Open and Distance Learning in Indian Music & the Role of ICT

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Abstract
This article aims at analysing the present state of Open and distance learning in Indian music, analysing the various challenges involved in offering music education through ODL mode and highlighting the importance of ICT (Information & communication technology) in improving the quality of distance education in music. The article emphasises on the importance of using technological tools for improving the content and quality of ODL music programs in Indian Universities. The article is based on the meta-analysis of the various textual sources and the review of some existing writings on the subject.

Keywords: Distance learning, Music, ODL mode, ICT, Guru-Shishya Parampara, correspondence courses, continuing education.

Introduction:
Music education has undergone tremendous changes since its introduction in the educational institutions. Earlier Guru-Shishya parampara was believed to be the only mode suitable for music training but now-a-days music education has adapted to the revolutionary changes brought about by education and communication technologies. The recent trend in music education is that, it is offered through open and distance mode using various technologies. Many conventional Universities in India are offering courses in music through open and distance learning. However most of these Universities accept a few honourable ones, lack quality in their distance programs. Against this backdrop this article attempts to answer the following research questions; i) what is the current scenario of music education through distance mode in India; ii) What are the various issues and challenges involved in imparting Indian music through distance mode; iii) What role ICT can play in improving the quality of distance learning music programs in Indian universities.

Historical background of ODL system in India:
The terms Open learning and distance education are often used inter-changeably. However the concept of open learning is a much broader concept than it is actually

understood. As (Madhulika, 2006) notes; Open learning contains a wide range of innovations and reforms in the educational sector including are the changes that aim to improve such things as the participation of learners, instructional design, methods of transmitting information and support to learners. "ODL is a term which accepts the philosophy of "openness" and uses the "distance mode" of learning. It is open in the sense that it removes whatever constraints exist in face-to-face conventional classroom method of teaching and learning. Flexibility achieved through "openness" expands opportunities for many more learners aspiring for higher education but not having access to it through the conventional mode[1].

The history of ODL system of education in India dates back to 1962 when University of Delhi established its School of Correspondence Courses and Continuing Education. By the end of 1970, in addition to the University of Delhi, Universities like Punjab (1968), Rajasthan (1968), Mysore (1969), and Meerut (1969) had started introducing correspondence courses through their respective directorates/institutes of correspondence courses (Madhulika,2006). Slowly, many universities followed suit. Rapid expansion of the ODL courses took place during the seventies when 19 more Universities started/Institutions/Directorates of correspondence courses[2]. The idea of establishing open universities to strengthen distance education in country came after the popularity of British Open University which had started functioning in 1970. It was because of the success of British Open University that a seminar on "Open University" was organized in December 1970, by the Ministry of Education and Social Welfare in collaboration with the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, the UGC, and the Indian National Commission for cooperation with UNESCO. The seminar recommended the establishment of an Open University in India on an experimental basis (Madhulika, 2006). The first state Open University was established in the state of Andhra Pradesh in 1982. In India, modern ODL started with the foundation of Dr. BRAOU (then APOU) in 1982 by Prof. Ram Reddy (Mishra, 2013). Realising the utility and importance of distance education and with a view to strengthening it, the Government of India decided to set up a National Open University (Madhulika, 2006). It was in September 1985, that IGNOU was established by an act of the Parliament. The establishment of IGNOU was a watershed in the field of distance education in the Country. The university has been assigned the role of coordinating and maintaining the distance learning system in the country and determine its standards. As per the Madhava Menon Committee report 2010, there were, in addition to IGNOU, about 13 SOUs and about more than 200 distance educational institutions offering programmes in diverse disciplines as on 01-03-2010. The phenomenal growth of distance education in India is the proof of the fact that this

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[1] Madhava Menon Committee on ODL, constituted by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) on 5th August, 2010.
[2] Ibid.

form of education is well accepted by Indians and it is going to play an important role in the education system of the country in the coming years.

Open & Distance Education in Indian Music-An Overview:

Indian music education system has undergone tremendous changes over the last twenty years. Before the institutionalisation of music education in India, there was the common practice of imparting music training through *Guru-Shishya parampara* involving individual learning under a guru. However with the introduction of music in educational institutions, the old method became less effective. According to (Bodas, 2007), the first person who introduced Indian music in educational institutions was Dr. Annie Besant. Bodas notes, "Knowing the value of this fine art in the cultural consciousness that one has to build in the young generations of Indians, through proper and all-round education, she requested the late Pandit Vishnu Digambar to spare a good pupil for the Hindu School started at Banaras around 1905. Thus music got its due place along with other subjects to be taught in the schools". As Bodas reports, Kayastha Pathashala of Allahabad in Uttar Pradesh was the next to take the bold step of introducing music as a subject in 1916. Bodas further notes, "Rabindra Nath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi introduced music in their respective institutions, Santiniketan and Satyagrahashram, in 1911 and 1917 respectively, and from 1925 onwards many institutions in U.P. began to include music in their curricula. Here I may say that the late D.P Khattry, the founder of the Federation of All India Education Associations, was the first to introduce music in his Pandit Prithvi Nath High School, Kanpur, against the strong opposition of its managing committee. Mr. Khattry got his first music teacher from among the pupils of Pandith Vishnu Digambar". While tracing the history of music pedagogy in educational institutions, Bodas reports that, "in 1936 music was made an optional subject for the High school Examination and in 1940 it was elevated to the intermediate Standard; from 1948 or 1949 music got its highest place in the university syllabus. I think Banaras Hindu University was the first among Indian universities to introduce music and an optional subject for girls in B.A".

At present, all the major universities in India such as B.H.U, MS University Baroda, Mumbai University, Calcutta University, Delhi University, Punjab University, Rabindra Bharati University, Guru Nanak Dev University, I.K.S university Khairagarh, and others are offering courses in music ranging from BA to PhD level. In the recent past IGNOU also joined the list of higher institutions offering music education. The new shift in music education in India is that music which was traditionally believed to be taught only through face-to-face mode is now offered through distance mode. This new shift in music education is due to the communication and technological advancement as well as the demand of the time. Many conventional universities in India are offering music through open and distance mode but most of these institutions are suffering from lack of quality in their distance programs. Some of the major Universities offering music through

correspondence or distance mode include the Indira Gandhi National Open University, University of Madras, Annamalai University Tamil Nadu, Himachal Pradesh University, Indira Kala Sangit Vishwavidyalaya Khairagarh and Rabindra Bharati University. However the main concern is the quality of the education being delivered and received at the end point. There are certain institutions that offer distance programs in music but their programs are lacking in quality and standard.

Significance of open & distance education in Indian Music:

Now the question that arises that what is the utility of imparting music education through ODL mode? One of the answers to this question is that music as a subject is offered only by a few universities and these universities are located mostly in the advanced cities and urban parts of India. The students from far flung rural areas interested in taking music as a profession can't visit these expensive cities to get education. The second reason is that most of the colleges of the state universities in India offer music only up to graduation, as a result of which, the students of these universities after completing their graduation are forced to move to the capital cities where university headquarters are situated like Delhi, Chandigarh, Baroda, Varanasi, Jaipur and Mumbai to complete their masters and PhD. To quote an example from my own native place, the universities of Jammu and Kashmir offer music education only up to graduation. The students after completing graduation have no other choice but to move to Chandigarh, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana or Delhi for higher studies. This creates a lot of problem for these students and they have to bear huge expenses while living in these cities. The third reason is that there are limited seats in most of the universities for music students. Many interested students are thus deprived of quality music education. It is because of the already mentioned reasons that music education through ODL mode in India is the demand of the time.

Challenges in imparting Music Education through ODL mode:

The first and foremost challenge of offering music education through ODL mode is that music is a performing Art involving heavy practical component, therefore it can't be imparted completely through correspondence using print material. There must be compulsory practical classes to enable learners to learn the various intricacies of the art. Secondly music involves not just the transfer of theoretical principles but the transfer of art and its techniques, which cannot be provided in the absence of a teacher. Thirdly there is a paramount importance of feedback in music instruction, which cannot be provided without the frequent interaction between the student and teacher. These are the major challenges which the current institutions offering distance music course are facing. However these difficulties can be reduced considerably by the use of technological and communication aids.

Role of ICTs in improving the quality of music education through ODL mode:

We are living in a digital era where it is impossible to live without the use of ICT (Information and Communication Technology). ICT has been defined by UNESCO as "the forms of technology that are used to transmit, process, store, create, display, share or exchange information by electronic means. It includes not only traditional technologies like radio and television, but also modern ones like cellular phones, computer and network, hardware and software, satellite systems and so on, as well as the various services and applications associated with them, such as videoconferencing"[3].

        To improve the quality of distance education programs in music, ICT (Information & communication technology) can play a vital role. However the quality will depend on how to employ these technologies. Eminent musicologist Prof. R.C Mehta (2013, p.20) notes, "Distance education in music can grow progressively, depending on how the information/knowledge/data is designed and made available on cheaper cassettes, or videos, CDs, CD-ROMs website and printed books and booklets, in English, Hindi and regional languages. Vast literature on music, ragas, biographies, dictionary could be made available on website and friendly 'packages' could be produced"[i]. Mehta further elaborates, "For evolving distance music modules, we require modern teaching methodologies, which employ participatory learning techniques, creating multimedia support materials, integrating distance education and face-to-face modes and which increasingly, encourages self-learning devices". Being a practical oriented subject, music training needs the frequent interaction of the student and teacher. In order to learn the intricacies of the art, personal contact with the teacher is a must. Therefore teaching music through distance mode is challenging. Even if we have got a notation system in our music; in order to understand the intricacies of the composition and the mood behind the composition the students need the help of a good teacher (Chakravarti, 2013). Proper use of relevant technology can considerably reduce the distance between the student and teacher. However to utilize the benefits of technology, we need training programs to train the teachers to make them use the technology. It is to be noted that technology can never replace teachers in any form of education, only the role of teacher changes from being a transmitter of knowledge to the facilitator of knowledge. Feed back is an important component of any category of education including music. As Professor Mehta notes, "Feed-back for music in distance education is complicated by the fact that the student's singing or playing an instrument has to be transmitted to the teacher and comments sent to the students to answer questions through e-mail or interactive web pages and evaluate their understanding and proficiency. Music can be also put on the web pages and the concept of one-to-one individual teaching which is more effective for Indian Classical Music can be achieved by the teacher". Professor Mehta further adds that it is important

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[3] https://www.riemysore.ac.in/ict/unit__1__information_and_communication_technology.html#WhatisICT.

to maintain contact with teachers through correspondence either by e-mail or post card to find out how much the students have grasped the subject-matter since face-to-face contact is absent. He further says that, teachers must be aware of the latest developments in the media which would help students. Professor Mehta again observes that, although technology plays a key role in the delivery of distance education, educators must remain focused on instructional outcomes and not of the technology of delivery. As suggested by Professor Mehta, the key to effective distance education is focusing on the needs of learners. According to Mehta, the approach must be a mix of media, each serving a specific purpose. For example, a strong print component can provide much of the basic instructional content in the form of a course text-book as well as readings. Mehta stress that the teachers must be aware that print is a foundational element of distance education and the basis from which all other delivery systems have evolved. He urges the teacher to suggest to the learner various print formats such as text-books and study guides as well as instructional audio cassettes and videos/CDs which are essential for Distance education for classical music. Update and up gradation of professionals are required at any cost in order to meet the technological challenges to sharpen their professional skills and sensibility (Chakravarti, 2013).

Conclusion:

From the study it is clear that, being a Performing Art and mostly a practical oriented subject, music education through ODL mode is challenging as well as demanding. However it can be successfully imparted through ODL mode if there is a provision for compulsory Practical classes and if various communication and technological Aids are employed. Learners should be supplied with pre-recorded audio and Video CDs along with Self learning material (SLM). These CDs should contain the Voice culture techniques and the course Ragas explained in detail. To increase the teacher-learner interaction, there should be a provision for frequent feedback to the learners through email. Contact with teachers through correspondence either by e-mail or post card to find out how much the student has grasped the subject-matter is very necessary as the face-to-face contact is absent. To train the teachers in the use of technological aids, there should be a provision for training programs and workshops for the teachers. In other words we need to adopt an alternative system in which there is a mix of distance, face-to-face and ICT components. It is by adopting this alternative system that the delivery of quality music education through ODL mode is possible.

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