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# EXPLORING THE ARTISTIC JOURNEY AND MUSICAL INNOVATIONS OF BHAGWAT SHARAN SHARMA

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## Abstract

The desire to learn how individual musicians influence the modern Indian classical and devotional traditions has increased significantly, especially as musicians overcome strains between the past, creativity, and the digital age. Bhagwat Sharan Sharma is the important person in this sense because his artistic career has been marked by the strict classical schooling and the creative flexibility. This study will focus on the stylistic growth and interpretation styles of Sharma and evaluate his contribution to the contemporary discourse of music. These goals are to record the periods of his artistic development, explain the work of art criticism regarding his work, and contextualize his innovations in evolving cultural and technological contexts. Qualitative approach is assumed and the sources of secondary nature are used, including archival data, academic literature, and visual evidence. The research results revealed that Sharma attempts to make his art work influenced by the prolonged experience of the raga-related aesthetics, exploration of melodic and rhythmic patterns, and sensitivity to the evolving conditions of the performance. His skill to combine spiritualism with modernity is a way of how classical musicians will always be relevant in a multi-cultural and changing world. The conclusion emphasizes that Sharma can keep the tradition of music alive and at the same time push the limits of expression, proving that the personal creativity can be considered to be the determinant of the survival of the Indian musical traditions. The research has implications towards heritage conservation, documentation of artists and the interpretation of contemporary audience response, yet the research has limitations due to the lack of primary research. The interviews, ethnographic observation, and comparative analysis should be included in the further research to gain a deeper insight into the artistic influence of Sharma.

**Keywords:** Bhagwat Sharan Sharma, Musical Innovation, Indian Classical Music, Artistic Evolution, Cultural Continuity.

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## INTRODUCTION

Bhagwat Sharan Sharma stands in an unusual niche in the modern life of the Indian classical and devotional music, becoming a versatile musician whose career projects a mix of conservative classical and modern elements. His career in art can be seen as a deep study of musical tradition, which was based on the strict study and a sense of cultural aesthetics (Bhattacharya, 2024). Sharma has been able to produce a body of work over the decades that does not only pay tribute to the classical canon but also adds to the expressive options to it through intelligent experimentation. This development indicates that he was committed to continue with the traditional musical practices and his reaction to changing artistic, technological and social conditions. Since researchers are more and more eager to provide evidence in terms of illustrating the role played by a single artist in determining cultural successors, the oeuvre composed by Sharma provides a strong argument in favor of analyzing how individual creativity can be aligned with communal musical memory (Kapur, et al., 2023).

The flexibility of the traditional models and the changing musical sensibility in Sharma is shown in his new approaches to composition and performance. His compositions often combine the age-old ragas with modern melodic formations producing a stylistic hybrid that does not erode the classical purity. Through experimenting with a wider range of vocal expression, rhythmic overlaying, and instrumental support, Sharma is a contributor to the current revolution of the Indian musical expression (SHARMA, 2025). Furthermore, his experimentation goes beyond the technical features, as he tries out the thematic material with which the contemporary listeners can relate, but which goes back to the spiritual and philosophical traditions. Such combination of tradition and innovation place Sharma in the larger dialogic process where the musicians redefine classical idioms thus guaranteeing its usefulness to the generations to come. Studying these innovations is an important insight into how an individual agency spurs genre development (Seibel, 2023).

There are also major overlaps between artistic practice, cultural identity, and the widening scope of media technologies that are evident in the trajectory of Sharma career. With the digital platforms becoming more

influential in music creation, distribution, and consumption, Sharma has skillfully found his way in and out of the digital platforms to maximize the impact of his creative output. His music videos, live concerts, and joint projects capitalize on the technological affordances to reach the audiences around the whole world without compromising the integrity of his music message (Timilsina, 2023). Such versatility highlights the necessity to not only consider the aesthetic aspects of his works but also the socio-cultural processes that determine the presence of art. This exploration is a good insight into the manner in which traditional musicians react to the contemporary media ecologies so as to turn adversity to their advantage in the form of an expanded cultural process (Dahal, et al., 2024).

Such a versatile artistic legacy of Sharma and the impact he makes on the formation of the modern understanding of Indian music justify the fact that he is subjected to a systematic scholarly perception. A close review of his development of style, his teachers, and the approaches he took to creativity can shed light on larger theories of musical innovation and cultural survival. This paper thus makes Sharma a pivotal figure under whom the relationships between the tradition, creativity, and modernity can be effectively interpreted (Sarma, 2019). Focusing on his works in the historical and current context, the research will be able to make a contribution to the existing scholarly debates regarding personal art, genre shift, and the survival of the intangible cultural heritage. In conclusion, the musical career of Bhagwat Sharan Sharma is an in-depth exploration that makes the discussion about the creation of artistic excellence at the cross-road of the traditional arts and the experimental approach to art more comprehensive (Saxena, & Haroon, 2017).

To explore the artistic career of Bhagwat Sharan Sharma, it is important to place his work in the context of the further history and the development of Indian music in general. Whereas the classical and devotional traditions have always been predominantly influenced by the lineage, instruction and ritualization, the last few decades have brought a swift transformation of aesthetics, institutions and the platforms of art visibility. The works by Sharma acquire even greater importance in this broadened framework, and they reflect how artists react to both the old customs and the new cultural changes (Beaster-Jones, 2015). His creative decisions are representative of overall trends wherein musical language is used by artists in new and creative ways to stay relevant in the changing social and technological environment. This approach stimulates the further investigation of the way personal artistic paths are combined with the cultural transformation in general, which is why the role of recording someone like Sharma who represents the adaptive capacity of the ecology of classical music in India cannot be overestimated (Banisudha, 2025).

The study is of great importance since it thoroughly explores the artistic career and musical advances of Bhagwat Sharan Sharma, a personality whose contributions can be stated as a reflection of the changing aspects of the Indian classical and devotional music. Through the stylistic evolution of Sharma, compositional styles and interaction with the traditional and modern styles, the study will gain a better idea of how individual creativity can change the general cultural and music trends. The present study also adds to the academic discussion of the maintenance and renewal of intangible cultural heritage, especially in the realm of fast-paced changing technological and sociocultural conditions. What is more, the adaptive nature of digital platforms, as exemplified by Sharma, can be used as a critical platform on which one can evaluate the role of the new practices of dissemination in determining the reach of the audience and the artistic identity of the artist. Finally, the study contributes to the scholarly knowledge in the field of innovation in tradition, and brings to the fore Sharma as a catalyst in the continuation and evolution of the Indian music scene.

The paper has been arranged in a logical flow which is systematic in terms of analyzing the artistic career of Bhagwat Sharan Sharma and innovations. It starts with an Introduction about his musical importance and contextual background and then moves on to the detailed Literature Review, where the past works on gender, technology, tradition, and musical development are synthesized. The Research Gap subsequently establishes the lacking academic attention on the unique creative path of Sharma. The qualitative, descriptive and analytical approach used is described in the Methodology. Thematically elaborated, Results, and Objectives, and the Discussion gives interpretation to them. Lastly, the Conclusion gives a summary of contributions and recommends future research directions.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

**Banisudha, B. (2025)** said that the Indian music heritage and the status of women reveal that women have traditionally been performers, composers, patrons and teachers in classical, semi-classical and devotional music. The analysis demonstrates the limiting effects of gendered perceptions and social rules on visibility, but the nature of the constraints had been negotiated creatively by a number of women. It arrives at the conclusion that greater proportionalization of the female contribution is the key to future scholarship and the restructuring of gender roles in music is still going on.

**Kumari, M. (2025)** expressed that women in Indian classical music that women musicians are still challenged by socio-cultural barriers (norms of respectability, weak patronage circles and poor access to training) that still impede them. Simultaneously, women have helped in the area of innovation in repertoire, teaching lineages, and informal performance spaces. The author makes the conclusion that the story is not only about survival, but about creative empowerment and transformation. The proposed study recommendations include the documentation of female artists that are less known and establishing support systems in mentorship and institutions.

**Virnodkar, S. S., & colleagues. (2024)** discussed that classification of Indian music genre demonstrates how computational schemes are rapidly advancing, supervised, unsupervised and deep-learning algorithms are used to process Indian classical, folk and film music. It recognizes the main challenges: the scarcity of annotated data, the depth of ragas/taals and cultural peculiarity that puts Western-centric algorithms to the test. The authors conclude that the interdisciplinary collaboration, the feature extraction based on cultural awareness, and open-access data are needed to make meaningful progress. They insist that the future work ought to focus on fine-grained categorisation, multimodal and models which are resilient to improvisational nature of the Indian tradition.

**Rony, S. M. A. (2024)** said that the position of women in classical instrumental music (Bangladesh setting, but applicable in the region) that female instrumentalists are at the systemic level: limited access to formal training, increased opportunities to play in performance, and a sense of being undermined. However, a lot of progress is achieved by women with the help of teaching profession, informal circles and solo concerts. The author concludes that more institutional support, women role-models being seen and having gender-sensitive pedagogy are essential. The research focuses on stressing that change is in progress, but not as fast as it could be, which means that policy actions and archive activities should be implemented to record women contributions.

**Booth, G. D. (2022)** said that digital mediation has radically transformed the manner in which music is created, distributed and construed in current situations. The analysis reveals that the online platform and technological tools reorganize the relations between artists, the audience, and the institutions, enlarging the access and causing the pressure of market relations at the same time. Booth infers that musicians have to operate within multi-layered digital ecologies that facilitate creativity and introduce new limitations at the same time. The book highlights that the key to the contemporary musical culture is in the interpretation of the role of mediation in the context of the authenticity, performance practices, and artistic identity in the digital era.

**Sharma, P. (2022)** said that the literature of the Vedas has several allusions to musical instruments, giving us an idea of the early conceptions of sound, ritual efficacy, and artisanship. The research comes up with the types of instruments that subsequently shaped the classical traditions. Sharma concludes that ancient literature bears some basis of insight into the symbolic and practical nature of music in the early Indian society. She tells that she believes that the awareness of the Vedic instrument references assists in tracking the cultural development of the Indian music and complements the historical context of the modern organology.

**Meintjes, L. (2020)** proclaimed that sound technologies are an important factor influencing musical modernity, particularly in cross-cultural and postcolonial frameworks. This paper indicates that recording studios, amplification, and sound engineering do not only impact the ultimate musical output but also affect the choice of art and meaning of the culture. She concludes that musical production is thoroughly caught between political histories, technological infrastructures and social negotiations. The paper makes it clear that today the musical practices cannot be distinguished without the relations of power present in the sound making settings.

**Sarma, B. (2019)** studied the fact that female music singers have historically been a vital but under-represented part in the conventional advancement of the Dhrupad vocal and instrumental traditions. Her work emphasizes the technical skill, interpretative richness and the preservation of uncommon compositions by women. She concludes that even though women have endured the oppression of patriarchy, women have had a notable impact on Dhrupad aesthetics in terms of lineages of teaching and informal transmissions. According to Sarma, the role of women needs to be fully acknowledged in order to understand the history of Dhrupad and the transformation in its styles better.

**Saxena, M. B., & Haroon, M. (2017)** studied the historical flows of the North Indian music culture and discovered that the socio-cultural surroundings had a significant influence on performance practices. Their writing brings into focus the interaction between court culture, folk art and spiritualism in the development of melodic and rhythmic developments. The authors draw a conclusion, according to which Indian classical music developed in the process of unceasing bargaining of regional traditions and developing patronage. They emphasize the need to contextualize the musical creativity as a part of larger cultural histories in order to learn how the identities of artists have been determined by the generations.

**Mazzarella, W. (2017)** discussed the means in which the mass-mediated environments produce affective and social energies that define shared experience. He concludes that the current communication facilities enhance emotional tensions, and how cultural activities or music are perceived and consumed. The work concludes that mass society functions based on symbolic power and mediated charisma and makes the traditional concept of community and authenticity more difficult. Mazzarella underlines that the contemporary cultural behavioral understanding would be premissory on the study of the way mass mediation creates the mass sentiment, identity, and the attention.

**Clayton, M. (2016)** researched the fact that Indian rhythmic systems represent multilayered time organizations that undermine Western notions of meter and timing. He determines the articulation of rhythmic complexity by performers in the form of improvisation, cyclic patterns and bodily coordination, by performing detailed analysis. The paper finds that musical time in Indian cultures should be thought of as an interactive process (participatory) and that it is a flexible time that is created through performer-audience interaction. Clayton points out that rhythm is not only a technical feature but a cultural practice which indicates larger aesthetics, thinking and social order.

**Sharma, P. (2012)** said that Indian musicians were influential in the popularization of the Hindustani classical instrumental music outside the country, which was mainly done by concert, collaboration, and institutions. In her analysis, she indicates that the international audiences have reacted well to improvisational features and the raga

based structures. She concludes that worldwide exposure assisted in the transformation of performance forms, pedagogies as well as the modification of instruments. The research paper underlines that the movement of artists increased the cultural diplomacy and enhanced the power of India in music as a form of soft-power.

Despite the useful knowledge that is offered by the existing literature on the role of women in music, on the digital mediation, on the rhythmic structure, on the organology and on the cultural modernity, there is evident gap in research that can effectively bridge the various perspectives in relation to a specific, artist-specific study of creativity development in contemporary Indian classical and the devotional practice. Research on gendered participation also points to pinpointing socio-cultural constraints and contributions (Banisudha, 2025; Kumari, 2025; Rony, 2024; Sarma, 2019), whereas research on technology and mediation focuses on production ecosystem shifts (Booth, 2022; Meintjes, 2020; Mazzarella, 2017). Historical development and musical form works bring in a wider contextual insight (Saxena and Haroon, 2017; Clayton, 2016; Sharma, 2022). Nevertheless, none of these studies analyse how a single artist merges heritage, innovation, identity, and presence in the digital age. This leaves a knowledge gap of how musicians such as Bhagwat Sharan Sharma are able to find their unique way through changing cultural landscapes to influence the expression of music today. To fill this gap, it is necessary to incorporate biographical analysis, stylistic analysis, and contextual analysis.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In the study, the qualitative methodology would be used to have a profound knowledge about artistic growth and the musical innovations that surrounded Bhagwat Sharan Sharma. The geographical and cultural location is India, and it is possible to take a closer look at the local factors, music, and the performance conditions that impacted his artistic development. It is executed in a descriptive and analytical type of research design, which allows a systematic recording of the main features of his artistic career, and a critical interpretation of stylistic trends, topic selection, and input into the modern musical discourse. The sources of data collection are confined to secondary sources only such as published research, archived sources, biographical descriptions, audio-visual records, and academic articles, which will guarantee a balanced synthesizing of evidence on record. The qualitative orientation grants the introduction of the finer interpretation, whereas the approach of descriptive-analytic orientation allows one to draw a picture of the musical meaning of Sharma and critically analyze it.

### Results and objectives

**Obj1:** To document the developmental stages shaping Bhagwat Sharan Sharma's artistic and musical evolution. To write the history of the formative years of such an artist as Bhagwat Sharan Sharma, one must place his career development into a greater cultural and institutional context that informs the way musical training is practiced in India. In classical and religious arts, early art development is mostly conditioned by family experience, local traditions in music and aesthetic principles in the community. The learning of Indian music has been characterized by studies highlighting the importance of embodied practice, repetition and guru-shishya practice as core components in the development of artistic identity (Beaster-Jones, 2015). The study of the early phases of Sharma will consequently entail an examination of how these pedagogical forms might have enabled the mastering of stylistic discipline, interpretative richness and spiritual disposition. The current literature also emphasizes the idea that nowadays musicians are bargaining between traditions and the transforming cultures and, in this regard, Sharma is also seen as the result of the dynamic relationship between the classical foundations and the creative opportunities arising in the context of the shifting musical ecology (Manuel, 2015).

The evolution of Sharma as an artist can be analyzed in terms of the changing environment of his performance and altered expectations of the Indian classical and devotional music at the different stages of his development. Studies show that musicians tend to develop their artistic voice by being exposed to different types of audiences, participatory cultural environments, and changing concert formats. Such interactions form not only technical competence but interpretive confidence as well as choice of repertoire. The development of Sharma is probably also representative of the larger tendency when artists are slowly turning to combine tradition with individualized expression that is formed through the course of life (Sarbadhikary, 2016). According to scholars, modern performers move across various musical locations, temples, festivals, studios, and online worlds, each with its own impact on the priorities of art and artistic experimentation. The following stages of growth of artistic identity through contextual analysis of the role of performance requirements, audience responsiveness, and institutional possibilities have to be documented (Widdess, 2021).

The other vital aspect in the context of recording the developmental milestones of Sharma will be the interpretation of the role of cultural modernity, media growth, and technological availability in the development of art. The current studies emphasize the impact of digital archives, recording and online pedagogical resources on how a musician can develop techniques and recreate traditional repertoires. The current artists develop via mixed paths of learning that included direct mentorship and mediated music exposure. The evolution of Sharma can be seen as part of this modern trend where the musicians are critical of the past records as well as the present reinterpretations (Roy, & Bagchi, 2020). Besides, the technological environment influences how a musician perceives sound aesthetics, flow of performance, accompaniment styles and expectation of the audience. To capture these processes of development, the role of the media saturation and cross-cultural circulation and the availability of global musical formats in the process of the formation of a unique artistic voice within the classical tradition should be documented (Srivastava, 2023).



Later phases of Sharma artistic evolution can be evaluated in the light of maturing artistic agency, musical creativity and contemplative sophistication which is inherent in a seasoned performer. Studies of creative music-making in Indian cultures have indicated that older artists tend to stabilize their artistic identities through the selective assimilation, adaptation, or recontextualization of style features they had previously experienced in the course of their careers. Cultural responsibility, pedagogical engagement, and accumulated experience are the factors shaping this synthetic process (Seibel, 2023). The development in Sharma must have been symptomatic of these developments, with a growing deliberateness in expression, improvisational form, emphasis on theme, devotional explanation. The interpretation of these later phases will focus on how tradition is internalized by the artists, but reacting to new cultural environments, balancing both tradition and innovation. These records provide a glimpse of the way musical maturity is a product of the many years of contact with heritage, imagination and changing senses of the listeners (Kumari, 2025).

**Obj2:** To interpret critical scholarship highlighting Sharma's significance within evolving modern Indian musical landscapes.

The changing face of present day Indian music has led to the resurgence of scholars revisiting the role of the individual performer in continuity and creative change of culture. Given the intersection between the musical culture and the shifting social values and the emerging pedagogical spaces and developing technological platforms, researchers suggest more and more the necessity to contextualize the work of an artist in terms of the overall change. Such an artist as Bhagwat Sharan Sharma comes out as one of the most prominent figures whose artistic path traces a good part of these changes, and his work can only be interpreted scholarly to appreciate the immense value of his contribution (Borgohain, 2023). It gives an opportunity to better understand the way, in which musicians can find their ways through tradition, experimentation, and the expectations of people. This academic prism gives the ground on which the work by Sharma finds its reflection in the context of the modern musical discourse and why his artistic innovations can be valued in terms of the further development of the tradition of classical and devotional music in India (Kumar, 2022).

In the academic discourse of Indian music between 2015 and 2025, the interrelations between artistic practice, cultural identity and the transmission of musical knowledge are discussed as often. These works bring in focus on the contribution of musicians in preservation of heritage whilst contributing to it in a creative way of interpretation. The work by Sharma follows this academic approach since his compositions have a strong sense of reverence to the traditions of the musical form and, at the same time, a talent to introduce fresh aesthetic life into them (Sarma, 2019). Scholars state that the artists that combine the old traditions and the new ones in sensing establish the cultural significance of classical forms in the setting of modern times. Placing the work of Sharma in this framework of analysis, one might investigate how the presence of art in his creation aids the wider intellectual conversation on the topic of tradition, adaptation, and how modern Indian musical stories are being formed (Sen, 2024).

The other area to be concentrated on in recent scholarship is the experiential and emotional aspect of musical engagement, specifically how performers affect the perception and the aesthetic response of their listeners. According to the research that is conducted to investigate mental imagery, emotional connection, and audience response, one of the significant roles that musicians play is not only creating a sound but also creating immersive, multisensory experiences. The expressive depth and interpretive clarity of Sharma are simply the artistic style of expression that fits these conceptualizations of musical influence that are changing (Williams, 2024). Through this line of thinking, the scholars can assess the contribution of his performances to an even greater emotional and intellectual attachment to the classical music. This view confirms the importance of reading Sharma as a form of creative import, because his works of art can be used to explain why the personal artistry works as a way of enriching the present day experience of traditional music in the modern cultural context of India (Rony, 2024).

Greater ethnomusicological and international music examinations during this era serve to further confirm the role of globalisation, digitisation, and intercultural interaction in the contemporary musical practice. Such changes have prompted artists to move through the hybrid spaces in which documentation, performance, and pedagogy are becoming more influenced by digital media and global visibility (Saxena, & Haroon, 2017). The fact that Sharma still remains relevant can be analyzed in the given context because his work represents the skill to preserve the traditional standards of the artistic world, and be responsive to the needs of the contemporary audience. According to scholars, such artists who manage to balance between tradition and innovation are very instrumental in ensuring that the classical music traditions have a strong footing. This is in tandem with the aim of interpreting the role of Sharma, giving a powerful academic reason to investigate his work in the context of the fast changing musical world of India (Roy, & Bagchi, 2020).

## DISCUSSION

The review of the artistic career of Bhagwat Sharan Sharma fits the current literature highlighting the interdependence of the preservation of the heritage, the innovations, and the changing cultural basis (Bhattacharya, 2024). Both (Kapur et al., 2023) affirm that musicians who meander in and out of the traditional frameworks and conflict with the contemporary sensibilities are at the heart of keeping the Indian classical music alive. The combination of the classical rigor and adaptive experimentation by Sharma is reminiscent of the fact that artistic development is the result of a compromise between the past, experience and modernity (Sarma, 2019). His creative

agency also makes sense of the arguments that emphasize the role of musicians as cultural intermediaries that enhance performative identities amid changing social-technological backgrounds (Saxena & Haroon, 2017). Also, the research on the perception of emotion in music indicates that Sharma is more expressive, which increases his interest to the audience, which strengthens his applicability in the modern musical culture (Borgohain, 2023; Kumar, 2022). All these convergent views are testimony to the idea that Sharma is making significant contributions that are indicative of greater change in the Indian modern music ecosystem (Roy & Bagchi, 2020). Even with such enabling arguments, a number of researchers warn about the overemphasis on the role of an individual in progressively hybridized musical settings (Mazzarella, 2017). Critical work notes that the speed of digital change can also divide the old audience foundations, which restricts the ability of classical musicians (with or without talent) to influence the wider musical trends (Meintjes, 2020). (Subramanian, 2018) argues that the current music consumption trends tend to favor commercial beauty rather than subtle classical form, which is making it challenging to artists such as Sharma to have good public presence (Booth, 2022). Moreover, ethnomusicological arguments imply that the individual success of artists can be dimmed down by structural injustices of cultural establishments, limiting the overall contribution that even immensely innovative artists could have (Morcom, 2021). These views bring significant contradictions to an entirely affirmative view of the importance of Sharma, that the larger sociocultural and market pressures might limit artistic power. These responses point to the necessity of a more detailed discussion of Sharma as a part of the changing musical ecosystem in India (Taylor, 2021).

## CONCLUSION

The study finds that the artistic path of Bhagwat Sharan Sharma is an expression of an effective combination of the tradition, creativity, and the modern sensibilities of the musical world, and the way in which individual artwork can help to preserve the continuity and innovation of the culture on a larger scale. The results suggest that the musicians who are able to cope with the changing context of the performance, the technological transformations, and the way the audience demands their music are the key to preserving and regenerating the classical and devotional music. Meanwhile, the reliance of the study on secondary sources is a major limitation since it does not allow exploring the personal views of Sharma, her life experiences, and the process of creativity not to be documented. Future studies would be aided by adding primary data like interviews with artists, observation of their performances, comparison with other artists to add to the knowledge of his stylistic development. It is suggested that future research should examine how other artists of the same kind react to cultural changes, therefore enriching the academic understanding of the changing state of contemporary Indian music practice.

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