

# Indian Classical Music and Emergence of New Platforms

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## Abstract

*Indian classical music has constantly been reinventing and reinterpreting itself through the ages. Various factors, be it a different cultural influence or development of new technologies, influence the way we hear or perceive music. Indian classical music has also been evolving in terms of presentation and performance and its compositional structures have gone through various modifications with time. There is a need to accept and study these changes in order to know their impact on the current music scene. It also helps in predicting the future development and prospects of Indian classical music so that it can further add to its growth and retaining its viability in a rapidly changing society. The platforms for performing Indian classical music have also been constantly evolving keeping in mind the kind of audience and exposure in that era. In current scenario, due to technical and media support, there has been a birth of new performing platforms encouraging independent music and collaborations. In this article I have tried to study how the emergence of new performing platforms with arrival of new technologies has made an impact on Indian classical music and how it has added and contributed to the practice and performance of classical music. I have attempted to do so through various examples from platforms like Film music, Coke Studio, independent music and Fusion bands, to analyze the way Indian Classical music is being presented along with other music forms, and how it has contributed to its promotion in the society. The main object of this article is to understand how in the current times, Indian classical music compositions are being applied and performed in new ways, attracting a different and much wider audience and assimilating various new musical and cultural influences.*

## Research Paper

**India** has one of the oldest musical traditions in the world. It has been, and still remains, one of the most pervasive forces in our society. Indian Classical music traces back to antiquity and has continued to evolve to this day. This dynamism and essentially fluid nature of Indian classical music makes it unique. It has kept evolving in its forms and usage. The platforms for performing these compositions have also kept varying with time.

The Origin of Indian music is said to be rooted in the Vedas . it is said that god himself is a musical sound, the sound which pervades the whole universe, i.e. Nadabrahma. The origins of Indian music are therefore considered divine. It is said that the musician has to cultivate an attitude of self-abandonment, in order to fuse with the Supreme Reality, Brahma.[<sup>1</sup>]

### EMERGENCE OF VARIOUS PLATFORMS

It took a long time for classical music to come to the form found in present-day India. The most important advance in music was made between the 14th and 18th

centuries. During this period, the music sung in the north came in contact with Persian music and assimilated it, through the Pathans and the Mughals. It is then that two schools of music resulted, the Hindustani and the Carnatic. Hindustani music adopted a scale of Shudha Swara saptaka(octave of natural notes) and Carnatic music retained the traditional octave. During this period, different styles of classical compositions such as Dhrupad, Dhamar, Khayal, etc. were contributed to Hindustani music, along with many exquisite hymns, bhajans, kirtans, etc.[<sup>2</sup>]

Back when it all started, Indian music and its compositions were only sung or played in temples or for one's own self fulfillment to achieve a state of spiritual release. However, as times changed and the Mughals arrived, Hindustani classical music was taken to the courts. With this transition from a personal to public space, new and popular styles of compositions came into being, such as khayals and thumris. This, in a way, enriched the repertoire of Hindustani music with new styles of compositions. Unlike

earlier times when Indian classical melodies and ragas were sung for one's own fulfillment, in Mughal era, Hindustani classical music became a source of entertainment and pleasure for the audience as well. As time progressed, various technological developments in the field of music gave a much needed exposure to Indian classical music and its compositions. In the last few decades, with the arrival of radio, television, tapes, discs and so on, classical music began to be introduced to the masses at a much larger scale.

From the very beginning, Hindi film music has had Indian classical ragas as the basis of its songs and several *bandishes* can also be heard in their traditional format to showcase a particular sequence such as in Baiju Bawra, Basant bahar etc. After so many years and in this era of technical advancement, we can still see various songs from current movies clearly using compositions and elements of Hindustani music while changing their presentation and music arrangement. Chota khyal such as 'Albela Sajan' in movie 'Hum Dil de chuke Sanam', songs like 'Ras ke bhare tore nain' from movie 'Satyagrah', thumris and dadra like 'Hamari Atariya pey aa ja o Sanwariya' from 'Dedh ishqiya' etc are clearly an example of how application and presentation of Indian Classical music and compositions has undergone a change and how film music continues to be a great platform where Indian classical music is showcased but with a lot a more experimentation and post production work.

With further spread of information technology and an increasingly globalised world, we see a host of musical forms co-existing in contemporary India- rock music, R & B, Hip-hop, jazz etc. Apart from these western forms of music, traditional forms of Indian music, such as Khayal, Geet, Thumri, Qawwali etc also find their place in the contemporary musical scenario. This is evident in different formats and compositions of Indian classical music being presented in a non-traditional and experimental set-up, for instance in shows like Coke Studio; Bollywood; fusion bands; work of independent artists and producers; classical artists collaborating with other style of music etc. Various fusion bands and independent producers like Abhijit Pohankar, Karsh Kale, Shankar Tucker etc are constantly trying to fuse Hindustani classical compositions or elements with other genres of music leading to higher popularity and exposure of Indian Classical music.

Media boom and advent of information and communication technology has had a huge impact on Indian classical music, culture and the society as a whole. It has brought higher accessibility and huge amount of exposure to Indian

classical music at a global level. With globalization, the arrival of computers and information technology revolutionized the way we accessed and experienced our music.

The spread of internet has now completely transformed the experience of music, partly through the increased ease of access to music and the increased choice for the customer. It has become economically viable to offer products that not many people are interested in. With the spread of internet, many other online services and communities have come into existence such as Youtube, MySpace and Facebook. Such sites simplify connecting with other musicians, and greatly facilitate the distribution of music. Professional musicians also use YouTube as a free publisher of promotion material. Performing platforms like Coke Studio Pakistan, known for its collaborative and creative presentation of traditional music gained maximum popularity worldwide through internet and sites like YouTube which had Coke Studio's performances uploaded and these were accessed and enjoyed by millions of music lovers.

These new developments have surely brought a spot light back to our classical heritage by presenting Indian classical musicians collaborating with other genres of music. It would be interesting to understand the impact of these platforms on Indian classical music and its presentation and also see how through all these different platforms, collaborations and experimentations, Indian classical music continues to hold a significant space in modern Indian musical experience.

Let us discuss some examples in detail which demonstrate the application of Hindustani classical music in a non conventional or experimental way. All these examples will be from various platforms such as Films, Fusion Bands, Coke Studio and also music producers using Hindustani classical music in their productions. We will try to analyze one or two cases from each of the above formats.

## APPLICATION OF HINDUSTANI CLASSICAL MUSIC IN VARIOUS PLATFORMS

### FILM MUSIC

**1. 'Albela Sajan aayo re' – Albela Sajan Aayo Re** is a classical Hindi song popularized by Ustad Sultan Khan of Sikar Gharana, in the Bollywood movie, *Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam* released in 1999. The music was given by Ismail Darbar and was a great success. This particular track got really popular among the masses at that time and made Ustad Sultan Khan a household name for even people who did not have any knowledge of classical music.

‘*Albela Sajan Aayo ri*’ is traditional *Chota khayal* composition in *Raag Ahir Bhairav* in *Teen taal*. The song in which this composition has been used, also goes with the theme and situation in the film as the protagonist Sameer (Salman Khan) comes to India in a musical Household to learn Hindustani Classical music from Nandini’s (Aishwarya Rai Bachchan) father and this song is picturised when he is learning from his teacher along with Nandini.

If we discuss from the production point of view, we can see that it’s the western instruments or sounds which are introducing the song. In the first few seconds when the song starts, some bass notes and a rhythmic strumming is establishing the tempo of the song and then the flute takes off and plays a melody, almost exactly a minute passes by and then the composition is introduced in its true form. But the important thing to note is that in the whole track the rhythm or the tempo is kept by the bass sounds which were introduced at the beginning of the track and an electronic beat loop which is introduced along with vocals itself.

Tabla sounds are only used as a tonal variation in some places which is unlike the traditional way where Tabla is main timekeeper. This is an example of how in film music Hindustani classical compositions are used in a film track subtly backed by western instrumentation and arrangement along with Indian sound, at the same time contributing to the plot of the movie and signifying a particular sequence.

Another point is that the mukhda of the composition “Albela Sajan aayo re” is again played in the background in some sequences, establishing it as a theme song for that whole plot.

**2. ‘Sardari Begum’ songs – Sardari Begum** is a 1996 Hindi movie directed by Shyam Benegal. The music in this film is worth mentioning in relation to Hindustani compositions used in the movies in the late 90’s. According to many, this movie is a perfect example to demonstrate how Hindustani classical music can also be an integral part of a film’s music rather than merely being an influence.

In the sound track, various compositions such as *thumris* have been used to substantiate the characters and the situations in the movie.

The music was given by Vanraj Bhatia and the lyricist was Javed Akhtar.

Music played a crucial part in this movie since the protagonist is a *thumri* singer named Sardari Begum,

whose struggles with music and performances have been shown in the movie. The movie starts with Sardari Begum singing the mukhda “*Pi ke Nagar chali*” in a *thumri* style in 16 beats Chanchar Taal, the singer being Aarti Anklekar, famous Classical vocalist who has sung majority of the songs in the movie. “*Ghir Ghir aayi badariya kari*” set in *Raag Malhar* is another song in the movie which has been picturised as a song sung by Sardari and her daughter when they go to a college music festival to perform. “*Ghar nahin hamare Shyam*” based in *Raag Nand* is sung in a *thumri* style by young Sardari in a *mehfil*. Singers like Asha Bhosle sang “*More Kanha jo aaye palat ke*” which is a traditional Dadra composition in Hindustani vocal music which is picturised on the younger Sardari when she is asked to sing in front of a producer. Similarly “*Sawariya dekh zara iss oor*” sung by Shobha Joshi was filmed on Surekha Sikri (Idan bai) who acted as the teacher of Sardari Begum.

However we must mention all these compositions were sung in purely Classical, semi classical settings and all of these compositions depicted or accentuated a sequence in the movie.

**3. Bhor Bhayee Tori Baat Takat Piya’** – This *bandish* is of Patiala Qasur Gharana, based in *raag Gujari Todi* and was popularly sung by Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, the legend of Patiala gharana. This *Bandish* was incorporated in the film score of *Delhi 6*, where the *bandish* is sung by the playback singer Shreya Ghoshal and delivered beautifully in a purely classical fashion. The song starts with Bade Ghulam Ali Khan saheb’s original recording of this *bandish* only and the music director A.R Rehman has very smartly incorporated Shreya’s voice along with that of Ustadji with Shreya singing most of the *badhat* and improvisations but every now and then one hears Khan Sahib’s voice singing the *mukhda*.

This sort of thing has only been possible due to the help of advanced technology and high quality recording and production equipments, and application of this *bandish* in such a mainstream commercial movie has taken it to the masses, further popularizing Hindustani classical music.

## COKE STUDIO

### 1. ‘Mundari mori kahe ko chheen laeen chhailawa’<sup>[3]</sup>

– It is a *bandish* in *Raag Adana* in *Teentaal* which was presented and sung by Ustad Naseer-ud-din Saami of Delhi Gharana and was included in Coke studio Pakistan 4th season. This was the first time in Coke Studio that a purely Hindustani Classical *bandish* was presented with an arrangement backed by western instruments and extensive production.

This track has more than 3 lakh views on YouTube which indicates growing interest of people around the world for such music. The making of this track is also available on YouTube and it is really interesting when Rohail Hyatt the producer of Coke studio Pakistan meets Naseerji and expresses his desire to work with him and shows his hesitation in experimenting with his singing, whereas Naseerji tells him that he is in favour of experimentation till the point where both the aspects are equally balanced.

Another instance is when in the video Rohail is explaining the concept of '*Teentaal*' and '*Sam*' to the drummer and the bass player, since they are the instrumentalists who will be accompanying Naseer ji in this track, and tells them to keep a steady groove and bass line, no matter whatever improvisation or phrasing is done on the top.

One has to give credit to the Producer and the other instrumentalists for accompanying so beautifully in the main track which is helping Naseer-ud-din Saami sing this *bandish* with complete focus and passion. Coke Studio makes this experimental attempt at combining Eastern classical music with Western accompaniment with minimal constraint on the creative liberty of Ustad Saami and a respectful adherence to the requirements of the art-form.

**2. 'Hey Kangna, de de ri Chel mero'** [4] - "Kangana" is a challenging fusion number from Coke studio Pakistan season 4 (2011), featuring the master craftsmen of *Qawwali*, brothers Fareed Ayaz and Abu Mohammad, in intense musical communion with the Coke Studio House Band. "Kangana" is a *Qawwali* that is based on classical music. In the video clip of the making of this song, one of the brothers states that it's a Classical *cheez* and is rendered here in the *Raag Malkauns*. The Coke Studio version is beautifully constructed on a rhythmic foundation of 10-beats per cycle, or *jhap-taal* allowing for breath-taking improvisation from the *Qawwals* and a show of mature and disciplined musician-ship from the House Band.

In a probable depiction of the way early *qawwali* was rendered, "Kangana" borrows liberally from a variety of sub-continental influences to convey a message of universal love. While the essentially spiritual theme is expressed through the imagery of culturally significant symbolism, in both idiomatic Hindi and in Farsi, the emotional relevance of the *Raag Malkauns* in combination with musical elements from Hindu devotional music enhances the conceptual basis of "Kangana".

In the behind-the-scene video clip of this track, one of the brothers Fareed Ayaz states that, "हम ये चाहते हैं कि

हमारी मौसिकी की आइडेंटिटी भी मुतासिर न हो और इनके साथ collaboration करके हम इसकी खूबसूरती में इजाफा कर सकें और हमारी जो traditional or devotional music है उससे आँच भी न आए।"[5]

These lines by him perfectly sum up this track and the result of this collaboration in Coke Studio. It also states the motive of this collaboration which is to adding various elements to the presentation of the composition without compromising the real identity of the traditional music.

**3. 'Laage re Nain tumse piya more'** [6] - '*Lage re Nain tumse*' is a classical *bandish* in *Raag Bhopali* in *teentaal*. This *bandish* can be heard in season 6 of Pakistan Coke Studio by Ayesha Omar. The song's composition has a relaxed vibe and a catchy tune making it a song that provides for an easy listening. Composed in the ancient sub-continental language of *Poorbi*, the verses speak of classic love, mirroring the restlessness that comes with being in love across distance. While the yearning does tug at the heart, the experience in this song is not one of sadness; it is a celebration of being in love and fully experiencing all the feelings associated with the state in true bliss. The groovy sunshine feel of the song, performed by the band in Serbia, meets influences from Nepal such as the Flute coupled with the calming quality of bells.

This track is a clear representation of globalization in music, when people from different countries are playing together and creating music. It is also an example of technology meeting talent and enriching classical music. The unique quality of this season's Coke Studio, especially in context of this track, is that everybody is recorded separately which means a *sarangi* player from Nepal is recorded at his own house, and then there is a Serbian house band who are playing to a backing track of vocals. There are other percussions like bells and flute which are also recorded separately in their own spaces, then all of the elements have been put together by Rohail Hyatt the producer.

Watching the video clip of making of this song one notices the contribution of producers like Rohail Hyatt, how he advises Ayesha to sing in a much lower scale since he feels the texture of her voice and emotion of the *bandish* will be portrayed the best that way. One will notice Rohail is using an ipad through which he is simultaneously playing the *Tanpura* and *Tabla* application to check the scale and Tempo at which the *bandish* will sound best in this kind of set up, and he changes scale accordingly. *Sarangi* by Anil Gandharba starts this song and retains a character of its own throughout this song. Zoe and Rachel (doing

backing vocals and Harmonies) add sweetness to the song and the Serbian house band keeps it mellow. The song also introduces us to a West African instrument called Kora. The arrangement sounds exotic and neat.

**4. 'Jogi'**<sup>[7]</sup> Recreated and sung by Richa Sharma and Ustad Rashid Khan for Coke Studio @ MTV 1<sup>st</sup> season 'Jogi' is a popular Punjabi song sung during weddings that describes a bride's wait for her groom fused with a *bandish* in *Raag Yaman* and backed by house band of Coke studio India 1<sup>st</sup> season. Music is conceived and created by Leslie Lewis.

The song is primarily sung by Richa Sharma and in the middle of it, Rashid Khan's voice enters beautifully with an *aalap* of *Yaman* and then sings the *mukhda* of the popular *bandish*, '*Ae ri aali piya bina*'.

This an example which basically shows that sometimes song may only have a *mukhda* of the *bandish* and its improvisations and not the full *bandish*. The reason for this is that the song is not constructed around the classical singer or the *bandish* which only acts as one of the elements in the song. However it must be understood that this also helps Hindustani classical music in reaching out to a new audience which after listening to classical music in glimpses in such formats, gets curious and interested.

**5. 'Aao Balma'**<sup>[8]</sup> This song was featured in Coke Studio@MTV India season 3. This is an amazing composition and credit should go to A R Rahman for arranging and conceptualizing this beautiful track with the living legend Ustad Ghulam Mustafa Khan.

'Aao Aao Balama' is a very popular composition of Rampur Sahaswan Gharana and it is a special track since all the three generations of Ustad Ghulam Mustafa Khan are singing this *bandish* together (his sons and grandson). The composition is a masterpiece in fusing the traditional knowledge of Hindustani classical music, with Carnatic scales which few have mastered.

The most remarkable thing about this song is that it is completely based around the *bandish*, and there is no compromise on the structure or the text of this composition and is sung while maintaining the purity of the *Raaga*. The track is backed by the house band of western instruments. On the guitars it is Prasanna who is a fantastic guitar player playing Carnatic music on it, and on percussion and drums is Shivamani.

In the teaser of this song it is interesting to see how Rahman conceptualizes the track, how he suggests a beat to the percussionists and how he is advising Ghulam

Mustafa Khan Sahib to take short phrases of *sargam* and do a '*Sawal jawab*' improvisation with Prasanna the Carnatic guitarist. When we later watch the actual track, we realize how valuable these suggestions are in shaping up the track and how it is enhancing the presentation of the *Bandish*. Apart from the *bandish* the '*Sawal jawab*' of Khan Saab and Prasanna is another highlight of the song.

Khansaab's son Murtuza Mustafa in behind-the-scene clip of this song explains the whole concept in one statement, "It is a fusion of three styles, we are singing the Hindustani classical, Prasannaji is playing Carnatic and the band is playing western music".

## **INDEPENDENT MUSIC PRODUCERS**

### **1. Abhijit Pohankar**

Music Producer, composer, singer & Indian classical keyboardist, Abhijit may be considered as one of the most versatile & talented young musicians today. Abhijit has music in his blood, being son of the renowned classical vocalist Pandit Ajay Pohankar, he also took training in instrumental style of Indian music from world renowned Santoor Maestro Pandit. Shivkumar Sharma.

Abhijit came to limelight with the super success of his Fusion/New Age Music album "PIYA BAWARI" in 2002. The song went on to become one of the most popular songs in the Indian non-film music when it came into the market. The album remained in the top three charts of MTV for many weeks. The song "PIYA BAWARI" went on the international scene by its inclusion in the famous "BUDDHA BAR" of France. Abhijit has so far produced more than 20 albums Nationally & Internationally with some of the most reputed labels like H.M.V, Times Music, Music Today, Universal Worldwide & Freespirit Records.<sup>[9]</sup>

In '*Piya bawari*', with his father Pandit Ajay Pohankar, Abhijit experimented with Hindustani classical music fused with lounge music.

Compositions like '*Kin Bairan kaan Bhare*' a chota khyal in Raag Darbari have been arranged and produced with keyboard pads and electronic beats loops.

The track '*Sajan more aaye apne ghar ko*' sounds like a khyal in Raag Abhogi, its difficult to assess whether it's a traditional *bandish* but certainly sounds like a khayal in Raag Abhogi Kanada in a Madhya laya.

All the tracks are in the voice of Pandit Ajay Pohankar and there is also a track named *Tarana* which is based in Raag Rageshri. The treatment and music production of

all the 11 tracks is not very different from each other but this album got quite successful since it was unique how all the tracks in an experimental fusion album were either classical *bandishes* rearranged with modern sounds or were self compositions on the lines of Chota Khyal and Tarana.

This Album made a mark and was quite successful therefore in 2006 Abhijit Pohankar again released most of the tracks of Piya Bavari under the name of 'Piya Bavari Again' with some new tracks which again had some very traditional *Bandishes* arranged in a similar fashion In the voice of Ajay pohankar such as *Thumri- 'Kaa Karoon Sajni aaye na Balam'* in Bhairvi, Chota Khyal in Raag Malkauns '*Rang Raliyan Karat Sautan Ke Sang*' and a track named '*Tarana*' in Raag Jog.

Abhijit has a very unique style of making music and has successfully done so using traditional classical *Bandishes* and melodies. His works have been acclaimed by the masses & appreciated by legendary musicians too. He thinks differently & presents his music in a stylish way. He is one of the first musicians to make Hindustani classical music '*cool*' & accessible to the youngsters.

## 2. 'Nadia bairi Bhayi' by Nitin Sawhney –

One of the most talented and recognized producers and songwriters within the British electronic and fusion music scene Nitin Sawhney is also a respected actor, writer, and scriptwriter. Conceiving daring theme combinations of electronica-style beats with gleaming pieces of Asian inspirations driven within the trip-hop and jazzy styles, Sawhney delivers exclusive and overwhelming sound pieces, enlightened by his indubitable creative insight<sup>[10]</sup>

In 1999 Nitin Sawhney released his fourth album 'Beyond Skin' and it had a track named '*Nadiya*' which was arranged and produced by Nitin Sawhney and it got a lot of attention in both India and abroad. '*Nadiya*' is a track in which a classical *thumri* '*Nadiya Bairi Bhayi*' based in Raag Desh is sung by Swati Natekar. It's a beautifully sung *thumri* with utmost sincerity. The kind of drum programming and production this track has, was never heard before '*Nadiya*' was released in 1999. This idea of taking a *thumri* and reproducing in you own way influenced other artists and producers as well. There was another version of *Nadiya* played by Jeff beck on guitars which made it even more popular. On Youtube itself, there are more than 10 lack views of a clip of this song played at a live performance by Jeff Beck. Even In Coke studio@MTV India Nitin Sawhney was one of the producers. In the 4th Episode of Coke Studio, '*Nadiya*' is sung by Nicki Wells & Ashwin Srinivasan. Nicki is a

British musician but she is trained in Indian Classical music.

## 3. Shankar Tucker –

Shankar Tucker is an American clarinetist and music composer. He rose to fame with the popularity of his online music series called "The ShrutiBox". The ShrutiBox is the title of an ongoing series of internet music videos composed, recorded, performed and directed by Shankar Tucker. The Shrutibox features his compositions and was released online on platforms like YouTube and Soundcloud. Shankar himself plays a wide range of instruments in his recordings: piano, bass, kanjira, tabla, and other percussion instruments. The videos feature his own compositions, and his arrangements of traditional and classical songs, film and popular music, in Hindi, Tamil and English.

The videos have created great excitement over the past years, garnering over 12 million views and a combined 1,00,000 fans. The series has been featured on the front page of YouTube, MTV India, and has recently been included in the Smithsonian Museum's exhibition on Indian American Culture. As a clarinetist, Shankar has shared the stage with such legendary artists as Zakir Hussain, Hariprasad Chaurasia, and Raghu Dixit and recorded with music director Amit Trivedi for MTV's Coke Studio<sup>[11]</sup>

The Success of Shankar Tucker is a clear example of the internet revolution in the past decade. It clearly indicates the increasing interest of people in finding music, videos on sites like youtube and sound cloud.

His interest in classical music is quite evident since in one of his tracks he did a remix / rearrangement of a famous Hindustani classical *Bandish* '*Ja Ja re apne Mandirva*' in Raga Bimpalasi, which was sung by the Nirali Kartik. The music arrangement is not very intense and tabla (Amit Mishra), Clarinet(Shankar Tucker) are the only live instruments used in the song, there are almost 5 lac views on this music video which clearly shows the interest of people listening to classical *Bandish* in such a format.

## FUSION BANDS

### 1. Fuzon ( Shafqat Amanat Ali)

**Fuzön** (literal English pronunciation: "fusion") is an alternative rock band from Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan formed in 2001. The name has been derived from *fusion* as the former vocalist Shafqat Amanat Ali had described the band as a fusion of Pakistani classical music and modern rock music. The band was born out of diverse western pop/rock and eastern classical influences.

The trio, consisting of studio sessionist Emu, Shallum and vocal exponent Shafqat, rediscovered its credentials as a serious cutting-edge band, fusing deeply meditative *Ragas* with rock and jazz.[<sup>12</sup>]

Over the course of 11 years, the band successfully released two albums with classical singer Shafqat Amanat Ali as lead singer in the first and Rameez Mukhtar in the second. The first album 'Sagar' had Shafqat as the lead singer who is a trained classical singer of Patiala gharana and son of Ustad Amanat Ali Khan which makes him the ninth generation in his family carrying on the lineage. In the first album Sagar shafqat rose to fame with songs like '**Malhar**' which had lyrics such '**jhoom jhoom badarwa ghir aaye**', a classical *thumri* '**Mora saiyyan mose bole na**' in a track named **Khamaj**. Both of the songs were beautifully sung by Shafqat and were Produced by Imran Momina(keyboards) and Shallum Asher Xavier(Leaad guitars). 'Mora Saiyyan' is an extremely popular song and its purely classical rendition can be heard by Ustad Salamat and Nazakat Ali Khan sahib on youtube as well, it is a great example that how such compositions gain much popularity by merely changing their presentation, platform and the way they are musically arranged.

## 2. Advaita

Advaita is a fusion band from Delhi, formed in September 2004. 'A'- non, 'dvaita' – dual, means experiencing all as 'One'. It is the expression of eight distinct musical sensibilities that dissolve into each other to bring forth a truly unique and ingenious sound. Indian Classical Traditions are given new dimension, as they are reinvented within a contemporary soundscape in harmony with Rock and Electronica. Their music is deeply inspired by the quest to discover rhythms and textures that resonate around us and within. Their brand of contemporary 'organic' fusion has been lauded as one of the most original and ground- breaking sounds to ever come out of the Indian underground music scene. They have successfully carved out a niche for their New Age Music in the Global context, while staying true to their characteristically Indian roots. The "Advaita Experience" is defined by the pursuit of that incredible moment during performance when the musician becomes the music and forgets his own identity, resulting in thoroughly electrifying stage performances.[<sup>13</sup>]

This band has two albums to its credit and in both albums they have tracks which showcase Hindustani classical music influence fused with electronics and western instrumentations. Following tracks from their albums have Hindustani vocal *bandishes* as their integral component

- '**Rasiya**' – This is a track called *Rasiya* which was the first track in the first album of Advaita 'Grounded in Space'. '**Rasiya hun na Jani**' is a traditional *Bandish* (Bada Khyal), Vilambit ektaal in Raag Marubihag and its quite beautifully and seamlessly heard in this track. Both sthayi and antara of this composition are sung by Ujjwal Nagar with a lot of ease. Along with Hindustani vocals, one can also hear English chorus sung by Chayan adhikari and beautiful interludes played by Suhail yusuf khan on sarangi.
- '**Ghir Ghir**' - 'Ghir Ghir' is a track by Advaita based in Raag Malhar. One of its version is performed by the Advaita members in Coke Studio. A powerful track by Advaita, it was first heard in their first album 'Grounded in Space' before going to Coke Studio Indian 1<sup>st</sup> season. It is hard to say wheather it is a traditional bandish or not, but it surely comes out to be a powerful composition in Raag Malhar taking ektaal as the basic groove and then other things layering on the top.
- '**Durga**'- This track is again from their first album. The whole track is arranged and produced around the *Bandish* in Raag Durga: '**Lakh Jatan kar hari re mein toh**'. It's one of the most popular songs of Advaita and is a crowd favourite, with its simple text and sweet melody of the *bandish*. The vocalist here is Suhail Yusuf Khan who is also the Sarangi player in the Band. Although he is not a professional vocalist, his sweet voice texture and innocence in voice completely does justice to this song.
- '**Gorakh**' – The track named 'Gorakh' is a track from their second album 'Silent Sea'. Chota khyal in Raag Gorakh Kalyan '**Eri Mayi Aaj Piya nahin aaye**' can be heard along with western vocals singing English verses in a counter scale with guitar solos and melodies. In the end improvisations by the Hindustani classical vocalist can be heard within the Raag (mix of aalap and notations) on the top of the unison riff played by all instruments while creating a climax.
- '**Mandirva**' – This track is solely based on a *Bandish* in Raag Bhimpalasi '**Ja Ja re apne Mandirva**'. This track, according to the band, was made in the jam pad while practicing and while the groove of this song was the starting point of the song, the *bandish* was sung by the classical vocalist to match the feel of the grove and chords being played. This is a good example of how a Hindustani vocalist sometimes reacts to a set of foreign sounds

by singing a *bandish* and doing improvisations in the *Raga* he has learnt.

- **‘Spinning’** – It is a very soft and easy listening track of Advaita. The track starts with a continuous riff played by piano which sets the scale of the track followed by Hindustani vocals **‘laaj rakho tum mori Gussaiyan’**. Here again the *Bandish* is an important element of the track but this song couldn’t have been complete without the beautiful western vocals by Chayan Adhikari in response to the *Bandish* sung by the authors of this article. This *bandish* is actually based in Raag Charukeshi and popularly sung by Ustad Amir Khan Saheb of Indore gharana but in this particular track most of the text is from that *bandish* but is based in raag Gavati.

### 3. Mekaal Hasan

Mekaal Hasan Band, sometimes shortened to MHB, is a Sufi rock band formed in Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan in 1999 by composer-songwriter, guitarist Mekaal Hasan. The band members have roots in different genres, including jazz, classical music, soul music, and Sufi rock- the combination of each has created a sound which has earned them fans from a variety of quarters. Hasan is the lead songwriter and has been noted for having a special style mixing classical music with metal techniques. The band is also famous for their epic live performances having won a number of awards for Best Live Act. [14]

The band achieved mainstream success with its debut album, *Sampooran*, released in 2004. Its following studio album, *Saptak*, released in 2010 continued the band’s success. The tunes in **“Sampooran”** were written incorporating traditional material from the eastern classical tradition and adapting these with music which was based on the jazz rock fusion explosion of the seventies. It possesses arguably some of the finest musical arrangements. Tracks named ‘Sampooran’ and ‘Darbari’ clearly depict a heavy influence of Hindustani classical music and show how beautifully they have incorporated vocal bandishes in their style of music. The lead singer of this band is Javed Bashir who is a popular name in Pakistani music industry and one can hear influences of Hindustani classical music and qawwali singing in his voice.

The track ‘Sampooran’ in this album by the same name is predominantly an instrumental track but almost after 3 minutes into the track Javed Bashir sings the famous composition in Raag Yaman **‘Ae ri aali Piya Bin’** although

he changes the 2<sup>nd</sup> line as **‘Piya bin mohe nahin chain’** instead of the traditional sthayi. One doesn’t get to hear the antara of this bandish in this song and approximately after two minutes of the singing the instrumentalists again take over and conclude the song.

Another song in their album, **‘Darbari’** can be considered as the highlight of the album. Fabulous musical arrangements and a massive performance by Javed Bashir make this song sound fabulous. It captivates you and gives you the feeling of being present in a Mughal Darbaar. This track has Javed Bashir singing the *Bandish* in Raag Darbari Kanada popularly sung by Ustad Amir Khan (Indore) and the lyrics are in Persian. Here the bandish is in the forefront and decides the direction of the track with guitar and drums taking over later into the song but vocals remain an important element throughout the track. Javed Bashir concludes the track singing *alaps*, *sargams* in the Raag on the top of the recorded mukhda **‘Yaare Man Biya Biya’** in the background creating a beautiful climax.

The above analysis has been attempted to suggest that there are some really good examples of collaborations or experimentation with Indian classical music where technology and creative freedom is going hand in hand while maintaining the sanctity of Indian classical music. It is to justify that such collaborations in Indian music may lead to enhancement of presentation or performance and at the same time get the desired media attention leading to much larger audience. One has to agree that such collaborations when done tastefully, lead to a new and refreshing sound which caters to a much larger audience as compared to the listeners of traditionally performed classical music.

We can see that the area of application of Hindustani classical music and its compositions has become much broader with many fusion bands, music arrangers, singers trying their hand at applying their repertoire of Hindustani music in completely different formats. This experimentation with Hindustani music in various formats such as movies, bands, platforms like Coke Studio and private albums is definitely introducing and taking classical music to a whole new audience. Pure classical forms have a niche audience and are not considered to be meant for the masses but the use and application of Hindustani Vocal *Bandishes* in such platforms and formats is creating a wider audience for classical music. However, one



cannot completely justify anything and everything in the name of experimentation and evaluation. We have to embrace these changes as they indicate a certain dynamism that is evident with socio-cultural changes while at the same time respecting and maintain the purity and essence of Indian classical music.

### Foodnotes :

1. Vishnudass Shirali, Sargam – An introduction to Indian music, p. 7
2. Vishnudass Shirali, Sargam – An introduction to Indian music, p. 8
3. Coke studio Pakistan 4th season, Performed by Naseer-ud-din Saami
4. Coke studio Pakistan season 4, performed by Fareed Ayaz and Abu Mohammad
5. Behind the scene(BTS) video clip, Coke studio Pakistan season 4, performed by Fareed Ayaz and Abu Mohammad
6. Coke Studio Pakistan season 6, performed by Ayesha omar
7. Coke Studio@MTV India 1st Season, performed by Richa Sharma and Rashid Khan
8. Coke Studio@MTV India 1st Season, performed by Ustad Ghulam Mustafa Khan
9. <http://www.abhijitpohankar.com/>
10. <http://www.alwaysontherun.net/nit.htm#beyond>
11. <http://www.shankartucker.com/bio>
12. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fuz%C3%B6n>
13. <http://indianbandshub.blogspot.in/2010/08/advaita.html>
14. <https://soundcloud.com/mekaal-hasan-band>

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<http://www.shankartucker.com/bio>  
<https://soundcloud.com/mekaal-hasan-band>  
<http://indianbandshub.blogspot.in>  
<http://tribune.com.pk>  
<http://forbesindia.com>

#### Links to songs –

· Film music-

<http://www.youtube.com/AlbelaSajan>

<http://www.youtube.com/MoreKanha>

[http://www.youtube.com/Sanwariya\\_dekh\\_zara\\_is](http://www.youtube.com/Sanwariya_dekh_zara_is)

[http://www.youtube.com/Ghar\\_Nahin\\_Shyam](http://www.youtube.com/Ghar_Nahin_Shyam)

[http://www.youtube.com/Chali\\_Pi\\_ke\\_Nagar](http://www.youtube.com/Chali_Pi_ke_Nagar)

[http://www.youtube.com/Bhor\\_bhayi\\_tori\\_baat](http://www.youtube.com/Bhor_bhayi_tori_baat)

· Coke Sudio

[http://www.youtube.com/Mundai\\_mori\\_Kahe\\_ko](http://www.youtube.com/Mundai_mori_Kahe_ko)

[http://www.youtube.com/BTS\\_Mundari\\_Mori\\_Kahe\\_Ko](http://www.youtube.com/BTS_Mundari_Mori_Kahe_Ko)

[http://www.youtube.com/Hey\\_Kangna](http://www.youtube.com/Hey_Kangna)

[http://www.youtube.com/BTS\\_Hey\\_Kangna](http://www.youtube.com/BTS_Hey_Kangna)

[http://www.youtube.com/lage\\_re\\_Nain\\_tumse](http://www.youtube.com/lage_re_Nain_tumse)

[http://www.youtube.com/BTS\\_Laage\\_Re\\_Nain](http://www.youtube.com/BTS_Laage_Re_Nain)

[http://www.youtube.com/Ghir\\_Ghir\\_by\\_Advaita](http://www.youtube.com/Ghir_Ghir_by_Advaita)

<http://www.youtube.com/Jogi>

[http://www.youtube.com/Aao\\_Balama](http://www.youtube.com/Aao_Balama)

[http://www.youtube.com/BTM\\_Aao\\_Balama](http://www.youtube.com/BTM_Aao_Balama)

[https://www.youtube.com/Teaser\\_of\\_Aao\\_Balama](https://www.youtube.com/Teaser_of_Aao_Balama)

·Independent producers and artists –

Abhijit Pohankar –

[http://www.youtube.com/Piya\\_Bawari](http://www.youtube.com/Piya_Bawari)

<http://indiamp3.com>

[http://www.planetradiocity.com/Abhijit\\_Pohankar\\_Interview](http://www.planetradiocity.com/Abhijit_Pohankar_Interview)

Nitin Sawhney –

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[http://www.youtube.com/Ja\\_Ja\\_re\\_apne\\_Mandirwa\\_By\\_Shankar\\_Tucker](http://www.youtube.com/Ja_Ja_re_apne_Mandirwa_By_Shankar_Tucker)

·Fusion Bands

Fuzon

[http://www.youtube.com/Khamaj\\_-\\_Mora\\_Saiyyan\\_mose\\_bole\\_na](http://www.youtube.com/Khamaj_-_Mora_Saiyyan_mose_bole_na)

[https://www.youtube.com/Malhar-Jhoom\\_Jhoom](https://www.youtube.com/Malhar-Jhoom_Jhoom)

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<http://www.youtube.com/Rasiya>

<http://www.youtube.com/Durga>

<https://www.youtube.com/Gorakh>

<https://www.youtube.com/Mandirwa>

Mekaal Hassan –

[http://www.youtube.com/Ae\\_ri\\_aali\\_piya\\_bin\\_Sampooran\\_Track](http://www.youtube.com/Ae_ri_aali_piya_bin_Sampooran_Track)

[http://www.youtube.com/Darbari\\_Album\\_Sampooran](http://www.youtube.com/Darbari_Album_Sampooran)

\*BTS – Behind the scenes video clips

\*BTM – Behind the music video clips.