

## **Impact of Television Reality Shows in Popularization of Indian Classical and Folk Music**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study explores the pivotal role of television reality shows in the popularization and preservation of Indian classical and folk music. Through analysing several critical reviews and cultural analyses, it demonstrates how television has brought traditional music to the people and, which has been best notated, has purchased the life of artists and regional genres, thus local art forms having regained their breaths. The Knowledge of veterans, heart touching stories, technical advancement along with fusion performance are the altogether reasons by which Classical and folk music are more listen-able and view-able these days. Although it presents a challenge in terms of commercialisation, reality TV continues to be an important instrument with which the broader public grapples with and understands cultural pride and diversity in India's musical culture in the modern media world.

**Keywords:** *Indian Classical Music, Folk Music, Television Reality Shows, Cultural Preservation.*

### **I. Introduction**

The Indian subcontinent, with its sprawling cultural heritage and rich musical tapestry, has long been the cradle of some of the world's most sophisticated musical traditions. Indian classical and folk music, especially, have developed through centuries of oral tradition as a part of the heritage of performing-arts, music, and religious culture sanctified music, and demonstrated cultural resurgence. They have in fact been safeguarding the aesthetic core of the country, at the same time that they represented living records of its socio-cultural past. In today's world, however, "The classic music has been dwindling, and in a way global culture has slowly been eating out our indigenous," says Manuel Sampaio, a leading musicologist. In this context, television reality shows have played an impressive role in the rejuvenation and dissemination of Indian classical and folk music across the country. As a medium, the television has expanded its reach multifold and increased its impact to an great extent over the course of a decade and a half; ever since the Indian economy was liberalized in

the early 1990s. Music based reality TV for one has fed off this growth in using to package selected performances of classical and folk music for mass consumption. “Programmes such as Sa Re Ga Ma Pa, Indian Idol, The Voice India, India’s Got Talent have helped in popularising classical forms of music and making it more visible and relatable to the youth. These formats blend elements of competition, mentoring by celebrities, and large-scale voting to produce emotionally charged stories, most of the time involving performers singing songs drawn from Indian classical ragas or regional folk practices. In the process, these programs escape from mere entertainment to become forums for cultural dissemination and revival.

The integration of classical and folk music into reality shows is not merely incidental but reflects broader cultural and pedagogical shifts. In history, classical music was mostly treated as gharana sangeet (lineage's music) or courtly or devotional music or music exclusive to music-releasing places such as agraharas or temples; folk music was known to be operating on fields (especially those for tribal music). The democratisation of these vehicles and these styles through TV becomes historically relevant as a method of musical transmission and reception. Certainly now, seven decades later, we have the medium of contemporary media, where the genre of music is blurred the lines between folk and classical and between traditional and modern are quite permeable. Musicians from the smallest of villages, the lowest of economic classes, and the farthest regions of India now have a national platform to display their talents, thereby lending to deconstruction of music either educationally or in terms of listenership. The significance of reality television in this respect is manifold. For one, these shows are repositories of cultural memory. When a competitor sings a Bhojpuri folk song or a version of a Hindustani raga, they’re not performing a piece of music so much as representing a heritage that might otherwise have been underserved by popular conversation. Second Reality Show Pedagogical Value there’s something to be learned from watching reality shows. Expert judges - and many offer comments on the history and theory behind the repertory as well as the performance itself - form an informal and potent system of music education. These shows’ competitive, and emotionally rich, form therefore commands widespread public attention, and in doing so, cultural relevance.

Academic inquiries into this phenomenon have begun to unpack the complex ways in which music reality shows intersect with identity, performance, and media economics. Rashmi (2025) examines the impact of hills tunes on classical Indian music and finds the hills melody from the mountain folk music contributing significantly to the raga structure of Hindustani classical music. Her conclusions bring out the close intertwining of regional folklore and the classical canon and suggest that television performances contrasting or blending these genres represent important tools in teaching. Likewise, Banerjee (2025) emphasized the importance of the gharanas in maintaining the link with boringness and how it is imperative for these gharanas to evolve in today’s context and age without losing their tradition. He speaks of a mixed pedagogy that respects both the institutional and the traditional systems of learning.

Economic factors also play a crucial role in shaping the popularization of traditional music. Pandey (2025) observed the wane in the royal patronage after independence as one of the major retrogressions for classical musicians that had historically relied on feudal patronage networks.

Lacking the commercial strength of a solid economic model, reality television is an ugly, if secondary, place to gain visibility and support. They not only get fame, but also get chances of concerts, playback singing and even brand endorsements, which make way for traditional musicians to re-occupy the economic mainstream. This commodified aspect has been criticized by many, but it is also exactly what guarantees the art's continued life in modern settings.

Li (2024) provided a global perspective by examining the fusion of classical music with other genres like jazz and blues. It contributed to a notion of hybridization as essential to the preservation of classical forms in a world increasingly dominated by popular culture. Indian music reality shows follow a similar pattern of prioritizing fusion where they have shown enthusiasm for artists performing soulful raga based music with Bollywood tunes or western chords. They attract a younger and contemporary audience, and are characterised by traditional music combined with current themes, in the perfect balance between innovation and heritage. This tendency is also strengthened by technological changes. Patil et al. (2024) applied deep learning techniques to the classification of tabla taals, and highlighted potential benefits of AI based methods for music analysis and education. Similarly, Singh et al. (2021) introduced Swaragram, a system developed for raga recognition in Indian classical music. Now technology is playing a larger role in reality TV shows and, in the case of these essayists, is being used by contestants for pitch-correcting software, rhythm adjustment software, and evaluative software. This combination of the old and the new is not just the modernization of traditional and folk music but also its democratization to amateur musicians and digital natives alike.”

The cultural narratives embedded within reality television formats further enhance their pedagogical potential. Sharma and Hassan (2021) further examined nation-building through musical performances. They also discovered that the show's episodic crisis stories often favored values of humility, perseverance and cultural pride, and connected with a wide range of viewers. When you do this, you provide stories that make classical music and folk music accessible and relatable, not as something elitist or folksy, but bearing on life and society in emotional ways. And the democratising potential of reality shows cannot be emphasised enough. Mazid (2019) pointed out these platforms disrupt traditional hierarchies, enabling “ordinary” individuals to be awarded superstar status. This democracy doesn't stop with genres of music. Folk practices, long dismissed as quaint curiosities, have taken center stage. (Shows like India's Got Talent and Super Singer often include acts that performed in regional languages and attire, hence validating and honouring diversity). Such visibility is uplifting for folk healers and helps motivate the young to investigate and conserve their heritage.

Despite these positive developments, critiques persist. Sriram (2019) argued the commercial pressure on reality show often exaggerate public mentality and misrepresent culture. To gain better TRPs (Television Rating Points), producers cud script emotional back stories or maychant v out perfs too such dat music gets sidelined. This kind of mechanism, however, reinforces mass appeal, which allows for greater conveyance of classical and folk music. The trick is to walk a line between entertainment and verisimilitude — a pretty tall order that involves careful selection and ethical production. FOLK music, especially, becomes patently electrifying when extended to the visual and audio canvas of television.

Singh (2022) pointed out how folklore was used in visual and narrative re-creation; according to him, folk music, along with folk crafts, stories and rituals are important components of the country's intangible cultural heritage. Reality shows on television offer a lively stage for this heritage to be expressed and reinvented. Participants will often change traditional songs up with more modern instruments or even set folk dances to music for a complete audio and visual cultural presentation.

This reinvention is not limited to performance alone but extends to pedagogy and scholarship. Shete and Deshmukh (2020) described how state-of-the-art 'audio feature extraction' methods may be utilised as a tool to better understand and appreciate timbre carried by tabla strokes, which can in turn enliven and enrich music pedagogy. Gor (2017) also trained machine learning algorithms to categorize Indian folk song types, demonstrating the possibilities for data-driven approaches to research in ethnomusicology. When implemented in television formats, such technological advancements can contribute to the educational aspect of music reality shows, turning them into a medium for research and experimentation. This conversation is enriched by the geographical diversity of Indian music. Sengupta (2018) took examples- Banarasi sarees and folk music- to examine TCE by bringing out the artistic and craft dimension of Indian cultural heritage. It's not just entertainment when they wear regional clothes or sing region-specific songs, but it subtly teaches us how diverse India is culturally. This applies especially if one lives in a global village that constantly threatens the destruction of indigenous culture.

From a historical perspective, Sharma (2020) traced the evolution of Indian classical music from Vedic chants to contemporary compositions, underscoring the adaptability and resilience of the tradition. His work threw into relief the contrasting, yet complementary, journeys of Hindustani and Carnatic music, circuitous weavings through the world's cultures. Reality TV that contains both styles provide a point of comparison and a way of promoting cross-cultural understanding and dialogue. They are so much 21st century sabhas (concert congregations) where the connoisseur or common listener can interact with the music.

At a more granular level, the structure and content of reality shows facilitate experiential learning. Judges - many classically or folk-trained musicians - deliver immediate critique and direction. A You can, for example, have a judge describe a raga or the meaning of a folk lyric, in effect turning a performance into a mini-seminar. With a system of informal education, like this one, where music education does not reach most of the population, this way of learning is quite efficient.

Furthermore, the archiving potential of televised content cannot be overlooked. Reality show performances are generally uploaded on digital platforms such as YouTube thus a depository of classical and folk music is being driven in to the homes of global audience. These digital repositories play the role of rich information resources for researchers, music enthusiasts, and educators to sustain and promote traditional music genres in cyberspace. The mental and emotional health implications of these shows also deserve debate. Most contestants gain a loyal, devoted fan base of viewers invested in them emotionally, who cheer for them in their journey and aspire to see them succeed. This emotional interest further increases the value of remembered and experienced play music. Suddenly the most esoteric or antiquated song gets a second act when placed in the context of a person's passionate personal history.

The importance of audience reception is further illuminated by the work of Sarkar and Biswas (2016), who provided a concise overview of Indian classical music and its socio-religious origins. Music in India is more than just entertainment, they pointed out; it has been a form of devotion, protest and social commentary. Reality shows, with their origins in devotional songs, protest ballads and the socially relevant song, thus intersect this metabolic function and, hence, acquire their accentuation.

The intersection of television reality shows with Indian classical and folk music represents a unique confluence of tradition and modernity, pedagogy and performance, preservation and innovation. These shows have opened up traditional music to the populace, offered new outlets for talent and generated a fresh interest in the wealth of India's musical legacy. Though they have commercialization and authenticity problems, they have mostly served us well. As future developments in media and technology shape music culture (and as reality-TV in general becomes more prominent), the ways in which reality-TV shows mediate music in India is likely to become increasingly important as a site of scholarly and popular inquiry.

## II. Literature Reviews

Author	Year	Key Focus	Findings
Rashmi	2025	Hill tunes and Hindustani classical	Hill melodies influenced classical ragas in structure, improvisation, and emotion
Banerjee	2025	Preservation of Hindustani music	Gharana system vital for versatility; supports hybrid model for preservation and sustainability
Pandey	2025	Economic challenges	Loss of royal patronage weakened Hindustani music; proposed alternative financial models
Li	2024	Fusion of classical and popular music	Classical music survives through fusion with jazz, blues, etc., aiding global popularization
Patil et al.	2024	Tabla taal classification via AI	Used Advance Methods to recognize taals; User Interfacing tool aids learners and teachers
Singh & Devi	2023	Hindustani music principles	Traced classical roots from ancient to modern, showed commonalities in raga-tala structure
Singh	2022	Folklore and music	Emphasized reinvention and awareness among youth using fieldwork and narratives
Jaral	2022	Folk-classical relationship	Folk music shaped many classical ragas; explored origin and similarities
Sharma & Hassan	2021	Reality shows and national identity	Sa Re Ga Ma Pa used to express Indian identity through structured narratives
Singh et al.	2021	Music feature extraction	Developed 'Swaragram' for Indian ragas, supporting education and research
Sharma	2020	Hindustani vs. Carnatic	Compared structural frameworks and evolution; emphasized adaptation and preservation



Shete & Deshmukh	2020	Tabla bol identification	91.2% accuracy using timbre + MFCC in SVM classifier for tabla stroke analysis
Sriram	2019	Tamil reality TV impact	Reality TV promoted talent but also caused cultural imbalance due to commercialization
Mazid	2019	Superstar image in reality TV	Reality shows democratized stardom but imposed emotional and psychological labor
Sengupta	2018	Folklore expressions	Banarasi sarees and folk music valued artistically; preservation differs from industrial products
Gor	2017	Folk music classification	Used Few Engineering method to classify regional folk songs using MFCC and spectral features
Sarkar & Biswas	2016	Overview of classical music	Classical music rooted in socio-religious life; emphasized enduring cultural significance

### III. Findings From Review Study

**Enhanced Visibility and Cultural Inclusivity:** Television reality shows have brought Indian classical and folk music into mainstream popular culture by showcasing them to vast and diverse audiences. Artists of rural, tribal and other marginalised communities are provided opportunities to perform traditional compositions with regional languages and styles. This all-encompassing exposure not only legitimizes their culture, but also fosters a sense of pride and interest in its audience. Folkloric instruments, costumes and dialects previously limited to regional fest inals and village fairs are learning to be showcased in nationwide broadcasts, thus encouraging multi-culturalism and renewing regional identities.

**Informal Music Education and Public Engagement:** Reality shows serve an educational function by offering audiences informal lessons in music theory and history. During feedback, expert judges generally one or two classically trained musicians – will explain aspects of raga structure, taal variation or the role of a folk lyric. This converges the form of entertainment into one of education, especially for those without access to an education in music. In addition, the emotional stories of the participants and competitors make the exotic seem human, and the audience can identify more strongly with the music and its participants as a result.

**Innovation through Fusion and Technological Integration:** The blending of classical and folk music with contemporary genres like Bollywood, pop, or Western harmonicsn has become a signature feature of reality shows. “Through its fusion, it is able to attract the younger generations while maintaining the heritage of folk music. Furthermore, it is observed that several technology-based systems such as AI-based raga recognition systems, methodological systems, such as tabla taal classifier systems, and technical tools (e.g., pitch correction software), are having a clear usage both in performance analysis as well pedagogy. These breakthroughs allow us to bring music education into the 21st century, enable us to document the tradition in a digital format, and (most importantly) provide traditional music to the tech-inspired generation of new learners.

**Economic Empowerment and Career Opportunities:** For many traditional artists, television reality shows offer new paths to economic sustainability. Contestants who perform well get playback offers, stage shows, endorsements and music albums. Such visibility provides a feasible career path that had been closed off to numerous classical or folk musicians, especially outside urban or institutionalized circuits. In such a way, reality series are contemporary patrons filling in for the vanished mechanisms of royal or high society patronage of these art forms.

**Preservation Challenges and the Need for Balanced Representation:** While the impact of reality shows has been largely positive, concerns remain about commercialization and dramatization. Sometimes, the tradition of traditional music can be compromised through emotional scripting, oversaturation or even the superficial coupling of deeply complex musical forms. Entertainment could potentially detract from cultural integrity. So, producers and makers need to strike a balance – that Indian classical and folk traditions do not get washed out but cherished, respected and portrayed on TV with depth.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

Television reality shows have emerged as dynamic platforms for reviving and popularizing Indian classical and folk music. With this broad invitation, along with the prominent platform and the expert mentorship available, these shows provide a space where tradition meets modernity. They offer to all a democratization of heritage, give a voice to rural and underrepresented artists, and provide a range of access to the public from entertainment to education. Though aspects of its commercialization continue to confound, by and large it has been a game changer – guaranteeing the survival, adaption and global spread of an extraordinary legacy of music in India. Continued attempts at authenticity and cultural sensitivity can further improve the reinstating and redeveloping of traditional Indian music forms.

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