

The Impact of Indian Classical Music on Present Society

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ABSTRACT

The age-old and well developed tradition of Indian classical music still has a big impact on modern culture. This article looks at how it affects a number of contemporary issues, such as education, global fusion, cultural identity, and mental health. Indian classical music, which draws from both Hindustānī and Carnatic traditions, offers a strong link to India's cultural legacy and promotes pride and continuity in a world growing more interconnected by the day. Rāga therapeutic benefits, which have been demonstrated to lower stress and encourage relaxation, highlight its importance in mental health procedures. The guru śiṣya tradition and well-known classical music festivals serve to uphold fundamental cultural values and a sense of unity among Indians to this day.

In addition to its function in India, classical music has sparked fruitful cross-cultural exchanges, resulting in international fusion genres that honor both innovation and tradition. It has gained popularity in educational curriculum, where it fosters cultural understanding and improves cognitive and emotional development. Classical music has embraced new channels in the digital age, allowing for a renaissance that cuts across generational and geographic divides. As a result, Indian classical music continues to be a powerful force that can adapt to contemporary settings while providing a constant source of artistic, therapeutic, and cultural significance.

Keywords: *Hindustānī music, Carnatic music, guru śiṣya tradition, international fusion, education, digital age*

Indian classical music, one of the oldest and most sophisticated musical traditions, continues to deeply influence contemporary society. This research explores the impact of Indian classical music on mental health, cultural identity, global fusion, and education in present-day society, demonstrating its relevance and resilience. Not only does Indian classical music preserve an invaluable cultural heritage, but it also finds new applications in wellness, artistic collaboration, and modern education.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study explores the historical evolution of Indian classical music, its role in shaping India's cultural identity, its therapeutic benefits, its global influence, its role in modern education, and its adaptations and revival strategies in the digital era. It also explores the therapeutic benefits of rāgas, its global influence, and its role in fostering cross cultural collaborations and preserving national heritage.

METHODOLOGY

This research article adopts a qualitative methodology, combining a literature review with historical analysis. It utilizes both primary and secondary sources, such as ancient philosophical writings, academic publications, musical treatises, and recordings of performances. The process includes examining the development of Indian classical music over time, investigating its ideas, and exploring the interaction of culture, music, and the aesthetics of Indian culture.

1. Historical Background and Evolution of Indian Classical Music

The ancient Sāmaveda, which dates to approximately 14th Century AD, is frequently cited as the source of Indian classical music. Over the years, music evolved into two major streams. Carnatic music in the South and Hindustānī music in the North. Carnatic music is more compositional and based on structured kritis (compositions), whereas Hindustānī music stresses improvisation within rāgas (melodic frameworks) and tālas (rhythmic cycles). Over centuries, both organizations shaped and reflected India's ethos as they developed in lockstep with social, spiritual, and cultural changes. This rich tradition continues to have an impact on contemporary

culture because it gives individuals a sense of connection to their heritage and history while providing insight into the spirituality and philosophy of ancient India.

2. Role of Indian Classical Music in Cultural Identity and National Heritage

Indian classical music is integral to cultural identity and national heritage. For many, it symbolizes resilience in the face of globalization, fostering a sense of belonging and pride in India's ancient cultural legacy. Classical music festivals such as the TyāgarājaĀrādhana in Tiruvaiyaru and the SawāīGāndharvaBhīmsen Festival in Pune bring together people of diverse backgrounds, reinforcing cultural unity and attracting younger audiences. These gatherings not only preserve tradition but also transmit the importance of cultural continuity to the next generation.

A defining feature of Indian classical music education is the guru śiṣya (teacher–disciple) tradition, which places a strong emphasis on virtues like discipline, humility, and respect for one's master. This distinctive teaching approach emphasizes cultural values that go beyond music while fostering respect and character.

3. Impact of Indian Classical Music on Mental and Emotional Health

Indian classical music offers notable therapeutic advantages, positively influencing emotional well-being and mental health. Studies show that specific rāgas can shape moods, aiding in the reduction of stress and anxiety. For example, rāgas like Yaman and Hamsadhvani are associated with feelings of joy and tranquility, while Bhairavī encourages introspection and a sense of peace. Research further highlights that engaging with rāga music, whether through listening or practice, helps lower cortisol levels and boost dopamine production, fostering relaxation and mental focus and clarity. This therapeutic approach not only aids in individual mental wellness but also integrates seamlessly into holistic healthcare.

4. Cross-Cultural Fusion and Global Influence:

Indian Music investigated by the western people about the perceptions and representations of Indian music in Western contexts over a span of two centuries. It examines the Orientals

interpretations of Indian history and culture during the 18th and 19th centuries and traces the subsequent assimilation of Indian musical elements into Western popular culture in the late 20th century. The study underscores the periodic rediscovery of Indian music in the West, elucidating how these engagements have reflected evolving cultural, social, and political relations between India and the West. The work provides a scholarly discourse on the interaction between two sophisticated and complex musical systems, contributing to the broader field of cross-cultural musicological studies. Indian classical music's impact extends beyond India's borders, enriching global music and fostering cross-cultural fusion.

In these fusion experiments, Indian musical forms often took precedence, as highlighted by reviews of the Indo-Jazz Fusions debut album (1966) and Ravi Shankar's *Portrait of a Genius*, which featured jazz flautist Paul Horn. A reviewer remarked that "the worlds of jazz and Indian classical music are far from incompatible, as evidenced by these albums; however, the jazz musicians notably adapted to the Indian idiom to establish a shared musical language."

In *Indo-Jazz Suite* (1966), John Mayer employs two distinct quintets: one comprising alto saxophone, trumpet, piano, bass, and drums, and the other featuring sitār, tablā, tānpurā, flute, and harpsichord. Mayer juxtaposes these ensembles, using the flute and harpsichord as timbral bridges between the jazz and Indian instruments. The compositions draw on Indian rāgas such as Megh and Gaud-Sārang, along with tālas like kaharvā (8 beats) and jhāptāl (10 beats). Each piece begins with a drone on the tānpurā, followed by an ālāp-like introduction played on the flute or sitār. Ostinato patterns on the bass or piano highlight key notes of the rāga, creating rhythmic interplay with the tāla. The melodies are carried by the flute, trumpet, saxophone, and occasionally the piano, sometimes doubling in unison with the harpsichord. After presenting the thematic material, instruments take turns improvising solos, maintaining a characteristic jazz format within the Indian framework.

Carnatic vocalists Ranjani and Gayatri have ventured into fusion music while remaining deeply rooted in classical traditions. Their work with fusion often centers on bridging Carnatic music with broader musical elements, emphasizing the versatility of ragas and Carnatic idioms to reach diverse audiences. A prominent example is their "Raaja by RaGa" concert, where they reimagining compositions by Indian music composer Ilayyaraaja through a Carnatic lens. This

project exemplifies their nuanced fusion approach, presenting Ilaiyaraaja's pieces while integrating raga-based structures, allowing for both fidelity to traditional Carnatic music and innovative interpretive possibilities. The duo emphasizes maintaining the intellectual integrity of Carnatic music, even as they adapt it for wider audiences. For instance, while interpreting Ilaiyaraaja's compositions, they retain the foundational raga characteristics to preserve Carnatic music's essence, even as they appeal to listeners unfamiliar with classical structures. This philosophy reflects their broader fusion approach, where they seek to communicate the emotional core of Carnatic music across cultural barriers, reinforcing the music's timeless relevance.

By engaging in such fusion work, Ranjani and Gayatri continue to advance Carnatic music's global reach without compromising its classical core, a testament to their roles as modern-day torchbearers of the genre.

Present-day artists such as Zakir Hussain carrying forward this tradition, fusing classical Indian music with jazz, electronic, and popular music. Such fusion reflects the adaptability of Indian classical music, which, while deeply rooted in tradition, remains open to experimentation. This global appeal strengthens Indian classical music's relevance, introducing it to audiences unfamiliar with its cultural context.

5. Indian Classical Music in Modern Education

Indian classical music plays an important role in education, promoting cognitive development, emotional resilience, and cultural awareness among students. Classical music programs are increasingly integrated into school curricula, where they encourage students to explore their cultural roots and understand the philosophy behind music. Educators have observed that learning classical music enhances students' focus, memory, and analytical skills.

Moreover, Indian classical music provides an alternative framework for education by incorporating the guru śiṣya model, which emphasizes patience, dedication, and respect. This model offers students a holistic cultural experience, instilling values that transcend the field of music. Many Indian institutions, such as the Banaras Hindu University and the Prayag Sangeet

Samiti, Sri Padmavati Mahila Visvavidyalayam provide comprehensive programs in Indian classical music, which include rigorous training in theory, history, and performance techniques. These programs often culminate in diplomas, bachelor's, master's degrees, and even PhD positioning classical music alongside other academic disciplines.

In modern education, Indian classical music is being incorporated in various universities and colleges both in India and globally. This shift aims to preserve cultural heritage and offers students a structured, academic understanding of these traditional art forms.

Rajiv Gandhi University of Knowledge Technologies (RGUKT), Andhra Pradesh, features a dynamic Performing Arts Department offering a comprehensive curriculum in vocal training, instrumental performance, and music composition. Equipped with state-of-the-art facilities and guided by experienced faculty, the department fosters creativity, academic excellence, and artistic growth. Students are encouraged to engage in co-curricular activities such as music, drama, visual arts, and debates to enhance their creative and intellectual skills. Additionally, RGUKT's Cultural and Social Activity Club promotes interdisciplinary cultural and social initiatives.

In recent years, there has also been a rise in music institutions like the Sadguru Music Academy , which offer fusion courses blending Indian classical music with modern elements, preparing students for careers that bridge traditional and contemporary music industries. Similarly, Shankar Mahadevan Academy provide specialized programs, even offering online courses to increase accessibility and cater to global students. Outside India, organizations such as the Darbar Arts Culture Heritage Trust in the UK work to promote Indian classical music through events like the Darbar Festival, introducing classical traditions to a broader, international audience. This cross-cultural exposure has increased interest in Indian classical music as a subject of study in foreign institutions, including the Trinity College of Music in London. The role of Indian classical music in education is further supported by technological advancements. Online platforms allow for innovative learning experiences and broader access to Indian classical music courses. Institutions like Shankar Mahadevan Academy utilize virtual classrooms, creating an interactive learning environment that accommodates global students, illustrating how digital tools are transforming music education in India and beyond. These educational pathways are crucial for maintaining

and evolving the rich traditions of Indian classical music within a globalized educational landscape.

6. Revival and Innovation

21st-century classical music refers to art music within the contemporary classical tradition that has emerged since the year 2000. This period is characterized by its loose and ongoing nature, defined solely by the passage of time rather than by a specific musical style.

Many characteristics from the previous century persist, including postmodernism, polystylism, and eclecticism, which aim to blend elements from various musical styles, regardless of their classification as "classical." This trend signifies a diminishing distinction among different musical genres. Significant influences on this music include rock, pop, jazz, and the associated dance traditions. Additionally, the integration of classical music with multimedia has become a prominent practice in the 21st century, with the Internet and related technologies serving as vital tools. Furthermore, there is a notable shift in attitudes towards female composers, and the use of artificial intelligence in music creation is also on the rise.

In the digital age, Indian classical music has found new platforms for revival and innovation. Streaming services and social media allow artists to reach larger audiences, bridging generational and geographical divides.

Online platforms have greatly enhanced Indian classical music education by providing a wide range of resources and opportunities. Notable examples include Ishan Music College, which offers a comprehensive online program featuring video tutorials, practice tools, and discussion forums to promote community interaction. Similarly, Darbar Guru provides live streaming of performances, workshops, and interviews with renowned artists, offering learners exposure to diverse musical traditions and insights. These platforms overcome geographical constraints, making it possible for students worldwide to learn from accomplished gurus. They also offer the advantage of flexible scheduling, allowing students to progress at their own pace and tailor their learning journey to suit individual needs.

However, challenges persist. The lack of face-to-face interaction can limit the transfer of intricate nuances and personalized mentorship. Furthermore, the immersive guru-śiṣya dynamic

may be compromised, leading to a less cohesive learning experience. Successful initiatives include the IndianRaga Fellowship, which uses digital platforms to link aspiring musicians with mentors, fostering creative growth and collaboration. Another example is SwaraManjari, which enhances student engagement and understanding through interactive Carnatic music learning modules. For example, musicians like T.M. Krishna and Kaushiki Chakraborty use social media to share performances and engage with younger audiences, making classical music more accessible and relatable. Digital platforms enable not only preservation but also experimentation with Indian classical music, fostering a continuous dialogue between tradition and modernity. Reality shows and competitions focused on classical music have further contributed to its revival, attracting new listeners and providing aspiring musicians a platform to showcase their talents. Such media representation highlights the relevance of classical music in contemporary culture, ensuring its future sustainability.

7.The Influence of Audience Taste:

Classical music has historically been perceived as the domain of the elite and the intellectuals, a perception rooted in the historical context of music itself. Throughout history, numerous monarchs have been musicians, including figures such as Harsha Vardhana , Mughal emperors and Sri Krishna Devaraya, who were renowned for their appreciation of classical music. Following the decline of the Empires, court musicians found refuge in princely states such as Gwalior, Jaipur, Lucknow, and Baroda. During the pre-independence era, the enjoyment of classical music was largely restricted to the ruling class and landed gentry. However, in the late 19th century, a burgeoning mercantile class began hosting concerts in their homes, sparking interest among the general populace in the revival of traditional music.

From the 19th to the 20th century, Maharajas, Nawabs, and affluent members of the educated middle class, in collaboration with prominent musicians, organized All India Radio Music conferences. The venues for Indian classical music evolved from temples to royal courts and subsequently to the residences of noble families. This shift led to the emergence of a new group of music promoters, organizers, and patrons dedicated to the advancement of music. Additionally, the proliferation of concerts, conferences, recordings, cassettes, and CDs has made classical music accessible to a wider audience today.

In the contemporary social and cultural landscape, classical music has transitioned from chamber music to concert music, facilitating direct interaction between the audience and the artist. The audience now comprises performing artists, musicologists, students, financiers, therapy groups, music critics, and international listeners. A fundamental requirement for a discerning audience is the cultivation of an appreciation for classical music. Spontaneous reactions and encouragement from the audience can motivate artists to deliver their finest performances. In the current scenario, musicians encounter a diverse audience, resulting in varied responses to the same performance. Consequently, the audience plays a crucial role in shaping the presentation of music. Furthermore, the influence of Western culture and music has led many performers to experiment with the westernization of Indian classical music.

8. Overall Impact of Modernism on Indian Classical Music

During British rule in India, harmoniums tempered scale allowed it to accompany Indian classical music at the cost of loss of microtones. Ticketed shows/concerts of Indian classical music helped artist to earn. Thus, we can say that another pattern of khyal or krithigayan is emerging in which individual skills, like fastest taans and miraculous sargams seem to be more focused than Raag prakruti and specialties of raags. Print media helped content of Indian classical music to be documented. Time period for establishing raag was reduced drastically to some minutes. There was no change in music content as such, but quality of music getting recorded improved.

CONCLUSION

Indian classical music exerts a profound influence on present society by promoting cultural identity, enhancing mental well-being, fostering cross-cultural collaborations, and contributing to education. As a living, evolving tradition, it continues to adapt, blending ancient wisdom with modern innovation. In a world increasingly focused on individualism and rapid change, Indian classical music offers a sense of continuity, mindfulness, and community that is invaluable.

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