

# RECENT TRENDS IN HINDUSTANI CLASSICAL VOCAL MUSIC

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**ABSTRACT**—This paper gives us an idea of changing trends in Hindustani Vocal Music; you will get a glimpse of what Indian music is and know about trending companies and people behind these changes

<sup>1</sup>“If I were not a physicist, I would probably be a musician. I often think in music. I live my daydreams in music. I see my life in terms of music.”  
— Albert Einstein

Music can be a social activity, but it can also be a very spiritual experience. Ancient Indians were deeply impressed by the spiritual power of music, and it is out of this that Indian classical music was born. So, for those who take it seriously, classical music involves single-minded devotion and lifelong commitment. But the thing about music is that you can take it as seriously or as casually as you like. It is a rewarding experience, no matter how deep or shallow your involvement.

<sup>2</sup>The evolution of word “Sangeet” and the meaning is given in the ancient Sanskrit Granth as “Vanmayi” in the form of “Samyak Geet”. The definitions and descriptions in music are related to its three art forms namely “Geetam, Vadhyam and Nrityam and they are described in almost all the granthas from the ancient times. The 13th century musicologist Sarang Dev, in sangeet Ratnakar Granth expressed that the combination of these three art forms is said to be sangeet.

<sup>3</sup>गीतं वाद्यं तथा नृत्यं त्रयं सङ्गीतमुच्यते ।

-Sharangdev, Sangeet Ratnakar

<sup>4</sup>Indian classical music is a sophisticated art form that requires a great deal of listening and a patient learning of its mechanics. It has specialized in melody and the subtle nuances of sound. After Jaideva, the saint poet of 13<sup>th</sup> century A.D. ,

This mighty river of classical music bifurcates into two major streams.

Indian classical music is the classical music of the Indian subcontinent. It has two major traditions: the North Indian classical music tradition is called Hindustani, while the South Indian expression is called Carnatic. These traditions were not distinct till about the 16th century. There on, during the turmoil’s of Islamic rule period of the Indian subcontinent, the traditions separated and evolved into distinct forms. Hindustani music emphasizes improvisation and exploring all aspects of a raga, while Carnatic performances tend to be short and composition-based. However, the two systems continue to have more common features than differences. Indian classical music has two foundational elements, RAGA and TALA. The raga is based on SWARAS(notes), while the TALA measures the time cycle or the beats. The RAGA gives an artist a palette to build the melody from sounds, while the TALA provides them with a creative framework for rhythmic improvisation using time. In Indian classical the Western classical concepts such as harmony, counterpoint, chords, or modulation are absent. Harmony in Indian classical music is mainly the result of the TANPURA playing a combination of the tonic (sa) and the fifth (pa) in a fixed pattern in the background, somewhat like an chord. Harmony in the Western sense, however, is not a part of traditional Indian music, and it is important not to look for it.

In Indian music traditionally a TABLA is used as the percussion instrument and TANPURA (Indian Musical Drone) is used for a constant pitch. However recently with development of science and technology new trends are being witnessed in Hindustani Classical Music. Today instead of Traditional acoustic Tanpura, mostly electronic tanpura is used and similarly electronic substitutes for traditional tabla have been created.

The electronic tanpura was created as a marketable, practical solution for instrumentalists, having their hands otherwise engaged, who cannot readily avail themselves of able tanpura

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/music>

<sup>2</sup> <https://allaboutmusicin.blogspot.com/2017/05/what-is-music-or-sangeet.html> (all reff.)

<sup>3</sup> Bhartiya sangget viganik vishleshan

<sup>4</sup> Musical Heritage of India

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players for their long hours of private practice. Generally, the electronic tanpura has one or more dials to control the tone and volume, and may have other switches and buttons that allow a certain pitch and volume to be saved and used again at a later time. The range is usually one to two octaves.

<sup>5</sup>The electronic tanpura was first invented by Mr.G. Raj Narayan in 1979, an engineer-musician from Bangalore, India, and demonstrated at the annual conference of the Music Academy Chennai in December that year. The products were manufactured by the company he founded, Radel. The first versions were created with the technology then available, using discrete components and transistors. In the late 1990s, these gave way to models using sampled recordings of the traditional tanpura on a chip. With time many companies have emerged, bringing their electronic products to the market.

Now a day's even electronic tanpuras and tablas are old. The latest trending thing is used of mobile application that have substituted everything else. The most popular mobile application amongst Indian musicians on IOS platforms is I TABLA PRO.

The official description of I TABLA PRO says, 'iTablaPro is the first electronic tabla and tanpura that actually sounds like the real thing, ideal for Indian Classical musicians and students. It includes support for all common taals used in Hindustani music, making it the perfect companion for daily riyaz (practice). And the beautiful Tanpura and Swar Mandal create an instant concert atmosphere!'

<sup>6</sup>The creator of this popular application is Prasad Upasani. Prasad Upasani is a professional musician, teacher and performer who also a talented programmer with over 25 years in IT as a Project Manager, Software Developer & Technical Architect. He has a Master's degree in Computer Science and a Bachelor's degree (Sangeet Visharad) in Indian Classical music. He lives in Southern California where he currently writes multimedia software for the iPhone. He is also Chief Technical Office at uGovernIT, which provides cutting-edge help-desk management, project and resource management software.

The popular application on android platform is iShala and tanpura droid .

<sup>7</sup>iShala is an Android/iOS app that can be used as a tabla machine, a lehra player and/or an electronic tanpura. These are small machines that provide rhythmic/melodic accompaniment to people practicing Indian music, or just jamming on any other musical style. Featured instruments are Tabla, Harmonium, Swarmandal and Tanpura. You can select to play one or all of them, and they will automatically synchronize together (apart from Tanpura/Swarmandal that are meant to

follow their own cycle). Includes 37 rhythmic cycles, melodies in more than 80 ragas and 7 different tempos; possible combinations are thus nothing short of endless!

Tanpura Droid is the software version of a Tanpura, this sitar-like instrument used in Indian classical music to play a drone sound throughout a musical performance. Includes real sounds. Whether you practice Indian music or just want a meditative background sound for relaxing, this is the only free app while others are paid.

Both these apps have been created by Swar Systems.

According to your story.com 'Mariano Etchepareborda is an interesting man. Back in the 1990s, this young Swiss software developer had just started to learn tabla. "I wanted to create a tool to store tabla rhythms as array structures in folders and be able to play them at different tempos for practice," Mariano tells us over email after request for an interview. Little did he know then that he had embarked on a ride that would take so much of his time and energy over the next two decades. "Even though there have been some difficult times, it has always been very exciting," he tells us. His company, Swar Systems, was officially registered in 1999, but Mariano had started working on the first software, TaalWizard, a tabla software ancestor of SwarShala in 1996. This little software led to a host of products that Swar Systems has developed over the years. SwarShala is a full music software to learn, practice and compose in the Indian classical music tradition. Built by a small team of five, SwarShala has been built from experience. Built in multiple versions with tutorials, standard and also for pros, SwarShala is priced from Rs 499 to Rs 8750, and it has something for every level of expertise. The company has grown organically without any marketing and has found music lovers who get utility in their product. What helped Swar Systems is the development in audio technology to stay with the times. "Our aim quickly became to have the software produce results that sounded as realistic as possible. The way the technology progressed since the 90s in the audio field opened up a completely new horizon for that. The limit was no longer the technology but rather the time and efforts we could invest into it," says Mariano. Their other products include SwarPlug - a plugin synthesizer that features more than 76 sampled Indian instruments, SwarGroove - another plugin that includes over 200 rhythmic styles from all over India, Swar Studio - a complete Digital Audio Workstation (DAW) to compose music, which also includes various Indian instruments, and SwarTrax - Indian instruments formatted for various different keyboard models. Over time, Swar Systems has also ventured into mobile apps- iShala (a light version of SwarShala for riyaz) and Tanpura Droid (virtual Tanpura). To give an idea of the traction, Tanpura Droid has been installed close to 7, 50, 000 times. "Play Store statistics show about 80 percent of users are based in India. For our other products, main markets are India and the US, with Europe following," says Mariano. The company has received love from the users but has also been hit by piracy. "I'd rather not

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.radel.in/about-us/> and Wikipedia.com

<sup>6</sup> [http://upasani.org/home/About\\_Me.html](http://upasani.org/home/About_Me.html)

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[https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.swarsystems.ishala&hl=en\\_US](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.swarsystems.ishala&hl=en_US)

dwelling on financial aspects, since the revenues are still quite limited. It's somehow a niche market, and we are also heavily penalised by piracy, but we have good hopes that the improvements in all our products will properly increase these revenues in the coming years," believes Mariano.<sup>8</sup>

Indian Classical Music is traditionally considered to be taught by teacher to student on one-to-one basis and in face-to-face mode for one important reason: It is a performing art that has more to do with practice with a high precision. However with advent of many software's and YouTube tutorials now a new trend of distance learning is also seen in Indian music. The popular government YouTube channels are CBSE audio books and UGC tutorials.

In spite of all these changes, the value of original instruments and learning methods cannot be depreciated. These things do provide a temporary solution, but for excellence traditional methods are the king.

Like all tools, modern technology has produced some wonderful moments in music and also some Horrors.

– **Hugh Hoppe**

Technology is, of course, a double-edged sword.

Fire can cook our food but also burn us.

- **Jason Silva**

#### REFERENCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY (rest footnotes)

Sr.	Book	Author	Publication	Year
1	Bhartiya sangeet ka Itihas	Bhageat Sharan Sharma	Sangeet Karyalaya, Hathras	March, 2010
2	Bhartiya sangeet vigyanik vishaleshan	Prof. Swatantra Sharma	Anubhav publication house	2010
3	Musical heritage of India	Lalita Rama Kishna	Shubhi Publication, Delhi	2003

<sup>8</sup> <https://yourstory.com/2017/02/swar-systems-switzerland-india>