

A JOURNEY FROM CLASSICAL TO LIGHT: TABLA'S MUSICAL EVOLUTION


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ABSTRACT

One of the most expressive instruments of Indian music which has exceptionally changed in form and use as a versatile instrument of the light music is tabla. The presented paper, A Journey from Classical to Light: Musical Evolution of Tabla in a variety of musical cultures, investigates historical, aesthetic and performative changes that have influenced the role of tabla in the music of various musical cultures. The study follows the progression of how a genre like tabla, which has its roots in the classical systems of Hindustani music, gradually permeated into other genres, including bhajan, ghazal, qawwali, film music, semi-classical and contemporary light music. It examines the evolving patterns of taal, bols, improvisational flexibility and accompaniment techniques that allowed tabla players to adjust to different melodic and rhythmic settings. The paper concludes by identifying the role played by outstanding tabla artists and composers towards the reconciliation of the barriers of strict classical discipline and popular musical expression. The study makes the argument that the journey of tabla is both continuity and innovation and how it can be seen as a continuity in that same manner. These results indicate that the versatility of tabla has not only been able to enhance light music but has as well boosted its usefulness to its cultural utility in contemporary music practice. This study helps further comprehend tabla as a vibrant instrument, which bridges the classical tradition with contemporary accessibility.

Keywords: Tabla, Hindustani music, light music, rhythmical development, accompaniment, musical tradition.

1. Introduction

The traditional percussion music instrument, originally from North India, and playing a significant role in Indian classical music for centuries is Tabla. The role of tabla has been the most significant in classical music specially in Hindustani music, due to its elaborate metrical strains and while unique tone it could produce. But it has now turned its face towards classical music, and into the genres belonging to the Indian light music genre.

Light music is simple, and easy to understand compared to classical music, which is rigid and structured. It can be coupled with more traditional music but is also very contemporary, and popular at the same time. The introduction of these changes in Tabla has seen it adapted to suit the main classical beats without omitting its adherence to a variety of pace and rhythms in music for the lighter beats making it a versatile instrument. This is what makes the tabla amazing in Indian music scene, as it is flexible yet there is fidelity to the source.

Much of the light music of India is dominated by the tabla, both through playing ghazals, thumris and bhajans and Bollywood song. For instance, ghazals are a poetic musical composition of love and the other sentiments. In this instance tabla provides soft but vastly intricate break beats which go in harmony with soft emotionally-arranged ghazal melodies. The light rhythms produced by tabla in emotional songs such as thumris add to the beauty of the music and build its emotions. The foundation of the devotional songs or bhajans, is somewhat unique, in that there is a primary and special task of creating the foundation of the rhythm (Rag) to allow the listener to perceive the devotional content or devotional component in the music.

One of the most notable places where there exists the use of tabla has been Bollywood music. The Bollywood songs are actually musically shaped in their particular styles and often use the tabla in conjunction with modern instruments like the guitar and the synthesizer. The reason is mainly two-fold; firstly, it is derived from the classical music era of India, thus preserving the base of this rhythm and secondly it is no different from these modern sounds, making it an essential part of Indian modern music. This concoction has matched up with the ever-vibrant Indian musical world.

The tabla is not only used for music, it also personifies the dense Indian musical heritage, and has also a great status in Indian society. Bollywood's tabla carries you back to the past and infuses with tradition in a classical recital or a Bollywood tune; one thing one shouldn't forget in a Bollywood song is the touch of tradition that the tabla brings in. Tabla is still a major topic in education about contemporary music production today and youth are being given knowledge about the instrument, how it is used and historically.

2. Historical Background and Origins of the Tabla

Tabla is a widely well-known percussion instrument that is known all over the world but its history is centuries old and held a lot of mysteries and intrigues. *Ustad Khusro Khan*, a very good Indian musician, is believed to have created the tabla in 17th century. It is believed that he adapted the *pakhawaj*, an oldest Indian percussion instrument into a smaller, more adjustable version which would later on develop into our now known tabla. The *pakhawaj*, used in the traditional Indian music throughout the centuries was a large two headed drum that was usually related with the classical music. The innovation of *Khusro Khan* enabled precision and flexibility to a greater degree, thus making tabla more useful in aiding the voices of singers and instruments that produced musical pieces.

The structure of tabla is two drums held in various sizes that produce different tonal values. The big drum, which is referred to as *bayan*, has deep bass sound and the small drum is known as the *dayan* which produces sounds that are sharp and higher-tone. The invention of these two drums whose variations in tonal quality were vastly different enabled the tabla to generate a vast plethora of sounds, the production of which enabled musicians to be more expressive and versatile in rhythm.

During its initial stages, tabla was mostly played as an accompaniment to the classical music especially in the Hindustani culture. Its capacity to sustain intricate rhythmic variations known as *talas* as well as giving room to improvisation soon encompassed it to be an unavoidable component of classical performances. With time tabla was no longer used as an accompaniment and started to be identified as a solo instrument with tabla players dashing off complex playing styles that made it appear versatile and virtuosic.

2.1 The Evolution of Tabla in Classical Music

The tabla has come to form the back bone of the Hindustani classical music in which the rhythm is a foundation point. During classical performances, tabla is used as a rhythmic track on which the music progresses. This is brought out by means of execution of exact rhythms and patterns that will offer structure and harmony to the overall composition. The tabla is mostly played along with an instrument of melody or a singer and it constitutes the heartbeat of music concerts with a classical touch.

Complex rhythmic procedures are one of the most important details that help the indication of tabla unavoidable in classical music. These rhythms are structured in cycles termed as *talas* which are time forms of measurement and are adhered to by musicians during a performance. Each *tala* comes with a certain number of beats and these are varied so that one could get relatively simple such as the so-called *teen taal* (16 beats) or get more complex with the likes of *jhaptaal* (10 beats) and *ektaal* (12 beats). The fact that the tabla can sustain and elaborate on these *talas* enables it to accompany any of the variations of the classical music whether the music involves vocals, instrumental music or even dance.

Indian classical music especially in the Hindustani tradition has many types of genres where the tabla is used. As an instance, a tabla plays a role in creating rhythmic frame which accompanies highly free and improvised manner of the vocal singing in which the form of classical voice music is called *khayal*. As in the case of *dhrupad*, the tabla has been associated with one of the oldest forms of the classical music where it collaborates closely with the *Pakhawaj* (another traditional percussion instrument) creating a consistent beat that provides it with plenty of time to draw out lengthy vocalizations.

Over the years of Indian classical music, the tabla has gained a lot of refinement and there are many other legendary tabla players who have come up with techniques and styles. The greatest tabla maestro including *Ustad Ahmedjan Thirakwa*, *Ustad Sidhar Khan*, and *Pandit Ram Sahai Ji* have been not only capable of mastering all the practices of the instruments but have also developed other techniques of their own that explored the boundaries of the instruments. They have added new strokes, technique of fingers and rhythmic improvisation, which have immensely added to the heritage of tabla to classical music.

2.2 Transition from Classical to Light Music

Although the tabla is hugely rooted in the classical music, it slowly started to move to the light music in the 20th Century. The development of radio, films and modern recording processes considerably transformed Indian music environment, resulting in the creation of light and popular styles of music, which could be accessed by greater number of people. This shift caused the tabla to expand out of the boundaries of classical music and into the film music, the format of the *ghazals*, *thumris*, *bhajans*, and *Bollywood* songs.

The introduction of the tabla in the light music has been attributed to the changing face of the music industry. With the advent of radio broadcasting in the first half of the 20th century, a fresh stage was open to the music makers and Indian classical musicians started to test the use of the tabla in lighter repertoires. It was also during this era that Indian cinema developed, especially in the locality of Mumbai upon which the market of *Bollywood* industry (Hindi cinema) started initiating the paths that Indian music should be taking.

The tabla became part of the rhythm section where it was used together with such instruments as guitar, harmonium and violin that is why this instrument is commonly used in Bollywood music. The tabla fit perfectly in Bollywood songs which had evolved into being a mixture of all forms of music and it could with its rhythmic versatility accommodate all the changes in the way popular music changed. The versatility whereby the tabla could fuse old school rhythm with some of the more recently developed melodic beats rendered it a critical instrument in the arrangement of Bollywood songs.

Along with the Bollywood music, the tabla started playing a significant role in the other genre of light music like the ghazals, thumris, and bhajans. Ghazals are a lyrical-musical form of poetry, and these songs usually take a slow and sorrowful tune and the smooth and lush tabla strikes just at the right spot to complement the tonal-emotional flow to the words. In a similar manner, tabla also plays a significant role in accentuating the mood and meaning of the songs in thumris, which are compositions that generate a lot of emotion and music.

The rhythmic richness of the tabla also in animal cooking batch was useful in Bhajans which are devotional song inspired in the gods or in spiritual subjects. The songs are usually sung when in a group and the tabla gives the rhythm which keeps the singers in the right beat. The use of tabla in bhajans is not quite that complicated as in the classical pieces, but it does enhance the spiritual mood, making the whole piece much better.

This transition of classical to light music provided more creativity and innovativeness in the playing of the tabla. The tabla performers started paying more attention to more simplified structures of rhythm and also tried to play at tempos that were easy penetrable to a common person and that could readily be absorbed into the popular music. This shift helped the tabla to come closer to an ordinary audience and due to the soundtracks of Bollywood movies, the tabla became especially popular.

The other outstanding thing about the tabla coming to light music is that it has resulted to the evolvement of the fusion music that is comprised of both classical as well as modern music. Musicians such as Ustad Zakir Hussain and Ravi Shankar did much to introduce tabla to jazz, Western classical music, and world music, thus rendering the instrument recognizable to the global listener. This genre mash up saw the tabla go into the international arena demonstrating how the instrument can fit in and flourish in diverse music scenes.

The flexibility and versatility of tabla contributed largely to its relevance in the classical and light music even years later. With Indian music rapidly advancing, the tabla would forever remain a critical instrument in the music scenario to ensure that there is an elective bridge between tradition and modernity. Its presence in light music has widened the scope of the tabla as this allows more people to be exposed to it and make it a part of the newer evolutions of Indian music.

3. The Tabla in Indian Light Music

A major influence in Indian classical music, tabla has perfectly fitted into light music of different genres. Its complex rhythms as well as its flexibility have enabled it to play critical roles in other forms of music such as ghazals, thumris, bhajans and Bollywood music. The tabla can combine with the emotional intensity and rhythm variation of these genres, and thus it is also a universal and essential instrument in the Indian light music.

3.1 Tabla in Ghazals

Ghazals refers to poetic music, which started in Persia and gained massive following in the Indian Sub-continent. They are characterized by the haunting and melancholic sound, and their themes cover love, longing or loss. Ghazals are also very lyrical and emotional in nature and they concentrate on provoking emotions with the help of the music. Tabla has the capacity to generate minute and detailed tones of rhythm and fits the depth of emotion of ghazals perfectly and hence makeup a perfect rhythm instrument to ghazal.

As compared to the classical music where the tabla has a more organized and complicated role, in ghazals, they are relatively quieter as well as delicate beats. This will enable the singer or an instrumental player to give the poetry its emotional details and the tabla to present a stable and rhythmical body. The complexity of variations of strokes of the tabla especially in the rapid ghazals serves to keep in check the rhythm and flow of the music, as it makes the entire experience of the song better. The versatility of the tabla in ghazals also stems out of the fact that it is as responsive to the finer shades of the voice performance so that it does not dominate the mood expressed in the song.

To use an example, during a ghazal a tabla player has to change pacing at different points to match a gentle and pensive verse, at other points where the singer asks a question or shows excitement, the tabla has to make more vigorous rhythms. This is the musical analogy where the tabla and the vocalist respond in a reciprocal manner that will enable the accompaniment of the tabla to follow the flow of the song emotionally without compromising the classical background of the song.

3.2 Tabla in Thumris

Thumris are melodic, emotional and quite expressive form of light classical music. Thumris usually have a connotation representing a love, dedication and desire, and the intercourse is slower and lyrical when compared to other classical songs. It is part of thumris that tabla is used to enhance the mood and also to add an overall emotional effect to the music.

The rhythms associated with tabla in thumris are usually sensitive and subtle and these rhythms always accompany the phrasing of the singer in a highly-synchronized movement. The complex rhythms and changes of tempo played in tabla allow describing delicate changes of the melody and creating a vibrant and sensitive accompaniment to the singing of the singer. The addition of tabla to the lyrical lines of thumris gives a kind of harmony between the rhythm and the melody, which lets the singer exhibit a variety of feelings, both sorrow and joy.

The singer in thumris improvises a lot, and the tabla frequently reacts to the vividness of the recital, creating its richness. The versatility of the tabla enables it to tune in with the expression of the singer creating a better emotional effect of the performance. The combination of the rhythms of the tabla and the improvisation of the vocalist creates a personal and intimate experience of the user since the warm touch of the tabla completes the flow of the composition in general.

3.3 Tabla in Bhajans

Bhajans are devotional songs that are normally sung at places of religious worship places or during religious conventions. The main purpose of bhajans is to bring an attitude of devotion as well as anchoring the listener to the divine. The use of the tabla to form rhythmic patterns in bhajans is repetitive and simple, and it acts as the creation of a continuous positive rhythm that succeeds in generating a religious mood in the performance.

Compared to classical music the rhythms are very complex and diverse there, whereas in regard to bhajans the tabla does not so much to provide complicated patterns but rather a steady and flowing rhythm. The rhythms in Bhajans are usually simpler and the tabla would incorporate them so that the rhythm is straight yet it is easy to follow with assistance to everyone. The fact that the rhythms of the tabla in bhajans are repetitive enables the audience to concentrate on the devotional lyrics and the general effect on spirituality.

In a large number of bhajans, the rhythmic pattern of the tabla is fixed and the instrument forms the rhythmic content on which the other instruments and voices may be superimposed. Simplicity of the tabla in bhajan means that the focus of the music is on the message of the song and therefore the devotion side of the music can be expressed in full manner. Moreover, tabla can easily be incorporated in other instruments associated with bhajans including harmoniums and cymbals to have a pleasant and devotional experience.

3.4 Tabla in Bollywood Music

The most significant arena in which the presence of tabla in light music is felt to date is the Bollywood music. The songs of Bollywood in most cases carry a mixture of several music forms and this is the fusion of traditional and modern music styles and it is appealing to the large consumer base. This is the reason why the tabla has fit perfectly well in Bollywood music since it is able to accommodate all the aforementioned musical styles.

Modern instruments such as guitar, synthesizer and keyboard are usually integrated with tabla on Bollywood music. This mixture of ancient rhythms with the modern style has enabled the tabla to be accommodated in the rapidly changing world of popular music. Tabla in Bollywood songs has much more to offer other than providing traditional rhythms on the side of play, but plays the most significant element of providing distinctive tastes and Flavors that possess a power to boost complete vitality among musical creation.

The versatile nature of tabla in Bollywood music is that the instrument could be used to fit the varied tempo and rhythm. The tabla can be used to create propulsive and energetic rhythms in the Bollywood song which makes the song move or it can be used to create the slight softer rhythms that accompany the song. The flexibility with which the tabla can easily mix with the fast beats of modern-day Bollywood music makes it very accessible to the worlds of both old and the young audiences.

The Bollywood music is also inclined to include fusion music that incorporates Indian music with western music and the versatility of tabla in this context is very outstanding. Regardless of whether it is mixed with rock, jazz, or electronic beats, the tabla introduces an element of complexity and originality in the music that can be defined as the most recognizable instrument in Bollywood. The use of tabla in Bollywood does not only demonstrate the rhythmic mastery capability of this instrument but also emphasizes the ability to close the gap between the heritage of classical music and contemporary popular music, which is why a specific fusion has been created and has captured the global world

4. Rhythmic Techniques and Adaptability

The tabla is a very dynamic percussion instrument which has very complicated rhythms and can adapt to many different aspects. This has made it play an important role not only in Indian classical music but also in light music and fusion music because of its capability of sustaining its age-old rhythms and adapting to the modern musical expectations. In the present part, we are to discuss traditional rhythmic methods of tabla, its conversion to light music, and the combination of conventional methods and results with contemporary to modern music.

4.1 Traditional Tabla Rhythms

The tabla forms the backbone in classical Indian music in the process of sustaining rhythmic patterns referred to as talas. Talas are particular time cycles each with a fixed number of beats and they are central to the design of Indian classical music. A tala may have as few as a 4 beat to very involved cycles with 10, 12 or more beats. Both instrumental and voice improvisation is based on such rhythmic cycles when musicians and singers improvise in limits of created cycle.

The rhythms played with tabla are referred to as *Kaida's*, *tihai*, *Paran's* and *bol's* (unique syllables to describe tabla strokes). Every pattern is used in a performance to a purpose. To exemplify, *Kaida* is complex and period patterns frequently applied during improvised solos, and *Tihai* is a figure which is repeated thrice and indicates the end of a composition. The *Paran's* and *bol's* describe the various levels of complexities of the rhythm, and the *bol's* depict the simple strokes, and *Paran's* are the more advanced blends and mixtures.

The tabla does not only serve the purpose of instrument of time in classical music, but it is the active companion of melody instrumentals or voice. Although the melody instruments and singers are engaged in their improvisations, the tabla keeps everything together in terms of maintaining the tempo and the stability of the rhythm. This rhythmic capability by tabla to maintain the rhythm with creative flexibility to pace and its drumbeat is what makes Indian classical music give the very sense of freedom and spontaneity amid an explicit outline.

The ability to improvise in the rhythms is what distinguishes the tabla among the percussion instruments used in other musical traditions. In contrast with Western percussion instruments, rhythms in the tabla are not often set and predictable, making the rhythm a flexible exploration that is circumscribed by talas. This is what makes tabla, an instrument, have its own unique sound and that is what expresses it and as such this makes it imperative as part of the classical genre.

4.2 Adaptation in Light Music

Although tabla rhythms are intricate and very complex in most classical music, the instrument has changed the techniques to be used in light music that mostly demands less commercialized rhythms. In the light music, tabla is no longer a strict timekeeper as it is in other forms but a more fluent accompaniment to the song so that it blends with the tone and melodies with the voices.

In popular musical genres such as Bollywood, ghazals, thumris, bhajans tabla usually begins with simpler, less intricate rhythmic patterns more readily understood by non-classical musicians and successfully adopted by them. These simplified rhythms help to make the tabla compatible with other instruments, which may be harmonium, guitar or synthesizer, and they help to take the melody and not dominate upon it. As an illustration, in a Bollywood song, the tabla might sound in a repeated, constant beat, which is a rhythmic supplement of the song. It helps the listeners relate to the music and at the same time maintaining the unique tonal and rhythmic qualities of tabla.

Tabla in light music, unlike the rigid tala systems of the classical music, usually involves more flexible and relaxed rhythmical patterns to go in line with the lyrical and emotional content of the songs. The rhythms of tabla used in light music tend to be relaxed and soft so it calms down the entire set-up. In this case, gentle flowing rhythms of tabla, for example, in ghazals, match the sad and meditative style of words, contributing to the emotional entertainment.

Moreover, the flexibility of the tabla is also observed in the characteristic to meet different types of musical genres. As in Bollywood music, the tabla is likely to interact with electronic beats, synthetic tones and western instruments demanding a change of its traditional rhythms. This flexible attribute of the tabla to change its beats and still manage to keep its classical signature is one of the reasons as to why it has continued to remain a significant attribute in contemporary music.

4.3 Fusion of Classical and Contemporary Techniques

One of the main characteristics of Indian light music is the collaboration of the classical manifestations of tabla and modern music. The mixture has enabled the tabla to grow and be a part of the contemporary music landscapes not only in India, but also at the global level.

This mixture of traditional tabla rhythms and modern music is most notable in such genres as Bollywood, fusion, and world music. In such styles the tabla finds its company with the modern instruments like the electronic synthesizers, electronics with relation to maintaining the beat through percussion drums, electric guitars and even jazz percussion. This blend brings out a combination of note that is sophisticated having the complex rhythms of the tabla matched by the harmonic and melodic elements of the western music.

Among others, in the Bollywood music, when using the tabla together with the modern instruments, they can serve as the gap between the conventional and modern music. The rhythms of tabla are also traditional, based on classical talas and interpreted according to the rhythmic trend and mood of the song so that they can go with the fast tempos of modern music. The combination causes the tabla to have its personal flavour, but at the same time makes the sound modern and familiar to a contemporary listener.

Tabla players have played more experimental sounds and techniques in fusion music. One example is that tabla masters Zakir Hussain has collaborated with musicians of various other forms and genres, including jazz and rock to develop new rhythmic patterns and which incorporate tabla discipline and freedom as well as improvisation of Western music. Its versatility in all these various styles of music has enabled it to dominate in the fusion styles of music where artists are always experimenting with the boundaries of sound and genre.

In addition, classical tabla and electronic beats plus synthesized sounds have resulted into new genres like electronic fusion and international pop music. Some of the classical elements of tabla, that have enabled it to synergize with the ever advancing modern technologies that are applied in music production, have seen the instrument play a major role in the international music circles. The tabla has served its purpose in both traditional and modern setup and its role in contemporary music keeps on evolving and as such, the tabla exhibits quite an impressive versatility.

5. Cultural Importance of the Tabla

Tabla is among the most recognizable instruments in India, which has cultural and societal importance. It is closely connected with the musical heritage of the country in the popular and more so in the classical music, where it forms the rhythmic foundation of the pieces. It is not an instrument, the tabla is rather a symbol of rich, Indian cultural heritage which proves the capacity of the country to preserve the culture and follow the modernity.

5.1 Tabla in Society

The tabla holds a sacred place in the Indian society and especially in the culture and religion. It is not but just a musical instrument rather it is a reflection on the spiritual and emotional connection of India. The tabla is historically part of classical music which is well respected in Indian culture. It is not only significant when played in concert halls, and the tabla may also be played in devotional practices meaning that bhajans (devotional songs) and kirtans (devotional chants) can be performed using the tabla.

In religion, tabla also plays an important role in establishing the rhythmic environment in order to intensify the spiritual experience. It is commonly utilized in the temples, ritual prayer sessions, and other places of worship where its tunes are thought to assist in evoking the feeling of religious service and rapport with God. Spiritual nature of the tabla also translates into the teaching process where years and years of practice, commitment and some degree of humbleness is expected which can also be compared to the teachings of Indian philosophy and spirituality.

Other than being used in the religious and classical music, the tabla has also gone beyond these limits to become part of cultural identification. The tabla also symbolizes how India is able to maintain the balance between the traditional music of the country and the modern influences around the world as it reflects in contemporary India. Such musical instruments as the tabla, which is played during the concert of classical music or a Bollywood song, or even the fusion of classical Indian music and modern tracks, signify the survival of the Indian culture in the new world.

5.2 The Role of Tabla in Music Education

The tabla has remained a central icon in the teaching of music in India and has been used to maintain the music tradition of the Indian classical music in the posterity. Both classical music schools and contemporary conservatories train students to play the tabla, to be able to get command over its complicated rhythms and talas (rhythmic cycles). To learn tabla, one should know the structure of the talas and how to play the different Bols (syllables), which have an equivalent to various tabla strokes. These lessons are the basis of the concept of rhythm and timing in Indian classical and light music as understood by the student.

Traditional music schools in some music school's students often benefit, especially in guru-shishya (teacher-student) schools, by having the chance to study with experienced tabla masters. A lot of emphasis upon oral transmission of knowledge is in these schools as the students are made to memorize and practice particular rhythms and compositions with the help of their

teachers. This approach of learning will not only help the student to acquire the technical elements of the tabla but also to discover the elements of the emotional expression and improvisation which are the essential elements of Indian music.

Education The tabla is gaining admission into the more formal education arena with structured course work and graded tests in modern conservatories. Nevertheless, the gist of the tabla learning process cannot be neglected as the students are being taught the basics of the Indian classic rhythms, and they can even develop the instrument in numerous musical styles. The flexibility of the tabla has led to it becoming one of the rudiments of the education of fusion music in which a diverse range of styles is introduced to the students such as Bollywood, jazz and world music. This acculturation dimension is also relevant especially in the present music dominated world that is becoming more appreciative of the fusion of the folk dance rhythms and western melodies.

Tabla is still playing its significant role through both conventional and new educational mechanism in not only carrying Indian music culture but also in its originality as far as contemporary music is concerned. The versatile nature and the flexibility of the tabla as well as the deep cultural and social implications make it a crucial element in the Indian musical milieu, which will certainly survive the test of time.

6. Conclusion

The use and versatility of tabla in Indian music industry is unprecedented, as it transformed to a fundamental instrument of light music from classical music. Founded on centuries-old tradition, the tabla has continued to take the precedence as a crucial percussion instrument, both in classical and in more contemporary, listener-friendly music such as in ghazals, thumris, bhajans, and Bollywood songs. The complexity and flexibility of its rhythms, and the fact that it can be applied in many musical styles, have enabled the culture of tabla to spread to many musical traditions and tabla is itself a representation of the cultural richness of India.

Tabla is also an important instrument in Indian classical music, which usually holds the cycles/rhythms (talas) and also improvises. However, in light music, the role played by it has been modified due to its learning of a simpler, easier beat which would also naturally fit into a vocal song and other modern instruments for usage. Because of its flexibility, it has become an important aspect of fusion music, a fusion of classical features into more modern ones like those using electronic-based beats or even synthesized sounds.

This cultural value of an instrument is because of the ability of tabla to reconcile the old form and new form of music. Thus, it is the life link of the musical heritage of India with the present day musical forms; it is life continuity in one sense and far reaching in another. Tabla is one of the inevitable instruments, whether during classic shows in India, or in the global music arena, whether it be Bollywood stage tracks in corporate settings, or classical concerts.

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