

Indians win big at Grammys: *Shakti* takes home honours

Tabla maestro Ustad Zakir Hussain wins 3 awards; flautist Rakesh Chaurasia gets 2 prizes; singer Shankar Mahadevan, violinist Ganesh Rajagopalan and percussionist S. Vinayakram bags one each

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Indian music struck a chord at the 2024 Grammy Awards with five musicians from the country, including tabla maestro Ustad Zakir Hussain and flautist Rakesh Chaurasia, winning the coveted prize in Los Angeles.

While Mr. Hussain was India's big winner with three Grammys, Mr. Chaurasia picked up two awards. Singer Shankar Mahadevan, violinist Ganesh Rajagopalan and percussionist Selvaganesh Vinayakram, Mr. Hussain's collaborators in the fusion group *Shakti*, won one Grammy each at a glittering ceremony held on Sunday night.

Shakti won the 2024 Grammy Award for best global music album for *This Moment*. The album features the four Indians as well as its founding member, legendary British guitarist John McLaughlin. *This Moment*, which released to critical acclaim in June 2023, is the group's first studio album in more than 45 years.

Besides his award for *Shakti*, Mr. Hussain won



All smiles: Shankar Mahadevan, Ganesh Rajagopalan, Ustad Zakir Hussain and V. Selvaganesh of *Shakti* pose with the award during the Grammy Awards in Los Angeles on Sunday. PTI

two other awards – the best global music performance for *Pashto* and best contemporary instrumental album for *As We Speak*.

Praise from PM

The best global music performance category had eight nominees, including *Abundance In Millets*, a song by Falu and featuring Prime Minister Narendra Modi, *Shadow Forces* by Arooj Aftab, Vijay Iyer, and Shahzad Ismaily, and *Alone* by Burna Boy.

Mr. Rakesh Chaurasia, nephew of legendary flautist Hariprasad Chaurasia, bagged two Grammys as part of the ensemble of American banjo player Bè-

la Fleck and American bassist Edgar Meyer for *Pashto* and *As We Speak*.

In a post on X, the Prime Minister praised the five artists for making India proud at the Grammys, saying their "exceptional talent and dedication to music" had won hearts worldwide.

"...These achievements are a testament to the hard work you keep putting in. It will also inspire the new generation of artists to dream big and excel in music," Mr. Modi said.

"Without love and music, we are nothing," Mr. Hussain said in his award acceptance speech for *Pashto*, one of the 12 songs

in the fusion album *As We Speak*.

"Thanks to the Academy, thanks to all these great musicians for giving us this beautiful [live] music today... Families are here and without them, we are nothing. Without love, music, harmony, we are nothing," the veteran percussionist said.

'Winning as an Indian'

Mr. Rakesh Chaurasia said: "More than the joy I felt for myself, the pride of winning it as an Indian musician ranks higher. To win two Grammys on my first ever nomination definitely makes it sweeter."

The musician thanked Mr. Hussain for being an inspiration, saying that it was the tabla aficionado who introduced him to Mr. Fleck and Mr. Meyer. The *As We Speak* team were also nominated for best instrumental composition.

Mr. Mahadevan, who took the stage alongside Mr. Rajagopalan and Mr. Selvaganesh, gave a shout-out to Mr. McLaughlin and Mr. Hussain. While Mr. McLaughlin gave the ceremony a miss, Mr. Hussain was backstage as he had won another Grammy.

STALIN IAS ACADEMY - BEST IAS COACHING IN CHENNAI

12/24, Muthurangan Muthali St, West Tambaram, Chennai - 600045

<https://www.evastaliniasacademy.in/>

Contact Number - +91-8678969915, +91-9940332851

Honour and exception

Choice of past leaders for Bharat Ratnas is in tune with politics of the present

The Bharat Ratna, the highest civilian honour of the country, has been conferred on 50 people since 1954. Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader L.K. Advani and the late socialist leader, Karpuri Thakur, are the newest recipients. The making of national heroes is equally about the recipients as it is about its function as a stimulant of a collective consciousness. It is often the collective that needs heroes to hold itself together. By placing leaders on a higher pedestal, the group seeks to reinforce ideals represented by them. Mr. Advani has been a defining figure of modern Indian history. As he reminisced, he joined the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh at the age of 14. His role in the advancement of the Hindutva ideology has been the biggest by any single leader before Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He has been a mentor to Mr. Modi, with his campaign for a temple in Ayodhya definitively changing the course of Indian politics. The campaign pushed the limits of constitutional order, based on the claim that matters of faith cannot be subject to litigation. As it happens with an extraordinary assertion of popular sovereignty, the Ram Janmabhoomi movement changed the country at several levels; the Supreme Court of India, by 2019, unanimously ruled in favour of the temple that was inaugurated by Mr. Modi on January 22.

Thakur was a central figure in the social justice politics – a euphemism for the demand for better representation of intermediate castes – of Bihar and the larger Hindi belt, who challenged the Congress's hegemony. He served two terms as the Chief Minister of Bihar in the 1970s. Social justice politics went through phases of self discovery, and scattered into numerous parties over the years. One strand is closely aligned with the BJP. There are social justice groups that are still opposed to it, but the BJP owes its current strength considerably to intermediate castes. That ongoing process is being reinforced by honouring Thakur. In 2015, A.B. Vajpayee, the first Prime Minister from the BJP, and Madan Mohan Malaviya, the founder of the Banaras Hindu University, were conferred the Bharat Ratna. In 2019, Pranab Mukherjee, Bhupendra Kumar Hazarika, and Nanaji Deshmukh were recipients. All these selections are in tune with the politics of the present – and how the history of the Bharat Ratna has always been. All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam founder M.G. Ramachandran and B.R. Ambedkar were also conferred the award in the hope that their followers would, in turn, back the party or alliance ruling at the Centre. Mr. Advani and Thakur represent the two legs of BJP politics, namely Hindu consolidation and higher representation for intermediate castes in all fields.

First among firsts

The growth of Sinn Fein in Northern Ireland is significant in itself

The rise of the Sinn Fein's Michelle O'Neill, as the first nationalist First Minister of Northern Ireland, is an indication of how the region's political landscape is changing. If the Sinn Fein, which began as the political arm of the Irish Republican Army (IRA), was on the fringes for decades, it is now a powerful political force in Northern Ireland (part of the U.K.) and the Republic of Ireland (an independent country and European Union member). In the 2020 elections, the Sinn Fein won the largest share of votes. And in 2022, it emerged as the largest party, with 29% of the vote share, in elections in Northern Ireland, while the pro-U.K. Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) finished second with a 21.3% vote share. According to the 1998 Good Friday agreement, which ended three decades of sectarian violence known as the Troubles, Northern Ireland's government should include representatives of the largest and second largest political blocs (unionists, who are largely Protestants, as well as republican nationalists, who are mostly Catholics). After the 2022 vote, Northern Ireland saw chaos with the DUP refusing to join hands with the Sinn Fein to form the government, citing its opposition to the Northern Ireland Protocol, which London had agreed on with Brussels to manage post-Brexit trade between the U.K. and the EU. The DUP alleged that the Protocol, which introduced checks on goods being transferred from Britain to the island of Ireland, weakened the union.

In a realistic assessment of the situation, the DUP decided to return to the power-sharing agreement after London agreed to reduce customs checks on the Irish border and spend some £3 billion in Northern Ireland to steady the region's finances. The Sinn Fein, which campaigned on bread and butter issues and promised to address immediate administrative challenges, is now formidable, and delaying the power-sharing agreement will not weaken the nationalists. For the Sinn Fein, which is still committed to the unification of the two Irelands, taking over the office of the First Minister is historic. Party leader Mary Lou McDonald has said that unification is now "within touching distance". It need not be so, as a majority of Northern Ireland's voters still prefer being a part of the U.K. Also, the posts of First Minister and Deputy First Minister (to be held by the DUP) are technically equal. However, the symbolic value of the Sinn Fein leading the government in Northern Ireland and being the largest bloc in the Republic of Ireland amid rising economic and political discontents in the island, especially after Brexit, cannot be understated. After decades of the Troubles followed by political reconciliation, the nationalists are on the ascendant, while the unionists are on the back foot.

Taylor Swift wins album of the year at the Grammys for fourth time, sets record

Associated Press
LOS ANGELES

Taylor Swift won album of the year at the Grammy Awards for *Midnights*, breaking the record for most wins in the category with four.

She began her speech by thanking her producer and friend Jack Antonoff and added, "I would love to tell you this is the happiest moment of my life," she told the crowd, but said she feels this happy when she creates music and plays shows.

Earlier in the night, Taylor Swift used her 13th Grammy win on Sunday to announce her new album, *The Tortured Poets Department*, will arrive April 19.

"I know that the way that the Recording Academy voted is a direct reflection of the passion of the fans," she said while accepting the best pop vocal album award. "So, I want to say thank you to the fans by telling you a secret that I've been keeping from you for the last two years."

One of the night's biggest awards, record of the year, went to Miley Cyrus for *Flowers*, her second-ever Grammy and second of the night. "This award is amazing. But I really hope that it does not change anything because my life was beautiful yesterday," she said in her speech.

Victoria Monét won best new artist. "Thank you to the champagne-servers tonight," Monét began her acceptance speech. "Thanks to my mom, a single mom raising this really



Crowning moment: Taylor Swift wins the award for Best Pop Vocal Album at the 66th Annual Grammy Awards in Los Angeles. REUTERS

bad girl." Then she started to cry, telling the room that this award was "15 years in the making."

Billie Eilish won song of the year for writing the *Barbie* hit, *What Was I Made For?* She thanked director Greta Gerwig for "making the best movie of the year."

It was just one of several standout moments from Sunday's show, hosted by Trevor Noah and broadcast live from Crypto.com Arena in downtown Los Angeles.

Karol G made Grammy history on Sunday by becoming the first female performer to win best música urbana album for her blockbuster *Mañana Será Bonito* record.

"This is my first time at the Grammys," she told the audience in English. "And this is my first time holding my own Grammy."

Multiple performances
Performances were many. Olivia Rodrigo brought her bloodsucking ballad *vampire* - or in this case, bloodletting, as red liquid dripped from the walls behind her. Joni Mitchell, 80,

made Grammy history by performing *Both Sides Now* from her 1969 album *Clouds*; Travis Scott did a medley of *My Eyes, I Know?*, and *Fein*. Burna Boy was joined by Brandy and 21 Savage and did *On Form, City Boys*, and *Sittin' on Top of the World*.

In memoriam
A long and touching In Memoriam segment celebrated many of the musical greats lost last year. Stevie Wonder performed *For Once in My Life* and *The Best Is Yet To Come* in honor of Tony Bennett;

Luke Combs' delivered a heartfelt rendition of "Fast Car" with Tracy Chapman - his cover of the Chapman classic has dominated country radio and won him song of the year at the 2023 CMAs. In 1989 the song won Chapman best female pop vocal performance.

Jay-Z was awarded the Dr. Dre Global Impact Award and used his speech to talk about the hip-hop greats that came before him - and heavily suggesting at the Grammys history of placing rap on the backburner.