

MODERN METHODS OF TABLA TEACHING IN UNIVERSITIES

Dr. Ashok Kumar

Assistant Professor Department of Music Kumaun University Nainital



[Read the Article Online](#)



[Cite this Article](#)

Published on 21 June, 2026

Kumar, A. (2026). Modern Methods of Tabla Teaching in Universities. Swar Sindhu, 14(1), 391-395.

ABSTRACT

Tabla is an important percussion instrument in Indian classical music. In the past it was mainly taught through the Guru-Shishya tradition where students learned directly from their teachers through regular practice and personal guidance. Today universities use many modern methods for teaching Tabla. These methods include online classes digital learning platforms audio and video materials mobile applications and smart classrooms. Modern technology helps students learn more easily and gives them access to learning resources at any time. It also supports practice communication and academic study. Traditional teaching methods still play an important role in developing musical skills discipline and artistic understanding. This paper studies the modern methods of Tabla teaching in universities and examines their benefits and challenges. The study finds that a combination of traditional teaching and modern technology can improve the quality of Tabla education and help students achieve better learning outcomes.

Keywords: *Tabla, Music Education, Universities, Digital Learning, Guru-Shishya Tradition.*

Introduction

Tabla is one of the most popular percussion instruments in Indian classical music. It holds a very important place in the musical life of India. Tabla is used in classical music semi classical music devotional music folk music and film music. It is also used as a solo instrument and as an accompanying instrument with vocal music instrumental music and dance performances. Because of its rich sound rhythmic beauty and wide use Tabla has become one of the most studied musical instruments in India and many other countries. The tradition of Tabla learning in India is very old. For many generations students learned Tabla through the Guru-Shishya Parampara. In this system the guru taught students through direct contact personal guidance listening observation and regular practice. Students spent a long time learning from their teachers and gained knowledge through practical experience. This method helped students develop musical skills discipline patience dedication and respect for music. The Guru-Shishya tradition played an important role in preserving different Tabla gharanas and passing musical knowledge from one generation to another. With the growth of modern education many universities and colleges started offering Tabla as an academic subject.

Today students can study Tabla at undergraduate postgraduate and doctoral levels. The inclusion of Tabla in higher education has increased the number of learners and has created new opportunities for music education and research. Universities aim to provide both practical training and theoretical knowledge so that students can develop as performers teachers and researchers. In recent years rapid developments in technology have changed many areas of education including music education. Modern teaching methods have become an important part of university learning. Teachers now use computers projectors smart classrooms online platforms digital study materials audio recordings video demonstrations and mobile applications during the teaching process. These tools help students learn more effectively and provide access to educational resources at any time. Online learning has become especially important in recent years. Students can attend classes from different locations and continue their studies without being physically present in the classroom. Recorded lectures digital libraries educational websites and online workshops provide additional learning opportunities. These resources help students revise lessons improve their understanding and gain exposure to different styles of Tabla playing. Audio and video technology have also improved the teaching of Tabla. Students can watch performances of famous artists listen to rare recordings and observe different playing techniques. Such resources help learners understand rhythm speed sound quality and performance skills in a better way. They also allow students to learn from a wide range of musical sources that may not be available in traditional classroom settings. The use of mobile applications has further expanded learning opportunities. Many applications provide electronic Tabla accompaniment metronome functions tala practice tools and rhythm exercises. These applications support regular practice and help students improve their timing and accuracy. Students can practice at home during travel or at any convenient time. Modern methods of teaching have many advantages. They make education more accessible flexible and organized. Students can learn at their own pace and can use different types of educational materials according to their needs. Teachers can share notes assignments recordings and feedback more easily. Educational institutions can also manage courses and student progress more effectively through digital systems.

However modern methods alone cannot fully replace traditional Tabla learning. Tabla is a practical art that requires close interaction between teacher and student. Personal guidance is necessary for correcting mistakes improving technique developing musical expression and understanding artistic details. Direct learning from a teacher remains one of the most valuable aspects of Tabla education. For this reason many universities are trying to combine traditional teaching methods with modern educational practices. This combination helps students receive the benefits of both systems. Traditional methods provide depth discipline and artistic understanding while modern methods provide accessibility flexibility and additional learning resources. The present study focuses on the modern methods of Tabla teaching in universities. It examines how technology and new educational approaches are being used in Tabla education. The study also discusses the benefits challenges and future possibilities of these methods. Understanding these developments is important because they influence the quality of music education and the future growth of Tabla as an academic and performing art. The successful combination of traditional values and modern teaching methods can help create a strong and effective system of Tabla education for future generations.

Traditional Methods of Tabla Teaching

Traditional Tabla teaching in India is based on the Guru-Shishya Parampara. This is one of the oldest methods of music education in Indian culture. For many years students learned Tabla directly from their guru. The guru was not only a teacher but also a guide who helped the student in music and in life. This method gave great importance to respect hard work patience and regular practice.

In the traditional system the student spent a lot of time with the guru. Learning was not limited to a classroom or a fixed schedule. Students observed the guru during practice teaching and performances. By watching and listening carefully they learned different aspects of Tabla playing. This close relationship helped students understand music in a deep and natural way. The teaching process mainly depended on oral learning. Most compositions were taught by speaking and repeating the bols. The guru first played a composition and then the student repeated it many times until it was remembered correctly. Students were encouraged to listen carefully and develop a strong memory. Written notes were used very little because learning was mainly based on listening and practice. Regular practice was an important part of traditional Tabla education. Students spent many hours every day practicing basic strokes simple exercises and different compositions. The guru carefully checked the hand position finger movement sound quality and rhythm of the student. Mistakes were corrected immediately so that the student could improve gradually. Another important feature of traditional teaching was individual attention. Every student learned according to his or her ability. The guru understood the strengths and weaknesses of each student and provided suitable guidance. This personal attention helped students improve their skills more effectively than group teaching. Traditional Tabla education also focused on developing discipline and dedication. Students were expected to respect their guru follow instructions and maintain regular practice. Through this process they learned patience concentration and commitment. These qualities were considered as important as musical skills.

The Guru-Shishya system also helped in preserving different Tabla gharanas. Each gharana has its own style of playing compositions techniques and musical ideas. Through direct teaching from guru to student these special traditions were passed from one generation to another. This helped protect the rich heritage of Tabla music. Learning through observation was another important part of traditional teaching. Students attended concerts rehearsals and practice sessions of their guru. They observed performance techniques stage behavior accompaniment skills and communication with other musicians. Such experiences helped them become complete musicians. The traditional method also encouraged students to understand the emotional and artistic side of music. Students learned not only how to play the Tabla but also how to express musical feelings through rhythm. They developed a sense of timing balance creativity and musical beauty. Although the traditional method has many strengths it also has some limitations in the modern educational system. It requires a long period of learning close contact with the guru and a high level of commitment from both teacher and student. In universities it is often difficult to provide this type of individual training because there are many students and limited teaching hours. Even today the traditional method remains an important foundation of Tabla education. Many famous Tabla players received their training through the Guru-Shishya tradition. The values of discipline dedication regular practice and personal guidance continue to play an important role in learning Tabla. Therefore traditional teaching methods are still respected and used along with modern educational approaches in many institutions across India.

Modern Methods of Tabla Teaching in Universities

The system of Tabla teaching in universities has changed a lot in recent years. Earlier most students learned Tabla only through the traditional Guru-Shishya method. Today universities use many modern teaching methods to improve learning and make education available to more students. The growth of technology and the development of new educational tools have made Tabla learning easier and more effective for students. Modern universities follow a planned and organized system of

teaching. Students learn through classroom lectures practical classes demonstrations assignments seminars and workshops. Teachers prepare lessons according to the syllabus and students study different topics in a systematic way. This helps students gain both practical knowledge and theoretical understanding of Tabla. One of the most important modern methods is the use of digital technology. Many universities use computers projectors speakers and smart boards during teaching. These tools help teachers explain difficult concepts in a simple manner. Students can watch demonstrations of different compositions and playing techniques on large screens. This makes learning more interesting and easier to understand. Online learning has become an important part of Tabla education. Many universities now conduct classes through online platforms. Students can attend classes from their homes using mobile phones laptops or computers. This method is especially useful for students who live far from educational institutions. Online teaching also allows students to continue their studies during situations when regular classes are not possible. Recorded video lessons are another useful teaching method. Teachers record lectures demonstrations and practical lessons for students. These videos can be watched many times whenever students need help with a topic. Students can stop the video watch it again and practice at their own speed. This helps improve understanding and confidence. Audio recordings are also widely used in Tabla teaching. Students listen to recordings of famous Tabla artists and experienced teachers. Listening to these recordings helps students understand rhythm sound quality speed and style. Audio materials also help students improve their listening ability which is very important for learning music. Universities also use digital study materials. Notes presentations articles and learning resources are shared in electronic form. Students can download these materials and study them whenever needed. Digital resources save time and make educational content easily available. Learning Management Systems have become common in many universities. These systems help teachers share assignments study materials and important information with students. Students can submit assignments receive feedback and check their progress through these platforms. This makes the teaching process more organized and efficient. Mobile applications have created new opportunities for Tabla learning. Many applications provide electronic Tabla sounds metronome functions and different tala patterns. Students can use these applications for daily practice. They can select different speeds and practice according to their level. These tools help students maintain regular practice even when a live accompanist is not available.

Smart classrooms are another modern development in university education. These classrooms are equipped with modern teaching tools such as projectors sound systems and digital displays. Teachers can use videos images presentations and audio examples during classes. Smart classrooms make lessons more interactive and engaging. Workshops and master classes have also become important teaching methods. Universities invite experienced Tabla artists and music scholars to interact with students. During these sessions students learn new compositions performance techniques and practical skills. They also get an opportunity to ask questions and receive guidance from experts. Group learning is commonly used in universities. Students learn together in practical classes and participate in discussions performances and practice sessions. Group learning encourages cooperation confidence and the exchange of ideas. Students learn from both teachers and fellow learners. Research based learning is another important feature of modern university education. Students are encouraged to study the history of Tabla different gharanas famous artists and rhythm concepts. They prepare projects presentations and research papers. This develops their knowledge and understanding of the subject beyond practical performance. Performance based learning is also widely used. Universities organize music programs competitions seminars and cultural events. Students perform before audiences and gain practical experience. Such activities help them improve stage confidence presentation skills and musical expression. Modern methods also include continuous assessment. Students are evaluated through practical examinations written tests assignments presentations and performance activities. Regular assessment helps teachers understand the progress of students and identify areas that need improvement. One of the greatest benefits of modern teaching methods is accessibility. Students from different regions can now learn Tabla through online resources and digital platforms. Educational materials are available at any time which helps students learn according to their own needs and schedules. Modern teaching methods also help preserve musical knowledge. Important recordings rare compositions and educational materials can be stored digitally for future use. This supports both teaching and research activities. Despite many advantages modern methods cannot completely replace traditional learning. Tabla is a practical art that requires direct observation personal guidance and regular correction from an experienced teacher. Therefore many universities try to combine traditional teaching with modern technology. This balanced approach helps students gain technical knowledge practical skills and artistic understanding.

Today modern methods have become an important part of Tabla education in universities. They provide new opportunities for learning teaching practice and research. Through the use of technology online learning digital resources workshops and practical training universities are helping students become better musicians and scholars. The future of Tabla education will depend on the successful combination of modern teaching methods and the valuable traditions of Indian music.

Integration of Guru-Shishya Tradition with Modern Pedagogy

The teaching of Tabla has changed greatly in recent years. Traditional methods of learning are still important but modern educational methods are also becoming popular in universities and colleges. Both systems have their own strengths. The Guru-Shishya tradition helps students learn through personal guidance and close contact with the teacher. Modern pedagogy provides new learning opportunities through technology organized teaching methods and educational resources. Therefore it is important to combine both systems for better Tabla education. The Guru-Shishya tradition has been the foundation of Indian classical music for many centuries. In this system the student learns directly from the guru through listening observation practice and personal interaction. The guru teaches not only musical skills but also discipline patience dedication and respect. Students receive individual attention and learn according to their abilities. This method creates a strong relationship between teacher and student and helps in the development of musical understanding. Modern pedagogy is based on organized teaching methods used in schools colleges and universities. It includes classroom teaching digital learning online classes study materials workshops seminars and practical examinations. These methods help manage large numbers of students and provide equal learning opportunities. Modern educational tools also make learning easier and more accessible. The integration of Guru-Shishya tradition with modern pedagogy means combining the best qualities of both systems. This approach allows students to receive personal guidance from teachers while also benefiting from modern educational resources. Such a combination can improve both practical skills and academic knowledge. One important way to integrate both methods is through blended learning. In this system students attend regular practical classes with their teachers and also use online resources for additional learning. They can practice compositions taught by the teacher and later revise them through recorded lessons and digital materials. This helps students strengthen their understanding and improve their performance.

Personal guidance should remain an important part of university education. Even when modern technology is used teachers should spend time working closely with students. Teachers can observe hand movements rhythm control sound quality and performance techniques. Personal correction helps students avoid mistakes and develop proper playing habits. Technology can be used as a supporting tool rather than a replacement for the teacher. Students can watch educational videos listen to recordings of great artists and use mobile applications for practice. These resources help students continue learning outside the classroom. However the final guidance should come from experienced teachers who can explain musical details and provide individual feedback. Universities can also organize workshops by famous Tabla artists and music scholars. During these workshops students get an opportunity to learn traditional compositions performance techniques and artistic ideas directly from experts. At the same time modern facilities such as projectors sound systems and digital presentations can be used to make learning more effective. Research and practical training should also be connected. Students should not only learn how to play Tabla but also study its history development gharanas famous artists and musical concepts. This combination helps students become both performers and scholars. Modern educational methods support research while traditional learning develops practical skill and artistic understanding. Digital archives are another useful way to combine traditional and modern approaches. Universities can store recordings of rare compositions performances interviews and teaching sessions. Students can access these materials whenever needed. This helps preserve traditional knowledge and makes it available to future generations. Assessment methods can also include both traditional and modern elements. Students can be evaluated through practical performances classroom participation written examinations assignments and research projects. Practical examinations help measure performance skills while written work helps evaluate theoretical knowledge. The integration of both systems also helps preserve the cultural values of Indian music. Traditional teaching encourages respect discipline patience and dedication. Modern education encourages critical thinking research and academic growth. When both approaches are used together students receive a more complete education.

Another benefit of integration is that students with different learning styles can learn more effectively. Some students learn better through direct demonstration while others benefit from videos notes and online resources. A combined approach provides many ways of learning and supports the needs of different students. Universities play an important role in promoting this balanced model of education. Teachers should encourage regular practice personal interaction and musical discipline while also using modern technology and teaching methods. Educational institutions should provide digital facilities along with opportunities for practical training and artistic development. The future of Tabla education depends on the successful integration of Guru-Shishya tradition with modern pedagogy. Neither system alone can meet all the needs of present day students. Traditional methods provide depth personal guidance and artistic values. Modern methods provide accessibility flexibility and educational support. Together they create a strong foundation for learning Tabla. In conclusion the integration of Guru-Shishya tradition with modern pedagogy is one of the best approaches for Tabla education in universities. It combines the wisdom of traditional learning with the advantages of modern technology and educational methods. This balanced approach helps students develop practical skills theoretical knowledge musical understanding and personal discipline. It also supports the preservation of Indian musical traditions while preparing students for the needs of modern education and society.

Conclusion

Tabla is one of the most important percussion instruments in Indian classical music. It has a rich history and a strong place in Indian musical culture. For many years Tabla was taught through the Guru-Shishya tradition. This method helped students learn through personal guidance regular practice and close contact with the teacher. It developed musical skills discipline patience and respect for the art of music. Many great Tabla players of India received their training through this traditional system. In recent years the field of education has changed because of new technology and modern teaching methods. Universities and colleges have started using digital tools online classes audio recordings video lessons mobile applications and smart classrooms for teaching Tabla. These methods have made learning easier and more accessible for students. Learners can now study from different places and can use many educational resources to improve their knowledge and skills. The study of modern methods of Tabla teaching shows that technology has brought many positive changes in music education. Students can attend online classes watch recorded lessons listen to performances of famous artists and use digital practice tools. These facilities help students learn at their own speed and support regular practice. Modern teaching methods also help teachers share learning materials conduct assessments and communicate with students more effectively. The study also shows that modern teaching methods have some limitations. Technology cannot fully replace the role of the teacher. Tabla is a practical subject that requires direct observation correction and guidance. Students need personal attention to improve hand movements rhythm control sound quality and performance skills. Learning only through digital resources may not provide the same experience as learning directly from a teacher. The Guru-Shishya tradition continues to be valuable in the present time. It helps students understand not only the technical aspects of Tabla but also the emotional artistic and cultural values connected with music. Through this tradition students learn dedication commitment concentration and respect. These qualities are important for becoming a skilled musician. The findings of this study suggest that the best approach for Tabla education is the combination of traditional and modern methods. Traditional learning provides personal guidance and deep musical understanding while modern methods provide flexibility accessibility and additional learning support. When both systems are used together students receive a more complete and balanced education. Universities have an important responsibility in this process. They should encourage practical training regular interaction between teachers and students and the use of technology for learning and research. Educational institutions should provide opportunities for workshops performances seminars and digital learning activities. Such efforts can help students develop both practical ability and academic knowledge.

Modern educational tools should be viewed as supportive resources rather than replacements for traditional teaching. Technology can help students revise lessons access learning materials and practice regularly. The role of the teacher remains central in the learning process. A skilled teacher can guide students motivate them and help them understand the finer details of Tabla performance. The future of Tabla education depends on maintaining a balance between tradition and innovation. Universities should continue to preserve the values of the Guru-Shishya tradition while also adopting useful modern teaching methods. This balanced approach can help protect the rich heritage of Tabla and make music education more effective for future generations. In conclusion modern methods of Tabla teaching have opened new possibilities for learning and teaching in universities. They have improved access to education and provided many useful resources for students and teachers. At the same time traditional teaching remains essential for developing musical skill artistic understanding and personal growth. A combination of traditional values and modern educational methods is the most suitable path for the future development of Tabla education in universities. This approach will help students become knowledgeable performers responsible learners and dedicated musicians while preserving the rich traditions of Indian classical music.

References

- Bhatkhande, Vishnu Narayan. *Hindustani Sangeet Paddhati*. Sangeet Karyalaya, Hathras.
- Shrivastava, Girish Chandra. *Taal Kosh*. Sangeet Karyalaya, Hathras.
- Saxena, Sudhir. *The Art of Tabla Rhythm: Essentials Traditions and Creativity*. Sangeet Research Academy.
- Neuman, Daniel M. *The Life of Music in North India: The Organization of an Artistic Tradition*. University of Chicago Press.
- Sharma, Bhagwat Sharan. *Bharatiya Sangeet Ka Itihas*. Sangeet Karyalaya, Hathras.
- Jain, Subhadra Chaudhary. *Bharatiya Sangeet ka Itihas*. Radha Publications, New Delhi.
- Government of India. *National Education Policy 2020*. Ministry of Education, New Delhi.
- Kumar, Ashok. "Role of Technology in Music Education." *Journal of Music Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 2, 2022, pp. 45–52.
- Mishra, Lalmani. *Bharatiya Sangeet Vadya*. Bharatiya Jnanpith, New Delhi.
- Puri, Harish Chandra. *Tabla Vadan Shiksha*. Sangeet Karyalaya, Hathras.
- Sangeet Natak Akademi. *Indian Music and Performing Arts*. New Delhi.
- Various articles published in music research journals related to Tabla pedagogy, music education and digital learning.