



Jindal India Institute
PROPELLING THE INDIAN CENTURY
O.P. JINDAL GLOBAL UNIVERSITY



Jindal School of International Affairs
India's First Global Policy School



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WORKSHOP

ON

Indian Music as Soft Power

On October 18, 2024, the Jindal India Institute (JII), in collaboration with the Jindal School of International Affairs (JSIA), hosted an insightful workshop titled *“Indian Music as Soft Power.”* This event explored how Indian music, particularly its classical forms, can serve as a powerful tool for cultural diplomacy and soft power on the global stage. Held at O.P. Jindal Global University, the workshop brought together students, faculty, and cultural enthusiasts for a day full of engaging performances, discussions, and interactive sessions. The workshop began with an ice-breaking parody play, *“Kaun Banega Chocolatepati,”* directed by Ms. Usha R. Damerla, a screenwriter, independent filmmaker, and record producer. This light-hearted act, performed by JII members and JSIA students, introduced the audience to key concepts and fun facts about the global influence of Indian music and set the stage for a detailed discussion. The audience also eagerly took part in a quiz that delved into various aspects of Indian music. In line with the idea of the play, chocolates were awarded to those who answered correctly, adding an exciting and engaging element.

Following the play, the focus shifted to the significance of classical Indian music as a tool of soft power. Ms. Usha R. Damerla, who has a deep understanding of both Indian cinema and music, took the stage again to introduce a distinguished panel of artists and experts. The panel featured prominent figures in the world of Indian music, each offering unique insights into how music can serve as an influential means of cultural expression and diplomacy.

The first panellist, Mr. Vinay Verma, a celebrated vocalist, music composer, and educator known for his mastery of Hindustani classical music demonstrated his exceptional vocal skills by performing a classical piece, captivating the audience with the depth and complexity of Indian ragas. His performance underscored the enduring relevance of classical Indian music in the contemporary world, particularly as a cultural bridge that connects India with the global community.



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Mr. Akhil Tripathi, a singer, keyboardist, and bassist, followed with a performance that showcased the blending of Indian classical music with contemporary genres. His fusion approach highlighted the versatility of Indian music, demonstrating how traditional sounds can be adapted and appreciated in global contexts. Mr. K. Ayyappan Gowtham, a renowned director of photography, helped the audience appreciate the interplay between sound and imagery, illustrating how music can transcend auditory experiences and evoke powerful emotions through visual representation. Mr. Harsh Vyas, a sound engineer, sound designer, and music producer, elaborated on how modern technology plays a crucial role in preserving and amplifying the impact of classical Indian music, making it accessible to a global audience.

All the panellists also talked about their personal growth stories and the important role music had played in their lives, which moved the audience. They highlighted how interacting with Indian music styles, especially classical music, instills essential life values. The rigorous practice required develops exceptional discipline and dedication. The precise timing needed in classical compositions enhances time management skills, while the intricate nature of ragas teaches patience and perseverance. Learning from a guru traditionally cultivates humility and respect.

One of the highlights of the workshop was a performance by Joyal Mogra, a student of B. A (Hons.) Global Affairs and an intern at JII, who showcased her talent by singing Raag Gaud Sarang, a classical Indian raag, along with a Chhota Khayal – Dekho chedo na neend mori. Joyal's performance resonated with the audience, exemplifying the emotive power and spiritual depth of Indian classical music.

The event concluded with a final interactive session where the audience had the opportunity to ask questions to the panellists. Topics covered included the role of Indian music in diplomacy, its potential for fostering cross-cultural understanding, and how it could be leveraged to enhance India's cultural influence in the international arena. A memorable moment of the workshop came when the entire audience participated in a collective chanting of Om, guided by Mr. Vinay Verma. This symbolic gesture emphasised the unifying power of music and spirituality within Indian culture, leaving a lasting impression on all attendees.



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