Chapter 5

SCOPE AND LIMITATION
OF FUSION MUSIC
Experimenting by fusing different music styles is the way to create fusion music. Fusion, being an experimental form of music, there are tremendous scopes in it. New results are achieved by experimentation, thus fusion also brings newness with it. Fusion may come wearing the face of surprise, shock or beauty... also an underdeveloped avowal, which is on its path towards establishment, as it is not bound by any specific rules and thus leaving a scope for its expansion.

Let us figure out some points to open up vision for creation of fusion music though they might be in use but with a possibility to explore further in the directions suggested. Some probable initial thoughts or ideas to create music in the form of fusion are:

A. Based on melody, harmony and rhythm

‘Rāga’ – the Indian melody, is being considered to be a potential base for some fusions. Artists either compose harmony pertaining to a bandish of a specific rāga or search for a bandish appropriate for a particular harmonic piece. Many a times, the combination of Indian melody and Jazz melody proves to be an attractive bait to lure audiences to shows.

Many experiments based on rhythm are being carried out. The Indian Tāla structure and its progression which is outlined by the usage of only one instrument at a time have amazed foreign artists. Viz a viz. the Indian counterparts have been stimulated by combined usage of a group of rhythm instruments.

Fusion introduces a large variety of compositions which are based on melody, harmony or rhythm along with compositions based on any of the above three components combined together. The scope of fusion limits itself to our creativity and open mindedness.
B. Based on theme

The Indian tradition offers a plethora of songs for every occasion of our lives. For e.g. songs for every season, songs to grieve on someone’s demise, songs to celebrate childbirth, weddings, festivals, etc. These themes are very much in use in present day fusions.

Also, as we have seen in chapter 1, theme based music has played a crucial role in the development of Jazz Music. Themes akin to emotions, stories, places (desert, mountain…), themes initiating relaxation, etc. have been used by jazz artists.

Thus, theme based composition is already a very popular style in Indian and jazz music. Such themes can be further developed for widening the extent of fusion.

C. Based on lyrics and singing styles

Fusion is mainly about amalgamating the music of different regions which also includes different languages. Syllabic pleasure is the highlight of this kind of fusion. Different languages and their enunciation augment this experience. The distinct forms of Indian music, such as ‘sargam’ where notations are pronounced in their abbreviated forms and ‘tarānā’ where meaningless words are manifested, can enhance this experience.

The style of singing, voice projection, and pronunciation is very different in every music form. It can be clearly observed that the folk style of singing, the ghazal style of singing, Indian classical or scat - all are very different. Also, if combined together they may sound appealing.

D. Based on different types of instruments

We have a large number of musical instruments of different categories and families with diverse tones.

Instrument - types

i. Wind instruments: flute, saxophone, trumpet, trombone, piccolo, etc.

ii. String instruments: all types of guitar, sitār, violin, mandolin, cello, etc.
iii. Rhythm instruments: all types of drums, tabla, mridangam, Dhol, Dholak, pakhawaj, ghatam etc.

All instruments differ in their making, timber, range, patterns, usage, etc.

In fusion, a combination of instruments can be used or use of technicalities with instruments which differ in the normal practices of that music style. For instance, Indian technicalities can be used with Jazz Instruments and vice versa. All instruments are blessed with the tact of playing ornamentation and subtle expressions in their own distinct ways. Thus, it becomes necessary to choose the right kind of instrument for a particular musical piece or composition. There is a large number of possibilities in this subject but will be revealed only if given sincere thought to.

E. Jugalbandi

Jugalbandi is using two different instruments which complement each other together. It is like a question-answer session. In fusion music, artists use this element a lot as it attracts the audience. Jugalbandi either covers the whole session or just a part of it. This proves to be an important tool for developing a scope for unity amongst artists and for communication with the audience as well.

All the above mentioned points gradually unfold the wide scope of fusion music. People of different cultures are coming together and this has led to a rapid increase in the extent of experimentation. Also, one’s music education directs one’s thought processes. For e.g. when a student of Indian music learns Jazz guitar, his thought process is entirely different from a student of Jazz music. Such kind of education has now become easily accessible because of easy communication facilities and fast growing technology.

Also, the drastic improvement in recording techniques has expanded the scope of experimentation. This has opened doors to numerous opportunities. Talented minds get ample scope for creating something new.

Freedom can provide the best opportunities but can be equally disadvantageous if used irresponsibly. Fusion is often misinterpreted as being ‘easy music’ by new learners. They clearly believe it to be music without rules where nothing is inappropriate. Such artists impress general audiences and believe that they are producing good music. This leads to deterioration in the excellence of music and its aesthetic value.
Points to keep in mind for fusion

As a musician, for good music to be spread in society and for maintaining the quality of music, we should keep some initial points in mind.

Expertise of musician

The creation of qualitative work demands high intelligence or a highly skilled and knowledgeable person to guide. In the field of music, it is very difficult for any artist to gain expertise in two or more music styles. But it is quite likely that every single artist is an expert in his own music style. This yields the best results. The best artists may exhibit the style they are best at.

Understanding and communication between artists

In fusion music, the theme or the basic idea is generally pre-decided but it is more of ‘spontaneous design’. When the artist has to improvise, he needs to understand the route or the pattern of the improvisation of co-artists and has to respond accordingly. Even when the music is totally pre-composed, the on stage communication is indispensable to accomplish it effectively. In fusion, there is a lot of scope to work with new artists which requires reciprocation amongst them and on stage it comes out in an effectual form of communication.

Communication between the audience and the artists

Music is always a very effective medium of communication. It communicates emotions and ideas. For any communication to be successful, participation of both artist and audience is essential. Fusion music is still a very new concept for the audience to understand. It may be difficult to grasp because it includes two or more styles of music. Another aspect is a language barrier. Be it words or the language of music, audience needs to feel familiar with it. It is always difficult to appreciate the art which is unknown to one. Communication makes it easier to be accepted. There are some styles like ‘call and response’ in jazz to catch the attention of audience. Similarly, in Indian classical music, the main emphasized beat ‘Sam’- which is always there in every cycle of tāla, involves audience. Use of such techniques may
strengthen the communication. And when it is conversed well, it can definitely create joie de vivre in audience as well as artists.

**Music should sound as one entity**

The word ‘Fusion’ itself means the merger of music styles. In such merger, if the styles fail to amalgamate properly, it may create chaos and lose its capacity to come out in the definite manner. When it is successfully done, it reaches to the audience in its definite characteristic and form, and becomes capable of conveying the idea of the artist. It attains its identity as a composition.

The above mentioned factors may not assure success, but will surely bestow authenticity to fusion music.
Limitations

Where there is scope, there are limitations. Limitations are the ones which give shapes to space and provide individual character to any possibility.

This study is limited to only two styles of musical traditions that are Indian Classical Music and Jazz Music.

As fusion is not a prevalent form of music, and also it does not have a specific structure, everyone is free to experiment with it.

The haphazard experiments not upholding the class of music and still endure using gimmicks are harmful to music society. Further the belief that music is a God gifted art, the importance of study lessens. Because of no rule book, every neoteric learner feels free to jump into fusion, which depreciates its quality. The basic study along with its technical aspects is essential for experimentation.

While using Indian music in fusion, many details are left behind. They are ignored by the artists, not by choice but because of lack of care and responsibility towards music, thus posing limitation for its qualitative expansion.

Another significant limitation is from some traditional artists who are afraid of losing the value of the traditional and pure forms of prevailing styles of music.

Thus, every limitation has a scope and every scope established will pose a set of new limitation. This is an ongoing process and we have no choice but to move ahead accepting every change positively. It all depends how deep the roots are, and how we handle them. Mahātmā Gāndhi has quoted, “I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all the land to be blown about my houses as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any.”