Exploring Music: Past, Present & Future

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Introduction

Progressively increasing awareness of our rich musical heritage from the world of beings at large sooner or later arouses an intense desire to make sense of the total musical situation. Ultimately to Make sense is to complete the experience and hence a necessary human requirement. To achieve the end the experience is to be initially placed on the dynamic framework provided by the combined operations of the categorial triad namely, Time, Space and Causality.

Attending to the general, unilinear, temporal dimension affords us the opportunity to focus on music-s describable as Music of the past, Music of the Present and Music of the Future. Of course all these segments of the Time-continuum look both forwards and backwards.

Attending to the Space dimension leads to disciplines such as Ethnomusicology, Bio-Musicology, Musicology and Music-history understood in a wider context. As one ethnomusicologist put it, "Oftentimes it is useful to study 'other' music-s to comprehend our own music ". In this context I remember as argument put forward by a Greek historian from the hoary past. He advocated a method of tracing history of a region by referring to what happened in other regions during the same period. For this reason the he recommended a kind of Alternate Chapter method of tracing history. Obviously the Space-dimension comes into picture in a major way.

Turning to Causality is to reach for clues as to the dynamics of musico-cultural changes and to ideas, concepts, theories and systems governing musical expression.

Now the exploration of the Past music requires ability to reconstruct imagine and interpret.

The Present necessitates observation, construing and understanding the different.

The Future demands projection, imagination and an assumed coherence.

The Past

In case of India the Past is considerably long. More importantly it is not a dead past- but a living continuity. The traditions concerned- in the present case musical-are unbroken though not in the original frame of their occurrence. It is near tautologous to say that traditions are dynamic i.e. they are inclusive of many kinds of changes. Attempts at examining the Indian musical past and its contents attracts attention to the phenomenon of performing ideas that are in near-continuous action and hence change in nature, thrust and intensity and cultural contexts. Further, the changes are characterized by successive states of flux, crystallization and partial reversal leading again to a flux and so on.

The crystallized identities become part of memory – collective and cultural. The said memory is not of facts. It consists of energized interpretations conducive to further action individual and societal. It is because of the inherent capacity of the memory to encourage action that techniques, methods, and theories about memory have acquired important place in the Indian approach. The famed oral tradition of India has rightfully accorded a high place to various matters related to memory. And this has determined the character of Indian Archiving.

The Present

The Present is always exciting because it can never be comprehended fully as the Present. It is a temporal division waiting to be crystallized. It usually appears to us as a series of incidents, events or movements. Incidents are occurrences that are perceived as isolated though effective in terms of generating experience. When linked in coherent, causal and identifiable units –incidents establish themselves as events. Finally events capable of arousing widespread interest and generating diverse appeal are on their way to become socio-cultural movements. Movements felt as such and noticeably in existence as potential theories which may or may not be components of a governing Philosophy. Philosophies consist of concepts as their basis and both concepts and philosophies are generative forces even when not 'understood' by the players.

The Future

All the three temporal states, namely the Past, Present and Future are problematic in the sense they compel or enable Action according to the given, accepted or contested ideas. What is created is (to use Russell's description) 'the white heat of thought'. This – the pressing demand for action is bound to cause a great deal of restlessness. Perhaps the Future-state is more problematic because it is full of too many unseen, unrecognized and uncontrollable variables.

This is the background for an inquiry into the Indian musical scene-music being too important an active component of the human behavioral pattern.

Why concepts, theories, isms and movements in music?

Granting the validity of the abstractions discussed, Foucault's somewhat paraphrased observation perhaps appears to be relevant. Reportedly he once stated, "It is time philosophers leave the Universals and attend to specifics"!

This is of course easily said than done! The only fruitful way towards this end is to hold fast to what Wittgenstein approvingly picked from Schopenhauer. Schopenhauer known for his apotheosis of music quoted from Goethe's Faust the following sutra: "In the beginning was the Deed". The suggestion to music-thinkers is to remember that Music lives in Performance. Performance is the only 'fact 'that we can rely on to make sense of the eternally 'living' phenomenon of music. As there are no theory-neutral facts the demand is to identify, explain and explore musical i.e. performing ideas to ensure significant, creative and durable relationship between us and music.

Performing ideas give us a focus irrespective of the temporal segmentation involved. We will do well to take note of the kinds of musical deeds allowing emergence of concepts, theories, isms and movements in music. For example the following will help in identifying performing ideas that matter.

1. Changed perception of the Substance of Music

2. Changed aims of the musical activity including its conception, propagation, reception and evaluation. Propagation may move to the level of communication.

3. Changed relationship of music with other life-areas.

4. Influences on music of those ideologies that are at least initially related to certain arts or those concerned with extra-musical life-areas.

5. Altered relationship among the usually accepted musical components namely melody, rhythm and text. Also changes in techniques of exploring these fundamental parameters.

6. Changes in the inter-sensory relationships and also in our awareness of their operations. (The phenomenon of Synesthesia is significant in this respect.)

7. Availability of aids, techniques, technologies pertaining to all phases of the musical activity.

8. Changed perception of the chronological segments (PPF) leading to efforts to relate them. The basic drive may be the felt human need to maintain continuity as permanence is not possible. To store or to archive is also a manifestation of a similar desire.

9. Desire to establish experiential linkage between time-space-causality.

10. The primacy of the primitive urge to experience something new or novel and therefore to move away from the conventional, established or the accepted. Attraction felt for the new/novel is comparable to the urge expressed through the question in relation to story-telling – What happened then?

The Indian Scene

On this backdrop when one concentrates on India two features of the Indian musical situation are likely to prove challenging: 1) The Categorial Sextet of Music (i.e. Primitive, Folk, Religious - including liturgical, devotional and mystic -, Art, Popular and Confluence) 2) The Pervasive Oral Tradition.

The existence of the musical sextet means no single common method can be applied to all manifestations. In view of their varying aims the manifestations are likely to be governed by musical and extra-musical considerations though in differing degrees. In other words, exploring the categorial expressions on the chronological axis would necessarily need criteria or their sets formulated in many disciplines ostensibly not related to music.

As far as the oral tradition is concerned it is of course important to understand that in India oral tradition is not to be characterized as tradition of the pre-literate people. Once this is appreciated the musical, technical and cultural nuances of how music is stored are to be considered for the intended exploration.

The Indian Context

Whatever might be the immediate concern - it is also necessary to specifically mention two factors in Indian cultural contexts - 1) In India it is unwise to make enthusiastic claims about originality in the usual sense of the term because of the long Indian cultural history; regional expanse, linguistic diversity and racial multiplicity. It is better to accept multi-genesis of ideas as the truth of cultural life. 2) Secondly, in cultural matters hindsight is not to be brushed aside. Very often it leads to new insights into the past, about events that seemed insignificant at one time. It is even likely that hindsight may reveal a new human aspect of a situation.

Keeping this in mind the following or similar other historico-cultural features of in India may be taken as pointers to what has been discussed –musical changes reflected in performing ideas often resulting from exchanges with other musical cultures:

1. The Indo-Aryans responded to the then prevailing indigenous music during the Vedic period and in the process changed their intended music.

2. During the post-Naradiya Shiksha period (c.500AD) the descending sequence of musical intervals was replaced by an ascending sequence. This was gradually combined with the stabilization of the melodic phenomena known as grama, jati and murchana.

3. The murchana principle was abandoned and the principle of tonality was accepted. This meant that all required musical intervals were established in one octave range.

4. Gradually raga, as distinct from a bare melodic scale, took roots. Treating it as an expandable framework the raga phenomenon attracted more and more codification from various angles.

5. With the development of prosody i.e. Padyashastra (later strengthened by the origin and development of regional languages) the Chandashastra i.e. metrics provided a bridge between literature and music in the aspect of temporality. Exploration of the Musical Time directly led to the fascinating manifestation that Tala in Indian music proves to be.

6. It is also significant that Indian musicology began referring to two main streams of music as Margi and Deshi .The terms alluded to a pan-Indian larger or older tradition and to the sub-streams - described as Deshi on account of their regional provenance. However it is also stated that the Deshi tradition offered more freedom in many musical aspects than the Margi which was more rigidly codified.

7. Text, tune and time brought together moved towards tone or the Emotional Content on the one hand and to the Nibaddha vogue of music-making based on Prabandha i.e. musical genres on the other. The Nibaddha was soon to be nudged aside by the Anibaddha mode of music-making which also meant different array of musical forms taking the front stage.

Sampler of 'Experimentation' in Hindustani Classical/Art Music

It should be obvious that a category-wise and an exhaustive examination of musical manifestation will bring out the fact that contrary to the largely circulating or dearly-held misconception about the unchanging, constant or conservative character of the long Indian music has been on the move because of the felt need of the performers to explore. It is to be remembered that Experimentation can be within the tradition or it may mean stepping out of the tradition.

On account of personal limitations of study, expertise and comprehension I present here some examples of experimentation form the category of Hindustani art music.

The Aspect of Rhythm:

1) Ati Vilambit Tempo 2) Ati Drut: Nissar Hussain Bhairavi Tarana 3) Complex tala based: Composition in Savari, in Shikhar tala, Prabandh, in Ardha Matta Tala 4) Theka and composition in different tempi.

The Aspect of Melody

1. Mishra Raga 2. Dhun Raga 3. Triveni 4. Pat-manajiri 5. Khat 6. New Intervals (Lagan Gandhar) 7. Compositions having the Sama on different note in the same raga.

For example,

Raga Bhimpalas

1. italati ati	<u>ni</u>^
2. dholan mende ghar ave	sa
3. rama rama rasiya	re
4. garava harava darungi	<u>ga</u>
5. ab to badi ber	ma
6. nausha bana	pa
7. tum jo kanha kahan	dha
8. vahun kavan	ni
9. jake mrigachhala take	sa (upper)
10. janat sab tumhari bat	re (upper)

Raga Yaman

1. tanana dre dre	dha^
2. sohela nandke	ni^
3. mora mana bandh lino	sa
4. mandar mana laye	re
5. savare merehi dvarpe	ga
6. yeri lal mile	pa
7. rain gamaye aye ho	dha
8. udanat dere tana dere	ni

The Aspect of Text

1) A long Text (*tom tanan tana* - Puriya tarana) 2) Multi-language composition 3) Swarartha (From Geetibhan - *saras pag dhare*) 3) Bemayana Sargam (*saras nidhapa maga rasanidhi*) 4) Jod-compositions 4) Two-language compositions 5) Composition-text with a poetic conceit etc. (*pahale to ankh mori* - Patmanjiri) 6) Music and Comment (*jane akal sab* - Savani, *vidyadhar guniyan* - Khat, *aise bahut chale* - Miyan ki Todi)

New Genres

1) Tap-Khayal (From Geetibhan), 2) Khayal Numa (Bhairav), 3) Raas (From Geetibhan), 4) Trivat (Pt. Vinayakrao Patvardhan), 5) Chaaturang (Todi, Pt. K. S. Pandit), 6) Sargamgeet (VCD 100 years of Recording), 7) Purana Ghazal (*Jo ke name haq na liya*), 8) Langda dhrupad (*Jane Akal sab*), 9) Ragasagar (Pt.Narayanrao Vyas)

A look at the new instruments coming into vogue and the subtle changes taking place in vocalizing practices would complete this illustrative listing of experimentation in Hindustani art music.

From Fusion to Confluence: A Qualitative Musical Journey

I made a reference to the experimentation as the essence of exploration of music and to the possibility that a kind of experimentation may be because two or more musical cultures come together also as systems and culminate in -what I have chosen to describe as the Tradition of Confluence Music. Due to various socio-cultural factors this category is likely to be the category of the future just as timbre is proving to the most generative of the acoustic dimensions. It is therefore necessary to discuss the category in some detail mainly focusing on the Indian manifestations.

The Cultural Spiral

In this context firstly I want to suggest that a wider spectrum of the human cultural activities indicates that the human race as such experiences and explores life in recurrent cultural spirals (and not circles!). Observing the human cultural march often prompts a somewhat paradoxical observation: "I have been here before" and "Nothing like this has happened before".

It is also true that there are times when both intensive and extensive cultural exchanges take place between different human groups to effect this spiral movement. This inevitably gives rise to new expressions – including musical. From the beginning of the twentieth century till today we are witnessing one such phase of immense interaction among different human groups. Even if one questions the validity of the concept of 'Progress' in matters cultural and artistic – the unmistakable movement towards qualitative improvement cannot be denied. Hence I have been advocating the concept of Cultural Spiralism as characteristic of the present times as an indication of the difference between the past and the received on the one hand, and the selective but qualitative rise on the other.

When Cultures meet…

Secondly I draw attention to the fact that due to diverse circumstances cultures come together in qualitatively different ways. Five kinds of cultural interrelationships are possible when one culture becomes aware of the 'other'. The five interrelationships are respectively: indifference, juxtaposition, borrowing, imitation and assimilation.

A combination of attitudes and actions bring these interrelationships into play. For example, indifference results from arrogance, ignorance and lethargy which dominate mainly because of a lack of curiosity among the cultures concerned. Juxtaposition indicates anxiety to maintain ones identity but the anxiety is also coupled with awareness of the 'other' and its

positive aspects. Borrowing suggests the inferiority complex of the borrower while the imitation mode points to acceptance of the 'felt' and comparative superiority of the 'other' culture prompting hasty actions from the imitator culture. It is the fifth process, that of assimilation which has always proved the most beneficial for cultures or their components. It is this Assimilative inter-relationship that leads to Confluence Music.

We hear today numerous voices that actively praise or condemn the musical coming together of cultures. For example, the term 'fusion music' is pejoratively used, sides are taken and words fly about - though no debate seems to take place. It must be understood and accepted that the zeitgeist of the present age is musical change brought about by coming together of different and numerous cultures and music-s. Prospects are exciting and bright provided fusion and other such acts are understood to be the natural and possible strategies employed to effect musical changes. Further, confluence music needs to be appreciated as the next –though not the final phase of musical development which, in its turn, is a part of human march towards the qualitatively rich future. In our efforts to fully engage with the phenomenon words/terms/concepts such as change, development, evolution, revolution, modification, experimentation, distortion, deviation and cultural invasion - will demand attention. Equally important may prove the loaded adjectives such as authentic, pure, natural, hybrid and artificial or synthetic. It is necessary to examine, define and employ them with clarity, honesty and adequate academic intensity to make the debate and the accompanying actions fruitful.

Performing Ideas-as the Initial Motive Force

Thirdly, I want to suggest that it is essential to distinguish between 'ideas and ideas' and stress the matter of performing ideas.

(I have discussed elsewhere the twin phenomena of fusion and confluence in music.) I would suggest that for a fruitful inquiry and a resultant action the primary focus is to identify 'performing ideas along with academic and scholastic contexts' related to them. What is primarily important for a performer interested in confluence is not a historical account or a theoretical statement about the musical reality he is facing. It will be more fruitful for him to go backwards to history from the present- if and when such a move required. Therefore in my second and collaborative presentation I play-back, or put forward some performing ideas in Indian music - through in a skeletal form.

Some Steps towards Confluence-music

A proper understanding of the concept of Confluence Music would inevitably involve appreciation of what is broadly described as experimenting in music. Experiments are

intended to bring about significant, qualitative and deliberate or conscious changes in what is available and around. All experimenting consists of deviation i.e. moving away from what is current or in circulation. Obviously to know what is in circulation helps to decide what to deviate from.

Coming to the contemporary scene the phenomenon and discussion of confluence music is likely to remind one of terms and concepts such as avant garde, experimental, modern, contemporary, futurist etc. These and similar other terms are relevant because they are symptomatic of something deeper. They indicate philosophies and the conceptual maps underlying them- which have given rise to various isms. These isms, in their turn, have noticeably influenced performing ideas and their manifestations. However the confluence that I am drawing attention to is full or near-total engagement of two or more well-developed musical systems. Compared to confluence - all isms may be described as strategies conducing to creation of confluence.

It could be said that the chain seems to be: philosophy < 'ism' <strategy <concrete work or performance. This is of course not to suggest that one link in the chain leads to the other or that there is a fixed sequence. What I wish to argue is the chain would be the completed story of any successful performing idea. Philosophies are abstract and they receive their real teeth through 'isms' as action plans based on them. All isms in their turn are manifest through use of strategies employed to create concrete works and the works are made concrete by resorting to devices of various kinds which the concerned creator thinks useful or relevant to attain his specific purpose. It is therefore beneficial to briefly explain the nature and implications of these individual strategies as well as the devices pressed into service.

Secondly it appears that due to their inherent performing essence- theatre and music bring to surface many parallels-in ideas as also in acts, actions and activities.

Thirdly it must be admitted that clear statements about the desirable, intended or operating isms are available mostly from those working in literature and painting than in performing arts. This might be linked to the inherent performance-reliance of dance, drama and music etc. However this needs to be pondered about. It needs to be stressed in this context that verbalization is not a necessary condition for conceptualization and it is most likely that performers have put their isms in practice before they put them in words and write about them. (Stravinsky: I need to play them before I finally compose them or the famous aunt from Henry James: How do I know whether what I say is logical unless I say it? or the Musicing about music; Parody is the best criticism of music)

Fourthly, it appears that most new philosophies or isms - (at least in the modern period-) point to a great intellectual turmoil, and an intense cerebral activity on the part of the innovators involved. These innovators look beyond their own art or specializations and they are

also persistent readers and thinkers. What is more important is the fact that they do not think reading etc. as contradictory or inimical to their being artists!

The Proof of the Pudding!

I have already hinted that movement towards confluence is different in many ways from merely bringing together of musical items from different musical and cultural contexts. However this needs to be finally reflected in the music composed and performed. I composed and presented one item which is intended, designed and performed as an illustration of confluence music.

I expect that the following features characterize the work:

1. Two melodic traditions of art music namely, the Hindustani and the Iranian are brought together. The interaction is between Dastagah and Raga.

2. The basic and initial melodic framework is structured like a raga but its lower and upper octave-related halves (i.e. Poorvanga and Uttaranga) are asymmetrical. Moreover no feeling of the vadi-samvadi logic is created.

3. The melody moves according to the text which is by Amir Khusro who was largely responsible for turning the Indian Islamic gaze fro Arabia to Persia. The text moves in stanzas as did the early Indian Pada tradition. Further, content-wise the stanzas are only loosely connected though there is a thematic base with a Sufi soul permeating it.

4. It is the poetry that decides the rhythmic structure. Hence the metrical cycle decides the expanse of the rhythmic cycle. It is not a full-fledged tala in action but a promise of it. The five-matra pattern creates a different kind of temporal tension .The tempo-variations are introduced through doubling, trebling of the original tempo. The tempo is expectably neither slow nor fast as the prosodic consideration is the ruling factor.

5. There is no elaboration of melodic ideas. The melodic ideas that appear in successive stanzas are known as Amir Khusro's favored melodic frameworks which he employed in his Sufi music-making. In Iranian renderings of art music vocalization patterns etc (see the rules about the tehrir-placement) are specifically placed to ensure an uninterrupted perception of the textual progress. This is the logic adopted here.

6. The aim of this music-making is not to make a complete statement. It gingerly steps in to suggest, echo or cast blurred shadows.

In Conclusion

       To me it appears that never before the usual time-place divisions have paled into near insignificance as far as creative activities are concerned. At the same time the challenges of the new possibilities are more and more intense! The initiation, transmission or propagation and reception phases in the overall process of communication are undergoing constant changes and the dynamism requires both honesty and alertness in creation.