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A modern look at changing trends in Indian classical music

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Abstract

Indian classical music is a big part of India's spiritual and cultural history. It's not only a mix of melody and rhythm; it's a meditation exercise that brings spiritual satisfaction. Over time, changes in society and culture, advances in technology, and globalisation have all had an effect on the traditions, teaching techniques, and audience perception of this art form. This article looks at these evolving tendencies, focussing on how the guru-shishya tradition has changed, how digital technologies have affected music, how fusion music has become popular, and how music education and listening are doing right now.

Keywords: Indian classical music, Guru-shishya tradition, technology, fusion music

Introduction

Indian classical music is a type of art that comes from the old Indian civilisation and spiritual culture. It is more than just a mix of melody and rhythm; it is a spiritual practice that brings calm and enlightenment. Its origins can be found in the Vedic period, especially in the musical recitations of the Samaveda. It changed over the years in a planned way through works like Natyashastra (by Bharata Muni) and Sangita Ratnakara (by Sharngadeva). Indian classical music is now mostly split into two primary styles: Hindustani (from the north) and Carnatic (from the south). Both have their own styles, ragas, and ways of presenting, but they both have the same goal: to connect the human spirit with the divine. But in the present world, new technologies, changes in society, and globalisation have changed the way it used to be done. This study looks at the most important developments, what caused them, and what they mean for the future of Indian classical music.

Changing the Guru-Shishya Tradition

The guru-shishya (teacher-disciple) system was the main way that music was taught in India for hundreds of years. Disciples lived with their guru in a gurukul system. They learnt not just how to play music but also how to be disciplined, devoted, and grow spiritually.

This tradition is slowly fading away in modern times. Schools, colleges, and more and more internet platforms are now teaching music. These modes make things easier to get to, but they don't always have the close and complete exchange of knowledge that was important in the previous way.

The Effect of Modern Education

Today's music education system puts a lot of weight on degrees and credentials. Students may learn the technical skills they need, but they frequently don't have a lot of emotional depth or a profound understanding of music. Shukla (2002) ^[4] says that "modern music education has turned music into a subject, while traditionally it was a spiritual practice."

A New Era of Music and Technology

In the 21st century, technology has changed Indian classical music by changing how it is learnt, played, and shared. Digital platforms like YouTube, Spotify, and ITC SRA have made it easy for people all over the world to find rare recordings and raga resources. Students can now learn from experts online through Zoom, Coursera, and music apps. However, this

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sometimes means that they don't get as much depth or personal help. Virtual concerts and social media have made it possible for more people to see and hear music, but they also run the risk of putting looks ahead of artistic integrity. AI-based apps like iTablaPro and Riyaz can help you practise, but they can't match the emotional depth of having someone show you how to do something in person. Technology has made music instruction and performance more accessible to everyone, but it also makes it harder to be creative, authentic, and follow the ancient rules of riyaz.

What Digital Platforms Do

You can now easily find classical music on sites like YouTube, Spotify, and Google Play.

- Musicians may now contact people all around the world through online concerts and classes.
- Raga libraries, like ITC SRA and Sangeetapriya, have made learning materials better for pupils.

Digital platforms have changed a lot about how people listen to, learn about, and keep Indian classical music. Here are some ways to understand how they have an effect:

- **More people can access it:** YouTube, Spotify, and Google Play Music all have huge collections of classical music recordings. This means that people all over the world can find and enjoy ragas, bandishes, and live performances whenever and wherever they choose.
- **Global Reach through Online Concerts:** Artists have been able to reach fans all over the world through virtual concerts streamed on social media and video platforms. This has broken down geographical barriers and increased their listener base.
- **Virtual Classrooms and Learning:** Students may now learn from famous teachers from all around the world using tools like Zoom, Google Meet, and music education platforms. This makes music education more open to everyone.
- **Curated Raga Libraries:** Online archives like ITC Sangeet Research Academy and Sangeetapriya.org have made digital libraries of rare recordings, artist performances, and raga analyses. These libraries provide structured and authentic material for deep study.
- **Promotion and Discovery:** Streaming playlists and social media algorithms help new listeners find classical music, which keeps younger generations interested in it. These new technologies have not only kept the legacy of Indian classical music alive, but they have also made it possible for it to thrive in a world that is driven by technology.

Problems

Even if technology has its pros, it also has its cons.

- **No Live Experience:** Digital platforms don't always have the same spontaneity and improvisation as live performances.
- **Less discipline:** Learning online can make you less committed and less likely to practise regularly.
- **Threat to Originality:** When content is easy to copy, it might make musical interpretations less original.

"Technology has made music available, but it is our job to keep its depth and sanctity," says Chaturvedi (2014) ^[1].

The Rise of Fusion and Globalisation

Indian classical music has become known around the world because to globalisation. Artists from other countries are studying it and adding it to their own music styles.

Fusion Music: Pros and Cons.

New audiences have come to fusion genres like Classical + jazz and Classical + Pop.

For example, Pt. Ravi Shankar worked with George Harrison to make Indian music popular over the world. A.R. Rahman made classical music popular through film music.

But others often worry that fusion may make classical music less pure. Mishra (2011) ^[2] says, "Fusion has brought in new audiences, but it sometimes strays from the essence of classical music."

The current state of music education is

In the last few decades, Indian classical music education has changed a lot, giving students many methods to learn about the art form. These are:

- **Classes at the University Level:** Delhi University and Banaras Hindu University are two well-known institutes that offer undergraduate and graduate degrees in Indian classical music. These structured programs mix theory with practice, which means that students can get degrees in music that are recognised.
- **Online Platforms:** Music courses made by professionals are now available on e-learning sites like Coursera, Udemy, and the Indian government's SWAYAM project. These classes let you learn at your own pace and give you access to high-quality information from well-known schools and artists. This is especially helpful for students who are working or living far away.
- **Private Schools:** Dedicated music schools like the Bhatkhande Music Institute and Sangeet Natak Akademi are still very important for developing talent through diploma programs, workshops, and learning through performance. Along with modern teaching methods, these schools often stress the old guru-shishya way of doing things.

Some of the biggest problems with music education today

Even if there are many different ways to learn, there are still a few problems

- **Making money off of education:** Music education is becoming more like a business, with greater focus on enrolments and certifications than on developing creative skills or cultural depth.
- **Not Enough Real-Life Experience:** A lot of programs, especially online ones, focus a lot on theory and pre-recorded classes. This means there aren't many chances for live feedback, improvisation, or performance-based assessment.
- The Guru-Shishya relationship is getting weaker. Personalised mentorship, which is a key part of Indian classical music training, is hard to reproduce in virtual or classroom settings, which makes the learning experience less effective.
- **Too Much Focus on Credentials:** Students often put degrees or certifications ahead of really knowing the music and feeling connected to it, which leads to performers who are technically good but not very creative.

Issues with Music Education Today

Indian classical music education is easier to get to these days, but the modern system is facing a number of new problems. One big worry is that music education is becoming more commercialised, which means that the focus often shifts from developing real talent to making as much money as possible. This change takes away from the traditional view of music as a sacred and spiritual activity. Another big problem is that students don't get enough real-world experience. Many schools focus on theory instead of live performance, improvisation, and hands-on learning. Also, the strong mentor-disciple tie that used to be at the heart of the guru-shishya tradition has gotten a lot weaker since the rise of digital learning. Online classes are handy, but they don't provide you the close, personalised guidance you need to thrive as an artist. Verma (2009) ^[5] makes a good point when he says, "Today's education system turns music into a skill, when it should stay a spiritual practice."

Changing the demographics of listeners

In the past, the audience for Indian classical music was tiny but very knowledgeable and dedicated. These listeners liked how each raga had a spiritual depth, how it was nuanced, and how it could be improvised. The demographic of people who listen to music nowadays, on the other hand, has changed a lot. Remixes, mashups, and social media reels are examples of short, fast-paced music that the younger generation is more and more drawn to. These types of music provide you rapid pleasure but don't have the depth and complexity of classical music. Also, social media sites have helped the "viral" music culture grow, where trends and algorithms, not musical value, typically determine what is popular. Because of this, serious and meditative music styles are often relegated to the edges, where they have a hard time competing with entertainment-focused content in the digital age. This change is hard for classical musicians who want to keep historic ideals while also meeting the needs of new audiences.

Conclusion

Indian classical music is going through a big change right now because of new technologies, globalisation, and changing cultural norms. These innovations have brought back interest in the genre, made it easier to access through digital channels, and introduced Indian classical traditions to people all over the world. Virtual classrooms, online performances, and music-sharing sites have made it possible for musicians and students to connect across borders. This is a new age in the way music is shared and learnt.

But this progress isn't without its problems. The spiritual discipline, emotional depth, and personalised transmission of Indian classical music through the guru-shishya tradition are all at risk of being lost. The commercialisation of music education, the rise of short-form digital content, and the increased focus on popularity over depth could all obscure the deeper philosophical and spiritual aspects of this sacred art.

There is an urgent need to find a balance between new ideas and old ones in order to keep it rich. Classical music needs to adapt to new technology and worldwide platforms to stay alive and relevant in today's world. At the same time, it needs to keep its aesthetic purity, spiritual intent, and pedagogical authenticity. Srivastava (2013) ^[3] wisely says, "Music is not just sound; it is culture; not just art; it is a

spiritual journey." The future of Indian classical music hinges on how it changes and how well it keeps the spirit of its centuries-old roots alive in the modern world.

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