

# Contemporary Trends in Hindustani Vocal Music Education in India: An Analytical Overview

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## Abstract

The dawn of the 21st century has expanded opportunities for learning Hindustani Vocal Music beyond its traditional boundaries. Once restricted within family and Gharana systems, this art form has now entered institutional, public, and digital education spaces. The present paper explores the contemporary scenario of Hindustani Vocal Music education in India, tracing its evolution from the Gurukul and Gharana systems to its modern manifestations in schools, universities, and specialised institutions. The study highlights the role of premier organisations such as Akhil Bharatiya Gandharva Mahavidyalaya Mandal, Bhatkhande Sangeet Vidyapith, Prayag Sangeet Samiti, Pracheen Kala Kendra, Sarabharatiya Sangeet-O-Sanskriti Parishad, and Bangiya Sangeet Parishad in democratising music education. It also analyses the current status of Hindustani Vocal Music within school and secondary curricula, identifying gaps, challenges, and recommendations for policy improvement. The findings emphasise that while the accessibility of music education has increased manifold, there remains a pressing need for curriculum standardisation, infrastructural support, and technological integration to ensure quality and continuity in Hindustani Vocal Music learning across India.

**Keywords:** Hindustani Vocal Music, Music Education, Institutional Learning, Contemporary India, Music Pedagogy

## Objectives of the Study:

The present study is undertaken to explore the contemporary status, accessibility, and institutional framework of Hindustani Vocal Music education in India. It aims to trace its evolution from traditional systems of transmission to its modern institutional form. The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

- To examine the inclusion and implementation of Hindustani Vocal Music in school and secondary education curricula under various boards and educational frameworks in India.
- To study the structure, functioning, and contribution of major music institutions such as Akhil Bharatiya Gandharva Mahavidyalaya Mandal, Bhatkhande Sangit Vidyapith, Prayag Sangeet Samiti, Pracheen Kala Kendra, Sarabharatiya Sangeet-O-Sanskriti Parishad, and Bangiya Sangeet Parishad.
- To identify the challenges and limitations in the present system of Hindustani Vocal Music education at different levels — school, institutional, and private learning.
- To evaluate the scope and possibilities for integrating modern educational technologies (ICT and online platforms) in the teaching and learning of Hindustani Vocal Music.
- To propose recommendations for policy formulation and educational reform to enhance the reach, quality, and sustainability of Hindustani Vocal Music education in India.

**Methodologies:** The methodology of this study is descriptive and analytical in nature. The study is qualitative, focusing on document analysis, institutional review, and secondary data interpretation

## Introduction:

The dawn of the 21st Century has opened the door for all Hindustani Vocal music lovers, the scope of learning this art form. The mediaeval era has kept music education within family boundaries. The learning of this art form was not open to all. Outsiders were very hardly allowed to pursue the art. But today, time has changed and along with the change of time and demand of society, music learning is accessible to all. The present chapter explores the prevalent openings of learning of this art form in this contemporary era.

It is evident that along with the changing time and need of the society each and every aspect of life goes through changes. So far, Hindustani vocal music as a subject of study is also not an exception. In the Vedic society, the educational institution was the Gurukul which along with time was replaced by the Gharana Parampara in the mediaeval era. But along with the grasp of time, Gharana Parampara also slowly gets extinct. The dawn of the modern era has brought in new demands in all aspects of life. The new age has brought in new changes in all spheres of society, where music education was also not an exception. The entire education system in this context has also gone through many revisions in compliance with the change and demand of the society.

Let us have a look into the various facets of learning this art form in this contemporary society:

### **Hindustani Vocal Music in School Curriculum:**

The teaching of Hindustani vocal music in Indian schools varies considerably throughout educational institutions and localities. Hindustani vocal music as an art form is sometimes incorporated into the curriculum, particularly by those schools that emphasise the arts or cultural education. But it is not always the case. However, efforts have been made to encourage the inclusion of Hindustani music in school curricula, acknowledging both its importance to Indian culture and its role in conserving the country's musical legacy. Several states have attempted to include Hindustani music education in their government school curricula. Hindustani music education in schools in India may not be widespread but there are efforts underway to promote its inclusion and ensure that students have opportunities to learn and appreciate this traditional art form.

The inclusion of music within school curriculum may be traced since the initiation of the modern era. But, it is very unfortunate that till the contemporary times, its implementation is not up to the mark till date. Music as a subject of study has not been given the importance like other subjects within the school curriculum. It has been included in the school curriculum so as to act as a stress buster.

The national curriculum framework mentions music as a tool to enhance the prestige of schools on different occasions. It states-

“Far from encouragement the pursuit of the arts, our education system has steadily discouraged young students and creative minds from taking to the arts or, at best, permits them to consider the arts to be ‘useful hobbies’ and ‘leisure activities’. The arts are reduced to tools for enhancing the prestige of the school on occasions like Independence Day, founder’s Day, Annual Day, or during an inspection of the school’s progress and working. Before or after that, the arts are abandoned for the better part of a child’s school life and the student is headed towards subjects that are perceived as being more worthy of attention.”

The national curriculum framework states music as a branch of art education along with other disciplines i.e. visual arts, theatre and dance. So far the music curriculum is concerned, it is mentioned that music education with disciplines of art education should be available as a compulsory subject up to Class X. The Curriculum further suggests the inclusion of participatory, interactive and experimental approach so far music education in school is concerned. It also indicates the need for awareness and importance of arts among parents, school authorities and administrators.

“Art education must become both a tool and a subject taught in every school as a compulsory subject (up to Class X), and facilities for the same may be provided in every school. All the four main streams covered by the term the arts, i.e. music, dance, visual arts and theatre, should be included.”

A number of researches have been carried out both on small and large scale so as to find the status of music education in schools of India so as to suggest research based recommendations to enrich the same. The findings may be stated as follows:

- Most of the schools do not even have dedicated music classrooms as well as music teachers. Such schools used to appoint some professionals during various occasions to conduct the event.
- It was also observed that music was not available as a mandatory subject in most of the schools. Rather it was available as an optional subject and only interested students can learn music in school.
- In some schools music was not available for the children of all classes. In some schools it was found available only for the primary wing i.e. for class I to V. Again in some schools music education was made available for the upper primary students, i.e. for class VI, VII and VIII.
- The schools of various states are affiliated to different boards of school education. As a result of which some schools follow the state curriculum whereas some follow the national curriculum. It has also been observed that in some schools music teacher themes design their own curriculum. In this respect it may be ascertained that the implementation of a proper music curriculum was not satisfactory.
- ICT facilities are not available in most of the schools. However in some schools it is available but not in use for music education. Technology is missing even in high schools and senior secondary schools.

- The level of advocacy on the part of school authority in relation to music education is found very low. Resources, funding and other important support which enhances the growth of a subject is not up to the mark so far music education is concerned.
- Most of the music teachers and heads of the schools are of the opinion that children are not capable of learning the subject in depth and thus suggest music to be taught just for fun.

### **Hindustani Vocal Music in Secondary Curriculum:**

Hindustani Vocal music as a subject of study in secondary curriculum in India varies between various states. It depends on educational boards as well as state policies. Some boards have specific provisions while others have a general focus on music education, i.e., without having any specific focus on Hindustani vocal music.

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) is one of the most prominent educational boards in India. It includes music as a subject of study in secondary curriculum, which covers various aspects of music including vocal music. However, the specific inclusion of Hindustani vocal music depends on the school's choice of content and resources.

Besides the CBSE, each state of India has its own education boards and the inclusion of Hindustani vocal music as a subject varies between various states. As found, some states have dedicated syllabus or curriculum whereas some others have kept music as a part of broader music curriculum. Here, it may be mentioned though Hindustani vocal music is not explicitly included in the secondary curriculum in many schools across India but a comprehensive approach is reflected in the form of extracurricular activities such as music clubs, choirs or vocal music competitions where students can explore and engage in Hindustani vocal music. It is important to note that the specific curriculum and syllabus of music vary across different schools. It is because there is a flexibility provided by the various education boards in shaping the curriculum within the guidelines. Therefore, the extent and depth of Hindustani vocal music education at secondary level can differ between school and region.

### **Hindustani Vocal Music in Music Institutes:**

#### **Akhil Bharatiya Gandharva Mahavidyalaya Mandal:**

After the demise of Paluskar in the year 1931, the task of democratising music education was taken over by his disciples. A meeting of all the disciples of Panditji was convened at Ahmedabad. The meeting was headed by Shankarrao Vyas and N.M. Khare. The members of the meeting gave a positive response and it was decided in the meeting that a body named 'Gandharva Mahavidyalaya Mandal' be constituted. Thus the Gandharva Mahavidyalaya Mandal was formed in the year 1931.

The Akhil Bharatiya Gandharva Mahavidyalaya Mandal is a virtual continuation of Gandharva Mahavidyalaya. Akhil Bharatiya Gandharva Mahavidyalaya Mandal is now one of the leading premiere institutions of India which works for the promotion and propagation of Indian classical music and dances. The main branch of this Vidyalaya is in Vashi, Navi Mumbai and at present there are about 1200 affiliated institutions under it. The institution has around 800 examination centres all over India covering from Assam to South Kerala. More than one lakh students give examinations every year starting from Prarambhik (Beginners level) to Sangit Achaarya (Ph. D. level).

So far the training process of the Vidyalaya is concerned, its main objective is to implement modern methods of instruction, training of qualified teachers and restoring music to its rightful place as an integral part of our culture.

The subjects that were offered include Vocal Music including both Hindustani and Carnatic Music, Instrumental Music (Sitar, Flute, Tabla, Harmonium, Tabla), dance forms such as Odissi, Kathak, Bharatnatyam. As the Mahavidyalaya got a number of branches, subjects offered in various centres also varied. It depends on availability of teachers of various subjects and also to some extent demands specific subjects based on geographical locations and popularity of subjects.

The steps of examination starting from the initial learning to the utmost degree are Prarambhik, Praveshika Pratham, Praveshika Purna, Madhyama Pratham, Madhyama Purna, Visharad Pratham, Visharad Purna, Alankar Pratham, Alankar Purna, Sikha Sanad, Siksha Visharad, Siksha Parangat, and Satgeetacharya.

#### **Bhatkhande Sangit Vidyapith (Lucknow):**

Bhatkhande Sangit Vidyapath was founded in the year 1926 at Lucknow. It was established with a motto to provide standardised music education so as to preserve the high traditions of Indian music. It was the great efforts of Vishnu Narain Bhatkhande and Rai Uma Nath Bali that has resulted in the birth of this premiere institution for learning Hindustani music. At the very beginning it was named as 'All India College of Hindustani Music'. But six months later after its foundation it was named after Sir William Marris, the then governor of Uttar Pradesh and came

to be known as 'Marris College of Hindustani music'. In the year 1948 during the birth anniversary celebration of Vishnu Narain Bhatkhande, the college was named after him as Bhatkhande Sangit Vidyapith.

The Vidyapith offers various courses in Hindustani music covering all the three disciplines- Vocal, Instrumental and Dance. The Vocal are covers only Hindustani Vocal music and the Instrumental section covers Sitar, Violin, Guitar, Sarod, Sarangi, Flute, Shahnai, Jal Tarang and Nal Tarang, The dance stream includes Kathak Dance, Manipuri Dance, and Bharatnatyam. The Vidyapith confers the certificate of Prathama, Madhyama, Visharad, Nipun and Acharya.

A number of institutions throughout India are affiliated to this Sangit Vidyapith which are governed by private coaching of reputed musicians and qualified teachers. At present around 248 private institutions throughout India are affiliated to this Sangit Vidyapith under which thousands of learners are learning this art form.

### **Prayag Sangeet Samiti (Allahabad):**

Prayag Sangeet Samiti is one of the premier institutions for the learning of Hindustani music. It was established in the year 1926 with a view to popularise and teach Indian Classical music. The Samiti aims at reviving the prestige of the Indian arts like Vocal music, Instrumental music and various other dance forms. Systematic training is the primary goal of this institute. The Samiti has also been successful in establishing a number of branches both in India and other foreign countries. The Samiti has played a vital role in including music as a subject in High School and Intermediate examinations curriculum in the state of Uttar Pradesh. The Samiti organised every year various music competitions, conferences with a view to popularise Indian classical music throughout India.

The various degrees awarded by the Samiti are Junior Diploma, Senior Diploma, Sangit Prabhakar, and Praveen Sangeetaharya. The subjects that are included in the vocal area are Classical Vocal, Bhav Sangit, Rabindra Sangit, Nazrul Geeti, Bangla Kirtan, Atul Prasad-Rajnikant and Dwijendra Geet, Shabad Kirtan, Gurbani and Sufi Sangit. The subjects that are included in the instrumental area are (1) Tantra Vadya Veena, Vichitra Veena, Sitar, Sarod, Guitar and Santoor (2) Vitat Vadya- Sarangi, Esraj, Dilruba, and Violin (3) Ghana Vadya- Jaltarang, Naltarang (4) Susir Vadya- Flute, Shahnai and Clarionet (5) Avanadhya Vadya- Tabla and Pakhawaj. So far the area of dance forms are concerned it covers Kathak, Bharat Natyam, Manipuri, Odissi and Ravindra Nritya.

### **Pracheen Kala Kendra (Chandigarh):**

Pracheen Kala Kendra, Chandigarh was registered in the year 1956 under the Registration of Societies Act XXI, 1860 vide No.72 of 1957-58. It was the tireless efforts of Shri M.L. Koser and Smt. Sobha Koser under whose leadership Pracheen Kala Kendra came into existence. The institution has succeeded in carving out for itself a prime cultural space in the arena of Indian Classical arts. It has now grown into an internationally acclaimed organisation. The Kendra is one of the oldest affiliating and examining bodies in India. The organisation provides a platform for its learners to showcase their talents by organising various cultural events and Painting Workshops all over India. The Kendra further aims to establish it as an institution of national importance or a specialised deemed or private university of distance education in the field of classical music, dance and fine arts (painting).

At present the institution is imparting training in the ancient Gurukul parampara in the subjects of Indian classical music including Carnatic music (Vocal and instrumental), Classical Dances (Bharatnatyam, Kathak, Odissi) and Fine Arts (Painting). The Institution has more than 3800 affiliated centres/institutes/schools of classical music and dance situated all over India and abroad including the USA, UK, Canada, Singapore, Mauritius, Nepal, Bangladesh, Kuwait, UAE, South Africa etc. The student strength is about 3.25 lacs. All these contribute to the institution becoming the largest organisation of its kind in the present times. The Kendra organises a number of festivals, seminars, workshops, conferences, painting exhibitions, competitions of classical music and dance throughout the year in various parts of the country with the support of local and state governments.

The courses offered by the Kendra are Prarambhik, Bhushan, Visharad, Bhaskar and Churamani.

The subjects that are offered by the Kendra are Vocal Music, Instrumental music (Sitar, Sarod, Violin, Esraj, Sarangi, Vichitra Veena, Flute, Guitar), Bhav Sangeet, Tabla and Pakhawaj, Rabindra Sangeet, Nazrul Geeti, Odissi Vocal music, Mardala (Pakhawaj), Kathak Dance, Bharatnatyam, Manipuri Dance, Odissi Dance, Kuchipidi, Tagore Dance, Fine Arts (Painting), Carnatic Vocal music, Carnatic instrumental music (Veena, Violin, and Flute), Mridangam, Gurmat Sangeet, Recitation etc.

The examination comprises both theoretical and practical examination. The examination process is given proper weightage so as to uphold the norms and standards on the lines of universities and examination boards. The examinations are conducted by recognized experts so that they meet both academic and professional requirements.

## Sarbabharatiya Sangit-O-Sanskriti Parishad (Kolkata):

Sarbabharatiya Sangit-O-Sanskriti Parishad was established in 1976 and has been operating since January 23<sup>rd</sup> 1976 in a rented house at Jadu Mitra Lane, Kolkata which subsequently shifted to Ramratan Basu Road, Kolkata. The name of the parishad was suggested by Late Pandit Sukhendu Goswami. The Parishad was established to propagate, foster and preserve the traditional forms of Indian art and culture.

The Parishad has about 5000 affiliating centres in different parts of India and abroad where students are tutored in various streams of Indian art and culture. The Parishad got recognition from Rabindra Bharati University and the West Bengal State Academy of Dance, Drama, Music & Fine Arts.

The syllabus of the various courses has been designed and prepared under the guidance of renowned musicians and stalwarts. Around 22 streams of Indian Art and Culture are conducted by the parishad. The entire course was distributed within a span of eleven years which is supposed to groom a learner from the very initial learning to level of maturity. An annual examination is conducted at the end of each course. The course name and structure is as follows:

- |                        |                         |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| • Pre-Primary-I        | Junior Diploma Part-I   |
| • Pre-Primary-I I      | Junior Diploma Part-II  |
| • Pre-Primary-I II     | Junior Diploma Part-III |
| • Primary              | Junior Diploma Final    |
| • 1 <sup>st</sup> Year | Senior Diploma Part-I   |
| • 2 <sup>nd</sup> Year | Senior Diploma Part-II  |
| • 3 <sup>rd</sup> Year | Senior Diploma Final    |
| • 4 <sup>th</sup> Year | Visharad Part I         |
| • 5 <sup>th</sup> Year | Visharad                |
| • 6 <sup>th</sup> Year | Ratna Part I            |
| • 7 <sup>th</sup> Year | Ratna                   |

In comparison to academic parameter, the Parishad compares the Pre-Primary-I learning with Class-V, Pre-Primary-II with Class-VI, Pre-Primary-III with Class-VII, Primary with Class-VIII, 1<sup>st</sup> Year with Class-IX, 2<sup>nd</sup> Year with Class-X, 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Year with Higher Secondary, 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> Year with Graduation and 7<sup>th</sup> Year with Post Graduation.

## Bangiya Sangeet Parishad:

Bangiya Sangeet Parishad is another leading cultural organisation which also plays a vital role in the promotion and preservation of the various art forms of India. It was established in the year 1975 under the noble initiative of musician and composer Sri Subodh Ganguly. Through music, painting, dance, and recitation, Bangiya Sangeet Parishad seeks to promote Indian culture, particularly that of Eastern India. Through its affiliated centres, Bangiya Sangeet Parishad provides instruction to students. The centre holds exams in several areas of the performing and visual arts and grants awards and diplomas to qualified applicants. The junior vocal division of Bangiya Sangeet Parishad is associated with Rabindra Bharati University, and the Bangiya Sangeet Parishad diploma is accepted by the Indira Kala Sangeet Vishwa Vidyalaya in Khairagarh, Madhya Pradesh. Eminent citizens and artists make up the Bangiya Sangeet Parishad's Governing Body. Some of this organisation's regular activities include welfare work, artist recognition, a research program on Bengali folk music, the publication of the quarterly journal "Ajker Sambad Bivakar," the creation of the music album "Sur-Smriti-Shrithi," the creation of a video archive, the publication of music books, and TV and radio shows.

The Parishad conducts various levels of examinations in the field of music, dance painting and recitation. The examinations are evaluated both practically and theoretically. The present examination levels and diplomas awarded by the Parishad are:

- Beginner- Adya, Madhya, Purna.
- Junior- First Year (Certificate)
- Senior- Second Year, Third Year (Certificate)
- Bivakar- Fourth Year, Fifth Year (Certificate and Award)
- Ratna- Sixth Year, Seventh Year (Certificate and Award)
- Prabor- Eighth Year
- BT- Ninth Year (Teacher's Training Certificate)

The above-mentioned institutions cum organisations which have been included in the research work are some of the premier Hindustani music learning institutions and their contribution is noteworthy. Besides these, there are many more institutions, those which sprung up with the same motto to promote and propagate the teaching and learning of Hindustani Classical music.

Another kind of individual institutions also needs to be mentioned, those which are run by the various stalwarts of our Hindustani vocal music like Ajay Chkraborty's Shruti Nandan, Rashid Khan's Shakri Begum Memorial Trust and many more.

### Findings and Recommendations:

- Music should be made a mandatory subject up to secondary level, with specialised electives at higher levels.
- A National Council for Music Education should be established to standardise syllabi, teacher training, and accreditation.
- Integration of ICT and AI tools can enhance accessibility and personalised learning.
- Collaboration between traditional gurus and modern educators can strengthen pedagogy.
- Policy-level funding and advocacy are essential for infrastructural development.

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