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## *Role of Music in International Cultural exchange*

Since the dawn of civilization, music has been an integral part of social and cultural life of human beings and has played a vibrant and vital role in the rich cultural heritage of the people. The industrial civilization with its musical traditions is as old as the Egyptian pyramids and in India as old as the Indus Valley civilization. In every culture, music is intricately interwoven with the lives and beliefs of its people. Mankind has always found ways of self-expression through music or other kinds of creative activities.

Culture is of immense value to a society. A society without its culture and heritage has no existence. Music plays a vital role in preserving the culture of the society. There is no society in this world without music. Every society has its own culture and traditions. Edward Taylor describes culture as, "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs and other capabilities acquired by man as a member of the society." 'Culture' in fact is the custom and beliefs, art, way of life and social organization of a particular country or group. 1

Every man belongs to a society, without which he cannot exist. Society generally means a group of people who are interrelated to each other. A social relationship means reciprocal awareness of each other and interaction with each other. This basic urge of reciprocal awareness and interaction has led the civilizations to grow and flourish. Music being the best way of communication has served the purpose as it is the universal language and crosses all the political and physical barriers. Role of music in the international cultural exchange has been very significant. Its importance can be understood by the fact that in the periods of early civilization when the practice of slave trade existed, according to historians of Phoenicia, the most potent and important factor in spreading and interlocking of the various cultures of the ancient world was from the point

of view of music, dance, language, literature, arts, craft and lines of thought. Therefore it is more than probable that the Indian or Sanskrit words in Europe were carried by the kidnapped scholars, musicians, dancers etc. sold in the slave market. 2 Based on the similar thoughts, many examples can be cited. According to F.W. Galpin the musical bow of one form which is used in India cannot be said unique as a similar form exists in South Africa, introduced by Malabar slaves. 3

The journey of cultural exchange continued, though the medium of this exchange changed with the growing civilization. Whether it was through slave trade or invasions in the early times or through educated trans-culturally receptive western people of the 20th century, music has been a part of it. Either cultural exchange took place with the help of music or the changes took place in the music of the world through cultural assimilation. To cite an example, 'western music traces its inchoate origin in the music of Greeks and thereon to the Gregorian Chant and the Gothic period followed by the Italian Renaissance, the seventeenth century Baroque, the Romantic Movement, the revolutionary music of Schonberg and others, and finally to the present day trends in modern music and jazz...' 4 Just in the medieval period i.e. 14-15th centuries, western music was predominantly melodic and the introduction of harmony in the 15th century by Monteverdi in particular caused a revolution. 5 Indian music also goes back more than 2000 B.C., to the period of the Vedas. It has gone through various changes depending upon the prevailing socio-cultural situation. According to Dragotin Cvetko, it is known that there was a contact between the ancient Greek theory of music and that of India- a fact which points out to the similarities of languages and the mythology of the ancient Indo-Aryan world. Nevertheless ancient Greek music, which served as a foundation for subsequent western music, and the music of India went separate ways in spite of their earlier contact. 6

We find many examples of cultural exchange in the field of music since the very civilization. In the ancient period, exchange of many musical instruments took place. For example, the Flute in India which has been mentioned





in Sanskrit books under the name 'Vansi'. It was in its earlier stage a long reed, opened both ends and played vertically like the Sumerian Ti-Gi, the ancient Chinese Ti or Yo, and the modern Arabian 'Nay'. This, it appears, was the flute popular amongst the Asiatic people from prehistoric times and in general use during the earlier Egyptian dynasties. However in eastern Asia, it had a rival, with flute like tone and blown in the same way, but consisting of a closed resonating chamber with 5 or 6 holes for the fingers. This instrument was known in China as 'Bsuan'. From this evolved 'Ch'ih' in which the resonator was not truncated but tubular, both the ends closed and the mouth hole placed in the middle. When Buddhism reached China in the 1st century A.D. and became the state religion, thence 'Ch'ih' was taken to the other centres of the new cult, and reaching India, it was transformed into a cross-brown flute. The transverse position was accepted but the mouth hole was moved to the left, the lower end blocked, and the six finger holes transferred to points between the mouth hole and the open end. However on its return to China in due course it became the 'foreign' 'Ti-tzu'. It travelled westwards in the early middle ages through Byzantium and later through North Africa to become the beautiful instrument of modern orchestra. Many foreign instruments were introduced into China during the T'ang Period and 'Ya-cheg' a type of violin bow came through Tibet.<sup>7</sup>

Change is the only permanent reality in music. Indian music under went various changes in response to the changing socio- economic realities and sustained itself by fulfilling the cultural needs of the society. During the medieval period when Muslims came to India North Indian music went through a metamorphosis, blending in itself beautifully the Arab, Persian, and Central Asian influences. In this process new forms and styles developed which continue to survive even today. This way Hindustani music that developed as a result of such synthesis was based on rich Indian tradition and its interaction with the Persian, Arabic and Central Asian influences. Here the role of music was pivotal in understanding the cultures of those nations. Another major influence on Indian music can be attributed to the Sufis. Sufis have left indelible imprint on Hindustani music. They skillfully blended Arab and Persian styles with Hindustani musical forms like Qawwali, Qaul, Gazal, Naqsh, Gul and Baseet.<sup>8</sup> Qawwali performing style gives us an insight of the Turkish, Persian and Arabic speaking region's culture, where Nauba is performed. This has been mentioned in Kitab-al-Aghani written by al-Asfahani.<sup>9</sup> Cultural exchange in the medieval period contributed a lot to the Hindustani music. New musical instruments like Rabab, Tamburchi, Duff and Surnay were introduced. Musicians and scholars from Central Asia and Persia such as Sharqi and Mir Ahmed Herati came and adapted to playing the local melodies as well as Persian.<sup>10</sup>

The spread of education all over the world has initiated new sections of the community to take interest in

the artistic heritage and it is a very welcome sign of the 20th century that the different musical traditions are communing and speaking to one another, hence, bringing the music of different regions of the world together. Anand Coomaraswamy voiced the thought very rightly, "if civilization is not to destroy itself, the vigour of European action should be united with the Asiatic thought."<sup>11</sup> This thought seems to be applicable in the musical field today when what is our own can no longer exist in isolation in the present world. Great musicians like Yehudi Menuhin has made successful attempts in making the Indian music appreciated and understood in European continent. If we go back a little in history, perhaps one of the greatest interpreters of western music to India and Indian music to the West was Rabindra Nath Tagore who brought many European motifs into Indian music and interwove them into some of our classical themes.<sup>12</sup> In a sense, our National Anthem is a wonderful example of the way in which an Indian tune, an Indian type of music has been given a form where it can be easily performed on the Western orchestral style.<sup>13</sup>

In the 1960s, International cultural exchange through Indian music got an impetus. Indian classical music entered a new phase when leading Indian musicians like Pd. Ravi Shankar, Ustad Ali Akbar Khan began to give performances abroad and started teaching instrumental music to Western students. The renowned Indian film maker Satyajit Ray also brought classical music to the attention of Westerners through the music scores of some of his early films, which were composed by Pd. Ravi Shankar and Ustad Vilayat Khan. In the course of time collaborations ensued between Indian musicians and Western musicians and a new kind of experimentation on fusion music began. Pd Ravi Shankar was one of the earliest musicians to have collaborated with the western musicians. He joined hands with the renowned violinist Yehudi Menuhin and produced a number of East-West albums. In the recent years, Grammy Award winner Pd. Vishwa Mohan Bhatt did a historic jugalbandi with a Chinese Erhu player, Jei Bing Chen. He also combined with the ace American Dobro guitar player Jerry Douglas, with the American country music singer Taj Mahal and a rare combination with the Arabian Oudh player Simon Shaheen. Other successful collaborations over the years have been between Ustad Sultan Khan (on the Sarangi) and Macro Guinar (on the Spanish Guitar) and Roy Cooder, L. Shankar and L. Subramaniam (both Violinists)<sup>14</sup>

The growing popularity of Indian Classical music in the Western nations can be understood by the fact that in a seminar held in Mumbai in 1996, over 30 western scholars and musicians presented papers and performances and the understanding and respect which they exhibited in the Indian music was amazing. Several foreign performers of Hindustani music are steadily becoming household names amongst Indian connoisseurs specially the Swiss Sarodist- Ken Zuckerman





American Flutist- Steve Gorn and the Italian Drupad vocalist -Amelia Cuni. 15

To the utter surprise for any lover of Indian music, new Gharanas have emerged abroad like,

Rotterdam Gharana and San Rafael-Seniya Gharana whose commitment to excellence might revitalize Hindustani music. 16

In another step to cultural exchange through Indian Classical music, the Indologist, Alain Daniellou and the UNESCO introduced the pre-eminent Dhrupad vocalists, Nasir Aminuddin and Nasir Moinuddin Dagar to Europe. The success of this effort made Dhrupad a unique phenomenon in art music. A genre which more or less had become a "museum piece" in early years after independence, revived its history of 500years ago by the virtue of West's recent enthusiasm for Dhrupad. 17

The popularity of Indian music has made the International recording companies in producing Hindustani music to flourish. To cite a few examples,

-The Rotterdam Conservatory of Music reached an authoritatively contemporary anthology of Ragas, and, Nimbus, a British label published it.

-Navras Records, a British company is leader in Hindustani Recordings market.

-India Archieve Music Ltd. And Raga Records – New York-Chhanda Dhara of Stuttgart- Germany -Makar Records-France etc. 18

The growing popularity of Fusion Music, both vocal and instrumental, indicates that multiculturalism and globalization are influencing taste and creativity in music world wide as the growth of new and faster communication, closer economic ties and increasing consciousness of mutual dependence have brought the people of the world closer together. National boundaries or limitations of their own music and culture no longer circumscribe musicians who are keen to experiment and explore new horizons. We have some profound examples to take account of the fact.

In the recent times, the Indian mandolin virtuoso, U. Srinivasan, produced an album called Dream, in collaboration with the Canadian guitarist Michel Brook. Pakistan born Adnan Sami was the first person to play Indian Classical music on the electric piano. Recently, a renowned Indian tabla maestro Talvin Singh has bagged U.K.'s prestigious Technics Mercury Music Prize for his album OK, which represents a fusion of Indian Classical music and contemporary British dance rhythms. He has also played with stars like Madonna and Bjork. In the vocal

music, the fusion album The Colonial Cousins of Hariharan and Lindsey Levie became an instant hit in India and abroad. A.R. Rahman produced an album with Michael Jackson 'Ekam Satyam' in 1999. 19

Not only vocal, if we talk about instrumental music, western instruments like synthesizer, drums, guitar etc. have become a part of Indian culture and Westerners have also integrated Indian music and its musical instruments. Mohan Vina evolved from Hawaiian guitar and now it is part and parcel of the Indian classical instruments. Harmonium, an instrument based on western equally tempered scale has become a part of Indian music. The Beatles and other Western musical stars have integrated Indian music and its musical instruments especially Sitar and Tabla into modern global musical forms that have recently emerged from a harmonious syncretism of Indo-Western arts. The list is endless and it gives a good insight in the role of music in understanding and appreciating each others culture.

Nowadays role of popular music in spreading Indian culture all over the world should not be overlooked. It is widely known as Indi Pop. The globalization of the Indi-Pop is an interesting feature of the recent times. By the end of 1999, Indipop began its inroads into the western world. The success of musical scores of the Hindi film 'Taal' in U.K., where it entered the top 20 of the audio charts, encouraged several people to explore and experiment with the Indian music. 20 The growing popularity of Indipop in the west can be gauged from the fact that even Stanley Kubrick incorporated Indian notes in 'Eyes Wide Shut' 21

Besides Hindi film music, regional pop albums like Punjabi, Rajasthani, Bhojpuri, Awadhi, etc have gained popularity all over the world. Indian folk music is world wide famous. The folk artists are always a part of cultural exchange. Who in the world doesn't know the Kalbeliya dance of Rajasthan, the Bhangra of Punjab, the Garba of Gujrat and many more? The folk music has the fragrance of the Indian soil and it depicts the rich culture of India.

The role of media has been very important in the exchange of cultures through music. In many musical reality shows we can see foreign candidates. Many dance forms of the western nations like, rock n roll, hippos, contemporary, salsa etc are performed proficiently by the Indians where as Indian dance forms like, Kathak, Bharatnatyam, Kuchipudi etc are have become passions for the westerners.

As said earlier, 'give and take' is the basic necessity of human beings. This is called 'Exchange' and it can be of any thing, whether of goods or of culture. It is not a new concept and has existed ever since the civilization. The only change which has occurred is, in its form. Earlier, it was slave trade,





then invasions, then through education, then through media and so on. Now the nations of the world have recognized its importance in promoting mutual understanding as no one can live in isolation. Cultural exchanges have become a part of international policy as artists are the cultural ambassadors of any nation. The festivals of nations are organized to promote their culture. In India, I.C.C.R (Indian Council for Cultural Relations) is actively involved in the cultural exchange programs. It organizes Indian Festival abroad and Festivals of other nations in India. Besides this, it sends artists abroad and gives scholarships.

The 21st century promises to be accentuated by international culture as the globalization has made the world a 'global hub'. Hence we must work to advance mutual understanding through cultural exchange to achieve harmony and co-existence among the world's diverse cultures. It is only music which can do the needful.

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