

Changes in Indian Classical Music (Historical, Sociological and Technological Perspective)

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Abstract

Change is human nature. Music is reflection of the society. It is interesting to study journey of music right from invention of seven notes to music today. This paper takes an account of changes occurred in Indian Classical Music (vocal) and states the gains as well as losses to the music field during this journey. It tries to see these changes from historical, sociological and technological perspective.

Historical and sociological perspective tells us about the way music was conceptualized, systematized and propagated. By technological perspective, it explains many other aspects like impacts of globalization, digitization, and technology. These effects are manifold and should be studied deeply. This paper attempts to study impacts of historical, sociological and technological factors on Indian classical music. Indian classical music has not only survived despite of tremendous factors influencing it, but it has taken new form, a new look every time.

Keywords: Indian classical music, history of music, Saptak, Shruti, Recording, live streaming, live concerts, technology in music, Gharana.

Introduction:

In India, music is said to be originated by Lord Brahma who handed it over to Lord Shiva, Lord Shiva to Devi Saraswati, Devi Saraswati to Narad and Narad to Gandharvas, Gandharvas propagated music in our society, if we see it from religious perspective. From scientific perspective, nature gave birth to music. Sounds from nature were studied which gave rise to concept of Swar (notes in music) and Laya (tempo). Practically, Hindu Saints used music (i. e. Swar and Laya) for chanting mantras. Indian music has travelled a long way to reach what it is today. It has undergone many changes like change in encompassing

culture, its languages, its presentation, its audience, its style etc. In this journey, it has taken new, beautiful forms. It is interesting to see this journey from historical, sociological and technological perspective to understand changes or upgradations Indian music has incorporated in it.

Music from Historical Perspective:

Invention of accompanying instruments or need for accompaniment can be seen as another step towards building foundation of overall music presentation style. Some instruments present in that period are - Tunab, Dundubhi, Flute, Adambara, Conch, Aghati etc³.

In post-Vedic period, references of music are lesser in Mahabharata than Ramayana. Ishrat Jahan mentions – “During Ramayana, Lava and Kusha were proficient in Margi music. Gandharva music was prevailing that days. Ramayana period mentions seven shuddha Jatis.

In Natya-Shastra (200 B.C. – 500 A.D.), Bharat mentioned 7 pure(shuddha) and 11 Vikrut – total 18 Jatis, 10 characteristics of Jati (Grah, Ansh, Taar, Mandra, Nyas, Apanyas, Alpatw, - bahutwa, odavatwa, shadawatwa) etc. Bharat put forth important theory of ‘Sarana-chatushti’ for establishing 7 notes between 22 shrutis. Rules of Jati-gayan were rigid. And this became responsible for origin of ‘Raag Concept’. In Sangeet Makarand of Narada (7th to 8th A.D.), raags were classified on gender basis i.e.- Male, Female and Neuter raagas according to their nature. Other classifications as audav, shadav and sampoorna and classification depending upon Prahar concept are also mentioned there⁴.

During 7th to 8th A.D., Matang Muni wrote Brihaddeshi. In Brihaddeshi, Matang references Raag concept and distinguishes Marg/Margi music (classical) from Deshi (folk) music and introduces Prabandhas. So, it can be understood that raga-gayan had become quite popular at that time. He has also stated definitions about Raag-jaati, Gram-raag as well as Swar and Shruti(microtones)⁵.

Purpose of music was different in its different forms and hence its content. But, with many scholars working on different concepts in music, music was getting systematized and at the same time, concept of Raag-gayan imerged from Jaati-gayan.

Sharangdeva’s Sangeet Ratnakar described characteristics of music and noted divisions like Margi and Desi music. He also mentioned about 3 registers mandra- madhya-taar along with 22 shrutis, setting 7 notes in these 22 shrutis with 7 shuddha and 12 vikrut - total 19 notes, Ahat and Anahat Naad, sthai- arohi-awrohi-sanchari four kinds of Varnas, and

many more. He discussed about 4 types viz.- Ranganga, Bhashanga, Kriyanaga and Upanga. Concept of 'Prabandhas' was developed at that time as he describes 75 Prabandhas having Ang and Dhatu. Six Angas of Prabandha are – Swar, Taal, Ten, Birud, Pada, Paat. From this, we can understand that a systematic method for presenting music was being developed. Establishing moorchhana in Madhya Saptak (middle octave), concept of Vikrut Swar, rescission of Madhyam-gram and emergence of Prati-madhyam are valuable references in Sangeet Ratnakar. Music had started taking a proper shape in many aspects like musicology and aesthetic aspects in presentation as well.^{6,7}

Shudhakalasa's Sangitopanisha saroddhara (1350 A.D.) discusses origin of music from viewpoint of Jainism. His most important contribution is the development of Raagmala. Raja Maan Singh Tomar (15th century) wrote a book 'ManaKutuhhal' in Hindi, in which he wrote down Raags and Raginis current in his time. He has associated six Shuddha raagas with six seasons. We can find that all these changes were responsible for evolution of music. Concepts of Swar, Taal, Raag etc were developed⁸.

In period 800 to 1800 A.D., with arrival of Mughal kings, like many other factors in the society, music was impacted too. New languages were added to music. Earlier music used Sanskrit language. But language changed to hindi or its colloquial languages like Brij, Punjabi etc. which were languages of Mughal period. Amir Khushrau introduced various new melodic structures by combining Persian maqams to Hindustani raagas. Some of the combinations of raagas by Amir Khushrau are Sazgiri (Purvi, Gaud, Kangli and Iranian melody), Yaman (Hindol and Nairoj), Zeelaf (Shahnaz and Patrag), Sarpada (Sarang, Patwat and Rast) to name a few. Sultan Hussain Sharqi of Jaunpur (1479 A.D.) contributed 17 raagas. In Pandit Lochan's Raag-Tarangini (1670 – 1705 A.D.), Janya-Janak raag's That system with 12 Thaats is given^{9,10}.

Thus, at the end of this period, new languages were introduced like Hindi, Brij, Punjabi, Rajasthani and many other colloquial languages. Many new concepts were introduced in Indian classical music. New raags, new taals, new music forms like gazal, Quawali, tarana, khamasa, khyal were introduced. New style of music, khyal singing, demanded many things like accompanying instruments for khyal, language of khyal etc. Earlier, Pakhawaj was used to accompany Prabandh or dhrupad and dhamar gayan. Khyal gayan was lighter as compared to these forms. So, tabla took place of Pakhawaj. Sarangi became common instrument to accompany Khyal. Regarding language of khyal, earlier

Dhrupads were having spiritual lyrics. Even Dhamars had devotional lyrics on comparatively lighter mood. Nom Tom alapi was used while singing Dhrupad and Dhamar. With advent of Khyal singing style, khyal demanded lyrics which a common man can understand. Hence, from Sanskrit language, it came to aforementioned Hindi, Brij, Punjabi, Rajasthani and many other colloquial languages. Also, topics in the poetry was changed from god/goddesses to daily problem of common people like Saas-Nanand, Piya etc. Purpose of music changed, here, from devotion to entertainment. As a result, to make it more attractive, taan was introduced which is originally a content from Persian music. In this period, we can see music with a virtue of religion.

Music in modern period took many different turns. Maharaj Sawai Pratap Sing Deo wrote book 'Radha Govind Sangeet Sara' (Dhundadi language (dialect)) in which he mentioned about Raag-Raagini as laid down by Hanumanmata. Ghulam Reza Bin Mohammad Panah wrote "Usulun Nagh mat-e Asifi" in which he had advised to adopt Bilawal scale instead of ancient pure scale of Kafi¹¹. Main reason for such impacts was foreign invasions in India by Mughal, British, Portuguese etc. South Indian musicologist Pandit Vyankatmakhi put forth theory of 72 Thaats which were calculated mathematically.

In modern period, musicians, musicologists like Ustad Ghisse Khan Maulabaksh, Pt. Vishnu Narayan Bhatkande, Pt. Vishnu Digambar Paluskar and many others tried to cultivate Indian Classical Music in masses. Gharana system of music education was in existence at that time. But institutional music education spread widely in society for all musically inclined students. Many books on music were written, notation system came into existence and thus music content started getting documented.

Music from Sociological perspective:

Gharana tradition - Very important factor in sociological perspective to changes in Indian music is formation of Gharana system. According to Ishrat Jahan, "Gharanas were a socio-musical institution under the patronage of feudal kings, Nobles, Zamindars."¹² Traces of Gharana system is found in ancient Indian "Sampradaya". In Keertan tradition of Maharashtra, many Dhrupads and Taranas are used. Gharanas in Indian classical music, that we find today, emerged at the beginning of Khilji period. It appears that before the dawn of Khayal gharana, there existed Quawwal gharana and Kalawant gharana.¹³

Mughal Culture¹⁴ - Amir Khushrau established Qawwal Gharana, Baiju the Kalawant Gharana and Miya Tansen created Seniya Parampara. Four traditional Dhrupad styles/Vanis

existed previously viz.- Gauhar, Khandar, Dagar and Nauhar. Music, being a creative art, cannot remain stagnant. Dhrupad vanis came to extinct and Khayal came into prominence. Nyamat or Nemat Khan's name (Sadarang) is associated with origin of Khyal.

It is believed that he introduced Vilambit Khyal which had great influence of Dhrupad. Many Gharanas originated in history of North Indian Classical Music. Some of them withered away, some sustained and are still going. Specialized method or technique for musical presentation of artists passed from generations to generations through traditional music education system Guru-Shishya Parampara. A Gharana is said to be established when its existence goes back to at least three generations continuously. Roots of Gharana system can be seen developing from 500 B.C. to 500 A.D. With gharana tradition, style of music was preserved and propagated to generations. Uniqueness in style of every gharana then became identity of singers and disciples of that gharana.

British Rule¹⁵ - British established their political power at the end of 19th century over most of India. They imposed education in English which resulted in some Indians showing interest in western culture and consequently in western music. Due to British power, many musicians became helpless. Some nobles and kings of Princely states tried to help musicians but that was not enough. After independence, many upcoming artistes who were /are not properly trained but capable of understanding need of musically uneducated audience became popular. Many talented musicians failed to adjust with this new social environment. But still, these musicians were determined not to compromise their art and passion. Rigidity of Gharana gradually disappeared due to advent of electronic media. Institutional music education also affected this rigidity. In present situation, compromising performances according to new listening public has benefitted many artistes who are considered to be brightest stars. Gharanedaar Gayaki was kept intact by means of traditional Guru-Shishya Parampara. Dr. Ashok Ranade speaks about the significance of Guru in oral tradition as "Music in India follows oral traditions precisely because of pronounced quality orientation which results from the interpersonal aspect inherent in it. It is the Guru who transforms word meaning into content, information into knowledge."

Presently, one more change can be seen is Harmonium as an accompanying instrument. Tempered scale of harmonium to suit Indian classical music was a valuable research as it allowed harmonium to be used to accompany Indian classical music. But having tempered scale, it is unable to follow specific shrutis needed for many raags in

Hindustani classical music e.g. – Todi, Darbari-kanada, Miya malhar etc. Thus, at the cost of loss of shrutis, Sarangi was replaced by harmonium almost totally today. Reasons for adopting harmonium for accompaniment are very convenient to use, tuning is already done. Another considerable reason can be when Indian classical music changed from chamber music to concert music, to address larger audience, it became necessary to have substantial sound support/filler for accompaniment. Due to all of these reasons, harmonium is now-a-days inevitable accompanying instrument.

Effect of taste of Audience¹⁶

Classical music was considered as monopoly of the elite and the intellectuals. This relationship has its roots in the history of music. In history of music, many kings were musicians. E.g. - Harsha Vardhana, mughal rulers like Jalaluddin, Akbar, Mohammadshah were known for their love for classical music. Court-musicians took shelter in princely states like Gwalior, Jaipur, Lucknow, Baroda etc. after downfall of Mughal empire. In pre-independent period, listening to classical music was confined to ruling class and landed nobility. In late 19th century, a newly rising mercantile class started arranging Mehfilis in their drawing rooms and here common people started taking interest in the revival of traditional music. From 19th to 20th century, Maharajas, Nawabs, the rich, educated middle class with associations with stalwarts of music organized All India Radio Music conferences. Platforms for Indian classical music changed from temples, to King's courts, and then, houses of noble families. So, a new set of music promoters, organizers, patrons started functioning for promotion of music. Also, concerts, conferences, records, cassettes, CD etc all have taken classical music to masses now-a-days.

Classical music, in today's social and cultural environment, has turned from chamber music to concert music. Here interaction between audience and artist is direct. Moreover, audience can be performing artists, musicologists, students, financiers, therapy groups, music critics, foreign audience. Basic eligibility of good audience is that it should have developed taste for understanding classical music. Spontaneous responses and encouragement inspire an artist to give his best. In today's reality, musicians are faced with mixed audience and hence artists get different responses from the same performance. So, audience plays important role in how music is presented. Now-a-days, due to influence of western culture and music, many performers are trying to westernize Indian classical music. This makes them popular and hence helps earn more money.

To summarize, Mughal and other foreign invasions affected talented students, not in favour of Ustads, by depriving them from ocean of knowledge. Very acute protection of Gayaki protected Gharana system.

Another sociological impact was due to globalization and invent of technology. Indian artists started to perform overseas. Culture of audience changed. Pt. Ravi Shankar was one of those artists who honestly tried to popularise Indian classical music. By mid of 1960, fusing some elements of Indian classical music with western pop music attracted huge audience worldwide. Prof. B. R. Deodhar learnt western voice culture techniques and he gets the credit of initiating this new faculty in music education which otherwise was restricted to Gharana system. He tried to open this new and special branch of voice culture especially for Indian classical vocal music.

Effect of changed daily routine of people:

Lifestyle of people changed. Earlier, it was possible for them to attend overnight classical music concerts as their routine was relaxed. Concerts were supposed to start after dinner and end by dawn. It allowed singers to perform for a long span while singing in such concerts (Tabiyat Se Gana). But with change in their lifestyle, job routines etc., overnight concerts shrank from overnight period to 3 hours, and now to 1 hour, or 45 minutes. Here, it should be noted that singing span of a raga is also reduced to 45 mins. This became a challenge for performers to give their best in such a short span of time. We can see the resultant crisp recording of 30 or 45 minutes at Akashwani.

Thus, globalization affected Indian classical music in many ways- e.g.- change in culture and taste of audience, change in platforms for music. Institutional music helped many artists to nurture their music knowledge. Number of artists grew. Ticketed shows/concerts of Indian classical music also helped artist to earn and continue their passion for music. In total, music changed its way of performance.

Music from technological perspective:

When we talk about Indian music from technological perspective, it starts from recording techniques i. e. invention of first microphone in 1875. Technological development and globalization, digitization have influenced music. When we talk about technological perspective, it is combined with impact of globalization. In general audio industry has a large impact on music right from its storage, reproduction, broadcasting and last but not the least,

voice culture techniques used in Indian music. In late 20th century, technology has tremendous effect on music. Digitization techniques have set new norms for music.

Technological development gave new solutions which in turn had a considerable impact on music as a whole.

Print media – Indian music has a rich oral tradition. Guru can explain raag and its structure, aesthetics of raag and khyal gayan, details of taal and Laya, all these details to disciples in-person only. Only source for learning different bandishes was Guru before invent of print media. Development of printing technology allowed notations of bandishes and raag-details to get printed. Many musicologists like Pt. Paluskar, Pt. Bhatkhande collected as many bandishes as possible, chalked out raag chalan according to bandishes and made all this treasure available to music students with the help of printed books. So, it became possible to read a notation and sing bandish today. (detailed study of bandish is not possible without Guru though).

Print media helps Indian classical music to get documented. Music prevailing at that time was preserved in the form of notations. It helped nation-wide spread of music which was restricted to small groups(gharanas) and made easily accessible to all interested learners.

Sound storage¹⁷ – Sound is an energy made up of vibrations. Hence, storing sound means capturing these vibrations and putting them on a medium from where it could be reproduced in its original form. First attempt was by a French bookseller. In 1850's, named E'douard-Le'on Scott De Martinville, in the form of 'Phonautograph'. A gently moving brush or 'Stylus' would trace vibrations of sound onto the soot (black carbon deposit left after incompletely burning of wood or coal), leaving behind white lines that correspond to sound waves. Recording was called as 'Phonautogram'. Audio of only some minutes was possible to get recorded initially.

Time period for establishing a raag was reduced drastically. It was a challenging part for Indian Classical singers to perform a raag in just some minutes and still have same impact on the audience.

Sound propagation and reproduction¹⁸ – In 1870's, Thomas Edison tried many medium to record and play sound from it. He started with 'Tinfoil Phonautograph' and finally ended up with 'Wax cylinder Phonautograph' to reduce noise. Over period of time, these wax cylinders were replaced by flat discs to make it easy to produce and handle. These discs were called 'Phonograph Records' or 'Vinyl Records'. 'Gramophone' was invented to play sound on

these discs. So now it became possible to store precious voices. We do get many records of our classical maestros like Ustad Abdul Karim Khan and many more, which is our treasure. Vinyl records were replaced by magnetic tapes with the advent of electricity and electromagnetism in early 20th century. Now, sound waves were converted to magnetic waves and were stored on magnetic tapes, a new form of music storage. In 1960, this technique was further developed to create compact and portable 'Audio Cassettes'. Now it became possible to listen to music while travelling in a car too. In 1981, Sony company launched 'Walkman' – a portable music player.

Due to these fast developments, listening good music became affordable and hence demand for good audios increased. Many artists could earn good amount by audio cassettes. Good music was available in hands. Though there was no change in music content as such, but quality of music getting recorded increased. Reason was, you have to give best if your performance is going to be heard for years ahead.

Next generation music storage and streaming – In 1982, Compact Disc or CD was invented. CDs were more portable, able to hold high-quality audio and durable than previous storages. Revolutionary changes in storage occurred due to "Internet". Music is now stored digitally. It is now possible to store hundreds of hours of music on a single pen drive or hard drive. In 2001, Apple released iPod which again moved audio industry. Now is the era of streaming. Streaming companies like Spotify, Apple music, gaana.com etc store huge libraries of music on their servers and we can access any single file from anywhere in the world. Thus, there is no need to store the music physically if it is available online. We are moving to wireless technology from earlier wired technology. Again, no change in content of music, but considerable changes in performance techniques.

Effect of Sound reproduction and sound engineering on voice culture techniques:

Previously, when there were no microphones, no loud-speakers, it was the singer who used to produce a voice that could be heard at least for some distance. And so, voice was prepared, trained for such loud voice levels. Riyaz was done accordingly, so that the voice produced becomes strong. Singing was full-throated singing. With the invent of sensitive microphones and mixing units and loud speakers, it is no longer needed to sing at this loud level of voice. So proper use of breath and voice is possible now. Microphone can sense even a sigh or a gap. Singer is no more needed to waste his efforts unnecessarily. Moreover, with mixing units, you can auto-tune. It is now possible to adjust your pitch, correct mistakes or even edit

it. This has given rise to more altered voice which is disadvantage of technology. With good quality loud speakers, it is possible to get good overall effect. In article “Art- Playing through Pandemic”, author Ishita Goel mentions that “In 1967, Monterey International Pop Festival was first large Rock festival where high-power sound system was used”¹⁹.

Structural changes in traditional instruments and invent of new digital instruments – Lot of instruments have changed their shape, structure or new instruments are created. Mohan-veena by Pt. Vishwa Mohan Bhatt , Zitar by Pt. Niladri Kumar are some of good examples. Harmonium is a foreign instrument but a harmonium with tempered scale is perfectly adopted to accompany Indian classical music. Now-a-days, it is commonly used instrument for accompaniment.

Geoshred app on Apple is fantastic, hexpressive musical instrument that runs on multi-touch devices. Students as well as performers widely use different apps like itablapro, ishala, soorsadhak, taal sadhana and many more for Riyaz sessions as they are very convenient to use. These apps can never take place of original acoustic instruments. But these are most convenient accompaniments for daily practice only. Performers always prefer acoustic Tanpuras or live lehra.

Broadcasting technique²⁰ – Invent of satellite communication gave rise to a new concept i.e. Broadcasting. By broadcasting, it became possible to sit at home and listen to news or songs from even another country. AIR helped many artists to reach a large population simultaneously. Then came the concept of Telecasting and it made revolution. It became possible to watch a live programme of an artist performing in another corner of the world. We are able to watch channels like ‘Insync’ on our TV.

Live streaming and online teaching method – Indian music is tightly bound with Guru-Shishya tradition. Previously, this training used to be at Guru’s home. Then music institutions came into existence and the knowledge of music was made open for all students. Still, it was not possible for a student, staying in remote area, to get training from Guru far away from him. Technology again came for help. Online education started through different platforms like Skype, Google meet etc. Though there are many problems in online teaching like network speed problem, synchronizing tabla beats on both sides, unable to detect minute differences in notes due to low network clarity, it is a revolutionary idea in music teaching method keeping Guru-Shishya tradition intact. In a life-threatening pandemic of Covid-19, it is this online education that has helped many students to continue their learning. Online streaming technique has helped people relax and forget pandemic problems. Online streaming

of music programmes, interviews of maestros have given lot of positivity in pandemic of Covid-19.

Response of masses to technological impact on music and music business²¹ - Goel Ishita says in her article – Playing through Pandemic, “Millions participated in events of World music day and Janata-Curfew online festival to engage audience creatively. As live streaming is gaining more followers, a whole new business seems to be emerging.” As a result, its digital broadcasts increased. In case of online concerts, not all the concerts are free. There are many platforms that are allowing artists to showcase their art and earn some money from it. Artists are learning to carry out digital marketing. One drawback of this is, artist, while performing, is not just showcasing his art but it is an exchange of reflexes and responses between the artist and audience. This factor is missing in such live programs. Another drawback is, successful artist might not be the best artist of that period as success is now more dependent on advertising, marketing skills and likes and shares from public. Artists for different countries are collaborating with each other to host musical sessions that share heritage of their own countries with the world. Big auditoriums are now replaced with digital spaces where you can go live. With online streaming, online teaching, online discussions, webinars, a whole new world is opened for all. Thus, modern period has brought many changes in music, music education and music business.

Content-wise there may not be much change in music, but there is a considerable change in performance and presenting. Audience of music concerts changed from small groups to thousands of people as music program is being organized as an event. When music is performed for masses, content of “what should be performed” is dominated by taste of majority of audience. As a result, there is constant need to have miraculous performance. And this has resulted in many concerns like – spirituality is diminishing, entertainment factor is in demand, vocal gymnastics at the cost of precision of notes and microtones, increased tempo irrespective of raag-nature (Raag-Prakruti) consideration, more usage of fast taankari and sargam. So, though spread of music is increased due to technology, size and taste of audience has changed. Thus, we can say that another pattern of khyal-gayan is emerging in which individual skills, like fastest taans and miraculous sargams are more focussed than Raag-prakruti and specialities of raags.

Conclusion:

- 1) Purpose of music was different in its different forms like Vedic music, Margi music, Deshi music and hence its content. Music was systematized and Raag-gayan emerged.
- 2) Aesthetic aspects of music mentioned by Matang and Sharangdeo came into existence. Mughal culture added some new languages like Hindi, Brij, Punjabi etc. to music. Poetry of bandishes focussed daily problems of common man. New raags, new taals, new music forms like gazal, quawali, tarana, khamasa, khyal were introduced.
- 3) Institutional music education spread widely in modern period. Music content started getting documented. Gharana tradition preserved and propagated style of music.
- 4) During British rule in India, harmonium's tempered scale allowed it to accompany Indian classical music at the cost of loss of microtones. Indian music scale changed to match scales globally. Fusing some elements of Indian classical music with western pop music were attracting huge audience worldwide.
- 6) Globalization and hence changed lifestyle of people, changes in culture, change in audiences' taste, changes in platforms of music challenged performers to give their best in short span of time. We get the resultant crisp recordings of 30 or 45 minutes at Akashwani. Institutional music helped many artists to learn music. Ticketed shows/concerts of Indian classical music helped artist to earn. But this demanded miraculous performances every time. This has many concerns like diminishing spirituality, high demand of entertainment factor, microtones' precision levels, increased vocal gymnastics, overall increased tempo irrespective of raag-nature consideration, more usage of fast taankari and sargam. Thus, we can say that another pattern of khyal-gayan is emerging in which individual skills, like fastest taans and miraculous sargams seem to be more focussed than Raag-prakruti and specialities of raags.
- 7) Print media helped content of Indian classical music to be documented.
- 8) 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. Reason being, the recording will be heard years ahead.
- 9) Apps can never take place of original acoustic instruments. But they are most convenient accompaniment.

10) In a life-threatening pandemic of Covid-19, online education and online concerts show that artists and teachers have started adapting technology. One can see considerable change in performance and presenting.

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