

## Ancient Strings: Alapini vina

### Nature of Instrument

The Alapini Vina is a one-stringed harp or lute from early India. It is related to the *Ekatantri* (literally: one string), which had a long wooden tube instead of the stick and a wide bridge. *Alpa* in "Alapini" means "adagio". See also [Vina](#).<sup>1</sup>

### History of the Instrument

During the second half of the first millennium ce, ancient harp (called "*vinas*" in Hindi) were gradually replaced by stick-zithers, initially called *alapini vinas*. The latter instruments had only one string. However, in later centuries they were built with two and three strings. When compared to the harps, the zither-vinas have two distinguishing features:

- (1) All playing strings are identical in length.
- (2) Although the alapini vina from the 7th century did not have frets, by the 13th century, the [kinnari vina](#) had 12 to 14 frets.<sup>2</sup>



Ragini Kedar, Hyderabad, c. 1750,  
Kolkata, the Indian Museum

<sup>1</sup> Cristiano M.L. Forster. [Musical Mathematics on the art and science of acoustic instruments](#). Section 11.34.

<sup>2</sup> Sadie, S., Editor, [The New Grove Dictionary of Musical Instruments](#), Volume 3, (London, Macmillan Press Limited: 1984). p. 730.