



## THE SCENARIO OF HINDUSTANI VOCAL MUSIC IN MODERN PERIOD

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**ABSTRACT**

Hindustani classical music in modern India holds a distinct position in the cultural arena of northern India. Indian music has been simultaneously nurtured in two culturally diverse schools of music which have rendered distinguishing characteristics to it. The music of Northern India, from Srinagar to Belgaon, and Dwarika to Manipur, has a distinct identity of its own when compared to Southern India, comprising Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. Both these streams grew parallelly and have enriched the musical heritage of our country by lending to it a variety of attributes and enchanting features.

**KEYWORDS :** Aesthetics, Socio-cultural relationship , Gandharva Sangita, Sama Gana, Mughlas, Composition, Maestros, Classical Music, Vocal Music

The Northern Indian classical music is known as Hindustani classical music. It has contributed much to the cultural growth and recognition of India. Its origin is enrooted in ancient past—in the times of the Gandharva-Sangita and the Sama Gana. The course of development of Hindustani classical music has been through a number of phases and has been witness to social as well as political upheavals. In today's world this form of music has a distinct identity and its present form is the consequence of the cultural evolution of India. The British Era in India had a profound impact on the culture of country and the period had greatly motivated the reformists. The Socio-cultural scenario of the country underwent a huge transformation owing to the thought process brought by the British. On one hand as it had caused a devaluation of traditional concepts, on the other it has also led to the revaluation of the set norms and practices. This music has always fought its way to find a place that represents the pride of Indian culture. Foreign influences have also played crucial roles on Indian music and the values that boosted its growth have been imbibed by it.

Music and dancing which flourished greatly under the Mughals, also suffered a great setback after the decline of their Empire. Even the last Mughal ruler Mohammed Shah was a great patron of music. A number of outstanding musicians flourished at his courts the most prominent among them being Adarang and Sadarang. During his times Indian classical music was greatly enriched as a result of the mingling of the Hindu and Persian music techniques. After Mohammed Shah the rich music tradition of the Mughals died. No doubt, several outstanding musicians took shelter in the courts of native princes, but they could not produce any outstanding compositions. In fact, by then music had been degraded to a medium of sensual gratification and the general masses began to abhor it.

North Indian Classical music was also much neglected during the 200 years of long British misrule of the country. No recognition was given to it nor was it popularised in the form of education. However, the traditions were kept alive because we have always felt a deep affection for our music and have patronage and appreciation was extended by the local Rajas, princes and landlords. They have accepted it as an integral part of their culture as well as an important component of amusement. A number of musicians in that era who had taken up music as their profession took pride in it and made efforts to popularise it by imparting training to the aspirants. That played a key role in preserving this precious form of art. The legacy of North Indian classical music has been transferred from generation to generation and in many cases emerged as a family profession and an important part of social customs.

When the struggle for independence began in the country, people became greatly aware of the tradition which had succeeded in maintaining its prominence through ages. A

number of rulers during this period also patronised this art by summoning great musicians to their royal courts. The performances of eminent artists had highlighted and popularised Indian music and helped in its spreading among the common men as well. Numerous attempts were made to develop a strong bond between the people and the music which comprised inclusion of music in the format of general education and establishment of various musical institutions. These attempts helped a great deal to revive the popularity of music and much of this credit must be given to Pandit Vishnu Digambar Paluskar (1872-1931) and Pandit Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande (1860-1936). In 1857, the year of the Sepoy Mutiny, a new wave of modern Indian music started. Some of the greatest music maestros emerged in the beginning of twentieth century. Their soulful renditions made permanent imprints in the musical world which still serve as inspirations for the critics and musicians across the world.

Thus, North Indian Classical music continued to thrive in places like Jaipur, Udaipur, Gwalior, Indore, Baroda, Rampur, Dewas and Raigarh. Some of the prominent personalities who can be credited not only for reviving but also for sustaining Indian classical music during the hard times of neglect and dissipation included Maharaja Pratap Singh Deva (1779 – 1804) of Jaipur, Mohammad Raza of Patna, Captain N.A. Willard, Krishna Nand Vyas, Hakim Mohammad Karam Imam, Raja S.M. Tagore, Krishnadahn Banerjee, besides the aforementioned Pandit Paluskar and Pandit Bhatkhande.

On the other hand, South Indian Classical Music, especially Carnatic Music was much influenced by the European musical traditions introduced by the British and amalgamated some of them into their own traditions.

Talking of Carnatic music, one thinks of temples, music which has retained its pristine purity over the ages and something strongly South Indian. But Carnatic music, like all Indian art forms has been open to various cultural influences from all over the country and across the seas. Strange as it may sound, the British Raj and its bands have left a firm imprint on this most traditional music form unlike that of Hindustani music. Muthuswami Dikshitar and Thyagaraja, two of the most revered composers of Carnatic music, were certainly influenced by the strange tunes from the British.

Perhaps the earliest innovation was the violin. This very Western instrument became part of the Carnatic music tradition when the family of composer Ramaswamy Dikshitar moved from Thiruvapur to Madras in the 1790s. The five-year stay exposed the brothers, Muthuswami and Baluswami Dikshitar, to the 'airs' that were being played by the Fort St George orchestra. Baluswami Dikshitar learnt to play the violin from an Englishman and introduced it to the Carnatic concert platform. Muthuswami Dikshitar composed around

fifty verses in Sanskrit, based on the orchestra's music. The most famous among these is 'Santatam Pahi Mam Sangita Shyamale' which is set to the same tune as 'God Save The King'!

Muthuswami Dikshitar's contemporary, Thyagaraja, composed 'Raminsuvar Evarura' in the Raga Suposhini, which was clearly inspired by music that accompanies march pasts. His 'Vara Lila Gana Lola' in Raga Sankarabharanam, is also based completely on Western band tunes. Thyagaraja used words that had come into Telugu from English in some of his compositions. The usage of the word 'Landaru' (from Lantern) in the kriti 'Emi Jesite Nemi' (Raga Todi) and Shalu (from Shawl) in the kriti 'Jutamurare' (Raga Arabhi) serve as examples.

The British were not immune to the beauty of Carnatic music. There were instances where singers such as Maha Vaidyanatha Sivan were much appreciated and honoured by British officials. The antics and contortions of Sivagangai Periya Vaithi, are said to have scared at least one British lady into hysterics. Gopalakrishna Bharat's Nandan Charitram moved a French official of Karaikkal to such an extent that he funded the first publication of the work. The Madras Jubilee Gayan Samaj opened its office in 1883 and among its patrons were such senior officials as Sir Charles Turner, Col. McLeod and Gen. S. Chamier. Programmes featuring Carnatic music were held at the Pachiappa's Hall in George Town, Madras and many Englishmen attended these events. Patnam Subramanya Iyer, the composer who lived in Madras for 12 years, thereby acquiring the prefix Patnam (city), created the Raga Kathanakutoohalam, which can easily pass off as a melody in Western Music. His song 'Raghuvamsa Sudha' in this Raga, is a favourite among instrumentalists up to this day, especially when they are performing in front of international audiences.

At the turn of the century, the Harikatha Movement (story-telling with music) was at its peak. Innovations were happening in this genre. Exponents such as Harikesanallur L. Muthiah Bhagavathar and Tirupazhanam Panchapakesa Sastriar were in the fore front of it. A popular item in their repertoire was the description of Rama's marriage to Sita. During their discourse they let their imagination run riot and even described a 'band' that belted out music during the wedding procession. The ever popular 'English Note' was created for this.

The Imperial Durbar of 1911 marked the zenith of the British Raj. The visit certainly influenced classical music. Gauhar Jan of Calcutta and Janki Bai of Allahabad performed a 'mujra' for King George V, and for their song 'Yeh Hai Tajposhi Ka Jalsa Mubarak Ho Mubarak Ho' they were given a gift of 100 guineas. M. Lakshmana Suri of Madras, father of Judge and noted musicologist T.L. Venkatarama Iyer and uncle to Harikesanallur L. Muthiah Bhagavathar, composed a set of 100 verses in Sanskrit for the King. It was titled 'George Deva Shatakam'. He was awarded the title of Mahamahopadhyaya for the effort. The Muthialpet Sabha of George Town, Madras, announced a competition among composers for coming up with a song on King George. The eminent vocalist and composer Ramanathapuram 'Poochi' Srinivasa Iyengar was awarded the gold medal for his kriti 'Satatamu Brovumayya Chakravartini' in Raga Todi. A mangalam (benediction) too was composed. It goes 'Jayatu Sarvabhauma George Nama, Sundari Mary Ragni Sahita Vijayi Bhava'.

In the mid-thirties, Chittoor V. Nagaiah released a 78-rpm recording of a Javali that began with the words 'O my lovely Lalana'. The song is a delightful mix of Telugu and English. Much closer to Independence, Ariyakkudi Ramanuja Iyengar had the occasion to perform before an English Collector. In order to impress him, Iyengar began with the English note. The man was not happy. 'When will you sing 'Entaro

Mahanubhavulu?' he asked. Carnatic music had come full-circle.

The influence did not vanish with the end of the British Raj. During the Rishabha Vahanam procession at the Kapaleeswarar temple in Mylapore, it is customary for the bearers of the idol to dance to the tune of a band during the last lap of the event. The tunes played are the English note, 'For He's a Jolly Good Fellow'.

Maharaja Pratap Singh Deva of Jaipur organised a grand music conference that was attended by the most prominent musicians and musicologists of the time. At the conclusion of the conference, a book entitled, 'Sangeet Saar or Epitome of Music' was published, and Bilawal Thata was accepted as the Shuddha Thata or Foundation Scale of the Hindustani classical music.

Mohammad Raza's book, Nagmat-i-Asafi, published in 1813, explored the then popular systems of music like Raga-Ragini, Putra-Ragini and Putra-Badhu. He also introduced his own system, entitled Six Ragas and Thirty-Six Raginis. The definitions of the Ragas given in this book are also useful till today.

Captain Willard was a senior military officer in the court of the Nawab of Banda State in Uttar Pradesh and a skilful performer on several of the Indian musical instruments. He studied the theory of Indian music and also wrote a book based on his observations – A Treatise on the Music of India, published in 1834.

Krishna Nand Vyas's book, Sangeet Klapadrum, was published in Calcutta in 1842. Like Mohammad Raza, he too accepted the Bilawal Scale as the Primary Scale.

Hakim Mohammad Karam Imam, who was a subject of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah of Oudh, wrote the Urdu book, Madan-al-Moosiqi in 1857, which contains authentic descriptions of the musical practices of those times. From this book, we get to know of the development of classical music in South India, whose centre was Thanjavur. The ruler of Thanjavur, patronised famous musicians, poets and singers like Thyagaraja, Shyam Shastri and Subram Dixit. The rulers of Cochin also patronised music and Perumal composed outstanding songs in Sanskrit, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Marathi.

Pandit Vishnu Digambar Paluskar (1872-1931) introduced his own notation system and wrote the books Raga Pravesh and Sangeet Bal Prakash. To popularise and spread classical music, Pt. Paluskar started the Gandharva Mahavidyalaya, a college imparting formal education on music. Pandit Vishnu Narayan Bhatkande, popularly known as 'Chaturpandit', composed Lakshya Sangitam (1910), in which he not only classified the various ragas but also explained the theory of Indian music in details. He introduced scientific methods for teaching Indian music and organised the first All India Music Conference at Baroda in 1916. These conferences subsequently began to be held regularly and provided a forum to the outstanding musicians to let other musicians know about their innovations. Ultimately it also resulted in proper classification of the various ragas and encouraged scientific education of music. Pt. Bhatkande, recognised the many rifts that existed in the structure of Indian classical music. He undertook extensive research visits to study the large number of gharanas of both Hindustani as well as Carnatic music, collecting and comparing compositions. Between 1909 and 1932, he brought out the monumental Hindustani Sangeetha Padhathi (4 vols.), which suggested a transcription for Indian music and described the many traditions in this notation. It consolidated the many musical forms of Hindustani Classical music into a number of 'thaats', a system that had been proposed in the Carnatic tradition in the seventeenth century. The Ragas as we know them today

were consolidated in this landmark work.

In modern times, the government-run All India Radio and Radio Pakistan has helped to bring the artistes in the fore front of a cultural transformation, countering the loss of the patronage system. The first star was Gauhar Jan, whose career was born out of Fred Gaisberg's first recordings of Indian music in 1902. With the advance of films and other public media, musicians began to make their living through public performances. With exposure to Western music, some of these melodies also started merging with classical forms, especially in the stream of popular music. A number of gurukuls, such as that of Alauddin Khan at Maihar, flourished. In more modern times, corporate sponsorship has also helped to support Hindustani music.

The scholars who rendered valuable contribution to the popularisation of music in Bengal included Maharaja Jatindra Mohan Tagore, Jyotindranath Tagore et al. But probably the most outstanding contribution to the transformation of the Bengali music was made by Rabindranath Tagore.

At such a time, Rai Amarnath Bali (in whose name the Hall at Charbagh, Lucknow, is dedicated by the government), went all the way to Pune to persuade an aging Pt. Bhatkhande to go and stay in Lucknow and guide the music college in the work of re-establishing the lost glory of pure classical forms and their methodical recording in the form of text books for future generations. Marris Music College later became the university called Bhatkhande Sangeet Vidyapeeth where graduate and post graduate courses in vocal and instrumental music began to be awarded. Its faculty include some of the most eminent music maestros of the day. Young men and women from decent families started studying music and their interest in classical music was revived once again.

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