



CONFERENCE PAPER

REIMAGINING THE TEACHING OF INDIAN CLASSICAL MUSIC IN THE DIGITAL AGE: PEDAGOGICAL OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract

The expansion of digital communication technologies has significantly influenced the transmission of Indian Classical Music beyond traditional geographical boundaries. Historically sustained through the Guru-Shishya Parampara, the pedagogy of Indian Classical Music is increasingly adapting to online learning environments that enable students worldwide to access instruction without physical proximity to a teacher. This shift has become particularly important for members of the Indian diaspora who often face challenges in accessing qualified instructors locally. This paper examines the pedagogical possibilities and challenges associated with online music education platforms in the global dissemination of Indian Classical Music. Adopting a qualitative approach, the study reviews contemporary online teaching practices and incorporates insights from a semi-structured interview with a practitioner associated with an online music academy. The discussion highlights issues of accessibility, scheduling flexibility, learner engagement, and emerging socio-economic opportunities for music educators. The results show that even though there are still some technical issues like delay and less personal interaction, new ways of teaching online can really help more people around the world learn and keep Indian Classical Music alive. This can be a great way to share and preserve this traditional music, even with the current limitations. As technology improves, it's likely that even more people will be able to participate and learn about Indian Classical Music.

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Introduction:-

Indian Classical Music has been passed down through the years by a special teacher-student relationship called Guru-Shishya Parampara. This way of learning is based on spending a lot of time with your teacher, watching, imitating, and learning from them. It's not just about learning the music, but also about understanding the style and the ideas behind it.

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When students learn in this way, they can really get a feel for the music and the traditions that come with it, like the raga-based traditions. This helps them to not just play the right notes, but to also understand the deeper meaning and beauty of the music. However, the rapid expansion of digital communication technologies in the twenty-first century has begun to reshape the ways in which musical knowledge is transmitted and accessed. Online platforms now enable teachers and students to interact across geographical boundaries, allowing music education to take place in virtual environments. Digital learning technologies have expanded access to education by facilitating remote instruction and global knowledge exchange (Bates 112). For people who love Indian Classical Music and live outside of India, online music schools are really helpful. Many Indians who live in other countries want to stay connected to their traditional music, but it can be hard to find good teachers where they live. That's where online learning comes in - it gives them a chance to learn from qualified teachers and get structured training in Indian music, even if they're not in India. There are still some concerns about how well online music lessons actually work. Music is a subject that usually needs a teacher to be able to see and hear their students clearly, and for the students to be able to see and hear the teacher.

Some researchers have noted that online music classes can be tricky because of problems with sound quality, delays, and not being able to show things in person (Waldron 258). On the other hand, technology has made it possible to share different types of music with people all around the world, and to come up with new and innovative ways of teaching music (Webster 134). This has opened up a lot of new possibilities for music education. For example, students can now learn from teachers who are on the other side of the world, and they can access a wide range of musical resources and materials online. However, it's still important to figure out how to make online music lessons as effective as possible, so that students can get the most out of them. This study looks at how online music schools can teach Indian Classical Music to people all around the world. It checks out what's working and what's not with online music lessons, and talks to teachers to see how they think online learning is changing the way this traditional music is passed on. By doing this, we can see how online teaching is affecting the way Indian Classical Music is shared and learned.

Objectives of the Study:-

The study is guided by the following objectives:-

1. To examine the role of online music education platforms in the global dissemination of Indian Classical Music.
2. To analyse the pedagogical possibilities and limitations of online instruction in the teaching of Indian Classical Music.
3. To explore how online music education contributes to accessibility and socio-economic opportunities for music educators.

Research Questions:-

The study addresses the following research questions:

1. How do online music education platforms contribute to the global dissemination of Indian Classical Music?
2. What pedagogical opportunities and challenges arise in teaching Indian Classical Music through online platforms?
3. How does online music education influence accessibility for learners and employment opportunities for music educators?

Review of Literature:-

Traditional Pedagogy in Indian Classical Music:-Indian Classical Music has always been taught in a special way, where a teacher, or guru, guides their student, or shishya, over a long period of time. This way of teaching helps students learn the technical parts of music and also understand the beauty and feeling behind it. The teacher and student work closely together, and this is how musical knowledge has been passed down through the years in many traditional art forms. It's like an apprenticeship, where the student learns from the teacher by watching, listening, and practicing with them. This approach is still very important today in keeping traditional music alive. Studies have shown that the way music is taught in Indian culture is really important. The relationship between the teacher and student, known as Guru-Shishya, is not just about learning music, but also about forming a person's overall artistic identity and how they perform. This is a key part of Indian music traditions, as noted by Nettl.

Music Education in the Digital Era:-Technology has changed the way we learn in a big way. It's made it possible for people to learn from anywhere, at any time. This is especially helpful for people who can't be in a traditional classroom. As one expert, Bates, points out, digital learning lets students join in from anywhere, and they can also

learn on their own schedule. Plus, they can get to all the materials they need online (Bates 112). This has really opened up education to a lot of people who might not have been able to access it otherwise. Within music education, technological tools have increasingly been integrated into teaching methodologies. Computer-based technologies and digital platforms support interactive learning experiences and facilitate new approaches to music instruction (Webster 134). Online learning environments have also encouraged participatory forms of musical engagement through digital communities and user-generated content (Waldron 258).

Global Dissemination of Indian Classical Music:-Indian Classical Music has become really popular all around the world. This happened because people moved to different countries and shared their music with others. Also, people from different cultures started talking and learning from each other. Now, you can hear Indian music everywhere, thanks to concerts, recordings, and people teaching it to others. The internet and other digital tools have made it even easier for musicians and teachers to connect with students from all over the world. For example, you can learn about Indian music from books like the one written by Farrell, which talks about how Indian music has spread globally. As a result, Indian music is now enjoyed by people from many different backgrounds, and its popularity continues to grow. Globalization has changed how music is shared and learned across different cultures. Now, online music schools play a big role in spreading cultural knowledge, letting students from all over the world learn about traditional Indian music. This way, people can discover and appreciate new types of music, no matter where they're from

Methodology:-

Research Design:-This study adopts a qualitative research approach in order to explore the pedagogical effectiveness and institutional implications of online music education platforms.

Data Sources:-

Two primary sources of data were used in the study:

1. A semi-structured interview conducted with Ms. Madhurima Banerjee, Partner at Svarāntar Academy of Music.
2. Analysis of contemporary online music teaching practices.

The interview explored institutional structure, pedagogical strategies, technological challenges, accessibility for international learners, and economic opportunities created through online music education.

Data Analysis:-The interview responses were analysed using thematic analysis, which enabled the identification of key patterns related to pedagogical adaptation, accessibility, institutional development, and economic sustainability.

Discussion and Analysis:-

Institutional Expansion and Global Student Base:-The interview findings indicate that online music education platforms have significantly expanded the reach of music institutions. According to the interviewee, Svarāntar Academy of Music now teaches around 550-600 students from all over the world. Most of these students are from countries like the US, UK, Canada, Australia, and some parts of Europe (Banerjee). This shows how much online music schools have grown and can now reach students globally. The academy offers instruction in vocal music, guitar, and keyboard across Western, Hindustani, and Carnatic musical traditions, as well as programs in music therapy and creative arts. The institution is affiliated with Sarba Bharatiya Sangeet-O-Sanskriti Parishad and maintains educational collaboration with Shri Balaji Vidyapith University for music therapy programs. Such collaborations illustrate how online academies are increasingly functioning as structured educational institutions rather than informal teaching arrangements.

Pedagogical Adaptation in Online Music Teaching:-Teaching Nowadays, online music lessons are way better thanks to advances in digital technology. In the past, learning music online was a bit of a challenge because of the slow internet and poor sound quality. But now, we have platforms like Zoom and Google Meet that are specifically designed for teaching music. They have features like high-quality audio that reduce delays and make the sound clearer, which is really helpful for music lessons (Banerjee). Teachers also utilize different digital tools to enhance students' learning experiences. Applications such as iShala, iTanpura, and Tanpura Droid are commonly used to provide drone accompaniment and pitch reference. Metronome and Tabla rhythm applications assist students in maintaining rhythmic accuracy during practice sessions. One key thing that stands out from the interview is how classes are recorded automatically using Google Workspace. This means students can go back and watch lessons again after class, which is really helpful for learning. It lets them practice on their own and remember what they

were taught by replaying the demonstrations and feedback from their teachers. This way, students can learn at their own pace and reinforce what they learned in class.

Technological Challenges and Institutional Solutions:-Despite the advantages of digital learning, certain challenges continue to affect online music instruction. Issues such as internet latency and audio synchronization can occasionally interfere with synchronous musical interaction. To address these challenges, Svarāntar Academy provides technical guidance during trial classes, ensuring that students configure appropriate audio settings before beginning regular lessons (Banerjee). Teachers are also trained in digital teaching practices to adapt traditional pedagogical methods to online environments. Also, the recording of classes allows students to review lessons and correct mistakes during practice sessions, thereby compensating for certain limitations of real-time instruction.

Accessibility and Cost Advantages for the Indian Diaspora:-Online music education has significantly improved accessibility for members of the Indian diaspora. According to the interviewee, in-person Indian classical music lessons abroad may cost between \$300 and \$500 per month, whereas online classes through Indian academies can be accessed for approximately \$50–\$60 per month (Banerjee). Online learning therefore provides a more affordable option for international learners who wish to maintain cultural connections with Indian musical traditions. Moreover, virtual instruction eliminates travel time and allows flexible scheduling across time zones, making it easier for students to integrate music learning into their daily routines.

Economic Opportunities for Music Educators:-The expansion of online music education has also created new professional opportunities for musicians. Traditionally, music teaching in India was often considered secondary to performing and was relatively undervalued economically. However, the interview indicates that online teaching allows musicians to reach international students and earn higher remuneration. Teachers conducting offline group classes may earn approximately ₹500 to ₹1500 per student per month, whereas online teaching for international learners can generate ₹500 to ₹1000 per class, depending on the teacher's experience and level of instruction (Banerjee). Furthermore, the academy itself has expanded from 15 teachers to more than 75 instructors, illustrating the growing demand for online music education.

Long-Term Sustainability of Online Music Education:-The findings suggest that online music education is increasingly becoming an integral component of contemporary music pedagogy. Its advantages in terms of accessibility, flexibility, and cost efficiency make it attractive for both students and teachers. Scholars have noted that technological innovations have significantly reshaped the ways in which music is produced, distributed, and taught in modern societies (Théberge 9). Within this context, online music education platforms represent an important development in the global dissemination of musical traditions.

Findings:-

The study reveals several key findings:-

1. Online music education platforms significantly expand the global accessibility of Indian Classical Music.
2. Digital tools and applications support effective pedagogical adaptation in virtual learning environments.
3. Online instruction provides substantial cost advantages for international learners.
4. The growth of online music academies creates new employment opportunities for musicians.
5. Despite technological limitations, digital pedagogy demonstrates strong potential for sustaining traditional musical practices.

Conclusion:-

The emergence of online music education platforms represents a significant development in the transmission of Indian Classical Music in the twenty-first century. While the Guru-Shishya Parampara remains central to the philosophy of Indian Classical Music pedagogy, digital technologies are enabling new forms of interaction between teachers and students across the globe. The findings of this study indicate that online instruction enhances accessibility for international learners while simultaneously creating new economic opportunities for music educators. Although certain technological challenges persist, ongoing advancements in digital communication technologies continue to improve the feasibility of online music instruction. Online music education therefore has the potential to complement traditional pedagogical models and contribute significantly to the global dissemination and preservation of Indian Classical Music traditions.

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Appendix A**Semi-Structured Interview Questionnaire****Interviewee:** Ms. Madhurima Banerjee**Position:** Partner, Svarāntar Academy of Music**Principal Investigator:** Tanmoy Mani**Section 1: Institutional Structure**

1. Could you briefly describe your role at Svarāntar Academy of Music and the academy's primary objectives?
2. Approximately how many students are currently enrolled at the academy, and from which countries do most of the international learners come?
3. What types of courses and certifications are students trained for through the academy?

Section 2: Pedagogical Effectiveness

4. From your experience, how effective is online instruction in teaching Indian Classical Music compared to traditional in-person training?
5. What pedagogical methods or digital tools are used to ensure that students develop proper technique, musical understanding, and discipline in an online environment?
6. Which applications or digital tools are commonly used by teachers and students during online classes?

Section 3: Challenges and Solutions

7. What are the most common challenges faced by teachers and students in online music classes?
8. What strategies or technological solutions have been implemented by the academy to overcome these challenges?
9. What is the difference between a trial class and a routine class?

Section 4: Accessibility and Cost Effectiveness

10. In what ways does online music education benefit the NRI diaspora living in countries such as the USA, UK, Canada, and Europe?
11. How does online learning compare with local music training abroad in terms of cost, accessibility, and convenience?

Section 5: Economic and Institutional Sustainability

12. How has the online teaching model created employment opportunities or income sources for Indian music teachers?
13. From your perspective, how sustainable is online music education as a long-term model for the global dissemination of Indian Classical Music?
14. How sustainable is it for music teachers as a career option?

Appendix B**Semi-Structured Interview Transcription**

The following is a question-wise transcript of the responses provided by Madurima Banerjee, a partner at Svarāntar Academy of Music:

Section 1: Institutional Structure

Could you briefly describe your role at Svarāntar Academy of Music and the academy's primary objectives?

Role: She is a partner in the firm.

Objectives: The academy aims to provide accessible and affordable music and music therapy education, services, and awareness worldwide.

Approximately how many students are currently enrolled and from which countries do you have the most number of students?

Enrollment: Approximately 550 to 600 students.

Student Locations: Most international learners are from the USA, followed by the UK, Canada, Australia, and parts of Europe.

What type of courses and certifications are students trained for through the academy?

Courses: Vocal music, guitar, and keyboard in Western, Carnatic, and Hindustani genres; art and craft; and music therapy diploma and short courses.

Certifications & Collaborations: Affiliated with Sarba Bharatiya Sangeet-O-Sanskriti Parishad. They have an educational collaboration with SNDT Women's University for music therapy and work with various NGOs and institutes for awareness and services.

Section 2: Pedagogical Effectiveness

From your experience, how effective is online instruction in teaching Indian classical music compared to traditional in-person training?

Comparison: There are not many differences now. While popular since the pandemic, online learning for Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) via apps like Skype existed earlier, though internet stability was poor then.

Modern Technology: Advances in technology and specialized platforms like Zoom, Google Meet, and Muse now offer features for musicians, such as high-fidelity "original sound" audio settings that handle high pitches and minimize latency.

Virtual Tools: Virtual instruments and various apps make it easy to clearly describe and showcase music to students.

What pedagogical methods or digital tools are used to ensure that students develop proper techniques, musical understanding, and discipline in an online environment?

Recordings: Using Google Workspace, every class is recorded and automatically emailed to students, allowing them to practice by reviewing the class without using their own device's storage space.

Equipments: Teachers and students utilize affordable equipment, such as microphones.

Can you name some of the applications which you generally use or the students use while learning and teaching?

Accompaniment & Tuning: Apps for metronomes, tuning, and Tabla accompaniment.

Specific Apps: iShala and iTanpura for Apple users; Tanpura Droid and various free Tabla rhythm and tuner apps for Android users.

Section 3: Challenges and Solutions

What are the most common challenges faced by the teachers and students in online music classes?

Status: Currently, there are few challenges if there is a stable internet connection. Initial issues like lagging and

latency have largely been resolved.

What strategies or technological solutions have been implemented by the academy to overcome these challenges?

- **Technical Support:** Representatives attend demo classes to assist students with audio settings like "original sound for musicians".
- **Teacher Training:** Teachers are trained to equip themselves professionally for online instruction.
- **Recorded Feedback:** Automatic class recordings via Google Workspace allow for rechecking class content.

What is the difference between a trial class and a routine class?

- **Trial/Demo Class:** A 15-20 minute session for new students to understand the pedagogy, meet the teacher, discuss the structure/timeline, and try the technology before committing to a paid subscription.

Section 4: Accessibility and Cost Effectiveness

In what way does online music education benefit the NRI diaspora?

- **Cultural Connection:** It helps NRIs connect with their roots through traditional Indian teaching methods.
- **Cost Efficiency:** In-person classes abroad can cost \$300 to \$500 per month, while online classes through the academy are significantly cheaper at \$50 to \$60 per month.
- **Personalized Care:** Online students often receive individual classes for a lower price than they would pay for group classes offline.

Section 5: Economic and Institutional Sustainability

How has the online teaching model created employment opportunities or income sources for Indian music teachers?

Closing the Gap: Traditionally, music teaching in India was secondary to performing and often undervalued and underpaid.

Income Increase: Teachers in India might earn only 500 to 1,500 rupees per student per month for offline group classes. Online, they can earn 500 to 1,000 rupees per class for international students, depending on experience and student level.

How sustainable is online music education as a long-term model for the global dissemination of Indian classical music?

Current Reality: It is no longer the future, but the present; online classes are expected to replace offline ones very soon due to being time and cost-efficient.

Convenience: It saves significant travel time and costs for both students and busy parents, allowing learning to happen at home under parental observation.

How sustainable is it for the music teachers as a career option?

Flexibility: It offers flexible timing, allowing musicians to manage performances and recordings alongside teaching.

Growth: The academy has grown from 15 to over 75 teachers supporting 550+ students.

Employment Benefits: Svarāntar is moving toward hiring teachers on monthly salaries with benefits like provident funds (PF) and medical facilities.