

Cultural Influence on the Teaching Methodologies of Carnatic Music

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Abstract:

Learning an art form has always been a part of Indian culture and is seen in practice since centuries before. The various methodologies adapted have been successfully educating the students in relevance with the requirements of that period. The necessity of learning carnatic music also changed over time and has begun to flourish as a profession, either as a teacher or as a performer. This article sheds light into the various teaching methods that were in practice from the olden days till the present day, bringing out the importance in each.

Keywords: Gurukula system, Institutional learning, foundation, social media, publications

Introduction:

Music is universal and beyond boundaries. It is believed to have more benefits. In modern era, it is being used in various places for its positive effect on human mankind. It is primarily one of the reasons why many prefer to learn and master this art form. A study conducted recently in a foreign nation established the fact that the need of music practices is increasingly culturally responsive education so that it is more meaningful to the learners. It is evident that the same fact hold good for the art forms of our country such as Carnatic music. Carnatic music has evolved with the time, satisfying the needs and requirements of that particular time or period. The method of teaching /learning has evolved over the years from the ancient gurukula system to the present day online learning mode. The evolution can be justified due to the social / economic and cultural changes.

Methods of teaching:

Methods of teaching have seen changes over the period of time. The methods of learning of music can be broadly categorized into several options such as

1. Gurukula System
2. Vidyalaya system
3. Regular school as part of curriculum
4. One to one Teaching / home tuitions/ Private teaching
5. Learning through social media
6. Online learning

Gurukula system of learning is the oldest methodology of learning. The student lives in the environment of the teacher and becomes part of the family. This way, it is believed that the



student understands all the nuances of music and also develops life skills. This type of education helps the student mature in every aspects of life. The student worships his/her Guru as “GOD” and strict obedience is expected. The biggest advantage is that the student stays in the close vicinity of the guru and imbibes all the lessons and essence of music. There are few disadvantages in this method of learning.

1. The student is not exposed to outside world.
2. The absence of theoretical knowledge of the art form in this method of teaching.
3. It is a time consuming process of learning as every aspect of music is taught in detail and in depth, at a pace decided by the guru.

It is also evident that, even in the present day scenario, there are teachers who follow gurukula system of teaching.

Institutional learning:

During the beginning of 20th century, when British ruled our country, learning music became a part of the academics. The need for a curriculum based learning, to master the art form became essential. One of the earliest institution is “The Maharaja Sayajirao University” in Baroda, established in the year 1886 by Prof. Mawla Bux under the patronage of Shrimant Maharaja Sayajiraom Gaekwad III. “Gandharva Mahavidhyalaya”, was established in the year 1901 in Lahore (which was part of India then) by Pandit Vishnu Digambar Paluskar.

Annamalai University in Chidambaram was the first of its kind in South India. It was started as a Music College in 1929 and a separate department was formed in the following year and introduced music into academics. A syllabus and a curriculum were very much needed then. These institutions were instrumental in imparting the knowledge without caste and creed. At the same time, talents and achievements were graded and certificates were issued. Learning music became time bound. Within the stipulated time frame, the lessons were taught and examined by the panel of teachers and the students were graded. Such learning was very beneficial for any aspiring music teacher or a performer. The curriculum suggested kindles the creativity required for the student to improvise on their manodharma sangeetham. He/she implements the basic foundation into maximum use to create his own style in manodharma sangeetham

However during the course of time, when the preferences changed due to various factors in the society, learning such art forms became a passion or a hobby, though small number of students still preferred to take it up as a profession. Several art schools started were established and regular schools also began to teach music in order to motivate and encourage the artform. Institution teaching included theoretical knowledge as well along with the practical which was seen absent in Gurukula system.

Private teaching:

Some passionate students began coaching from the eminent musicians and academicians. Several art schools started private teaching of various art forms including music. Thus music began to be taught in a capsule format to meet the requirements of the students. Private learning also acts as supplement learning and more personalized attention is provided towards the student. Hence it can be said that private teaching is most sought-after in the modern era.



Essence of Published books

Several books were published till date for the lakshana and lakhshaya of music. The first publication was in the year 1873, which contained all the lessons starting from the basics structured by Saint PurandaraDasa. Since then, many authors, musicians, teachers have penned their knowledge in the form of books for the future generation. The lessons in these books contain very exhaustive and elaborate exercises right from the beginning and provide all the required insights needed for any musical student. The lessons seen in these books help a student build a strong foundation in their musical journey. These publications can be referred from the music libraries and put to use in order to improvise themselves in the field of music.

Earlier these books were not easily accessible to students as they were very rarely found in libraries. Students had to travel places to get the required source. However in the modern digital world, that is no longer the situation. Digital libraries are more in the rise recently, to facilitate the readers or students to utilize the availability of such publications online. This may be considered as a biggest boon in the present scenario.

Role of social media in learning

With the world developing fast, technology holds a key role as one of the teaching methods. Valuable tips, lessons, and performances are available at the touch of the internet. Many live performances, lecture demonstrations, class recordings are available online, which can be used often by the students.

Performances or concerts held in the sabhas or temples are streamed live now a days for musical lovers to enjoy. Print media, for a long period of time, have been promoting, encouraging the art forms. Internet has become an important medium to promote music. Even the other type of Classical music namely Hindustani Music is now easily accessible to the students irrespective of their location. Eminent Musician, Sri. Kadri Gopalnath reiterates the fact that digital media has reduced the gap between Carnatic Music and Hindustani Music.

Online learning has also become the need of the hour during the pandemic recently. It provided a platform to continue their journey of learning through online mode of teaching without any break. The technological developments in the form of internet has undoubtedly enhanced the learning process and has aided music to spread out to a wider population.

Conclusion:

Teaching or learning Carnatic music has undergone changes over centuries. Teaching methodology has evolved from Gurukula system to online learning. While the methodology has changed drastically, the lessons taught have also been formulated to accommodate the time frame prescribed by the academicians in the institutional learning. In the process, the lessons that were published in books and taught through Gurukula system seemed to have been reduced and only the crux of the lessons is passed on to the generations.

To be a successful performer or to understand every aspect of music, going back to the roots and revisiting the basic lessons is very essential. The students have the facility to utilize the technology now and go through the basic lessons suggested by yesteryear musicians and teachers. It is very evident that the cultural changes that have happened in the teaching



methodology can be optimized by making use of the available sources and reaffirming the foundation stronger and deeper.

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