

Understanding Folk Music & Concerning Its Relation with Classical Music

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Abstract

India is a country rich in its cultures, heritage, and values. Every state has its traditions followed by the people residing in that state. Similarly, if we talk about music, India has a huge variety of music forms practiced in different regions of the country. Here, mainly we are about to discuss the association between two major styles of music, i.e, Classical music, and folk music. This article will help us understand the origin, meaning, and various folk and classical music forms. In addition, this paper includes a vision of how deeply folk music is connected to classical music. We will also find out about different ragas of classical music that originated purely from folk music. This paper also puts up some light on the various similarities and dissimilarities between folk music and classical music.

Keywords:

Folk music, Lok Sangeet, Indian Classical music, Carnatic Sangeet, Culture and Traditions, Folk influence on classical music, Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan Sahab.

Introduction:

There are different perspectives given by different scholars regarding the origin of music. But I believe that music emerged slowly in nature and through nature. Music is present everywhere in our surroundings, there is just a need for recognition and that's how after mere acknowledgment, music started developing slowly into people's lives. The two forms of music i.e folk music and classical music also originated in different ways. It is believed that classical music has its origins in the Vedic scriptures whereas folk music originated from the people binding a particular society or community (Chawla, 2020).

In general, the term 'folk' means a particular group of people sharing common traditions and values. Lok Sangeet is made up of two words, lok, and sangeet which means music of the people (Sharma, 2018). Folk music is a delightful form of music that is transmitted from one generation to the other with an unknown writer and composer. It does not appear in any written form or context and is accepted by everyone equally (Samar, 1968). This music is mainly associated with

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people's daily practices like farming, cooking, or any other work they do for their livelihood. Folk music is immensely incorporated in the rural regions of a particular state where people enjoy singing while doing their work. Music is their need for enjoyment and relief that makes them forget about all the stress in their life. Folk music can be interpreted as the *music of the people, by the people, and for the people*. It can also be called *the music of the masses* as people in large numbers sing together the tunes of various songs while doing the various activities related to their daily life. In Rigveda, the word "Dehi Lokam" is used to illustrate the meaning of the word 'lok'(Sharma,2018)

Every state has its kind of folk music which comprises many variable flavors. Each form of folk music is divergent from the other form in numerous ways which is due to the difference in cultural environments of each region. Different states have different values and tastes in music that leads to the creation of magical tunes and forms of folk music. Each region has its separate folk tunes in which the singers manifest the specialty of that particular region. A lot can be known about a state/region just by listening to the kind of folk music it exhibits. Some regions are especially known for their folk music. For example, Bhangra and Giddha, the traditional folk dance of Punjab, are famous worldwide due to their energetic and incomparable dance moves carrying the essence of their soil. Similarly, other forms of folk music such as Maand of Rajasthan, Baul & Bhatiali of Bengal, Bihu of Assam, and much more show the traits of their cultural and traditional heritage in the form of music.

Through the folk music of any region, we get to know about a lot of things associated with that particular region, like their way of living life, the way they talk, the kind of clothes they wear, the food they eat, and the culture they share. If we look upon the people living in mountains, we will observe that their body language, gestures, and voices are very soft and very polite. If we listen to Pahadi songs or watch pahadi people dancing to their folk songs, we can see that softness and calmness in their songs as well as dance movements.

The folk music of any region can be categorized into the following (Jain,2019):

- Birth songs
- Marriage songs
- Seasonal songs
- Fare & festival songs
- Love songs
- Devotional songs
- Sanskar geet
- Shram geet

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The term classical in general means 'traditional' or 'having a value that lasts. Now, if we talk about classical music, it has different traits and textures. *Indian classical music* is very rich in heritage and is one of the world's most expounded music systems. It is a kind of music that fills your soul and mind with peace & develops a direct spiritual and pious connection to God (Paranjape, 2004). Although, it requires hard practice to sing and understand Indian classical music, but once you get into it, the more you want to go deeper and the more connected you will feel. Indian classical music has its origin from the old Vedic scriptures. There are four Vedas- Rigveda, Yajurveda, Atharvaveda, and samveda, out of which, Samveda is called the Veda of music as it shares all the understanding of Indian classical music (Sharma, 2007). It contains different mantras, hymns, and poetic texts which were chanted during Vedic rituals using three to seven notes and sometimes even with instruments. There are some erudite granthas like Natyashastra, Brehadeshi, Sangeet Ratnakar, and many more that consist of rare and valuable knowledge about different concepts of music. It is nearly impossible to write down all the technicalities of Indian classical music in any book that is why it is practically demonstrated by a guru to his disciple. A person cannot understand classical music without the guidance of a guru. The guru teaches his student everything about classical music, including the meaning, concepts, swaras, alankaras, and different ragas with minute specifications. Music of the Vedic period can only be understood by studying the three sections i.e- '*Rig, Yajur & Atharavaveda main sangeet*', '*Samveda main sangeet*', and, '*Upanishada aur Shiksha Granthon main sangeet*' (Paranjape, 1969).

Indian classical music is divided into two different styles:

- Hindustani Sangeet or North Indian style
- Carnatic Sangeet or South Indian style

Indian classical music mainly consists of three forms:

- Dhrupad/Dhamar
- Khayal (Vilambit and drut)
- Tarana

Folk Influence on Classical music:

Every region is influenced by its culture, heritage, and atmosphere which creates a unique and special style of singing in every state. Each state has its swar in which the compositions are sung by the people residing in that state. There exists a peculiar relation between folk and classical music that is described by many musicians including the legendary *Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan Sahab* in an interview at All India Radio that we will discuss under this section of the paper.

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Many folk tunes have given birth to classical ragas (Gandharv, According to Khan Sahab, the swaras of various ragas are already present in the folk music of a region. There is just a need for a specialist/ustad, who can understand and discover the swaras out of folk tunes and turn them into classical ragas. Only the ancient scholars and musicians of Indian classical music could identify those ragas hidden in folk music. To clarify, if we listen to pahadi folk music, it will come to our acknowledgment that Raag Pahadi is derived from pahadi folk music only. Also, Raga Bhopali, which is a very basic raga of Indian classical music, is inspired by the swaras of pahadi. Some forms of folk music are sung distinctly in different states due to their differences in traditions (Khan Sahab, 1971). For eg: Maand, the folk music of Rajasthan is sung in variable styles in Gujarat, Punjab, Lahore in Raga Pahadi. Likewise, many other ragas have gotten their origin solely from folk music.

Here are some of the ragas that emerged from folk music:

- Raaga Bilawal originated from the folk music of Kashmir and Bengal
- Sindh region gave birth to famous ragas Jai Jai vanti and Kafi
- Raaga Bhairavi is inspired by Irani folk music.
- Raaga Bhopali is generated from the swaras of the pahadi region folk music.

We can imagine how ragas hidden in the basic tunes of folk music sung by people having no technical knowledge of music got mere recognition by our old Ustads/Pandits which became the reason for their existence.

Differences Between Folk music and Classical music:

- Folk music is a traditional form of art that has been passed on through generations by oral transitions whereas classical music is referred to as 'art music' that cannot be simply transmitted through any ignorant person.
- Folk music does not require any hard training (Sharma, 2018) wherein a person cannot learn classical music without doing rigorous practice and taking proper guidance under guru-shishya parampara.
- Folk music is used by people for refreshment and to celebrate daily experiences of life on the other hand classical music is a way that helps a person in attaining peace and is not just used for entertainment purposes.
- The swaras used in folk music are very simple and can be rendered by any non-musical person also but the complexity & technicalities of classical music cannot be understood by a person having zero knowledge of classical music.
- There are mainly 4 to 5 swaras that are repeatedly used in folk music (Paranjape, 2004) whereas classical music comprises a variety of combinations of swaras.
- Any average person can sing folk songs however classical music can only be presented by professionals.

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- Folk music can be sung in simple talas like dadra, keharva, roopak, etc but in classical music, a musician must have extensive knowledge of different talas and layakaris.
- Folk music is not bound by any rules while classical music has strict rules and regulations that must be followed by every artist.

Similarities Between Folk music and Classical music:

- Both forms of music have strong sentimental sides (bhav paksha)
- There is a huge importance of swar, taal, and laya in both forms of music.
- Just as there are different styles of folk music in different states, similarly in classical music, we can see different gharanas that display the style of singing of that particular Gharana.
- There exist some forms of folk songs like that of Rajasthan, that have similar artistic approaches to classical music.
- Both forms of music have fascinating and attractive essence that fills the audience with intense pleasure and satisfaction.

Conclusion:

From all the discussion in this paper, we came to a conclusion that these two major singing forms of music i.e folk music and classical music are interconnected in such a way that classical music has gotten its roots from folk music. The music of ordinary people was redefined and became the music of intellectuals. Despite being so different from each other, they have certain similarities also that create a deep linkage between the two forms. With changing times, we have seen a lot of changes in both forms of art. Like in the old times, folk music was fixed to the rural regions of a state and was sung by people belonging to a certain community only. Now the folk music of any region is sung and cherished by the people outside that region also. For eg; the folk music of Punjab is not only performed by Punjabi people but by people belonging to other states as well. Likewise, there is the folk music of Bengal, Rajasthan, Kashmir, and many other regions that are enjoyed by people universally. Today's folk artists who are famous worldwide get the same admiration and appreciation as classical artists. People feel very connected, and they relish Indian folk and classical music wholeheartedly. The reason that Indian music is famous globally is that every Indian artist puts his soul into his art and shows his actual sentiments and emotions through his music which develops a pious connection with his audience. Every artist (folk or classical) has their own charm and area of expertise and they get many opportunities and chances in their lives to display it on big national and international platforms.

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