



An Analytical Study of Teaching of Classical Music in Schools in India

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ABSTRACT: Music is a treasured aspect of our culture with its large impacts on human life, many studies have stated the importance of music on human mind, body and soul. Music, a stress buster, is considered as a therapy for good health and wellness. Music is a part of education in India like most of the other nations. The paper explores the music education system in schools in India, and provides recommendations for an effective, effective and articulate music education system to develop the opportunities for students to learn music and to enrich teaching learning experience at schools. a mixed method design i.e. literature review, interactive sessions, design and pilot of study tools, sampling, field visits and online canvassing. The collected data from different target groups through different modes i.e. responses on questionnaires, discussion, observation and interaction, was analyzed and placed in quantitative and qualitative structures. The analysis of data (Indian section) revealed that music is not available in all the schools, some schools have music but only for some classes or selected students, music in schools is treated as activity and not subject, curriculum is not updated, some schools do not have music curriculum, advocacy and monitoring for music education is very low, and availability of adequate musical instruments and ICT for music students need improvement. The paper provides recommendations to deal with the problems and enrich the music education system to enable each and every school going student to develop creativity and become a lifelong music enthusiast while much interested students find good career pathways in music industry.

KEYWORDS: classical, music, India, schools, teaching, analysis

I. INTRODUCTION

Music education in India has largely remained an undiscussed topic. There is a dearth of research and data about music being taught in Indian schools. How many schools in India teach music? How many schools in India are even aware of point no. 22 in the National Education Policy (2020) that promotes arts and music:[1,2,3]

“The arts - besides strengthening cultural identity, awareness, and uplifting societies - are well known to enhance cognitive and creative abilities in individuals and increase individual happiness. The happiness/well-being, cognitive development, and cultural identity of individuals are important reasons that Indian arts of all kinds must be offered to students at all levels of education, starting with early childhood care and education.”

There is enough literature on ‘why’ music ‘should’ be taught to students. However, it is often held at such a pedestal that it is accessible to only a small proportion of the society. Sadly, in a country that is struggling to provide equitable literacy and numeracy skills to all its children, subjects like music are brushed aside as non-essential and don’t get implemented in majority of the schools.

Schools that do, however, make an effort to impart music skills to students do not have a defined curriculum. Unlike Dublin, Hong Kong, New Zealand etc, there is no curriculum and assessment framework on music in India.

School functions, festivals, and competitions that revolve around thematic songs roughly constitute the syllabus and students don’t receive the foundational skills necessary to develop their physical, cognitive and socio-emotional intellect.

Then there are schools that follow a certain curriculum that has been going on for decades. Our country, although culturally as well as aesthetically rich and diverse, has a plethora of traditions to offer and pass on which is deeply rooted in the classical styles. However, music, by the virtue of being an art form, is bound to evolve and grow and so should the curriculum.

The curriculum that schools need to offer has to have a unique amalgamation of local and global music. The focus should be on fostering 21st century skills and creativity. A multifaceted curriculum and training needs to be provided for innovative ways to adapt to an international level of music education. This will also help break years of monotony and inspiring fresh change in learning experiences.



Benefits of music curriculum

Besides the contents, the instructional pedagogy of music education is highly underrated. The National Curriculum Framework (2021) advocates:

“Play and activity are the primary ways of learning and development with continuous opportunities for children to experience, explore, and experiment with the environment.”

Music is no longer merely a source of entertainment. Do you know there are many benefits to listening to music? Music is an effective stress reducer in both healthy individuals and people with health problems. Especially post pandemic in 2020, musical activities including singing proved to be therapeutic medically (strengthening respiration, for example) underlining its significance in our lives.

Research has time and again proven that music impacts the human brain in a rather holistic manner, stimulating activities in all parts of the brain. When children are exposed to music at an early age of 5 or 6, the fundamental brain development is affected more positively.

Over the years, multiple career avenues have opened up in the field of music and, professionally, it's been taken seriously. One can become a musician or a performance artist or can choose to be a music educator, music therapist, music critic, music journalist etc.

Teachers who try to teach Indian Classical Music to kids, especially to the ones below the age of 10 to 12 years, find it difficult to keep the kids motivated and engaged. It is a common experience that after a few months of training, the kids get bored with just singing Sa, Re, Ga, Ma and eventually stop coming to the classes.

Baithak Foundation has been working with schools, construction sites and other venues and we keep experimenting all the time; just to find out how can Indian Classical Music[4,5,6] be made interesting, engaging and enriching for kids at the same time. Recently, we happened to do a workshop at a stud farm for the kids of the staff working there. We consider ourselves extremely fortunate that we got an opportunity to teach Indian Classical Music to a bunch of 20 cheerful kids in the lap of nature. Here are some interesting thoughts and insights that could be used by anyone who wants to teach Indian Classical Music to kids as well as adults.

Baithak Foundation has a separate batch for kids where we teach them Indian Classical Music online in an interesting yet authentic manner. Do write to us at [baithakcommunity\[@ \]gmail\[.dot\]com](mailto:baithakcommunity@gmail.com) to know more.

Make it short, make it rich.

Attention spans are going down sharply not only for kids but also for adults. While it takes a very long time to get even basic understanding of this art form, one has to ensure that one activity does not go on for a very long time. Just as an example, if you make kids sing Alankars for more than 15 minutes, they will be done with it. Instead, one could make them sing for ten minutes followed by some breathing exercise or physical activity for five minutes which will again be followed by singing practice. It is very important to note that one needs a healthy body (SuSharir) for singing properly and hence, I would say it is responsibility of the music teacher to know and teach some basic physical activities to the kids. This will also solve the problem of short attention spans. Our music, Sangeet comprises of Gayan, Vadan and Nrutya (vocal, instrumental and dance) For young kids, it would be very helpful if along with their primary field, they are taught basics of other branches as well.

For instances, for kids who are primarily learning vocals, teaching them basic rhythms or body movements will make the learning process more fun and will also enhance their musical expression significantly.

The kids are smart, always!

Instead of telling kids certain best practices just as 'rules', try explaining logic behind them. The young generation is very sharp and can easily grasp the concepts which other wise are taught as 'parampara'. For example, one of the most frequently asked questions from kids is why classical musicians are always doing 'aaaaa' (the Akar). At the workshop at the stud farm, when we were asked this question, I related it with drawing. If a sketch is drawn with shaky hands, how would it look? I asked the kids. They themselves told me the importance of swift, graceful and steady lines in sketching. Then I related Akar to the gracefulness in the lines. We also made them sing without maintaining constant profile of Akar and they got the point in two minutes.



Many times, we assume that many concepts in our traditional art form (like Raga, Alap, Laya) are very complex and cannot be understood by kids or novices and hence, we burden them with lot of jargon and theory. Kids and people in general are quite smart and explaining logic behind all the activities will certainly boost their participation and interest levels.

Take it close to nature.

Our music is inspired from nature and nature is what enriches it. In the workshop, when it came to explaining the concept of Laya (tempo) to kids, we just asked them to sit silently with their eyes closed and asked them to listen to as many sounds as they could. While discussing the difference between the way crows, sparrows, parrots and horses sounded, kids could themselves tell the difference between the Laya of sounds that these creatures made. Now our job was just telling them names of different Layas. They had understood the concept just by listening.

Poorva Shah taught kids basics of Kathak amidst trees and birds.

Dr. Poorva Shah, Kathak dancer and the facilitator who graciously agreed to come and take a session on dance, made the kids stand in front of gigantic trees and asked them to move their hands as if they were painting the trees. What an innovative and fun way of teaching hand and wrist movements to kids.

Make it a mix of learning and performance.

Kids naturally love presenting more than learning. Why don't we use that positively to foster their learning? While teaching a song to kids, as soon as we told them that they had to sing it for a few visitors on the last day of the workshop, their involvement and interest simply doubled. We also invited a few artists to the workshop and organized a small performance. Kids simply loved it. [7,8,9]

Ninad Daithankar reciting Santoor for kids, accompanied by Rohan Chinchore on Tabla.

Observing a performer from a close distance also makes kids aware of the long, long way that is still unconquered. The posture, the confidence, the stability and Sahajata of the artist certainly touch the kids.

While this list is not at all exhaustive, as one starts following some of the practices mentioned above, more will pop up intuitively. For me, personally, it was heartening to see that at the end of five days, kids could listen to Tanpura and sing Sa properly. At all the locations where we work, kids are always interested and want more music. As far as teaching Indian Classical Music is concerned, a lot of change is required in teaching methodologies. We are glad that Baithak is getting avenues to work with kids and take Indian Classical Music to them without making it boring and complex.

II. DISCUSSION

Over the last week, there has been a furore about an internet petition on the website change.org to be sent to the Ministry of Human Resource Development. This is not an ordinary petition, but one demanding that classical music be made compulsory in Indian classrooms.

As a person trained to believe in the wonder of our classical traditions, a more detailed reflection throws up other considerations that defeat the purpose of such petitions. Furthermore, in a political context rife with a misplaced sense of what constitutes "Indianness", I do believe we need to be very careful about what we demand, and why we demand it.

Dear HRD Minister,

Congratulations on the many laudable initiatives of your government to make India an economically strong and a culturally vibrant nation. Just like in yoga, India has a rich heritage of classical performing arts, particularly Carnatic music and Hindustani music. These traditions date back several centuries and form an integral part of Indian culture, playing an important role all round the year in festivals and social events. Indian classical music has also significantly contributed to the Independence movement, and forms the backbone of Indian dance, theatre and film industry. Indian performing arts have a pride of place in the world.

Classical music was once taught in the gurukula. Today, just like yoga, it can be taught in schools using modern methods to develop good fundamentals, nurture talent, and kindle an abiding interest in Indian music. Weekly lessons



based on a syllabus created by a team of great musicians can cover both Hindustani and Carnatic music basics. This will enrich the cultural foundations in the education of our youth and create many more great musicians like Ravi Shankar and MS Subbulakshmi. Basic schooling in Indian classical music will also diffuse classical music from elite concert halls to mainstream Indian life.

IMPORTANT:

The intent of this petition is not to create a burden or imposition of an unpleasant school subject. Music can be offered in every school with an attractive format and content and therefore become a happy, group learning experience. Children will show enhanced learning abilities and become more proficient in studies and sports, due to classical music exposure.

Should Hindustani or Carnatic music be made compulsory in school classrooms? To answer the question positively, I would have to say there are no answers. Only more questions. To start with, what constitutes Hindustani or Carnatic music in a classroom setting? Do we go ahead and say we define pedagogy from the current practice of it as seen in a performance context? Does that preclude theoretical precepts underlying such performances? Is all pedagogy about performance? How do we reconcile a gurukul-based approach and its varied demands towards an abstraction that suits the classroom situation? Is that fair to the musical tradition that it represents?

More pertinently, how do we reconcile the realities of a classroom to a sensible approach to syllabus setting? Proponents of the petition cry foul at the simplest mention of the practicalities involved, including the rather important question of who the teachers will be, and how to train them. One of the rather frequent solutions offered includes getting young musicians and music graduates and giving them this job. The second-most-touted concept is this rather elusive phraseology termed "Music Appreciation". There seems to be no specific definition on what exactly this needs to be or what children are supposed to appreciate. Often, this seems to be idiosyncratic to the person who designs such programmes.

Hard work

Do we realise that the Central Board for Secondary Education, for instance, has reverted to the RTE Act of 2009 to mandate 1,200 working hours per annum for teachers in Class I to VIII, with an added proviso that those in secondary and senior secondary schools have to work six hours and 10 minutes per day [10,11,12], for six days a week for classes VI upwards. If this were to be successfully implemented, we are already discussing a new generation of children who will have to work much harder, and study more hours.

There seem to be two related, but distinct demands in the proponents of the petition. One, that our children understand "our culture", and that we need more appreciation for our classical art forms in our educational institutions. Two, that our children are not being "taught" to be more "aesthetic" and creative.

All of these notions and ideas assume the following. One, that our classrooms and schools do not currently offer sufficient exposure to the arts, classical or otherwise. Two, that exposure to our classical music forms (and for strange reasons not our folk traditions, dance traditions or even storytelling traditions) alone can correct this perceived gap in education. Three, that creating compulsory training in classical music will breed a new generation of culturally aware and aesthetically rounded students.

Creative exploration

Let us now examine what the National Curriculum Framework convened by the National Council of Educational Research and Training did in 2005. Looking at inducing an approach towards creative exploration (as opposed to "teaching" creativity, whatever that may mean), the National Curriculum Framework recommended the establishment of a Department of Arts and Aesthetics, and individuals as eminent and as qualified as Shubha Mudgal were part of the core committee that made these recommendations. Specifically, the directive reads :

"The Department of Education in Arts and Aesthetics (DEAA), NCERT, following the recommendations of the NCF 2005 to implement arts education as, (i) a curricular area of school education from class I to X and (ii) as an approach to learning & development, across the school curriculum and Implementation of the Right to Education Act, 2009, has designed and launched programme on 'Art Integrated Learning (AIL) in Primary Schools of Delhi in 2011-12, as a pilot project."

Let us be aware that almost all schools affiliated to CBSE, state syllabi and other boards are already compliant with



several of these recommendations, including the mandatory music hour. There are specific schools that advocate Indian music training to the extent that they have even set up music clubs for talented children to get more attention. The realities of the classroom, however, are vastly different.

With one staff member to 35 students or more to contend with, a music teacher, given an hour across a week to expose children to the varied complexities of Indian music, suffer from chronic fatigue and mounting pressure on timetable delivery and the need to show results. Music graduates are usually not trained to understand classroom demographic complexity or socio-economic communication divides. (That would be a matter that will have to be taken by a joint action force that constitutes both the University Grants Commission and with college-level boards). A “one lesson fits all” approach cannot, by definition, work for an art form as diverse as Indian music.

Neither is pedagogy, an area of supreme subjectivity when it comes to the creative arts, definable in broad terms and expected to serve across the spectrum. Many sizes work, and many approaches do this job effectively. Here is one very different approach from the hills of Kalimpong, West Bengal which actually uses Western classical music effectively.

Coming back to Indian music, organisations such as SPIC MACAY were set up with the precise objective of exposing children to its beauty and its varied traditions. This has of course had a profound effect on generations of young minds, and continues to. As all voluntary missions go, it too has its own share of challenges, but that does not take away from its intent or impact. Whether that system can serve as the crucible on which other similar initiatives can be founded is of course a question open for a number of suggestions (and there are many, in every region).

Further, there have been attempts made by a number of eminent performing artistes and organisations who have made tremendous strides in their own ways, in terms of outreach. Chitravina Ravikiran went several steps further and defined a blueprint for classical music dissemination in the classroom starting with the Sarva Siksha Abhyan during the previous regime (which is now languishing due to lack of political will). There are many more such artistes and organizations, and we salute every one of them.

I am also surprised (and rather alarmed, given the rampant xenophobia in today’s cultural discourse), that it has become de rigeur to ask for the “removal” of Western music elements from the syllabi for Indian schools. Why does the same principle not apply towards English language learning? Or Western thought on physics? (Why not ban Fermi, Einstein and Leibniz in one shot, while we are at it?). This thought is an insult to the practical intelligence of children who show tremendous fluidity in adapting to creative input. (For instance, a Western approach to the theory of harmony is actually far more functional in training groups of children to sing, even when such content is Indian in form and structure. Many such delightful experiments serve children and teachers efficiently).

From an African example, where similar approaches yield moving results

Nigerian Children's Choir[13,14,15]

Schools that follow the the Indian Certificate of Secondary Education, General Certificate of Secondary Education and International Baccalaureate already have advanced training in music, visual art and theatre where other battles of teacher unavailability and lack of standardisation are being fought. However, with immense foresight, the system allows the child to be given the option to pick the art form he or she most desires to be trained in.

Let us also understand, that making anything compulsory might have the additional undesired effect of turning children’s attention away, especially given the enhanced workload they are expected to be tackling, this point on. In a “make it compulsory or ban it” mandate that we currently find ourselves in, this is a real danger of becoming a reality unless we are careful.

Rather, a solution towards the existing school music hour that takes into account a more enhanced approach towards creative exploration for the child – (for example, taking in elements from our rich Indian classical repertoire, but also from similar traditions worldwide) – and links learning from these exposures towards holistic development, seems to be an approach worthy of consideration. Making anything compulsory can happen only after taking into account the realities of the varied stakeholders in this process, including those of the most important ones, the children.

No one questions the need to take tremendous pride in our culture and in our traditions. And yes, there is much more to be done. However, it is important that we look at what we already have put in place, and help that process, rather than impose demands on it that are sometimes less practical than they sound. Further, asking for interventions from ruling parties and their agendas certainly tolls a rather dangerous bell.



Whatever these deliberations will entail, one must keep in mind the need for teacher training and constant re-skilling, an activity that is arduous and requires tremendous thought and enlightened policymaking. Jingoism and social media warmongering may not be entirely fair or appropriate as there is so much at stake. And keeping in mind, always, that it is our children who stand to lose, and who have everything to gain, by the decisions we force upon them.

Creativity cannot be so easily defined. And neither can the love of music be fostered by it becoming yet another mandatory examination requirement.

III. RESULTS

The gurukula was a type of education system in ancient India where the shishyas (students) lived near or with the guru. The guru-shishya tradition is a sacred relationship that is the crux of the Gurukula.

Traditional Indian classical music is best learnt and mastered in the gurukula system. At the same time, today an academic education is necessary. These two important aspects are brought together under one roof at Chinmaya Vishwavidyapeeth. It is probably the first university in the world to offer a degree programme where one learns Indian classical music in the gurukula system.

The guru-shishya parampara is an ancient one and is also known as the best system for focused learning. From the Vedic times, education in music has been imparted by the guru orally. This is referred to as guru-mukhi vidya. The best way to acquire the right knowledge of any form of lore is to understand it via guru-mukh. The student while living in a gurukula would offer services to the guru while at the same time living under stringent discipline, following a moderate lifestyle and perpetually practising and learning by rote whatever education the guru was providing. This was the only way to receive musical training.

It is an indisputable truth that knowledge of music can only be acquired through direct contact with the guru because music being a practical subject, books and notations etc. prove to be superficial. It is literally the ancient guru-shishya parampara that has taken Indian music to great heights.

A gurukula is renowned for its unique teaching methodology. Here the teaching pattern is intentionally designed to make the learning process much more interesting so that the legacy of classical music reaches the world with its values intact. This methodology, along with all the activities that are carried out at the gurukula, has made classical music attractive to the younger generation. Students absorb music not only through direct sessions but also through the environment [16,17,18] they live in. Comprehensive understanding of music is possible through reading, listening and visualising to gain a broader perspective of the same, so that one can work on one's creativity and come out with more innovative concepts.

Chinmaya Vishwavidyapeeth is a one of a kind gurukula, where the students are mentored personally by some of the world's best artists in their respective fields.

Today it is imperative to ensure that teachers and students share a friendly relation of mutual respect. Children who feel secure and have trust in the caregiver are most likely to emulate the caregiver. This was present in the gurukula system. Today the same can be achieved through the use of activities and workshops to bond with the students.

Advantages of Gurukula Shiksha

1. The gurus have great knowledge and they know how to teach the most arduous of subjects.
2. In a gurukula learning is not time-bound. The shishyas learn at their own pace and come out only when they have gained expertise in the art.
3. The shishyas inherit a certain style and develop efficiency in it.
4. The students get well-trained and attain full authority in their art form.
5. The students develop humility and immense respect for the guru as they live a disciplined life. This way they learn the right attitude while learning the art.
6. Students are taught face-to-face, and even one-to-one.
7. The environment ensures that the shishya comes out as an artist.

Chinmaya Vishwavidyapeeth's School of Kalayoga has taken up the task of nurturing and propagating the priceless heritage of Indian classical music, beginning with Hindustani Classical Music, through the tradition of the 'guru-shishya parampara'. The aims and vision of the School is playing an important role in the resurgence and nurturing of this rich heritage.

The School of Kalayoga offers training in Indian Classical (presently, Hindustani) music in the traditional Gurukula system, with a blend of Indian Knowledge Systems, towards creating performing artists of the future.

IV. CONCLUSION

Indian classical music is the classical music of the Indian subcontinent.^[1] It is generally described using terms like Marg Sangeet and Shastriya Sangeet.^[2] It has two major traditions: the North Indian classical music known as Hindustani and the South Indian expression known as Carnatic.^[3] These traditions were not distinct until about the 15th century. During the period of Mughal rule of the Indian subcontinent, the traditions separated and evolved into distinct forms. Hindustani music emphasizes improvisation and exploration of all aspects of a raga, while Carnatic performances tend to be short composition-based.^[3] However, the two systems continue to have more common features than differences.^[4] Another unique classical music tradition from the eastern part of India is Odissi music, which has evolved over the last two thousand years.

The roots of the classical music of India are found in the Vedic literature of Hinduism and the ancient Natyashastra, the classic Sanskrit text on performing arts by Bharata Muni.^{[5][6]} The 13th century Sanskrit text Sangeeta-Ratnakara of Sarangadeva is regarded as the definitive text by both the Hindustani music and the Carnatic music traditions.^{[7][8]}

Indian classical music has two foundational elements, raga and tala. The raga, based on a varied repertoire of swara (notes including microtones), forms the fabric of a deeply intricate melodic structure, while the tala measures the time cycle.^[9] The raga gives an artist a palette to build the melody from sounds, while the tala provides them with a creative framework for rhythmic improvisation using time.^{[10][11][12]} In Indian classical music the space between the notes is often more important than the notes themselves, and it traditionally eschews Western classical concepts such as harmony, counterpoint, chords, or modulation.^{[13][14][15]}

The root of music in ancient India are found in the Vedic literature of Hinduism. The earliest Indian thought combined three arts, syllabic recital (vadya), melos (gita) and dance (nrta).^[16] As these fields developed, sangeeta became a distinct genre of art, in a form equivalent to contemporary music. This likely occurred before the time of Yaska (c. 500 BCE), since he includes these terms in his nirukta studies, one of the six Vedanga of ancient Indian tradition. Some of the ancient texts of Hinduism such as the Samaveda (c. 1000 BCE) are structured entirely to melodic themes,^{[17][18]} it is sections of Rigveda set to music.^[19]

The Samaveda is organized into two formats. One part is based on the musical meter, another by the aim of the rituals.^[20] The text is written with embedded coding, where swaras (octave notes) are either shown above or within the text, or the verse is written into parvans (knot or member); in simple words, this embedded code of swaras is like the skeleton of the song. The swaras have about 12 different forms and different combinations of these swaras are made to sit under the names of different ragas. The specific code of a song clearly tells us what combination of swaras are present in a specific song. The lyrical part of the song is called "sahityam" and sahityam is just like singing the swaras altogether but using the lyrics of the song. The code in the form of swaras have even the notation of which note to be sung high and which one low. The hymns of Samaveda contain melodic content, form, rhythm and metric organization.^[20] This structure is, however, not unique or limited to Samaveda. The Rigveda embeds the musical meter too, without the kind of elaboration found in the Samaveda. For example, the Gayatri mantra contains three metric lines of exactly eight syllables, with an embedded ternary rhythm.^[21]



Five Gandharvas (celestial musicians) from 4th–5th century CE, northwest South Asia, carrying the four types of musical instruments. Gandharvas are discussed in Vedic era literature.^[22]

In the ancient traditions of Hinduism, two musical genre appeared, namely Gandharva (formal, composed, ceremonial music) and Gana (informal, improvised, entertainment music).^[23] The Gandharva music also implied celestial, divine associations, while the Gana also implied singing.^[23] The Vedic Sanskrit musical tradition had spread widely in the Indian subcontinent, and according to Rowell, the ancient Tamil classics make it "abundantly clear that a cultivated musical tradition existed in South India as early as the last few pre-Christian centuries".^[24]

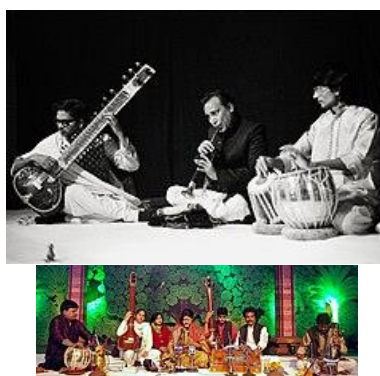
The classic Sanskrit text Natya Shastra is at the foundation of the numerous classical music and dance traditions of India. Before Natyashastra was finalized, the ancient Indian traditions had classified musical instruments into four groups based on their acoustic principle (how they work, rather than the material they are made of) for example flute which works with gracious in and out flow of air.^[25] These four categories are accepted as given and are four separate chapters in the Natyashastra, one each on stringed instruments (chordophones), hollow instruments (aerophones), solid instruments (idiophones), and covered instruments (membranophones).^[25] Of these, states Rowell, the idiophone in the form of "small bronze cymbals" were used for tala. Almost the entire chapter of Natyashastra on idiophones, by Bharata, is a theoretical treatise on the system of tala.^[26] Time keeping with idiophones was considered a separate function than that of percussion (membranophones), in the early Indian thought on music theory.^[26]

The early 13th century Sanskrit text Sangitaratnakara (literally, "Ocean of Music and Dance"), by Sarngadeva patronized by King Sighana of the Yadava dynasty in Maharashtra, mentions and discusses ragas and talas.^[27] He identifies seven tala families, then subdivides them into rhythmic ratios, presenting a methodology for improvisation and composition that continues to inspire modern era Indian musicians.^[28] Sangitaratnakara is one of the most complete historic medieval era Hindu treatises on this subject that has survived into the modern era, that relates to the structure, technique and reasoning behind ragas and talas.^{[29][28]}

The centrality and significance of music in ancient and early medieval India is also expressed in numerous temple and shrine reliefs, in Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism, such as through the carving of musicians with cymbals at the fifth century Pavaya temple sculpture near Gwalior,^[30] and the Ellora Caves.^{[31][32]}

The post-Vedic era historical literature relating to Indian classical music has been extensive. The ancient and medieval texts are primarily in Sanskrit (Hinduism), but major reviews of music theory, instruments and practice were also composed in regional languages such as Braj, Kannada, Odia, Pali (Buddhism), Prakrit (Jainism), Tamil and Telugu.^[33] While numerous manuscripts have survived into the modern era, many original works on Indian music are believed to be lost, and are known to have existed only because they are quoted and discussed in other manuscripts on classical Indian music.^{[33][34]} Many of the encyclopedic Puranas contain large chapters on music theory and instruments, such as the Bhagavata Purana, the Markandeya Purana, the Vayu Purana, the Linga Purana, and the Visnudharmottara Purana.^{[35][36][37]}

The most cited and influential among these texts are the Sama Veda, Natya shastra (classic treatise on music theory, Gandharva), Dattilam, Brihaddesi (treatise on regional classical music forms), and Sangita Ratnakara (definitive text for Carnatic and Hindustani traditions).^{[7][33][38]} Most historic music theory texts have been by Hindu scholars. Some classical music texts were also composed by Buddhists and Jain scholars, and in 16th century by Muslim scholars. These are listed in the attached table.



Indian classical music performances

The classical music tradition of the ancient and medieval Indian subcontinent (modern Bangladesh, India, Pakistan) were a generally integrated system through the 14th century, after which the socio-political turmoil of the Delhi Sultanate era isolated the north from the south. The music traditions of the North and South India were not considered

distinct until about the 16th century, but after that the traditions acquired distinct forms.^[3] North Indian classical music is called Hindustani, while the South Indian expression is called Carnatic (sometimes spelled as Karnatic). According to Nazir Ali Jairazbhoy, the North Indian tradition acquired its modern form after the 14th or the 15th century.^[42]

Indian classical music has historically adopted and evolved with many regional styles, such as the Bengali classical tradition. This openness to ideas led to assimilation of regional folk innovations, as well as influences that arrived from outside the subcontinent. For example, Hindustani music assimilated Arabian and Persian influences.^[43] This assimilation of ideas was upon the ancient classical foundations such as raga, tala, matras as well as the musical instruments. For example, the Persian Rāk is probably a pronunciation of Raga. According to Hormoz Farhat, Rāk has no meaning in modern Persian language, and the concept of raga is unknown in Persia.^[44]

Carnatic music

If Hindustani music is taken in as an entirely new form of music created from Indian classical music and Persian music, then Carnatic music was a form from the south of the sub-continent that developed further natively after this divergence. Carnatic music is the ancient Indian classical music that became distinct after Hindustani music was established. It is dated back to ancient periods, but was only distinct after Hindustani music was established. Purandara Dasa (1484–1564) was a Hindu composer and musicologist who lived in Hampi of the Vijayanagara Empire.^{[45][46]} He is considered Pithamaha (literally, "great father or grandfather") of the Carnatic music. Purandara Dasa was a monk and a devotee of the Hindu god Krishna (Vishnu, Vittal avatar).^[45] He systematised classical Indian music theory and developed exercises for musicians to learn and perfect their art. He travelled widely sharing and teaching his ideas, and influenced numerous South Indian and Maharashtra Bhakti movement musicians.^[47] These exercises, his teachings about raga, and his systematic methodology called Suladi Sapta Tala (literally, "primordial seven talas") remains in use in contemporary times.^{[46][48]} The efforts of Purandara Dasa in the 16th century began the Carnatic style of Indian classical music.^[47]



Saraswati is the goddess of music and knowledge in the Indian tradition.

Carnatic music, from South India, tends to be more rhythmically intensive and structured than Hindustani music. Examples of this are the logical classification of ragas into melakarta, and the use of fixed compositions similar to Western classical music.^[19,20] Carnatic raga elaborations are generally much faster in tempo and shorter than their equivalents in Hindustani music. In addition, accompanists have a much larger role in Carnatic concerts than in Hindustani concerts. Today's typical concert structure was put in place by the vocalist Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar. The opening piece is called a varnam, and is a warm-up for the musicians. A devotion and a request for a blessing follows, then a series of interchanges between ragams (unmetered melody) and Tanam (the ornamentation within a melorhythmic cycle, equivalent to the jor). This is intermixed with hymns called krithis. The pallavi or theme from the raga then follows. Carnatic pieces also have notated lyrical poems that are reproduced as such, possibly with embellishments and treatments according to the performer's ideology, referred to as Manodharmam.^[citation needed]

Primary themes include worship, descriptions of temples, philosophy, and nayaka-nayika (Sanskrit "hero-heroine") themes. Tyagaraja (1759–1847), Muthuswami Dikshitar (1776–1827) and Syama Sastri (1762–1827) have been the important historic scholars of Carnatic music. According to Eleanor Zelliot, Tyagaraja is known in the Carnatic tradition as one of its greatest composers, and he reverentially acknowledged the influence of Purandara Dasa.^[47]

A common belief is that Carnatic music represents a more ancient and refined approach to classical music, whereas Hindustani music has evolved by external influences.^[49]

Hindustani music



The 16th century musician Tansen, who about the age of 60 joined the Mughal Akbar court. For many Hindustani music gharanas (schools), he is their founder.

It is unclear when the process of differentiation of Hindustani music started. The process may have started in the 14th century courts of the Delhi Sultans. However, according to Jairazbhoy, the North Indian tradition likely acquired its modern form after the 14th or after the 15th century.^[50] The development of Hindustani music reached a peak during the reign of Akbar. During this 16th century period, Tansen studied music and introduced musical innovations, for about the first sixty years of his life with patronage of the Hindu king Ram Chand of Gwalior, and thereafter performed at the Muslim court of Akbar.^{[51][52]} Many musicians consider Tansen as the founder of Hindustani music.^[53]

Tansen's style and innovations inspired many, and many modern gharanas (Hindustani music teaching houses) link themselves to his lineage.^[54] The Muslim courts discouraged Sanskrit, and encouraged technical music. Such constraints led Hindustani music to evolve in a different way than Carnatic music.^{[54][55]}

Hindustani music style is mainly found in North India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. It exists in four major forms: Dhrupad, Khyal (or Khayal), Tarana, and the semi-classical Thumri.^[56] Dhrupad is ancient, Khyal evolved from it, Thumri evolved from Khyal.^[57] There are three major schools of Thumri: Lucknow gharana, Banaras gharana and Punjabi gharana. These weave in folk music innovations.^[56] Tappa is the most folksy, one which likely existed in Rajasthan and Punjab region before it was systematized and integrated into classical music structure. It became popular, with the Bengali musicians developing their own Tappa.^[58]

Khyal is the modern form of Hindustani music, and the term literally means "imagination". It is significant because it was the template for Sufi musicians among the Islamic community of India, and Qawwals sang their folk songs in the Khyal format.^[59]

Dhrupad (or Dhruvpad), the ancient form described in the Hindu text Natyashastra,^[60] is one of the core forms of classical music found all over the Indian subcontinent. The word comes from Dhruva which means immovable and permanent.^{[61][57]}

A Dhrupad has at least four stanzas, called Sthayi (or Asthayi), Antara, Sanchari and Abhoga. The Sthayi part is a melody that uses the middle octave's first tetrachord and the lower octave notes.^[57] The Antara part uses the middle octave's second tetrachord and the higher octave notes.^[57] The Sanchari part is the development phase, which builds using parts of Sthayi and Antara already played, and it uses melodic material built with all the three octave notes.^[57] The Abhoga is the concluding section, that brings the listener back to the familiar starting point of Sthayi, albeit with rhythmic variations, with diminished notes like a gentle goodbye, that are ideally mathematical fractions

such as dagun (half), tigon (third) or chaugun (fourth).^[62] Sometimes a fifth stanza called Bhoga is included. Though usually related to philosophical or Bhakti (emotional devotion to a god or goddess) themes, some Dhruvads were composed to praise kings.^{[61][62]}

Improvisation is of central importance to Hindustani music, and each gharana (school tradition) has developed its own techniques. At its core, it starts with a standard composition (bandish), then expands it in a process called vistar. The improvisation methods have ancient roots, and one of the more common techniques is called Alap, which is followed by the Jor and Jhala. The Alap explores possible tonal combinations among other things, Jor explores speed or tempo (faster), while Jhala explores complex combinations like a fishnet of strokes while keeping the beat patterns.^[63] As with Carnatic music, Hindustani music has assimilated various folk tunes. For example, ragas such as Kafi and Jaijaiwanti are based on folk tunes.^[citation needed]

Persian and Arab influences

Hindustani music has had Arab and Persian music influences, including the creation of new ragas and the development of instruments such as the sitar and sarod.^[43] The nature of these influences are unclear. Scholars have attempted to study Arabic maqam (also spelled makam) of Arabian peninsula, Turkey and northern Africa, and dastgah of Iran, to discern the nature and extent.^{[64][65]} Through the colonial era and until the 1960s, the attempt was to theoretically study ragas and maqams and suggested commonalities. Later comparative musicology studies, states Bruno Nettl – a professor of music, have found the similarities between classical Indian music and European music as well, raising the question about the point of similarities and of departures between the different world music systems.^{[64][65]}

One of the earliest known discussions of Persian maqam and Indian ragas is by the late 16th century scholar Pundarika Vittala. He states that Persian maqams in use in his times had been derived from older Indian ragas (or mela), and he specifically maps over a dozen maqam. For example, Vittala states that the Hijaz maqam was derived from the Asaveri raga, and Jangula was derived from the Bangal.^{[66][67]} In 1941, Haidar Rizvi questioned this and stated that influence was in the other direction, Middle Eastern maqams were turned into Indian ragas, such as Zangulah maqam becoming Jangla raga.^[68] According to John Baily – a professor of ethnomusicology, there is evidence that the traffic of musical ideas were both ways, because Persian records confirm that Indian musicians were a part of the Qajar court in Tehran,^[69] an interaction that continued through the 20th century with import of Indian musical instruments in cities such as Herat near Afghanistan-Iran border.^[70]

Odissi music

Odissi music is a distinct type of Classical music of Eastern India. This music is sung during performance of classical Odissi dance.

The traditional ritual music for the service of Lord Jagannatha, Odissi music has a history spanning over two thousand years, authentic sangita-shastras or treatises, unique Ragas & Talas and a distinctive style of rendition.

The various aspects of Odissi music include odissi prabandha, chaupadi, chhānda, champu, chautisa, janāna, mālasri, bhajana, sarimāna, jhulā, kuduka, koili, poi, boli, and more. Presentation dynamics are roughly classified into four: raganga, bhabanga, natyanga and dhrubapadanga. Some great composer-poets of the Odissi tradition are the 12th-century poet Jayadeva, Balarama Dasa, Atibadi Jagannatha Dasa, Dinakrusna Dasa, Kabi Samrata Upendra Bhanja, Banamali Dasa, Kabisurjya Baladeba Ratha, Abhimanyu Samanta Singhara and Kabikalahansa Gopalakrusna Pattanayaka.

Features





Indian classical music performances

Classical Indian music is one genre of South Asian music; others include film music, various varieties of pop, regional folk, religious and devotional music.^[1]

In Indian classical music, the raga and the tala are two foundational elements. The raga forms the fabric of a melodic structure, and the tala keeps the time cycle.^[9] Both raga and tala are open frameworks for creativity and allow a very large number of possibilities, however, the tradition considers a few hundred ragas and talas as basic.^[71] Raga is intimately related to tala or guidance about "division of time", with each unit called a matra (beat, and duration between beats).^[72]

Raga

A raga is a central concept of Indian music, predominant in its expression. According to Walter Kaufmann, though a remarkable and prominent feature of Indian music, a definition of raga cannot be offered in one or two sentences.^[73] Raga may be roughly described as a musical entity that includes note intonation, relative duration and order, in a manner similar to how words flexibly form phrases to create an atmosphere of expression.^[74] In some cases, certain rules are considered obligatory, in others optional. The raga allows flexibility, where the artist may rely on simple expression, or may add ornamentations yet express the same essential message but evoke a different intensity of mood.^[74]

A raga has a given set of notes, on a scale, ordered in melodies with musical motifs.^[10] A musician playing a raga, states Bruno Nettl, may traditionally use just these notes, but is free to emphasize or improvise certain degrees of the scale.^[10] The Indian tradition suggests a certain sequencing of how the musician moves from note to note for each raga, in order for the performance to create a rasa (mood, atmosphere, essence, inner feeling) that is unique to each raga. A raga can be written on a scale. Theoretically, thousands of raga are possible given 5 or more notes, but in practical use, the classical Indian tradition has refined and typically relies on several hundred.^[10] For most artists, their basic perfected repertoire has some forty to fifty ragas.^[75] Raga in Indian classical music is intimately related to tala or guidance about "division of time", with each unit called a matra (beat, and duration between beats).^[72]

A raga is not a tune, because the same raga can yield a very large number of tunes.^[76] A raga is not a scale, because many ragas can be based on the same scale.^{[76][77]} A raga, states Bruno Nettl and other music scholars, is a concept similar to mode, something between the domains of tune and scale, and it is best conceptualized as a "unique array of melodic features, mapped to and organized for a unique aesthetic sentiment in the listener".^[76] The goal of a raga and its artist is to create rasa (essence, feeling, atmosphere) with music, as classical Indian dance does with performance arts. In the Indian tradition, classical dances are performed with music set to various ragas.^[78]

Tala

According to David Nelson – an Ethnomusicology scholar specializing in Carnatic music, a tala in Indian music covers "the whole subject of musical meter".^[79] Indian music is composed and performed in a metrical framework, a structure of beats that is a tala. A tala measures musical time in Indian music. However, it does not imply a regular repeating accent pattern, instead its hierarchical arrangement depends on how the musical piece is supposed to be performed.^[79]

The tala forms the metrical structure that repeats, in a cyclical harmony, from the start to end of any particular song or dance segment, making it conceptually analogous to meters in Western music.^[79] However, talas have certain qualitative features that classical European musical meters do not. For example, some talas are much longer than any classical Western meter, such as a framework based on 29 beats whose cycle takes about 45 seconds to complete when performed. Another sophistication in talas is the lack of "strong, weak" beat composition typical of the traditional

European meter. In classical Indian traditions, the tala is not restricted to permutations of strong and weak beats, but its flexibility permits the accent of a beat to be decided by the shape of musical phrase.^[79]

The most widely used tala in the South Indian system is adi tala.^[80] In the North Indian system, the most common tala is teental.^[81] In the two major systems of classical Indian music, the first count of any tala is called sam.^[81]

Instruments



Musical instrument types mentioned in the Natyashastra.^{[82][25]}

Instruments typically used in Hindustani music include the sitar, sarod, surbahar, esraj, veena, tanpura, bansuri, shehnai, sarangi, violin, santoor, pakhavaj and tabla.^[83] Instruments typically used in Carnatic music include veena, venu, gottuvadyam, harmonium, mridangam, kanjira, ghatam, nadaswaram and violin.^[84]

Players of the tabla, a type of drum, usually keep the rhythm, an indicator of time in Hindustani music. Another common instrument is the stringed tanpura, which is played at a steady tone (a drone) throughout the performance of the raga, and which provides both a point of reference for the musician and a background against which the music stands out. The tuning of the tanpura depends on the raga being performed. The task of playing the tanpura traditionally falls to a student of the soloist. Other instruments for accompaniment include the sarangi and the harmonium.^[83]

Note system

Indian classical music is both elaborate and expressive. Like Western classical music, it divides the octave into 12 semitones of which the 7 basic notes are, in ascending tonal order, Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Dha Ni for Hindustani music and Sa Ri Ga Ma Pa Dha Ni for Carnatic music, similar to Western music's Do Re Mi Fa So La Ti. However, Indian music uses just-intonation tuning, unlike some modern Western classical music, which uses the equal-temperament tuning system. Also, unlike modern Western classical music, Indian classical music places great emphasis on improvisation.^[citation needed]

The underlying scale may have four, five, six or seven tones, called swaras (sometimes spelled as svaras). The swara concept is found in the ancient Natya Shastra in Chapter 28. It calls the unit of tonal measurement or audible unit as Śhruti,^[85] with verse 28.21 introducing the musical scale as follows,^[86]



तत्र स्वराः –

षड्जश्च ऋषभश्चैव गान्धारो मध्यमस्तथा ।

पञ्चमो धैवतश्चैव सप्तमोऽथ निषादवान् ॥ २१॥

—Naty Shastra, 28.21^{[87][88]}

These seven degrees are shared by both major raga systems, that is the North Indian (Hindustani) and South Indian (Carnatic) systems.^[89] The solfege (sargam) is learnt in abbreviated form: sa, ri (Carnatic) or re (Hindustani), ga, ma, pa, dha, ni, sa. Of these, the first that is "sa", and the fifth that is "pa", are considered anchors that are unalterable, while the remaining have flavors that differs between the two major systems.^[89]

Contemporary Indian music schools follow notations and classifications (see melakarta and thaata). Thaata, used in Hindustani, is generally based on a flawed but still useful notation system created by Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande.¹

Reception outside India

According to Yuktishwar Kumar, elements of Indian music arrived in China in the 3rd century, such as in the works of Chinese lyricist Li Yannian.^[90] In 1958, Ravi Shankar came to the US and started making albums. These started a 1960s penchant for Indian classical music in the States. By 1967 Shankar and other artists were performing at rock music festivals alongside Western rock, blues, and soul acts. This lasted until the mid-1970s. Ravi Shankar performed at Woodstock for an audience of over 500,000 in 1969. In the 1980s, 1990s and particularly the 2000s onwards, Indian Classical Music has seen rapid growth in reception and development around the globe, particularly in North America, where immigrant communities have preserved and passed on classical music traditions to subsequent generations through the establishment of local festivals and music schools.^[91] Numerous musicians of American origin, including Ramakrishnan Murthy, Sandeep Narayan, Pandit Vikash Maharaj, Sandeep Narayan, Abby V, and Mahesh Kale have taken professionally to Indian Classical Music with great success. In his 2020 released video, Canadian singer Abby V demonstrated 73 different Indian Classical ragas in a live rendering, which went viral on the internet; further establishing the growing prominence of Indian Classical Music around the globe.^[92]

Organizations

Sangeet Natak Akademi, is an Indian national-level academy for performance arts. It awards the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award, the highest Indian recognition given to people in the field of performance arts.

SPIC MACAY, established in 1977, has more than 500 chapters in India and abroad. It claims to hold around 5000 events every year related to Indian classical music and dance.^[93] Organizations like Prayag Sangeet Samiti, among others, award certification and courses in Indian classical music.^[94]

Akhil Bharatiya Gandharva Mahavidyalaya Mandal (अखिल भारतीय गान्धर्व महाविद्यालय मंडल) is an institution for the promotion and propagation of Indian classical music and dance.^[20]

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