primary sources and historical accounts, this study provides a comprehensive analysis of the Nawabi era's impact on the region's growth and transformation. Key themes explored include administrative reforms, urban development, cultural patronage, and the complex relationship with the British East India Company. The research concludes with insights into the lasting legacy of the Nawabs on Awadh and their enduring influence on the broader Indian historical narrative.

**Keywords: Awadh, British East India Company**

### **Introduction**

The era between 1801 and 1858 in Awadh (present-day Uttar Pradesh, India) was marked by the rule of the Nawabs, a line of Persian-origin governors who exercised autonomy under the Mughal Empire and later came under the influence of the British East India Company. This period is known for its cultural richness and administrative reforms, which left a lasting impact on the region. Awadh, sometimes spelt Avadh or Oudh in British historical accounts, was a historical area in northern India that is today part of Uttar Pradesh in the state's northeast. The ancient Kosala region is mentioned in the sacred texts of the Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain faiths. Every major Islamic dynasty in India, including the Mughal Empire, had a province there. As Mughal Delhi fell into disrepair, the eleven rulers of Awadh—known as Nawabs—became influential patrons of the arts, architecture, literature, and religion in northern India. Awadh was ruled by the nawabs from 1720 until 1856. Ayodhya and Faizabad were the original capitals of the area. In subsequent years, Lucknow—now the capital of Uttar Pradesh—took over as the capital. One of the main reasons for the greatest Indian rebellion against British rule, the Indian Mutiny (1857–1858), was the Indians' ire at the British conquest of Awadh in 1856. Following Aurangzeb's death in 1707, the Nawabs of Awadh exercised a degree of autonomy as rulers of the several Mughal Indian states. Their military service included conflicts with the Peshwa, the Mughal Empire's adversary the Maratha Confederacy at Bhopal (1737), and the Moghul court at Karnal (1739). Like many other Nawabs, the Awadh Nawabs were considered a part of the Mughal Empire's aristocracy. During the Third Battle of Panipat (1761), they sided with Ahmad Shah Durrani and helped establish Shah Alam II's (r. 1760–1788 and 1788–1806) reign as imperial ruler. To protect Moghul interests, the Nawab of Awadh also participated in the Battle of Buxar (1764). By 1818, the Oudh State had finally broken away from the Moghul Empire.

### **Historical Context**

The period of the Nawabs in Awadh (Oudh) from 1801 to 1858 is a crucial phase in the history of this region in present-day Uttar Pradesh, India. The Nawabs of Awadh during this time belonged to the dynasty of Persian origin known as the Nawabs of Oudh. Let's delve into the historical context and the development of Awadh during this significant era:

**1. Decline of Mughal Empire and Rise of Nawabs of Awadh:** Awadh was historically part of the Mughal Empire. With the decline of the Mughal authority in the 18th century, various regional powers emerged. The Nawabs of Awadh were among the most prominent of these regional rulers. Saadat Khan, a Persian noble under the Mughals, established the independent state of Awadh in 1722. His successors continued to rule the region and consolidated their power.

**2. Cultural Flourishing and Urban Development:** Under the Nawabs of Awadh, particularly during the reign of Nawab Asaf-ud-Daula (1775–1797) and his successors, Lucknow, the capital of Awadh, experienced a cultural renaissance. The Nawabs were great patrons of art,

music, dance, and literature. Lucknow became renowned for its sophisticated culture, including classical music, poetry, and Urdu literature.


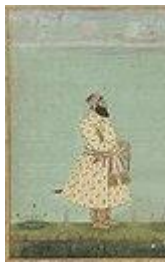

**3. British Influence and Subsidiary Alliance:** The Nawabs of Awadh came under increasing pressure from the expanding British East India Company. Nawab Saadat Ali Khan (1798–1814) signed the Treaty of Lucknow in 1801, which placed Awadh under British protection. The British gradually exerted more influence over Awadh's administration and economy, ultimately leading to the establishment of a British Resident in Lucknow who effectively controlled state affairs.










**4. Economic and Administrative Changes:** The Nawabs implemented administrative reforms during this period, particularly under Nawab Ghazi-ud-Din Haider (1814–1827) and Nawab Nasir-ud-Din Haider (1827–1837). The economy of Awadh flourished, with agriculture being a key sector. The region was known for its fertile lands and production of crops like rice, sugarcane, and opium.

**5. Socio-Political Unrest and the Revolt of 1857:** By the mid-19th century, the British control over Awadh became more oppressive. Policies such as the Doctrine of Lapse and annexation of territories heightened discontent among the local population. The Indian Rebellion of 1857, also known as the Sepoy Mutiny, was sparked partly by grievances against British rule, including in Awadh. The last Nawab, Wajid Ali Shah, was accused of supporting the rebellion and was deposed by the British in 1856.

**6. Legacy and Impact:** The period of Nawabs in Awadh left a lasting impact on the culture and identity of the region. The nawabi style of architecture, cuisine, and traditions still influence the cultural landscape of Lucknow. The annexation of Awadh marked a turning point in British colonial rule in India, leading eventually to the dissolution of the Mughal Empire and the formal establishment of the British Raj.

**Table 1 : From 1722 onward, every one of these Awadh royal family monarchs used the title of Nawab**

Portrait	Titular Name	Personal Name	Birth	Reign	Death
	<b>Burhan ul Mulk Sa'adat Khan</b> برهان الملک سعادت خان	Saadat Ali Khan I	1680 Nishapur, Khurasan, Safavid dynasty, Persia	1722 – 19 March 1739	1739
	<b>Abul-Mansur Khan Safdar Jung</b> ابو المنصور خان صفدر جنگ	Muhammad Muqim	1708	1739 – 5 October 1754	1754
	<b>Shuja-ud-Daula</b> شجاع الدوله	Jalal-ud-din Haider Abul-Mansur Khan	1732	1754 – 26 January 1775	1775
	<b>Asaf-ud-Daula</b> آصف الدوله	Muhammad Yahya Mirza Amani	1748	26 January 1775 – 20 April 1797	1798

	<b>Asif Jah Mirza</b>	Wazir Ali Khan وزیر علی خان	1780	21 September 1797 – 21 January 1798	1817
	<b>Yamin-ud-Daula</b>	Saadat Ali Khan II سعادت علی خان	1752	21 January 1798 – 11 July 1814	1814
	<b>Ghazi-ud-Din Haidar Shah</b>	Ghazi-ud-Din Haidar Shah غازی الدین حیدر شاہ	1769	11 July 1814 – 19 October 1827	1827
	<b>Abul-Mansur Qutub-ud-din Sulaiman jah</b>	Nasir-ud-Din Haidar Shah ناصر الدین حیدر شاہ	1803	19 October 1827 – 7 July 1837	1837
	<b>Abul Fateh Moin-ud-din</b>	Muhammad Ali Shah محمد علی شاہ	1777	7 July 1837 – 7 May 1842	1842
	<b>Najm-ud-Daula Abul-Muzaffar Musleh-ud-din</b>	Amjad Ali Shah امجد علی شاہ	1801	7 May 1842 – 13 February 1847	1847
	<b>Abul-Mansur Mirza</b>	Wajid Ali Shah واجد علی شاہ	1822	13 February 1847 – 11 February 1856	1 September 1887
	<b>Mohammad i Khanum</b>	Begum Hazrat Mahal بیگم حضرت محل	1820	11 February 1856 – 5 July 1857 Wife of Wajid Ali Shah and mother of Birjis Qadra (in rebellion)	7 April 1879
	<b>Ramzan Ali</b>	Birjis Qadr بر جیس قدر	1845	5 July 1857 – 3 March 1858 (in rebellion)	14 August 1893

### Administrative Reforms

Under the Nawabs, Awadh witnessed significant administrative changes. Nawab Asaf-ud-

Daula implemented reforms aimed at centralizing governance and modernizing revenue systems. This era also saw the growth of a bureaucracy and the introduction of judicial reforms.

### **Centralization of Governance:**

Nawab Asaf-ud-Daula sought to consolidate his authority and establish a more centralized system of governance. This involved reducing the autonomy of local landlords (zamindars) and bringing more administrative functions under direct control of the state. By centralizing power, the Nawab aimed to strengthen his rule and improve state efficiency.

### **Modernization of Revenue Systems:**

One of the key areas of reform was the revenue administration. The traditional revenue collection system in Awadh was based on the zamindari system, where landlords collected revenue from peasants in exchange for protection and administration. However, this system was often exploitative and inefficient. Under Asaf-ud-Daula's reforms, efforts were made to introduce more systematic and standardized revenue collection methods. This included assessing land revenue based on actual productivity and introducing fixed rates to replace arbitrary levies by local landlords.

### **Establishment of Bureaucracy:**

To implement these reforms effectively, Nawab Asaf-ud-Daula established a structured bureaucracy. This bureaucracy comprised of officials appointed by the Nawab to oversee various administrative tasks such as revenue collection, law and order, and public works. The establishment of a bureaucratic system helped in centralizing administration and ensuring uniformity in governance across the state.

### **Introduction of Judicial Reforms:**

The Nawab also focused on improving the judicial system. Judicial reforms aimed at providing better access to justice, reducing corruption, and ensuring impartiality in legal proceedings. This included setting up formal courts with appointed judges, standardized legal procedures, and codification of laws to ensure consistency and fairness in the administration of justice.

### **Infrastructure Development:**

Alongside administrative reforms, efforts were made to develop infrastructure. This included investment in roads, bridges, and public buildings to facilitate trade, communication, and efficient governance. Improved infrastructure not only enhanced connectivity within Awadh but also contributed to economic development and state modernization.

### **Impact on Society and Economy:**

These administrative reforms had a profound impact on Awadh society and economy. The centralized governance and modernized revenue systems helped in stabilizing the state's finances and improving public services. The introduction of a bureaucracy created new opportunities for educated elites to serve the state, leading to the emergence of a class of government officials. Additionally, judicial reforms contributed to a more predictable legal environment, fostering economic activities and social stability.

### **Economic Prosperity**

The period of Nawabi rule in Awadh (present-day Uttar Pradesh, India) from 1801 to 1858 was a critical time marked by both economic prosperity and eventual decline. Under the Nawabs of Awadh during this era, the region witnessed significant developments and transformations, although it ultimately faced challenges that led to its annexation by the British East India Company in 1856.

#### **Agricultural Prosperity:**

- The Nawabs implemented land revenue reforms that aimed to stabilize agricultural productivity and revenue collection. This included measures to regulate land rights and taxation systems.
- Investments were made in improving irrigation systems, such as the construction of canals and water reservoirs, which enhanced agricultural output and facilitated crop diversification.

#### **Trade and Commerce:**

- Cities like Lucknow became important centers of trade and commerce, attracting merchants and traders from across India and beyond.



- Awadh was renowned for its textile industry, particularly the production of fine muslin and silk fabrics, which contributed significantly to the regional economy.
- The Nawabi court patronized arts and crafts, encouraging the growth of skilled craftsmanship in metalwork, pottery, and jewelry.

### **Urban Development:**

- The Nawabs undertook projects to improve urban infrastructure, including the construction of roads, bridges, and public buildings.
- The era saw the development of distinctive architectural styles, blending Persian and Indian influences, exemplified by structures like the Bara Imambara in Lucknow.

### **Cultural Renaissance:**

- The Nawabs were patrons of literature, poetry, and music, fostering a vibrant cultural scene in Awadh. This period is often referred to as a "golden age" of Urdu literature.
- Awadhi cuisine flourished during this time, with the refinement of culinary traditions and the introduction of new dishes.

## **Urban Development and Architecture**

During the Nawabi rule in Awadh (Lucknow) from the early 19th century to the mid-19th century, the city of Lucknow underwent a remarkable transformation in terms of urban development and architecture. This period is often regarded as a golden era for Lucknow's architectural splendor, characterized by the construction of magnificent palaces, mosques, and gardens that blended Persian and Indian architectural styles. Here are some key aspects of urban development and architecture in Lucknow during the Nawabi period:

### **1. Influence of Persian Architecture:**

- The Nawabs of Awadh were of Persian origin and brought with them a rich architectural heritage. This Persian influence was prominently displayed in the architecture of Lucknow during this era.
- Key features of Persian architecture seen in Lucknow included the use of arched doorways, domes, intricate ornamentation, and the incorporation of Persian motifs in design.

### **2. Integration of Indian Elements:**

- Alongside Persian influences, Lucknow's architecture also incorporated indigenous Indian architectural elements, resulting in a unique fusion style.
- Local materials and craftsmanship were utilized in the construction of buildings, blending traditional Indian building techniques with the elegance of Persian aesthetics.

### **3. Palaces and Forts:**

- The Nawabs commissioned the construction of opulent palaces and forts, serving as symbols of their wealth and power. Examples include the Rumi Darwaza, Chattr Manzil, and Kaiserbagh Palace.
- These structures often featured grand facades, spacious courtyards, and lush gardens, creating an aura of luxury and sophistication.

### **4. Religious Architecture:**

- Mosques and Imambaras (Shia Muslim congregational halls) were built with intricate detailing and majestic domes. The Bara Imambara complex, including the Asfi Mosque and the Rumi Darwaza, exemplifies this architectural style.
- The architecture of these religious buildings combined functional elements with artistic expression, showcasing the Nawabi patronage of Islamic arts and architecture.

### **5. Gardens and Landscaping:**

- Lucknow's urban development during the Nawabi era included the creation of expansive gardens and landscaped areas around important structures.
- Gardens such as the Dilkusha Kothi and the Residency Gardens were laid out with symmetry and geometric precision, featuring pathways, water bodies, and ornamental plants.

### **6. Legacy and Cultural Impact:**

- The architectural legacy of the Nawabi period continues to influence Lucknow's

identity today. Many of these historic structures remain important landmarks and cultural symbols of the city.

- The blend of Persian and Indian architectural styles seen in Lucknow's buildings reflects not only artistic innovation but also the cultural fusion that characterized Awadh's cosmopolitan society during this period.

## **Cultural Patronage**

It is arguable that music predates all the arts that provide joy, euphoria, or ecstasy, and thus it limits all that man has accomplished since he came into this world. A man's intelligence and senses determine his capacity to appreciate beauty and art. The impact is more noticeable in those with a sharp mind and refined sensibility. Despite Islam's disapproval of music, the Arabs and Iranians kept alive, albeit incognito, a musical heritage that had survived from before Islam.1 Since the prophet of Islam himself commanded his followers to recite the sacred book in the most melodic, lovely, and sonorous tone, it is safe to say that not even Islam could impose a complete ban on musical sounds.2 Artistic and cultural outputs from a certain time period mirror not just the mental and physical climate of that time, but also its unique expectations, mood, and goals. There is a strong correlation between the musical styles of a certain time and its economic, political, social, and creative climate.

Those who were skilled singers were bestowed the titles of "Kalawant" and "Qawwal" by the Mughal emperors, especially Akbar. Afterwards, during the Nawabi age of Lucknow and the zenith of the Mughal Empire in Delhi, music was shaped to suit the tastes of these ostentatious patrons. It was necessary to compose new forms of semi-classical music in response to their needs. The four Lucknow gharanas—"Khayal," "Thumri," "Tabla," and "Sitar"—emerged independently. In spite of administrative and political squabbles, Awadh became India's cultural epicentre. The monarchs and Nawab-Wazirs of Awadh lavished support on the performing arts, visual arts, and literature. The deposal of the last Nawab Wazid Ali Shah in 1856 marked the end of Lucknow's magnificent age, which began in 1775. Lucknow, the Awadh empire's capital, rose to prominence as a major artistic hub throughout these vibrant decades. It was the birthplace of a civilization unlike any other in India's history. Until the East India Company removed the last Nawab, Wajid Ali Shah, and deported him to Matiyaburj near Calcutta in 1856, Lucknow enjoyed a brilliant age. Lucknow rose to prominence as a hub of artistic excellence in the East throughout these formative years, earning accolades for its music, dance, poetry, and drama. The Nawab Wazirs' Persian-influenced music, dance, language, attire, and culture harmoniously intertwined with Hindu India's advanced artistic, linguistic, and cultural traditions. As time went on, the most accomplished musicians sought to preserve their heritage by passing it down through the generations; this practice eventually gave rise to gharana music in the nineteenth century. Hindustani music as we know it now is the product of a four-century transformation in Indian music that began in the sixteenth and continued into the nineteenth centuries. Khayal and thumri, two of today's most popular musical styles, both emerged during the contemporary period. After Aurangzeb's death, the Mughal empire in Delhi began to decline, and a rapid succession of monarchs followed. Muhammad Shah Rangeele, a renowned figure from 1716 to 1748 AD, was one of them. Many musicians were blessed by his kind and generous patronage. Niamat Khan, better known as "Sadarang," created a new genre called "the Khayal" while she was a court official.

According to a common saying, "Jab Dilli Ujadi, Lucknow Bani," the sophisticated and refined "Nawab-Wazirs" of Lucknow provided generous patronage and nurtured the arts in their extravagant darbars while Delhi's glory days were coming to an end and performing arts such as music, dance, and poetry were on the brink of oblivion. The palace and the elite circles were not the only ones who showed extraordinary support for the musical arts; a sizable portion of the local population also showed an extraordinary affinity for these forms of performance. New claims in musicology about modal classification and the "Shudh" scale, which were later acknowledged and would form the basis of Hindustani music, also occurred between 1722 and 1856.

The first Nawab-Wazir Sa'adat Khan Burhan ul-Mulk's son-in-law, Safdar Jang, succeeded to the throne upon his death. Although he is believed to have had musical training, he was too busy to make any contributions to the advancement of music. In order to calm himself emotionally and spiritually whenever he felt fatigued, he would often summon musicians to perform for him, the city of Faizabad was proclaimed the capital of Awadh by Nawab Shuja-ud-daula, son of Nawab Safdar Jang. Day and night, caravan processions arrived in Faizabad, bringing with them renowned artists, musicians, dancers, and craftspeople from all over. Nawab Shuja-ud-daula was a lifelong dancer and music lover. The two qawwali singing specialists Ghulam Rasul and Mirja Zani travelled from Delhi to Faizabad on the bus, and then they continued on to Lucknow, where they chose to perform Khayal. Miyan Shori, son of Ghulam Rasul, began to sing Tappa. No matter where the Nawab went, he was entertained by a huge number of girls who were talented in singing and dancing. An intriguing occurrence brought up by Sharar:

While strolling outside the tomb of Shah Peer Muhammad on a moonlit night in the Moharam era, the renowned poet Insha overheard a woman singing an Awadhi mersia in an incredibly sad tune:

**“Dukhiari Zainab door khari,  
Sar Veer Sipahi Joojh Gaye  
Ab Bhai bhi Marne jawan hai”.**

(Zainab, who is standing distant and bereaved, is pounding her head and sobbing as she realises that her brother would also be slain along with all the courageous troops).

Nawab Asaf-ud-daula observed and listened to the woman reciting the mersia the following day as well. Listening to music made him feel sad. According to some historians, Ustad Muhammad Reza penned the governing text of classical music, "Usul-ul- Naghmat al Asifia," following this event. No specific information is known on the author Mohammad Reza, but, he did receive musical instruction from Khwaja Hasan Maududi, a prominent figure in Nawab Asaf-ud-daula's court, and penned this work in 1813 A.D. Nawab Saadat Ali Khan continued to support Khwaja Hasan Maududi after Nawab Asaf-ud-daula.

One of the most well-known Persian masterpieces from the late Middle Ages. This composition has three manuscripts: one in the Salarjung Museum in Hyderabad, one at Jamia Millia Islamia in New Delhi, and one at Delhi University's Faculty of Music and Fine Arts Library. This work's various manuscripts have vastly different titles. This work was authored by Ghulam Raza Bin Mohammad Panah. Raag, Svar, Prakeerna, Prabandha, Tal, and musical instruments make up its six chapters. The work's emphasis on the shuddha scale, also known as the Bilaval scale, in Hindustani music is an essential feature to mention. Modern scholars can benefit from this, even though it has not been defined in detail. I think it's excellent work because the author has thoughtfully covered every major facet of Hindustani music. These Persian manuscripts on Indian musicology are just a few of many that can be found in India and beyond. It is necessary to investigate and study these. The preservation and translation of some of them is urgently needed because of their fragile state. I think it's a must-do to preserve Indian musicology's rich history from oblivion; else, we risk losing it forever. A fan of Rag Bhairavi was Nawab Saadat Ali Khan. Mirja Jafar Hussain states that the famous courtiers enjoyed listening to Raga Bhairavi every morning just after namaz. Niamat Khan Sadarang' (1670–1748) of Lucknow popularised the khayal in the 18th century as people became tired of the strict and disciplined Dhrupad-Dhamar. He was a vainik and great musician at Mohammad Shah Rangeele's court who, after once disobeying imperial orders, went to Lucknow and lived in quiet obscurity for a while to avoid vengeance. The khayal style was developed during his time in Lucknow, when he wrote hundreds of khayals under the pseudonym "Sadarang." His sons, "Adarang" (Feroz Khan) and "Maharang" (Bhupat Khan), continued the tradition. Since the Lucknow Gharana of exponents was founded by the renowned qawwal Ghulam Rasool, the "Qawwal Bachcha Gharana of khayal singing" also thrived in Lucknow. Because of the profound impact of qawwali, which Amir Khusrau brought to this gharana, his descendants became famous performers of it. Bade Mohammad Khan and Nahan Peer bux, who were descendants of Ghulam Rasool, were the founders of the renowned

Gwalior gharana. Upon arriving in Gwalior, they established this new gharana.

## **Awadh-cultural hub for classical artists**

### **[i] Dhrupad [ii] Khayal**

#### **1. Dhrupad:**

##### **Origins and Development:**

- ✚ Dhrupad is one of the oldest forms of classical vocal music in India, with roots tracing back to the ancient Vedic traditions and medieval courts.
- ✚ The style flourished particularly during the Mughal era and was patronized by rulers and nobles, including those in Awadh.
- ✚ Dhrupad is characterized by its austere and meditative nature, focusing on a slow, elaborate rendition of raga (melodic framework) with emphasis on precision and purity of notes.

##### **Characteristics:**

- ✚ Dhrupad compositions are traditionally structured in four parts: sthayi (the initial section), antara (the second section), sanchari (the third section), and abhog (the concluding section).
- ✚ The lyrics of Dhrupad are often devotional or philosophical, drawing from ancient texts and poetic expressions.
- ✚ Dhrupad singers emphasize the use of alap (slow, unmeasured improvisation), jor (medium tempo exploration of the raga), and jhala (fast-paced rhythmic play), showcasing the full range and intricacies of the raga.

##### **Performance Style:**

- ✚ Dhrupad is typically performed in a deep, resonant voice with a focus on maintaining the purity of the raga's structure and maintaining a steady rhythm.
- ✚ The accompanying instruments in Dhrupad performances often include the pakhawaj (a double-headed drum) and tambura (a string instrument used for drone).

##### **Cultural Significance:**

- ✚ Dhrupad has played a pivotal role in shaping the classical music traditions of North India, influencing subsequent styles like Khayal.
- ✚ It represents the spiritual and contemplative aspect of Indian classical music, emphasizing the pursuit of musical excellence as a form of devotion.

#### **2. Khayal:**

##### **Origins and Development:**

- ✚ Khayal emerged as a distinct vocal form in the 18th century, evolving from the more structured Dhrupad tradition.
- ✚ It gained popularity during the decline of the Mughal Empire and found patronage in the courts of Awadh and other princely states.

##### **Characteristics:**

- ✚ Khayal is a more free-flowing and improvisational form compared to Dhrupad, allowing greater scope for personal expression and creativity.
- ✚ It is characterized by its focus on lyrical compositions (bandish) that explore a specific raga, with flexibility in rhythm and tempo.

##### **Performance Style:**

- ✚ Khayal performances typically begin with a slow and meditative alap, followed by a rhythmic exploration of the raga in vilambit (slow tempo) and drut (fast tempo) stages.
- ✚ Singers showcase their virtuosity through intricate taans (melodic phrases) and rhythmic patterns, often accompanied by tabla (drums) and harmonium (a keyboard instrument).

##### **Cultural Significance:**

- ✚ Khayal represents a shift towards more emotive and aesthetically pleasing expressions in classical music, appealing to a broader audience beyond the elite circles.
- ✚ It has become one of the most popular and widely practiced forms of Hindustani classical music, shaping the repertoire of classical musicians and vocalists.



### **Awadh as a Cultural Hub:**

- ✚ Awadh, with its vibrant courtly culture and patronage of the arts, played a crucial role in nurturing classical musicians and sustaining musical traditions like Dhrupad and Khayal.
- ✚ The region's cultural heritage, blending Persian, Indian, and local influences, enriched the artistic expressions within classical music, making Awadh a focal point for musical innovation and creativity.

### **The Evolution of gentle classical musical styles of Awadh**

#### **(i) Thumri      (ii) Tappa**

The gentle classical musical styles of Awadh, particularly Thumri and Tappa, have evolved over centuries and are deeply rooted in the rich cultural heritage of the region. These styles are characterized by their emotive melodies, intricate rhythms, and poetic expressions. Here's a closer look at the evolution and characteristics of Thumri and Tappa:

#### **1. Thumri:**

##### **Origins and Development:**

Thumri originated in the region of Awadh (present-day Uttar Pradesh) during the 18th century, evolving from the more classical forms of Hindustani music like Dhrupad and Khayal. It was initially sung in the courts of the Nawabs of Awadh and gained popularity as a lighter, more emotive form of classical music, often drawing inspiration from folk music and poetic expressions.

##### **Characteristics:**

Thumri is characterized by its romantic and devotional themes, focusing on expressions of love, longing, and spirituality. It is usually performed in a semi-classical style, blending classical ragas with folk tunes and rhythmic patterns. Thumri compositions are set in a lighter tempo and are known for their improvisational nature, allowing the singer to explore melodic embellishments and variations.

##### **Evolution:**

Over time, Thumri expanded beyond its courtly origins and became popular among both classical musicians and common audiences. Different styles of Thumri emerged, including Purab Ang (from eastern India) and Punjab Ang (from Punjab), each with its distinct musical characteristics and lyrical themes. Modern interpretations of Thumri continue to evolve, incorporating new musical influences while preserving its essence as a soulful and expressive genre.

#### **2. Tappa:**

##### **Origins and Development:**

Tappa is another classical vocal form that originated in the Awadh region and gained prominence during the 18th century. It is believed to have evolved from the folk music traditions of Punjab and the musical practices of the courtesans (tawaifs) in Awadh.

##### **Characteristics:**

Tappa is characterized by its fast-paced and intricate rhythmic patterns, demanding vocal techniques, and lyrical compositions. It often features playful and romantic lyrics, focusing on themes of love, separation, and nature. Tappa compositions are set to complex rhythmic cycles and showcase the singer's virtuosity through intricate melodic ornamentation and swift taans (melodic runs).

##### **Evolution:**

Like Thumri, Tappa also gained popularity beyond the courts and became a favorite among classical musicians and connoisseurs. Different styles of Tappa developed, including the Banaras Gharana and the Punjab Gharana, each contributing unique elements to the genre. Tappa continues to be performed in classical music concerts and is appreciated for its technical complexity and emotional depth.

##### **Cultural Significance:**

Both Thumri and Tappa represent the cultural ethos of Awadh, reflecting the region's artistic sophistication and syncretic musical traditions. These gentle classical styles have contributed to the enrichment of Hindustani classical music, offering unique avenues for artistic expression

and emotional storytelling.

## **Decline and Annexation**

The decline and annexation of Awadh (Oudh) by the British East India Company in 1856 was a culmination of political, economic, and social factors that weakened the Nawabi state and made it vulnerable to British interference and ultimately annexation. Nawab Wajid Ali Shah's reign marked a critical period of decline for Awadh, paving the way for British intervention.

Nawab Wajid Ali Shah ascended the throne of Awadh in 1847. His reign was characterized by political instability and weak governance. The Nawab was known for his extravagant lifestyle and patronage of arts and culture, which drained the state treasury. His focus on cultural pursuits and neglect of administrative duties weakened the Nawabi administration, leaving the state vulnerable to internal dissent and external pressures. One of the critical issues during Nawab Wajid Ali Shah's reign was financial mismanagement. The Nawab's lavish spending on courtly luxuries and patronage depleted the state's finances. Awadh faced mounting debts and fiscal deficits, leading to an inability to maintain a strong administrative apparatus or adequately fund essential services such as defense and infrastructure. This financial crisis undermined the Nawab's authority and contributed to the weakening of Awadh's governance. The British East India Company closely monitored the situation in Awadh. The Company, which already exercised significant influence over Indian affairs, viewed Awadh's financial instability and political weakness as an opportunity for intervention. The Nawab's inability to maintain law and order and manage finances provided a pretext for the British to intervene under the guise of restoring order and good governance. The Doctrine of Lapse, a policy introduced by Lord Dalhousie, the Governor-General of India, further exacerbated Awadh's vulnerability. According to this policy, if a ruler under the Company's authority died without a male heir, the territory would be annexed by the British. Although Awadh had an heir (Nawab Wajid Ali Shah), the British exploited the political turmoil and financial crisis to justify the annexation on grounds of misrule and inefficiency. In 1856, citing mismanagement and disorder in Awadh, the British East India Company under Lord Dalhousie's leadership annexed the state of Awadh. Nawab Wajid Ali Shah was deposed and exiled to Calcutta (Kolkata), marking the end of Awadh's independent rule. The annexation was also driven by the Company's desire to expand its territorial control and consolidate its power in India. The annexation of Awadh had profound consequences for the region. It marked the end of the Nawabi era and the imposition of direct British rule in the territory. The annexation further fueled discontent and resistance against British colonial rule in India, contributing to the Indian Rebellion of 1857-58 (often termed the Indian Mutiny or First War of Independence), which had significant repercussions on British policies and Indian nationalist movements. The annexation of Awadh by the British was not accepted passively by the local population. There was widespread opposition and resentment among the people of Awadh towards British rule. The annexation led to feelings of betrayal and loss of independence, sparking sentiments of nationalism and anti-colonialism that would later contribute to the Indian Rebellion of 1857-58.

The British East India Company aimed to build dominance over different regions in India and progressively increased its influence there, which amounted to British interference in Indian domestic affairs. The British began meddling in Awadh's domestic affairs in an effort to sway the Nawabs' policies and judgements. The British took an active interest in Awadh's administration, meddling in governance, taxation, and the maintenance of law and order. In 1857, there was a revolt against British rule, and Awadh was a major player in it. The British seized Awadh in 1856 and proclaimed Wajid Ali Shah a collaborator in the revolt, leading to the Nawab's deposition and annexation. The annexation of Awadh had far-reaching consequences, including the erasure of the region's cultural traditions, economic wealth, and political independence. Awadh was known for its rich cultural heritage and artistic traditions, particularly in music, dance, and literature. The annexation by the British resulted in a decline of Awadhi cultural influence as the British imposed their own administrative and cultural norms. This period marked a shift in cultural dynamics, with traditional Awadhi arts facing suppression or assimilation into broader colonial cultural frameworks. The annexation of

Awadh had significant economic repercussions. The British restructured the revenue system, often to the disadvantage of the local population, leading to increased taxation and exploitation of resources. The disruption caused by annexation also affected trade and agriculture, impacting the economic livelihoods of the people of Awadh. Following annexation, British officials and residents were appointed to oversee the administration of Awadh. The introduction of British bureaucracy and governance systems further marginalized local elites and weakened indigenous power structures. British residents exercised significant influence over Awadh's affairs, shaping policies that favored British interests. The annexation of Awadh left a lasting legacy of resistance and defiance against British colonial rule. Awadh became a focal point of anti-colonial sentiment, with local leaders and rebels rallying against British oppression during the Indian Rebellion of 1857-58. The spirit of resistance in Awadh contributed to broader movements for Indian independence in subsequent decades. Nawab Wajid Ali Shah's deposition and exile symbolized the end of the Nawabi dynasty in Awadh. He spent the rest of his life in exile in Calcutta, where he continued his patronage of arts and culture. The plight of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah came to represent the tragic consequences of British imperialism on indigenous rulers and their territories. The annexation of Awadh remains a subject of historical debate and interpretation. Some view it as a necessary step for British consolidation of power in India, while others see it as an act of imperial aggression and exploitation. The event underscores broader themes of colonialism, resistance, and the complexities of India's colonial past.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the period of Nawabi rule in Awadh from 1801 to 1858 was indeed a transformative and significant era in the history of the region. Under the Nawabs, Awadh experienced economic prosperity marked by agricultural growth, thriving trade, and the development of urban centers like Lucknow as cultural hubs. The Nawabi court patronized arts, literature, and music, fostering a vibrant cultural scene and contributing to the evolution of classical music styles like Thumri and Tappa. Additionally, administrative reforms aimed at land revenue and infrastructure improvements positively impacted the livelihoods of the people. However, despite these achievements, Awadh eventually succumbed to colonial pressures, leading to its annexation by the British East India Company. The Nawabs' legacy lives on in the architectural landmarks, cultural traditions, and artistic expressions that continue to define Awadh's identity today. Despite the end of Nawabi rule, their contributions have left an indelible mark on the history and heritage of the region, underscoring a chapter of resilience, creativity, and cultural richness amidst the challenges of colonial dominance.

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