

# VOCATIONAL ASPECTS OF HINDUSTANI MUSIC

Dr. Rajpal Singh

Associate Professor, Faculty of Music and Fine Arts, University of Delhi

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## ABSTRACT

*Hindustani Classical Music, or Bharatiya Shastriya Sangeet, refers to the musical tradition rooted in ancient Shastras and has continued from the Vedic era to the present day. Traditionally, music was regarded mainly as a means of social entertainment and spiritual expression. However, with social change and technological advancement, music has gradually transformed into a viable professional field and a dependable source of livelihood. In the contemporary era, it is increasingly gaining mainstream visibility, and many aspirants now pursue it as a serious and structured career rather than merely a hobby. The term “vocational” refers to anything connected with an occupation. Thus, the vocational aspect of music involves understanding the discipline from a professional and career-oriented perspective. This remains a major concern for students and emerging artists who are often unaware of the diverse career avenues available in the field. Consequently, music is frequently perceived as limited and risky as a profession. This paper aims to highlight the expanding vocational scope of music and guide young musicians towards informed and practical career choices. From a vocational viewpoint, key considerations include the growth of audience engagement and the increasing scope and sustainability of opportunities within the music industry today globally too.*

**Keywords:** Hindustani Music, Vocational, Money, Career, Avenues, Income

## Introduction

Vocational aspects of music refer to the practical orientation of musical training that equips individuals with the skills, experience, and professional preparedness required for careers within the music industry, including performance, production, teaching, and allied fields. Unlike purely theoretical study, vocational music education emphasizes the transformation of artistic interest into a sustainable profession through experiential learning, industry exposure, and specialized skill development.<sup>1</sup> Key components of vocational music training include:

- **Industry-Relevant Skills:** The cultivation of applied competencies such as performance technique, audio production, composition, music pedagogy, and instrument specialization, aligned with professional demands.
- **Professional Work Experience:** Learning through active engagement in real-world musical environments, including concerts, recordings, rehearsals, workshops, and collaborative ensemble settings.
- **Career Development:** Awareness of the professional ecosystem of music, encompassing intellectual property rights, branding, marketing, concert management, and the functioning of cultural institutions and organizations.
- **Training and Education:** Structured and practice-oriented courses that integrate artistic, academic, and technical knowledge to prepare learners for viable employment and self-sustaining careers in the music profession.

## MUSIC EDUCATION

Music education is a field of practice where students are trained to acquire various career options such as teaching, researching, performing, etc.<sup>2</sup> It plays an important role in developing skills (teaching as well as performing skill) and widens the knowledge by providing insight into the various realms of music. There are various domains falling under music education but among these the most important and common human resource is the “teacher”. The importance of music teachers has also been described in many ancient manuscripts, such as the Kamasutra, in which music teaching is termed as “*peethmard*”. Even during the period of *Bharatmuni*, music training was conducted in a specific segment within *Rajmahal* (the king’s palace).

There are the following categories that fall under music education.

**SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES:** Before the nineteenth century, music learning was limited to the gharana lineage, where music was only taught orally (Gurumukhi tradition). Music being a practical subject, teachers often prefer the verbal way of teaching and therefore consider it an appropriate way to teach music. Schools and universities mainly emerged during the British era who established the school culture in our education system. Therefore, in the beginning of 20th century, a music community took initiative in building music schools and universities where facilities such as degree (bachelorette, masters, M.phil and P.hD), theory and practical exams and specified timetable are allotted to the teachers.

In 1950, the university named “Maharaja Sayajirao Vishwavidyalaya” was built at Baroda which is considered to be the first ever music university to be set up in India. One of the eminent musicologists Pt. Vishnu digambar Paluskar and Pt. Bhatkhande has set up Gandharv Mahavidyalaya and Maurice college respectively. This way the development started that led to an increase in the number of music colleges and universities all over the country. As a result, today there has been a tremendous increase in enrollment.

There are some famous music schools and universities displayed below.<sup>3</sup>

1. Gwalior university – Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh
2. Maurice college – Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh
3. Delhi University (Faculty of Music and Fine Arts) – New Delhi
4. Banaras Hindu University - Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh
5. Allahabad University- Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh
6. Chandigarh University – Chandigarh, Punjab
7. Bhatkhande College of Music – Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh
8. Anna Malai University – Tamil Nadu
9. Vanasthali Vidyapeeth – Vanasthali, Rajasthan
10. S.N.D.T College – Pune, Maharashtra

**MUSICAL INSTITUTIONS:** Music institutions which are also termed as “*Sangeet Sanstha*” are similar to music colleges or universities in the sense that they indulge in conducting daily routine classes. The only difference that arises here is that these institutions neither provide any degree nor conduct examinations. It helps students in exploring various realms of our Indian music. There many famous music institutions such as:

SN	Music Institutions	Year of setup	Founder’s Name
1.	Bharat Gayan Samaj	1874	Bhaskar buwa Bakhle
2.	School of Indian Music,	1925	B.R Deodhar
3.	Maharashtra Music school	1926	Ganesh Ramchandra Gokhale
4.	Gandharv mahavidyalaya, Pune	1932	Vinayak Rao Patwardhan
5.	Gandharv mahavidyalaya, Delhi	1926	Bramhanand Vyas
6.	Vishnu Sangeet Vidyalaya	1932	Bhagvati Prasad Trivedi
7.	Gopal Gayan Samaj, Pune	1918	Govind Gopal Desai

**GURU SHISHYA PARAMPARA:** The tradition of *Guru Shishya parampara* has been passed on from generation to generation which is considered to be the most appropriate way to learn the complex and diverse form of Indian classical music. In this term “*parampara*” means “lineage” that refers to the succession of teachers and their disciples. Under this tradition, firstly the guru performs the ‘*Ganda Bandhan*’ ceremony which signifies as a testimony of the student to stay as his disciple for lifetime. After that, the disciple stays at the residence of his guru for a certain span of time while receiving lessons. The student also helps in other household chores. Students receive rigorous and effective training from their teacher and in return teacher (guru) is given *guru dakshina* as a form of fees. In our Indian classical music, there are many artists who are examples of such tradition.

## MUSIC PERFORMANCE

Music performance or stage performance involves entertaining the audience through the performance of live music in front of an audience where artists perform vocally or by playing instruments. This activity provides scope for the musician to earn fame and make a name for themselves in the public domain. Nowadays there are numerous platforms where music aspirants present their respective musical prowess. It is the process during which musical ideas are realized and transmitted to the listeners. There are three types of music forms that are presented or sung in concert.<sup>4</sup> They are Classical Music, Light and Folk Music.

**CLASSICAL MUSIC PERFORMANCE:** Classical music also referred as “*Shastriya Gaayan*” includes recital of a raga in the form of either *Khayal, Dhrupad, Pallavi Anupallavi and Charanam* when it comes to vocal whereas in case of melodic instrument such as sitar, sarod , sarangi artist plays a raag in the form of *Jod , alaap, Jhala*. This form of music demands consistent training for an artist which makes them compatible to present a raag perfectly for a long duration.<sup>5</sup> There are

legendary classical music performers like Ustad Amir Khan, Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, Vidushi Kishori Amonkar, Vidushi Kesarbai Kerkar, Pandit Mallikarjun Mansur, Pandit Kumar Gandharva, Pandit Jasraj and the list will go on with so many artists who made their history in the field of music performance.

**LIGHT MUSIC PERFORMANCE:** Light music is a category of music which is based on classical music. This music is considered an alternative to pop music and Indian cinema music. Its compositions are lightly based on Indian classical music, so it is technically termed as “Light Music”. It includes various forms like Ghazal, Thumri, Dadra, Bhajan, Kirtan, Tappa which are presented by trained musicians also including classical musicians. Artists like Vidushi Shuba Gurtu, Vidushi Girija Devi, Begum Akhtar, Mehdi Hassan, Jagjit Singh, Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, Pandit Kumar Gandharv, Vidushi Malini Rajurkar who were famous for their renditions and gave inspiration to many young learners.

**FOLK MUSIC PERFORMANCE:** Folk music is also called “*Desi sangeet*” in *Samveda* and “*Lok sangeet*” in present language. Folk music basically depicts the socio-cultural events of a particular society which are sung at occasional events like wedding, harvest festival, seasonal festival, childbirth, death etc. India having diverse culture, led to create vivid forms of folk music that differs from place to place as well as community. Folk music such as *Chaiti, Hori, Bhatiyali, Santhali, Lavani etc.*, are also presented by many artists which created a new dimension to consider as a scope of earning.

## PLAYBACK SINGING

Playback singing has become a very desirable career option because it has turned many unknown actors or musicians into overnight stars. It is the process of singing behind the scenes in a studio along with accompanying instruments simultaneously recorded to create a soundtrack. In today’s day and age, the recording of every individual component of the soundtrack can be undertaken separately and it is necessary anymore for all the musical participants in a project to be present at the same time, thanks to advancements in music technology. This soundtrack is used in films where an actor or actress lip-syncs to the song on screen whereas the actual singer remains off-screen. Playback singing plays an important role in film (motion picture) and has become an inseparable component of the Indian film business and culture.

## INDUSTRIAL SECTOR (INSTRUMENT MAKING)

The instrument making sector falls under the manufacturing segment where instruments are crafted with perfection. This is also another professional scope in the music field. Indian instruments are mostly made of wood, clay, metals, leathers that are polished and assembled with delicacy. The craftsman acquires special skill over the years of training. These craftsmen work under a sector / company. It can be very lucrative depending on the scale of operations and diversity of instruments sold by a company. In Delhi there are popular instrument makers such as Rikhiram and Raj Musicals. For western instruments companies like Furtados are also very popular and well known. Instrument makers such as Pammi, Kartar Chand, Gopal Das among others are well known for their repair work of tabla and tanpura.

## MUSICOLOGY

Musicology is the scholarly study of music. It refers to the research in music that encompassed various domains as well as intersecting diverse subjects in connection to the music. In recent years musicology scope has emerged as a remarkable scope for students who aspire to be scholars or professors. In Hindustani music, musicologists played an important role in spreading the in-depth knowledge of our music. Many performing artists were also musicologists who wrote many books on theory as well as compositions and provided lecture demonstrations in numerous musical institutions that occurred to be a valuable resource for future researchers.

Some prominent musicologists in Hindustani Classical Music from the last 170 years include:

- Pt. S.N Ratanjankar
- Pt. Omkarnath Thakur
- Pt. V. N Bhatkhande
- Pt. V.D Paluskar
- Pt. Ramashraya Jha

## PUBLISHING

Publishing is the occupation of making books, journals, manuscripts and other readable articles available for sale commercially. In the field of Hindustani Music, publishers play an exceedingly important role, because Shastra and theory are of great importance to Hindustani musicians. Books, journals and magazines play a very important role in keeping a classical musician updated about the developments and latest trends in the world of music. Books also help artists aggregate a larger

database of bandishes. Information obtained from books helps in increasing the scholarliness of an artist's renditions and lecture demonstrations.

Some of the famous Publishing houses are<sup>6</sup>:

- Penguin Publishers
- Harper Collins
- Simon and Schuster
- Macmillan Publishers
- Hachette Book Group
- John Wiley and Sons
- Merriam-Webster

In the field of Indian music<sup>7</sup>,

- Motilal Banarasidas
- Karadi Tales
- Bharatiya Kala Prakashan
- Gyan Book Private Limited
- Sharada Publishing House

These are some of the important publishing houses.

## SOUND ENGINEERING/ PRODUCTION

In the last 15 years, sound engineering has become a subject of great importance. Today, we live in the era of digital recording and digital production of music and tracks. Gone are the days when Laxmikant and Pyarelal arranged 100 musician ensembles and painstakingly recorded the whole arrangement in a single take. Now, the desired orchestral effect can be created on the computer through sound engineering/production softwares like Studio One, Cubase etc. It is no longer necessary for an artist to be able to sing accurately in pitch. The sound engineer can facilitate pitch correction from their computer. All the instrumentation can be synthesised on the computer, and the MIDI keyboard can be used to play the desired musical passages. This is a very lucrative business, as many independent musicians approach location audio engineers for their music projects and pay for their expertise to produce professional-quality soundtracks.

## MUSIC CRITICISM

Newspapers, journals and magazines often showcase articles and reviews given by music critics of recent concerts by established and even upcoming artists. The ideal tool for creating informed “*Rasiks*” would have been music education and “*Taleem*”. However, it is not possible for everyone to study music as a subject at a substantial level. This is where critics come in providing detailed insight into recitals through reviews, articles, books, etc. Here, the underlying assumption is that the critic whose opinions reach the masses is a credible and meritorious individual.<sup>8</sup> Music criticism helps create informed and intellectual listeners of music by providing technical insights into concerts of artists. It helps maintain a high standard of musical performance by making artists know that they are being heard by discerning ears and thus pushing them to keep producing music of a certain benchmark quality. Some of the notable critics in Hindustani Music from the last 100 years are:

1. Kumar Prasad Mukherjee
2. Mohan Nadkarni.
3. Rajan Parrikar
4. Keshavrao Bhole
5. Dr. Ashok Ranade
6. Pu La Deshpande

## RADIO & BROADCASTING (AIR)

Radio and broadcasting have played an important role for Indian classical musicians for decades. The “ All India Radio” unit handles providing a platform to artists, which functions under Prasar Bharati. It conducts an audition for gradation of artists and accordingly provides them a platform to present their artform. In addition to this, All India Radio also organises a

*Sammelan* that has helped widen the career scope of performing artists as well as led to an increase in the number of music listeners.

Job positions for technical jobs like Programme Director and administrative roles are also available at radio stations. RJ'ing or being a Radio Jockey is also a sought-after profession.<sup>9</sup> It allows one to be the voice of the radio station.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the vocational scope of Hindustani Classical Music has expanded considerably in the contemporary period, evolving from a primarily spiritual and cultural tradition into a structured and sustainable professional field. With the growth of music education in schools, universities, and music institutions, students now have access to diverse career paths such as teaching, research, and performance. Traditional systems like the Guru–Shishya Parampara continue to play a vital role alongside formal institutional training, ensuring the preservation of artistic depth and authenticity. Performance opportunities in classical, light, and folk music, along with emerging avenues like playback singing and digital platforms, have significantly increased the potential for financial stability and public recognition. Furthermore, allied sectors including musicology, instrument making, publishing, sound engineering, music criticism, and broadcasting have strengthened the professional ecosystem of Hindustani music. Institutions such as All India Radio have historically provided important platforms for artists and contributed to career development. Technological advancements in recording and production have further diversified employment opportunities in the field. Although music was once considered an uncertain career choice, increasing awareness of its vocational avenues is gradually changing this perception. A balanced integration of traditional training, academic learning, and modern technological skills can ensure both professional stability and the continued preservation and growth of Hindustani musical heritage.

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