Indian Classical Music: Traits and Trends

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ABSTRACT: Any music origins in the society and develops with the changing realities of it. It accepts new and modified the existing in different periods of time. This process of acceptance and rejection makes any form of art exist for long. Similarly in various phases of transition Indian Classical music has embraced the elements which question its traits, especially in this highly technical world. The paper tries to point out those changes and analyse them in a legitimate manner.

Keyword: Changing Trends, Digitization, Indian Classical Music, Technology

I. INTRODUCTION

India is known for its rich musical heritage around the globe. There are numerous forms and genres of music. Among which the most respected is classical Music. The music represents an exemplary standard and long established principle or style based on methods developed over a long period of time. It is derived in part from the elevation and wide dissemination of particular elite music within nations over the last century or more (Moro, 2004). However the changing socio-economic realities with time, the spread and uptake of Indian classical music in the west for over half a century, and emerging critical voices among contemporary Indian students, new conditions and contexts have arisen that challenges a system essentially rooted in a court patronage environment (Schippers, 2007). In the era of international integration, open world trade, advanced mean of communication, internationalized financial market and increased mobility of persons, good, capital data and idea almost every aspect of life is restructures (Vedabala, 2016). So the music is. Consequently the rapid technological up gradation in last one or two decades has given a new shape to the music in India. Some technological innovation that have influenced the classical music are -

a. Up gradation of recording/archiving technology
b. Virtual music classes
c. Online availability of music
d. Digitization of music/ musical instruments
e. Online shopping of musical instruments etc

The present paper will analyse the important changes/ challenges the music faced due to the above mentioned technological advancements along with other aspect in the process of its transition.

A. Parentage

Continuity through generations has strengthened the tradition of Indian classical music from a long time. It is a service provided to a wealthy class of patrons or to prestigious rituals and ceremonies, music is often restricted by heredity and the role of musicians is an ascribed status (Rice, 2003). Musicians inherit the traditional repertoire and style of their ancestors and are called *khandani* musicians. The repertoire, compositions were so precious to be shared with any outsider. Compositions called *khaz cheez* used to be given in dowry or gift on very special occasion. Musical pieces were the treasures of the *ustads* which better to be kept within the family.

Owing to the loss of patronage and mediation of government the music freed her from the clench of handfuls and reached to the common mass, from elite to the middle class. It is now no one's legacy, whoever is talented or inspired aspires for classical music. Followers of music who don't have any musical family background doing great in the field. A good numbers of foreigners are performing Indian classical music around the globe as the Indians do. Nevertheless there is vexation and conundrum regarding the quality/purity of the music among some hierarchal population who consider themselves the proprietors of the tradition. Virtually music may in some ways be available

to all, but access to certain parts of the total repertoire by or at least associated with class, race, ethnicity, age, gender, occupational background, and aesthetic preference (Rice, 2003).

Despite the division of musical world into *khandani* and non-*khandni* groups, the tradition stands sanguine with the firm and eager musicians with learning (*taalim* [I]), listening (*sunna*) and practice (*riaz* [III]). Easy availability of records of old compositions of various artists and guidance from *guru* gives a wide vision to the seekers. Many beautiful compositions are coming up. As Prof. Mehta explained- "Our profound and just respect for the traditional *chijas* need not blind us to believe that there is no need for new compositions. If it were so, late Khansaheb Fayaz Khan, to take only one example, would not have taken any trouble to compose new *cijas*. The values given to the traditional *cijas* are not in any way undermined by new compositions. Different artistes have different susceptibility to words and hence a vocal artiste would like to use those, those phrases, those sentiments, those infections contained in words, which fulfil his artistic demands" (Mehta, 2011).

Words of Richard D. Wetzel in the context of patronage of the traditional western musical forms are appropriate to mention in this context- "Indicative of the prevailing confusion is the issue of patronage, without which art of any kind cannot flourish. It has changed largely because of technology, and it would be unwise to attempt to predict how the democratization and open market that it brought into being will ultimately become stabilized, how copyright issues will be resolved around the world, and how traditional institutions like orchestra and choral societies will be sustained" (Wetzel, 2012).

B. Guru-sisya Relationship

Classical music in India is based on the foundation of the old age tradition of *Guru-sisya,* teacher-disciple knowledge where knowledge is transmitted orally from generations to generations. The learning process demands active participation of both the *guru* and disciple in *gurukul* [III]. The focus of Indian music tradition in Nivedita Singh's words is -"totally centered on *guru* and he has a gigantic role to play covering almost every sphere of learning, i.e. from learning music to being a musician (N. Singh, 2004). A Guru's influence and responsibility on the life of his disciple was not only concentrated to the teaching and learning music rather *guru* shapes the characteristics, personality of the disciples in every sense. *Guru* teaches its disciples the roles of musicians, life philosophies and the social responsibilities. Even the *guru* keeps its disciples free from economic worries as the disciples' lives with the *gurus* and gradually with carrying out the tradition forward students manage getting their earning with their *gurus*. Till the date the followers of Indian classical music believe in the tradition and it continues. However the essence has been changed a bit or we can say a lot. The tradition which was absolutely under royal patronage has entered to the middle class. So until unless a *guru* is supremely rich or funded by any organization it's impossible for him to support his/her disciples. So the *talim* has been limited to the weekend classes or may be two, three sittings in a week. *Gurus* spend a lot of time in travelling for their performance. They stay months and months abroad, which squeeze student's time with them. The *guru* too has to perform and survive in their freelance career. There are very less facilities provided by the government to the artist as well. On the other hand students who have to maintain balance between various aspects of life in the fast moving world fails to give adequate time to their music they should. As Ustad Imrat Khan expressed in an interview-*"……now what is happening is that there is much more material knowledge. For performers performing, art or music is much more available to them, usually in recordings. But what is not available is this deep foundation. What is available is the constructions on the top, not the foundation"* (Khan 1992).

Students not belonging to musical family start music quite late, they don't get enough time for *talim* and *riaz*. They have to look after both the earning and music part simultaneously. Among these challenges in both the corners worst affected is the age long tradition of *guru sisya* relationship. Students prefer the *guru* who fulfill their conditions and the *gurus* bother less about the disciples. So the concept of *ganda-band*[IV] is just a ritual only. In fact the tradition is obsolete these days. In the highly digitized and notated world online availability of music is replacing the importance of *guru* is students' life. It creates question mark on the authenticity of the *gharana*[V] culture in the contemporary music scenario. It hardly fulfills the conditions of a *gharana* tradition except only one condition that someone is following one guru who follow a particular *gharana*. But how many students are sticking to one *guru* or a certain *gharana*. For one or other reason learning from one *guru* or one *gharana* is practically not maintained. Furthermore in this highly communicative world no one is devoid of influence of different *gharanas*. Where is the purity of the *gharana* then?

Efficiency of *guru* is also one of the apprehensions in this regards. Rather than just blaming the generation *gurus* should come up with new strategies of teaching so that the students should get interest and can learn music with maintaining balance between the tradition and modernity. Critically reflections on *guru* are virtually non-existent from Indian sources, as they are socially unacceptable in music circle. Although it is common to think *guru* as a person who generates divine musicianship in his pupils as a matter of course, most *guru* find it understandably difficult to live up to this profile.

In public and writing, students generally exalt the source of their musical skills and understanding. From private, oral reports one learns that many gurus may act like demi-gods, but in fact they have changing moods, weaknesses and oversights. They are, in effect, human in addition to being sublime musicians. Many *gurus* live in the twenty-first century, jet-setting around with their electronic toys, but they expect their students to live in the nineteenth century (Schippers, 2007).

In Addition to that the good performers are not good teachers and teachers are not good performers whereas performance and teaching are the two sides of the coin. In the institutionalized set up essence of music teaching and learning fails to maintain such balance.

So approach and effort of gurus is a vital factor which needs to be looked after. The *gurus* who come out of the shell and model their teaching process and maintain a perfect balance between traditional values and understanding the need of changing time make visible impact in the society. They are coming out with experimented new methods of teaching maintaining equilibrium between time, technicalities and music.

C. Institutionalized Music

From *gurukul* to the class rooms, journey of music has been a conscientious contention as it is evident compromising its ethos under the obligations of institutionalized framework. Problem lies in the society where till now music or any art form is of less priority than any other subjects. Except very few (who have musical background or interest in music) most of the parents don't encourage their kids for career in music. Educational pattern also doesn't act supportive to music education. Students who aspire for music don't get much encouragement and support. Lack of knowledge of future perspective in the subject leaves the kids in a confused state whether to take it as a career option or not. In the perception of music learning among parents and students Wai-chung Ho found that Music education is not confined to the school context, nor does learning stops after school hours. The result showed- i) though the parents and their children have different musical experiences, parents influence concert attendance and offer financial support for children's' participation in music; ii) although instrumental learning is commonly found among the students, parents often questions the value of persistent learning ; iii) school music education is highly regarded by most parents though they do not expect their children to aspire to further development of their musical abilities in the future (Ho, 2009).

The teachers in music education are an additional setback. No artist aspires to be a music teacher in school. Teaching in school is the last option for a music professional as everyone in music aspires to be a performer. When the situation is not favourable for the performing career then only they go for the school level teaching in music. While dealing with the conflict between the ways of music learning and the class room teaching Brendam Drummond with the reference of Northern Ireland considered the influences which lay behind the music teachers' original choices of career and identified the factors which appear to predispose them to self doubt in some important aspects of their works. He points outs the points i) the persistent conflict of the classical ethos of class room music and ethos. ii) Status of music teacher is disappointingly low in most schools with the fewer pay scales. Music teachers are generally more distressed, burnt out and negatively affected both by certain work stresses and attitude held by others. iii) Musical satisfaction is a second choice and is concerned about a lack of goals in their career (Drummond, 2001). This is very much the fact in the context of India as well. Similar study was carried out by Susan Hallam, Andrea Creech, and Hilary McQueen on the perception of non music staff and senior management of the impact of the implementation of musical futures approach on the whole school. The majority of staffs indicated that musical futures had had a positive impact on students' motivation, well-being, self esteem and confidence and had encouraged student to work together. But there was less agreement that it has improved student concentration, organizations and students attitudes towards learning and academic progressions (Susan Hallam, 2016).

With very less idea in the schools when the student decides to join music education in the higher level, he/she is already too late. In duration of five years course they have to be master in music. This is too less time for someone who is seriously aspiring to learn something in music, at least Classical Music. Moderated by the administration, syllabus limitations, examinations etc bounds the scope of intense learning in the institutionalized set up.

D. Written/Recorded Music

As Widdess discussed- "Indian music is dependent to a large extent on oral transmission, memorization and improvisation; and although these processes may be assisted by various systems of 'oral notation', for drums, dance and melody, these oral systems serve a mnemonic function, and are seldom written down. Scholars of Indian music rarely consider them as falling into the category of 'notation', or meriting serious consideration as such." He further expressed that –The western belief that memory is short-term, limited in capacity, and treacherously fallible, whereas writing is comparatively long term and reliable, is reserved in India : there, collective memory can transmit a complex tradition with astonishing accuracy over centuries, where as writing is perishable and leads to corruption, forgetfulness, or misuse (Widdess, 1996).

The need of preserving traditional compositions of great *ustads* in a politically unrest situation and western influence gave rise to the writing down and recording music in Indian Classical music. The less popular compositions of the exponents are still alive on the texts and are sung by present musicians. The vintage which might have been lost in the history is retrieved for aeon. As Brian Q. Silver discussed- "Recording have served as invaluable tools to musicians for self-assessment and the improvement of their own musical skills. They have also provided precise documentation of the traditions of the past masters, as well as a source of new ideas for the musicians to study the techniques and approaches of others (often competing) musicians, allowing them to incorporate such techniques into their own performance styles. Certain classical artists have been able virtually to duplicate styles of other musical traditions (*gharana*) without any direct study within those traditions, even identifying themselves explicitly as exponents of the traditions (the disciples of the late vocalist Amir Khan, for example) (B. Q. Silver, 2000). "Pt. Vishnunarayan Bhatkhande (1860-1936) and Pt. Vishnu Digambar Paluskar (1872-1931), Sourindra Mohan Tagore (1840-1914) and others scholars' notable contribution in this regards have given different dimension to the music. Rarest old compositions are available till dates because of their efforts and carry forwarded the legacy through the generations. All Indian Radio (AIR), in the later phases Sangeet Natak Academy (SNA) also has appreciable works in this regards. But as expressed by R.C. Mehta AIR, the quality of recording, storage, maintenance , transfer, cataloguing shows much disrespect (though unintended) to the treasures of music they have. And SNA, the search is not for a comprehensive coverage of the music of the master musicians-which alone can serve the purpose of preserving "music" of the master. The SNA archive is built more or less on its own recordings. Artists were/are called for such recordings are recorded on SNA Award or/for such events. The Sangeet Natak Academy, apart from these recordings should act as a "Central Archive of Indian Classical Music". Inviting contributions of recorded music of entire concerts of master musicians, whoever is left now, or of those whose music is available with other institutions, and individuals: or it may even "purchase" such recordings (R.C. Mehta, 2011).

Innovations and efforts are continuing to make the notation system more and more accurate through the changing times. It is getting better day by day. Now there are various systems have been developed for displaying and rendering staff notation in computers like Swara Shala. Research are undergoing for making appropriate software further to do justice to the various intricacies of Indian classical music. Institutions like Sangeet Research Academy (SRA)[V], Archives and Research Centre for Ethnomusicology (ARCE) [VII] New Delhi, Archive of North Indian Classical Music[VIII], Jadavpur University are putting good effort in safeguarding the music with all modern and sensible techniques of Archiving.

Still the question cannot be left unasked whether the system can replace the importance of the oral tradition, face to face learning from *guru*? Can these notated documents indicate the complexity of music? Can *Rishav* of *Bhairav* be shown with any symbol? That can only be understood with the *taalim* and self realization. Likewise there are many aspects of Indian Classical Music which is impossible to explain in words or indicated by any symbol. The melodic niceties and nuances, details and refinements, shades and hues, sheer complexities and overpowering varieties, cannot be represented on a sheet of paper. The magnificent oral tradition of music transmission through the *guru- sisya parampara*, is too overwhelming for any notation system (Bakshi 2002-2003).

E. Digitization

Invention of electronic media is a boon to Indian Music. From gramophone, rpm records, radio, Compact Disc (CD) to mobiles applications, YouTube, iTunes to electronic and robotic instruments[IX] the use of technology is increasing day by day in Indian classical music adding more updated versions with the changing times. Digitization to be defined is the conversion of analogue information into digital information. Almost everything of entertainment is completely digitized in the present generation. From listening, manufacturing to the marketing of the musical tools, all are trapped in the web of digitization. Digitization has made the cost of distribution and production of recorded music cheaper compared to the traditional means. Internet plays a significant role in marketing and promotion of music. Ability to download individual songs has diminished the need of traditional music product which includes the full length album. Independent artists are able to find audience with the help of social media (Mathew, 2013). The ease with which people can access music, either legally via iTunes and other such platforms, or illegally via file sharing has coincided and perhaps been a prime mover in the drop off physical music sell, much to the chagrin of those in the industry. But on the flip side the accessibility of digital recording equipment and the ability of artist to distribute their material world wide without a record deal have opened up new and exciting opportunity for artists (Gallagher, 2013). Gap between the artist and audience is bridged up by the social media, as mentioned by Dean Shapero- "Current marketing and media have humanized the star to a greater degree than ever before. Therefore, the iconic image of the start is not as relevant as before, but the influence is as greater than ever before due to the high rates of social engagement now available" (Shapero, 2015).

The state of technology in music today is a moving target: anything said about it becomes incomplete, out-of-date, or irrelevant soon after it is articulate. Storage and reproduction technology, once began, have advanced rapidly, and competition between production and marketing companies around the world is keen (Wetzel, 2012).

Beyond recording, listening and archiving electronic/digitized gadgets reached to the availability of the instruments and accessories online on Amazon, eBay, snap deal and other sites on comparatively reasonable rates. Wide range of instrument is easily available at the door steps, which is a new inspiring aspect towards the availability of the instrument in a reasonable price.
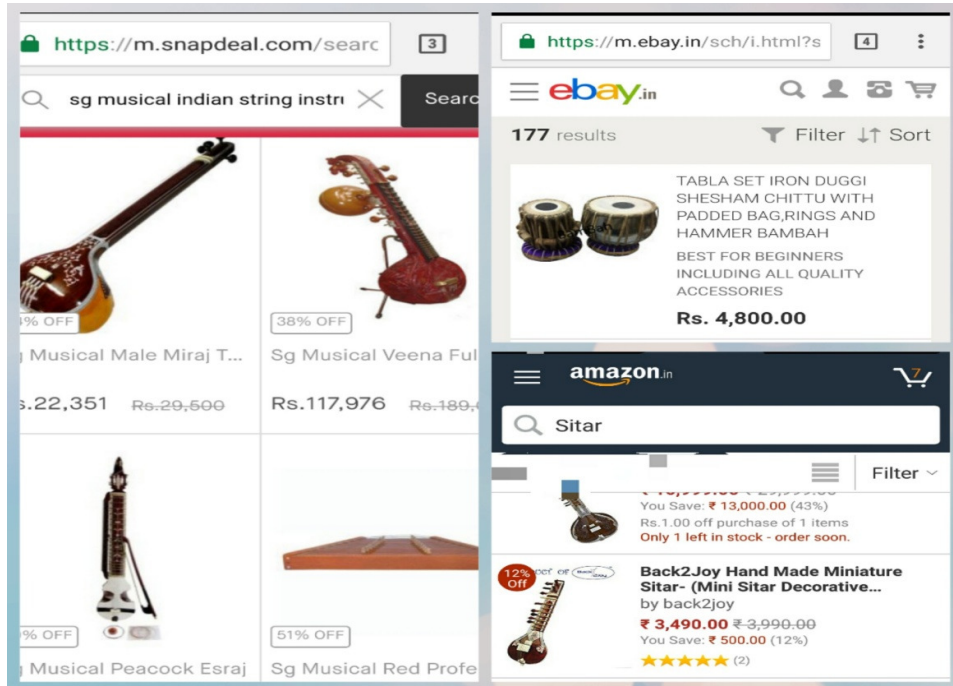

Fig. 1. Musical Instruments on online shopping sites.

In the music making processes, learning, practice etc. instruments like tuners, electronic *tabla*, *nagma* machines, electronic *tanpura* etc are becoming the necessities of musical lives. More than hundreds of mobile applications of *table*, *tanpura* and tuners are available on one click.

Electronic *tabla* and *tabla* mobile applications are great innovation in Indian Classical Music since it has replaced the manual table at least for practice. *Tabla* is the basic necessity of a musician.
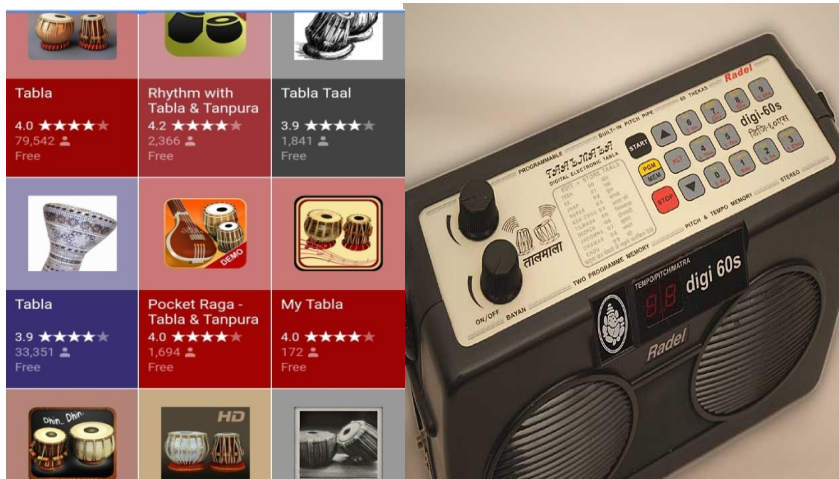

Fig. 2. Electronic Tabla and Tabla aaps.

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But having a table player always is practically not possible and the instrument is a useful substitute in this situation. So there is no time bound in *riaz* with table. Because it is a machine with almost all *taals* in different tempo it helps in maintaining *laya* better than a manual *tabla*. All these reasons made the instrument very popular within a span of half of a decade.

Increasing popularity of electronic sitar worldwide is quite strange at least to the traditional sitar players. Pt. Ravi Shankar made the sitar in his old age since he was too old to seat properly, he was seating on the chair and used the electronic jack for the amplification. The sitar gradually became very popular in the music market. Because of its small size and weight it is quite comfortable to be carried during travels and is allowed in flight cabins. From that point to the robot, the instrument has gone completely digitized. With due respect to the technologies and the engineering techniques associated with the process, the question of desirability of replacing manual sitar to all sorts of robotic and others still remain in its place.
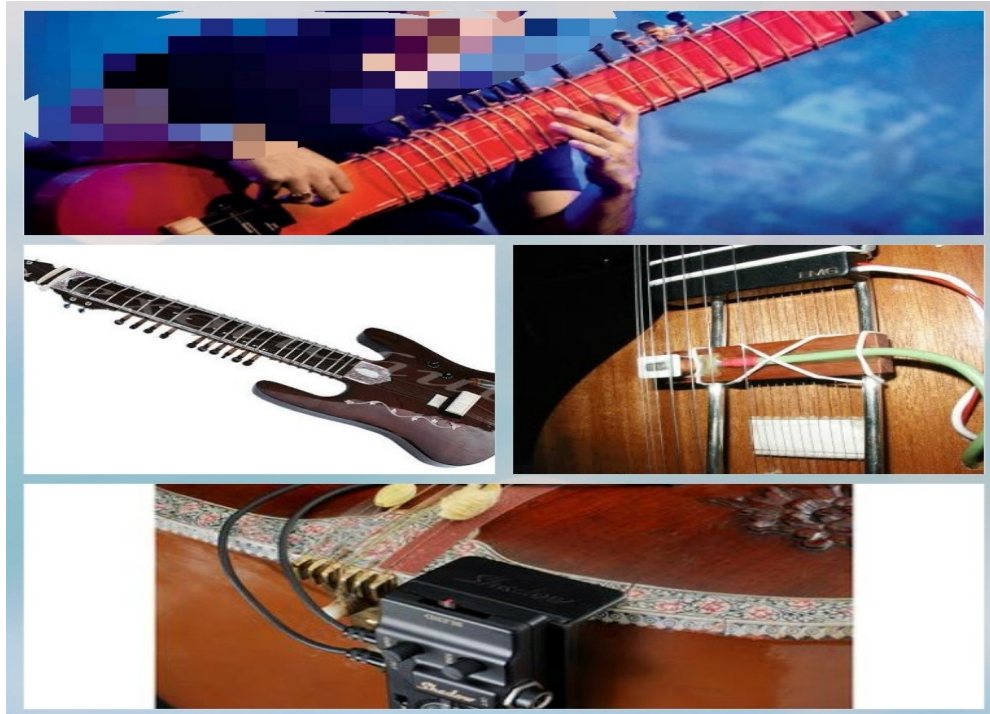

Fig. 3. Electric Sitar.

How can the instrument do justice to the sound the manual sitar with its limitations? Just amplifying the instrument with the electronic jack can help the loudness but what about the very technicalities of sitar playing. Right hand/left hand *bol* patterns, *Gamaks* etc. The instrument is not more than an imitation of the electronic guitar. Many artists play it in standing position. The techniques are not formed out of a blue without any reason; they are made for a reason and are outcome of long age research. If the techniques, at least the sound of sitar is not obtained from the instrument it can be called anything but sitar. Be it electronic or anything else. The creations can satisfy the thrust of an engineer but how long it can justify the musical thrust that remains a question for sure accepting the fact that such types of inventions undoubtedly misguide new generations. Anything of western touch attracts the Indian youth more than the traditional Indian things.

IV. CONCLUSION

Music, being one of the indivisible aspects of society, it cannot devoid itself from the changing realities of time. It has accepted the undesirables and rejected desirables in various phases of its evolution. The contradiction can be dealt with maintaining balance between the trend and the tradition. Technology mixed with traditional values can be an absolute advantage to the antiquated institution of music. Be it notation, modern instruments or musical styles all have come up as need of the time will continue with more developed processes. As explained by Rajeev S Patke "one the positive side, art gets disseminated widely because of technology.

The elitist and exclusive aspects of its pre-technological subsistence are gradually removed, and the masses are given access to what they had previously known only as the cultic. But art has its origins in local and specific factors. Its democratization might raise the culture of the masses and ameliorate the life of the artist and musicians. The process also risks diluting the local roots from which all art springs. There is thus both loss and gain. There is also the recognition that the gain is built on loss; contrariwise, the loss is the price entailed in a principle that remains socially desirable (Patke, 2007). What is needed is a proper balance. Some strides can be proved practicable as:

a. Completely westernizing music teaching in the conservatory system is going to worsen the consequences. But notations are for memorizing and can be taken as study materials accompanied with the proper guidance from the *guru*.
b. Universities in music should give equal emphasis on both practice and research.
c. Along with the traditional learning, young musicians should be well equipped with modern technologies. So that the music could reach to the masses.
d. Competition in this period of time necessitates erudite thoughts subsequently adding legitimate scruple to the culture.

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[I]. An Arabic work which means education or instruction. Commonly used in Indian Music for teaching and learning process.

[II]. Riyaz (also Riyaaz) is an Urdu language term used for music practice, for honing of Hindustani classical music vocal as well as instrument skills. Sadhakam or Sadhana in Carnatic music. It is followed rigorously by the students as well as exponents of vocal as well as dancing forms. (Wikipedia 2016)

[III]. A type of residential school in India with pupils (Sishya) living near the guru, often in the same house. Pupils learn from guru helping him in the household. At the end of the study students offers guru dakshina (Payment for the service) to the guru.

[IV]. A tradition in which a thread (ganda) is tied by the guru(teacher) on the wrist of the disciple (Shagird) before starting the teaching. This is a formal declaration that the particular student is the disciple of the guru.

[V]. Gharana is a collective noun meaning a group, which shares homestead. In the era of hereditary musicianship, the term came to represent a lineage, which cultivated a distinct style of rendering music over successive generations. Once kinship ceased to be the primary criterion for entry into the music profession, the term was redefined to denote a stylistic lineage. As a stylistic lineage, a gharana is characterized by three critical features-[a] a long period of rigorous training and aesthetic indoctrination of each aspirant under an authorized guru of the lineage [b] acquisition of the art through aural transmission [c] a sworn loyalty of each member to the music making philosophy and style of his mentor and lineage. The decay of the gharana phenomenon began in the second quarter of twentieth century and is now almost complete. The gharana model of continuity and change has been replaced by alternative models, yet to be conceptualized (Raja, 2007).

[VI]. ITC Sangeet Research Academy (SRA) is a Hindustani Classical Music academy run by the corporate house, ITC Ltd. It is located in Kolkata, India.

[VII]. Archives and Research Centre for Ethnomusicology, New Delhi, inaugurated in August 1982 in for advanced knowledge and understanding of the performing arts of India in the widest sense by providing facilities to scholars and students, maintain an audio-visual archives as well as a library, sponsoring conferences, by its public program.

[VIII]. The Digital Archive of North Indian Classical Music was initiated in 2004 as part of the School of Cultural Texts and Records at Jadavpur University, Kolkata. This includes a great deal of rare materials from private collections, often recorded as private concerts never commercially circulated.

[IX]. A robotic instrument is a sound making device that automatically creates music with the use of mechanical parts, such as motors, solenoids and gears. (Kapur 2002).