ANALYTICAL STUDY OF
SOME PROMINENT INTERVIEWS AND
SUGGESTIVE SCOPE OF FUSION
Opinion of renowned artists of music

Views about what fusion music is and how it grew up in their journey of music

Mr. Louis Banks, a jazz pianist based in India who has worked with several fusion bands like Dīyā, Ātmā, Ākriti, Silk, Asia Electric, Sangam, Matrix etc. opine about fusion music, “Fusion music comes under an umbrella of experimental music because we are experimenting and today we are experimenting all the time. There are definitely categories in music and that is how these disciplines come about. There are norms and rules you have to follow to be able to play that music. You can’t just haphazardly play classical music. You cannot definitely just play Jazz, there are norms to follow. That might come under the umbrella of pure music. For me, the base for fusion music is impurity. It starts from impurity because you are mixing things – some good, some bad – it is all experimentation.”

On asking, what inspired him to do Fusion, he replied, “Whenever I listened to a concert of Indian classical music by some of India’s great maestros, I found that there is a certain affinity to a jazz concert.... the main body of the interpretation and exploration of the rāgas lies in the improvisations.... In jazz, improvisations are based on the harmonic chord progressions!! The styles are different in many ways but the essence of the performance with its lyrical moments, rising intensities, spontaneous interplay, call and response and a climactic finish are akin to a fusion music performance ...drawing inspiration from groups like Shakti, Mahāvishnu orchestra and weather report, I, too, wanted to explore the possibilities of interplay of Indian and western styles in my own way... Then I began to write compositions loosely based on rāga scales..... luckily I got an offer to form a fusion band in

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203 Seminar on New Trends in Indian Music Since Independence; organized by ITC-SRA (western region) in collaboration with National Center for the Performing arts & Music Forum; Venue- NCPA, Mumbai 21; on 16th- 17th Jan 2010; Compiled by Parikh, Arvind; Pg- 138.
the eighties and then to represent contemporary Indian classical music in Europe... Sangam was formed and we did over 60 concerts all over Europe with great success...I haven't looked back since and will always remain a devotee of fusion music to the end of my days... My search for new ways of exploring this genre will go on and on... Music is such a vast ocean.”

In the seminar on ‘Fusion’ at NCPA, Mumbai, Dr. Aneesh Pradhān has said, “I would just like to say that may be broadly we can classify fusion music as collaborative process between performers perusing different styles or different systems of music.”

Where as Mrs. Arunā Sāirām has put forth, “I think fusing impressions, taking a particular impulse and then integrating into what you do, is also a kind of fusion, if you may call it.”

On the same, Mr. Ranjit Bārot said, “when you have collaborative processes with musicians from different ethnicities, not just internationally but even within your own country, the most amazing thing is that the artistes want meet at a place, which belongs to everyone. That spirit of music doesn’t really belong to any one ethnicity or any specific form or genre. That structured or improvised spirit exists and it is the same in Indian classical music as it is in Jazz or Western Classical music. There is one place where all the ideologies meet. That is where we all want to go.”

In 1990s, in a television show Saeed Jāfri talked about fusion music with Zākir Hussain. While discussing about Zākir ji’s experiments with Jazz and Blues… Zākir ji expressed, “It’s all learning process.”

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204 Interview in person with me, 07/06/ 2012 by E-mail.
205 Seminar on New Trends in Indian Music Since Independence; organized by ITC-SRA (western region) in collaboration with National Center for the Performing arts & Music Forum; Venue- NCPA, Mumbai 21; on 16th- 17th Jan  2010; Compiled by Parikh, Arvind; Pg-. 136.
206 Ibid, Pg- 136,137.
207 Ibid, Pg- 137.
208 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QX4qOw7vUNE&list=PL2491896040CFAB58&index=11&feature=plpp_video
Adding to the same, in the seminar at NCPA, Mr. Zākir Hussain stated, “There is something new emerging in music every hour, on the hour. We have utilized our resources whether folk, classical, just contemporary or whatever, and have come up with some very incredible as well as quite ordinary music over the years. If we were to explore using say the Rājasthāni folk or the Punjabi Bhāngadā and qualify the different salient features then we would have to have a book bigger than the Britannica! I don’t think we have got yet to that point but we can say that this music would have the “ten commandments” that we would follow. To me it is always different. To speak even of Indian music I don’t think that I would limit myself to saying that there are these do’s and don’ts. Because if I do, I would be limiting my vision and not think of what more I can do with it. Though I would adhere to certain rules as a launching point I would open up a little bit.”

About the thought regarding experimenting on his instrument, ‘tablā’, he was asked, what is he trying to do to further the boundaries of tablā. And he replied, “I am trying to find a way to be able to make it a universal voice to start with. We have many different gharānās for tablā and so people get confused about which is the right one! ... But what I am trying to do is establishing universal voice for tablā where each gharānā or each different element of it speaks in one voice, through one personality or one mode.” He further says, “Don’t create boundaries but go over them, go out there and expand peripheries and see what is out there because you grow as a tablā player.”

In one of the interviews recorded on Rock Om.net he said, “In India, the idea was…here is the instruments here is the repertoire, learn this and play this repertoire on the instrument and see how you can embellish it within the required rules and put forth do’s and don’ts. You are right here and you look at the instrument and say, okay so I am doing this, but what is the instrument capable of. What else can it do, in other words let’s move and take it around the corner and see what is possible with the instrument, what the instruments wants to speak.” This is how he looks at his instrument with open vision to explore and not limiting the capacity of the instrument to one music style. About the instrument, in another interview he said, “When you are talking about 5000 years old tradition of Indian classical

209 Seminar on New Trends in Indian Music Since Independence; organized by ITC-SRA (western region) in collaboration with National Center for the Performing arts & Music Forum; Venue- NCPA, Mumbai 21; on 16th- 17th Jan 2010; Compiled by Parikh, Arvind; Pg- 138,139.
music and you play this instrument, and it is classical instrument your identity is very important. People like me because I am Zākir Hussain,’ the tablā player’ playing a traditional role and making that traditional role fitting with all everything else that is in the world. If I give up that then I don’t have that identity. I won’t be Zākir Hussain. I don’t know what I will be.” At his early age in the journey of music, when he was not very established artist, he wanted to experiment. He was ready even to break the boundaries of him as a musician confined in Indian music.

He shares very interesting episode, an eye opener for himself in an interview in Bombay chat, 1994, “I wanted to be a Pop Star… I met George in one recording session and I asked him why don’t you play sit regularly on stage. And he said, I can express that music best on the instrument that I grew up with, I am very familiar with. No matter what I do, I would be still be a British Guitar Player. And I will not be comfortable doing anything else… it is very important to get back to the roots again.”

Here, we can summarize that Zākir Hussain believes that a musician should adhere to his roots, develop his understanding of the instrument, and then explore it to its fullest. When Zakir ji was asked about his first experiment with fusion music in an interview by Anil

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Prasād, “What is Shakti? Why do you think there’s been such an enduring interest in Shakti’s music?” He exclaimed, “Why is there still an interest in the Beatles or Rolling Stones!! There’s something magical about certain people coming together and linking on whole levels of communication, whether that’s through music, mind, heart or emotions. Shakti was such a group that made that connection. You could see it when you watched the band play—they were totally connected. They were operating as one. They were not four people, but one person. I guess that brings incredible amounts of positive feelings and vibrations into one’s music and that is something that lasts.”

He was further asked, how the chemistry between him and John McLaughlin has evolved over the years, he explicated, “When I play with John, it’s not like playing with a Western musician. It’s like playing with an Indian musician believe it or not. John has taken the time to study Indian classical music and figure out how we work how we think and what our improvising techniques are. Myself, I have had the good fortune to study and understand the Western ways of musical thinking be it jazz, pop or rock.”

Shakti, to come out as an outstanding experiment in music, artists thoroughly deciphered the different music styles of apiece.

Also on asked by Andāz, a television show in U.S., “Can you talk to me about ‘Shakti’ and how that got started, where did you meet these incredible artists?” He answered, “‘Shakti’, I would imagine is one of the initial attempt at trying to see if there was a way to be able to approach playing Indian music and western elements of music, whether it was Jazz or Rock or whatever. In a way it was prescribed to the Indian way of creativity- spontaneous improvisation… I was playing with some greatest musicians alive.”

The same expression he showed in interview at Nice Jazz festival 2010, “… I am very lucky that I got to play with John McLaughlin; Charls Loid, Harry Corland and so many different people because they are all great masters and I got to learn more from them.”

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215 Ibid.
216 Ibid.
belief in life and music is same as he believes, music and life – is all about learning, in learning no boundaries can bind a person or a musician.

Further in this interview, he was asked, “What is important for you when you play, Zākir Hussain? What do you think about what you want to give people?”

“I want to be able to give people the idea that the whole life and whole music is all about becoming a good student. It’s not about becoming a master. If you are a good student, you will see so many different things and learn so many different things and enjoy so many different things and that’s what music is all about” he answered.

Another artiste, Taufiq Qureshi mentioned about his own exposure in music in one of his interviews, “I am one person who is always hungry for more, ‘yeh dil mānge more’. From very early age, I was always impressed by great vidvān ‘Vikku Vināyakrāmji’. Once I started understanding and maintaining a nice relationship with him, I asked him if he would teach me, and he was kind enough to say yes, I will teach you. And I really benefited a lot because I understood the logistics, the ‘in’s and ‘out’s of Carnātic South Indian rhythms through him. He opened my eyes and Zākirbhai’s too.”

Trilok Gurtu, a fusion artiste, in his interview for FMM Sines talked regarding oneness of music, “The main instrument is the tablā and from the tablā I moved to different instruments, the drums. The drum… I didn’t want to be a normal drummer… just playing beats, wanted to have relation with music not only beats… I think music is one. There is no different music coming from Mongolia, China, and India. Music is one. The categories are better because of the human nature of people trying to categorize, what this music is. I don’t need a name. I don’t need a stamp. I don’t even want to know, it is good or bad. So this is the difference. For me it is all the same because I love music… my style is more Indian and African.”

When he was asked in another Interview with Riviera Jazz Club, how he got into jazz; he countered, “What is jazz? …For me Jazz is just a name, may be a popular name amongst the journalists/ people, who are brought up with the Jazz. Young people are not brought up with Jazz. They are brought up with something Global. It is a very old fashion way to say Jazz, we are in modern 2010. So, music has no boundary, no barrier.”

In Art talk with Jujhār Singh at Taj Mahal Hotel, New Delhi, Talvin Singh told, “I have been in the Indian classical music, in jazz, hip hop. So, I grew up with different tastes of music. I started also collaborating with Madonna, with Nusarat Fateh Ali Khan also with the jazz musician, Courtney Pine, Bjork. It’s fun to play with the musician like Bjork.” When Jujhār asked over what kind of music were they making, Talvin Singh replied, “In Anokha Club Night, we were mixing a lot of records like we would have one record player of Hariprasad Chaurasiā, ‘A’ is without the tablā, it just has the ālāp, and on the other side we got like hip hop bits and we were just mixing in between. And it was happening.”

On June 28, 1999, in an interview with Anil Prasād, John McLaughlin was asked to describe about his fascination towards Indian culture. He explained, “I became very interested in comparative religion around 1962 when I was 20. I was raised without any religious education whatsoever. I became a member of the Theosophical Society because they had a wonderful library. On discovery of the wonder and profundity of Indian thought and philosophy, my appetite was really whetted. I became aware of Ramana Maharshi, a man who had a strong impact and continues to exert quite an influence on me. I went on to become aware of Rāmakrishna, Vivekānanda, Premānanda and Sri Nisargadatta Mahārāj.

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224 Ibid.
My discovery of Indian music was also quite a revelation. I was first struck by the beauty of it and the mastery of the improvisation that exists in both the North and South. The relevance of this to my music, which is jazz music, was great - the necessity of mastering this kind of discipline for improvisation.”

In another interview, John McLaughlin explained about the relationship between Miles Davis and Indian music, “... in 69, I began to learn Indian music, because I was so very involved. In the philosophy of India and music came as natural event in my life. So I began studying north Indian music at this time. Within 9 months I got to know about tabla player Bādal Roy, whom Miles (Miles is really a fusion maestro) invited to come and play the tabla on his recordings, also new sitār player Gopāl Krishnā who had been invited also. Miles, he was aware of already that time ago about Indian music. He was very sensitive and even would listen to my suggestions about what he was doing in the studio… inspired me to start my band – Mahāvishnu Orchestra.”

This array of artistes incidentally and thus eventually became a part of fusion, in search of new paths in good music.

Rules of Fusion

In the discussion regarding structuring of fusion Mr. Louis Banks has stated in seminar at NCPA, Mumbai that “There are no written rules of fusion music and I don’t think there

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225 Spheres of influence by Anil Prasad Interview date: June 28, 1999 © Copyright 1999 by Anil Prasad. All rights reserved, www.innerviews.org , retrieved on Aug 11, 2007.

ever will be rules written in the future because the music is so experimental. But there are unwritten rules that you have to follow if you want to make sense what you are doing and fuse different styles. If I want to fuse Carnatic music with Jazz, I have to make that marriage happen by understanding what Carnatic musicians do. I haven’t studied Carnatic music, so I get the best Carnatic musicians to play with me. Then I take a cue from that and try to merge with that. So me being a jazz musician, I do not play Carnatic music, I play jazz. When I am playing with Carnatic musicians I fuse that element and we come together and then take off. When the Carnatic musician takes off, he does that with what he has learnt in his own pure form, structure and discipline that he has followed over the years. The jazz musicians does the same thing, they do not try and imitate. I do not try and play like Carnatic musician, or the Carnatic musician does not play jazz. Jazz has different norms and styles and you have to follow them. Jazz basically is chromaticism and Carnatic music is modal, so there is a difference. You can bring these two forms together and make interesting music. That’s what we are doing but the name given ‘fusion’.”

Furthering Zākir Hussain said, “A thought just occurred to me when Mr. Banks said there are unwritten rules. It appeared to me in my interactions with musicians that I wasn’t trying to find a way to make the music interact and shape my music in a way so that it fitted that socket – it wasn’t that. The unwritten rule was the social interaction between the musicians and between the artistes. How that appeared, how you talked with each other, how you behaved with each other and how you approached each other. Having interacted in that manner, it kind of opens the door as to how the music would then come together with interaction of the individuals involved. That is something maybe to look at in the future or may be now if somebody has any comments on how unwritten social actions or rules may apply.”

In the same conversation Mr. Ranjit Bārot added, “Our music is an extension of our personalities and it would seem logical that if I am playing my life story and want to play another life story, I should at least try and find out where this life story comes from.”

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228 Ibid, pg 140,141
229 Seminar on New Trends in Indian Music Since Independence; organized by ITC-SRA (western region) in collaboration with National Center for the Performing arts & Music Forum; Venue- NCPA, Mumbai 21; on 16th- 17th Jan 2010; Compiled by Parikh, Arvind; pg 141
Basically, there is no definite, structure for fusion music. At the same time, there is a scope for fusion to achieve the state where it can get definite structure and further rules can be formulated.

In a dialogue regarding fusion Zākir Hussin had commented, "When khayāl was invented it wasn’t called fusion and over the last centuries or so it developed into a system that we all follow. May be it is possible that a 100 years down the road we may have a form that may emerge from all this potpourri of stuff and may find a way to create some kind of a rule book as to how to go about doing it, how to learn it, how to sift through good and bad in it and so on. At the moment, I don’t see that."[230]

**Importance of vocal in fusion**

Present fusion music, as observed, has more emphasis on instrumental music. In fusion, the tonal quality of the instruments evokes a musical language while vocal is a linguistic expression. Thus language acts as a barrier. Consequently, more instrumentalists tend to involve in fusion than vocalists.

**Mrs. Arunā Sāirām** has shared her experience as, “I can only tell about the work that I have done. I have worked with Dominique Vellard of France. I have done series of concerts, which have gone down very well for us and for the audiences. There is a lot of work happening with the voice but I would say it is more with the instruments. I think vocalists are trying out.

Perhaps in vocal music there are several dimensions like the poetry, the voice, the timbre etc. therefore to that extent it is something that one would think twice before one really entered into the arena, because you got to deal with all these things. But I feel that if two artists vibe with each other as human beings and really know watch other as friends, or people that respect and trust

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[230] Ibid, Pg- 138,139.
each other, then the rest follows.”

In this context, Mr. Ranjit Bārot has said “I have heard voice being used in many contexts. We tend to look at it from Indian point of view – whether the Indian classical voice has been used- but may be not as much.”

Adding to this view Mr. Louis Banks has said, “I agree that voice is seldom being used but I love voice. If I find the right voice, I would love interact with the voice. So far in Indian music I have found a few voices with open minds - they have to have open minds otherwise it does not work – with closed minds fusion cannot happen.”

Mr. Zākir Hussain shares his experience that, “All the early fusion music featured voice and that goes back to when Indian music or khayāl was first being sung or being performed. The preferred element in that was singing. Everybody sang and that was the fusion of Drupad and Praband Gāyaki. Similarly forms such as Thumari, Kajari, Chaiti etc., where classical music or Khayāl music mixed with folk, it was again singing. Singing was a very important element of that fusion at that time. When you come to film music of India every song was sung and it was all fusion music. Until recent time- early 70s- most of the collaborative music, experimental music, and interactions between different Genres of music have singing as the featured mode of expression. It was only in the 70s that instrumental groups like Shakti emerged. Even in Jazz, singing was a very important part

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231 Seminar on New Trends in Indian Music Since Independence; organized by ITC-SRA (western region) in collaboration with National Center for the Performing arts & Music Forum; Venue- NCPA, Mumbai 21; on 16th- 17th Jan 2010; Compiled by Parikh, Arvind; Pg- 142.

232 Ibid, Pg- 142.

233 Ibid, Pg- 143.
and some of the finest singers like Loretta James, Billie Holyday, Frank Sinatra and others all sang. Similarly, when you talk about fusion music in the film world, you cannot imagine anything without the voice of Latāji, Rafiji or Mukeshji.”

**Importance of Improvisation in Fusion**

As seen in Chapter 2, both in Indian classical and jazz music, improvisation is one of the key factors. Improvisation has played a major role in binding both these styles for coming together as fusion. Different artistes have different methods and idea behind it.

**Pandit Vishwa Mohan Bhatt**, who has worked with several foreign artists, believes in working spontaneously while doing fusion. 235

**Mr. Zākir Hussain** throws light on this subject saying, “If you take all these different styles of experimental music that we are talking about, improvisation is the least. When you are talking about Ravi Shankar ji’s composition for himself and Yehudi Menuhin, it was a composed piece of music. His concerto too was a composed piece of music. Similarly his performances with other musicians were all composed pieces of music with very little improvisations. When you talk about all the experimental music now; rap, hip hop, electronic, Asian underground etc., there is a lot of element brought into it but it is all within the skeleton form of drum and base and then you fly in various sound samples and so on. Improvising element vise-a- vice someone’s personal involvement is very limited. There are very few groups that do that. Mr. Banks, Ranjitbhai, John McLaughlin and people like that use improvising as a major element for their compositions for experimental music, but much more than that.” 236
Mr. Ranjit Bārot believes improvisation as a free and spontaneous aspect and in this regard pronounces, “improvisation, playing a larger part that the compositional structure, is merely because it is really hard to write good music.”

Elaborating her own experience about improvisation, Mrs. Arunā Sāirām shares, “I do ālāp most of the time and then we peg it on a Latin piece or a Sanskrit piece or something like that. But then the ālāp forms the major part that is how it sort of couches the composition. It is blend of improvised music and sure enough, you have a composition, which is so beautifully written. It is there, it is the material that is valuable to you, and you would be crazy not to use that.”

**Acceptance of Fusion**

Fusion being a new genre, it has not been espouse yet. Any experiment or new thought has different expressions and it becomes difficult to accept. Change and its acceptance is a gradual process.

**Mr. Arvind parikh,** welcoming the idea of fusion says, “There are different categories of fusion, and I think perhaps Indian musicians would welcome some categories of fusion but may feel challenged by some other varieties, and there may be some categories of fusion that they would hate. The kind of reactions that different musicians would have may differ immensely.”

**Mr. Zākir Hussain** presenting his view says, “I think, the first spontaneous approach of musicians is to say that this music or that music sounds good or not. For me, I don’t know if I agree with the idea that there is a title which we are discussing as fusion music at the moment. It is the music which was not there 50 to 100 year ago. Probably it was there actually a thousand years ago, if I look at anything new or different. As Fusion, they just look at it as music.

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237 Ibid, Pg- 144
238 Ibid, Pg- 144
239 Ibid, Pg- 135.
Beautiful melodies composed by the Bollywood composers in the 40s or 50s were greatly appreciated by the great Ustāds. They didn’t say it was fusion music even though it was. They just regarded it as a beautiful melody based in particular rāga. It didn’t matter that there were strings playing with piano and the upright base was back there along with sārangi, sitār and sarod. It didn’t matter; it was just a beautiful form of music.240

In another interview after the performance with Niladri Kumar at Chicago world music festival 2010, Zākir ji said, “One thing, youth all over the world are more and more becoming aware of the culture of the arts, which is the great thing. I think it seems like there is some kind of cultural renaissance happening all over the world where young people are getting very involved in listening to not just the music they grew up, but the music that is all over the world. Specially in India, I notice this that students or young people today would listen to Indian music, tomorrow they would go to jazz club, next day they will go to disco dance and the next day after that they will go to a theatre or go to hip hop. So, its amazing to watch that the same people are tasting so many different dishes of culture and just a way it is in India, everywhere else too. Even in America, I mean you see today, in audience three – four thousand people here, they were listening to us play traditional music, and then there are Indians who also love Bollywood and they love Hollywood and, you know. So culturally the world is becoming much much more enlightened.”241

When Anil Prasād asked Zākir ji after their concert, “Audience accepted or not? How much easier is it for Remember Shakti to operate in 1999 compared to the original group’s circumstances in 1975?” He answered, “I think concert-goers have a much greater awareness of traditional music from all over the planet. It is more evident than ever before. The tastes of music listeners are so varied these days. They listen to everything from techno to rock to jazz to Indian to world to all kinds of stuff. It’s amazing to see people being so open-minded and panoramic in their vision these days. Therefore, a group like Shakti is just the ticket for a lot of people. The record is doing reasonably well and the concerts are selling out wherever we play. The response has been so incredible. There’s great love and affection from the people to us. It’s incredible and amazing, even though this group does not resemble the old Shakti. It’s a different sort of group and in some ways a step forward to hopefully a next level of musical coordination and composition.” On another question, What
role he believes Shakti has played in cultivating a greater acceptance of world music, he revealed his view, “Indian musicians became much more open after Shakti towards the idea of trying things not only within the realms of Indian music but by stepping out of Indian music and into any traditions they felt comfortable with. Shakti was one of the first combinations of musicians trying to do something that crossed all musical boundaries. We just jumped into the wagon and took a ride together. It was four people as one. We were very young at that time and had no qualms about trying different things. We just sat down and played and did whatever was necessary to make it work musically and be fun.”

Putting his very independent and different view Ustād Amjad Ali Khan in his interview with Kavita Chibber commented, “With all due respect to all kind of music especially fusion, noisy music is injurious to the health, and it does damage your sensitive cells! Listen to any music of the world, but unless it is soothing it’s unlikely you will receive the positive effects of that kind of music. Fusion is a momentary pleasure, almost like flirtation but you cannot produce a legitimate child out of it. Both the western and Indian traditions are so strong character wise that it is impossible to mingle the two and create a third tradition out of it. I think if you can improvise and remain within the tradition of your gharānā it would be great, but today unfortunately we have three gharānās- radio, television and cd gharānās... People copy and learn from TV and radio. The honest ones acknowledge where they picked up the stuff from others don’t.”

Sharing his openness to accept the experiments done in the field of music discloses, on a question by Kavita, “So do we expect a concerto for Sarod from Ustād Amjad Ali Khan?” he answered assertively, “Why not? I’m open to it. My sons have performed with the cello

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player Matthew Barley. My only problem is I don’t write and will have to get someone to write the music for me. Let’s see when an opportunity arises.” 244

The other senior artist of Indian classical vocal, Dr. Prabhā Atre shares her view about music as, “To me, music has only two categories --- good and bad. As you know, all classical music is not good; similarly all film music is not bad. Our problem is that we are conditioned in our listening habits. Film music has widened the scope of Indian music. It has projected a different side of Indian melody and has given birth to Indian ‘harmony’. The variety film music has presented before us in terms of tunes, instruments, rhythms, tonal textures, expressions, etc., is amazing. I agree that pop and disco music is very ‘loud’, at times noisy. But it has made even the common man turn to music. I am sure eventually, this form will mature and make people aware of the beauty of sound and rhythm.” 245

Further, she gives an opinion on the artists of Indian classical music moving towards fusion, “The fact that fusion is catching on reflects on us --- the listeners. In today’s commercial world, music has become a saleable commodity. Perhaps, it is the need of the time, and that is why, Indian classical musicians are drawn towards fusion. There can be various other reasons also in addition to ‘creativity’. Fusion in itself is not a bad music. We must give it time to evolve and mature. I only wish that musicians involved in fusion help popularize good classical music. Every form of music has to stand the test of time. Let us wait and see.” 246

Pandit Vishwamohan Bhatt believes that fusion music helps in the exposure of Indian music in other countries and also believes that the audiences appreciate both pure classical as well as fusion music performances. 247

244 Ibid.
In this context, Mr. Louis Banks presents his view on asking the question if present scenario demands for such music, “Fusion music, like Indian classical and jazz, will remain niche music cause there is a need for some level of in-depth understanding and involvement on the part of the listener ...it is not an escapist music and demands a lot more than casual listening, as in popular music. ...Having said that ... there is so much excitement, virtuosity and rhythmic drive in the music that it may be enjoyable even to the casual listener and layman.”

Sharing his personal experience on fusion, Mr. Louis Banks answered the questions mentioned below:

What elements do you like the most in fusion music?

I like the challenge of writing compositions that can be interpreted with Indian instruments and voices and creating jazz chordal harmonies and solos to give it that fusion edge...it’s a very exciting platform and the trick for me is to keep the purity of Indian improvisation and jazz interludes, true to established tradition and to create points of departure where the two disciplines meet and really stretch the imagination with unison lines, riffs, jugalbandis and solo flights.....it’s such a great platform to experiment and to explore fresh unexplored territories in fusion music..

What limitations do you face in fusion?

The only limitation I have encountered is maintaining the sanctity of the rāga scale ... Jazz music is chromatic and harmonic while Indian music is modal and linear.... Hence, there is a subtle balancing of styles and norms that need to be addressed so that the music can work seamlessly and effortlessly.

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247 Talk in person at Vadodara, on Aug 10, 2011, 7:00 pm.
248 Interview in person, by E-mail received on 07/06/ 2012.
What is the aim of Fusion music? Is it only for entertainment? Please state the benefits it gives to music society.

The entertainment factor is always present in any form of music...virtuosity, subtlety, gimmicks, showmanship and sophistication levels may vary depending on the caliber of the musicians performing...at the end of the day music has to entertain and be a source of joy and inspiration to the listener ...music can transcend the daily commonplace human activities and transport listeners to a very beautiful world of love, joy and hope.

Are increasing fusion bands healthy for growth of music? How?

As long as there is serious intent to play good and valid music, fusion music will give musicians a varied and very challenging platform to make music that integrates different cultures and genres ...fusion music demands a very high caliber of musicianship; an in-depth understanding of different genres and cultures ... with musical intelligence at its core, fusion music can unite the world with a sense of brotherhood, love and hope.

Can fusion music harm the pure forms of music? Or can it be more effective medium to reach to the audience?

Yes, it will harm pure forms of music if it is played carelessly, without thought, without deep understanding... With dedicated study of different cultures and genres, the composer and artists can elevate fusion music to a very high level and provide great entertainment, soul satisfaction, wonder and awe in both the performer and listener... I believe that fusion music is the music of the future...

What are the main themes you generally work on?

Nothing specific... but the essence of the rāga scales and western harmonies, interesting and complex rhythmic combinations is vital to give the composition drive and mobility... with these in mind I write melodies and arrangement that range from slow evocative ballads to highly rhythmic pieces with varied time signatures and sub-divisions.

How do you start any of your new song/composition?

I choose a scale and take a rhythm as starting points and begin by doodling on my keyboard with several motifs and ideas and gradually these motifs, in time, begin to grow and develop into a composition and become a piece of music for an integrated performance. It’s the simple formula of “play and discard.”
Do you usually improvise directly on stage or it is the fix music?

Yes, the improvisations are all spontaneous on stage and is different every time...that is so refreshing and exciting for the audience and the artists... the only common factor is the composition ,the unison riffs and possibly the ending ....We need to fix that in the arrangement so that piece has an identity and a title.

**Which instruments do you think are essential for the fusion band?**

A chordal instrument like keyboards or a guitar, bass, drums and Indian percussion instruments, and soloists like sitar, flute, sarod etc and saxophones, trumpet etc and of course voices ...the combinations and permutations are endless ....and there is an element of mix and match that varies with different composers and artists.

**Which type of criticism have you received from 1) general audiences, 2) musicians, 3) Critics?**

Generally, after a satisfying performance, we have always received very good responses from all three of the above in varying degrees of appreciation, enjoyment, and critiques. My belief is that you can satisfy only some of the people some of the time...we have to take the roses and the brick bats with diplomacy and a smile ...live performances are always a tight balancing act with no safety net.... And that is the adrenalin rush!!

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249 Interview in person, by E-mail received on 07/06/2012.
Opinion of experts and learners of music

We observed the legendary artists’ perspective of fusion music. One or the other way, destiny made them chose to experiment with their music and be a part of fusion music. Also their exposure to different countries and artists encouraged them to involve in such experiments.

Now let us explore the views of students and professionals related to the field of music.

About what fusion music is, the general understanding is ‘the outcome of the merger of two different types of music.’

The artists want to stick to their roots and pursue the style they have grown up with and are familiar with, but the exposure towards world music and seed of creativity is attracting them towards fusion music. Given a choice, most of the musicians positively want to work with fusion groups. In personal interviews with music students of M S University of Baroda, maximum of them were positive for being a part of fusion group.

Of fusion music, Indian musicians are very much attracted by the harmonies of western music styles, as it is not a prominent part of Indian music.

For maintaining the quality of music in fusion, Mr. Sachin Limaye, a well-known singer from Baroda believes that a fickle minded artist might run after instantaneous money, fame associated with global or fusion music, instead of working with pure classical forms. Only the sensitive and learned artists would be able to give justice to the forms fused in fusions. But creativity is not totally depended on learning, its one’s instinct that can create masterpieces in music.

About the relevance of fusion to present society, most of the musicians believed that society is moving in search of something new every day, because of globalization. And immense choices are offered to them as people are exposed to a lot of new music traditions. Fusion is the way where one can experiment using the music he is comfortable with or the music tradition he has learnt. Such opportunities to work with fusion are also a chance for learning new things and explore different styles of music. Ms. Mādhavi Saptarshi, a music teacher says that it can help to expand our art form in many ways.
“Promotion of fusion would open the new avenues for the musicians and lead to cultural mergers, which in turn will strengthen international relationships” said Mr. Collin D’cruz, an artist of fusion band from Goa. Presently a common trend can be observed whereby professionals are going to foreign country to study further and in the process besides education there is sharing of cultural values and ethos of living and thus getting connected to that context. While two people of different cultures are working together in every technical field, musicians too are working with the artists of different culture. Thus an emergence of fusion can be observed with surfacing of audience with global exposure accepting it.  

Further it depends on the direction that music and their artist selects; the present scenario accomplishes the scope to grow.

250* Ref- whole topic is a conclusion of interviews of music scholars, musicians and students taken in person in 2011.