

## EVOLUTION OF CARNATIC MUSIC EDUCATION SYSTEM

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### Abstract

Like Vedas, Indian Music has also been taught orally through Gurukula system in its initial stages. Later, due to various technological advancements and changes in the socioeconomic conditions, there has been continuous evolution in the music education system. This resulted in the shift of Gurukula system to Institutionalized system. And now, we are in the 'Internet Era' where teaching and learning of music has become Online i.e., Virtual mode. There are several Web sources that provide practical and theoretical content relevant to Carnatic music. Especially, during pandemic conditions like Corona, Online media has played a vital role in propagating and promoting music all across the world crossing continental barriers. This research paper mainly focuses on few essential aspects such as The method of teaching in these three systems namely - Gurukula, Institutionalized and Online.

The changes that resulted in the evolution of Carnatic Music Education System

Possible ways to learn Carnatic music through Online

**Key Words:** Carnatic Music Education, Gurukula System, Institutionalized education, Online/Virtual education, Carnatic Music Web sources, Carnatic Music Applications

## CARNATIC MUSIC

Indian music has been originated from the Bhakti movement initiated by devotees like Jayadeva, Kshetrayya, Narayana Teertha, Vittala, Sri Ramadasu, Annamacharya and few others. Their songs were sung by the people in popular tunes of those days. Till about 13th century A.D., the Indian music was a whole single system prevalent throughout the length and breadth of India, with certain local variations. The bifurcation of Indian music into two systems namely Karnatic and Hindustani was mentioned for the first time in the Haripala's work, '*Sangita Sudhakara*' written between 1309 and 1312 A.D. Due to the contact of Persian and Arabic styles, the music of North India began to develop along fresh channels. But, the music of the South, undisturbed by foreign invasions, continued to develop along the lines of ancient traditions and further came to be styled as 'Karnataka Sangita', which is widely popular as the traditional music of South India or simply called as '*South Indian Classical Music*'.

## CARNATIC MUSIC EDUCATION

Earlier, there was no systematic procedure or syllabus for teaching or learning Carnatic Music. But later, it was Sri Purandara dasa (15-16th Century), the '*Father of Carnatic Music*' who introduced various basic Swara-laya exercises that were taught during initial stages of learning followed by compositions according to their standard. This was well accepted and followed by the other musicians of those days. It laid a strong foundation for systematic teaching and learning of this art. Between 18th and 19th Century, Carnatic Music Trinity namely - Muttuswami Dikshitar, Tyagaraja Swami and Syama Sastri nurtured and developed this kind of music to a higher level of excellence with their knowledge and devotion. Teaching music in South India has been in existence for a very long period of time without undergoing notable changes. The Carnatic music lessons formally begin from basic Swara-

Laya exercises to advanced Manodharma Sangeetam. Generally, it begins with the practice of Swara-laya exercises such as Sarali, Janta, Daatu, Alankaras, Sthayi varisais followed by simpler compositions such as Geethas, Swarapallavis and advanced compositions like Swarajathis, Varnams, Kritis and Ragamalikas etc. Certain semi classical compositions which include Padam, Javali, Thillana, Ashtapadi, Tarangam, Abhang and other keertanas etc., are also taught along with them. It finally ends with the advanced concepts of Manodharma Sangeetam such as Ragam-Tanam-Pallavi (RTP), Neraval and Swarakalpana. The compositions vary from simple to advanced level and are taught according to the standard or understanding level of the student. Relevant theoretical concepts are also taught simultaneously. This is the common format of teaching and learning Carnatic music to become a teacher/performer, and is followed meticulously in any kind of teaching system.

## **EVOLUTION OF CARNATIC MUSIC EDUCATION SYSTEM**

There has been a continuous process of evolution in the music education system since its origin to present. For ease of understanding, this can be grouped under three headings as below:

- Gurukula System - Guru-Sishya Parampara
- Institutionalized System - Regular Mode and Distance mode
- Online/Virtual System - Online Schools, Web sources, Applications

### **GURUKULA SYSTEM**

It had been mentioned in the old Hindu Scriptures that Indian Music had its origin from the Samaveda, which is one of the four Vedas in the Hindu literature. Like Vedas, Carnatic music was also taught orally through Gurukula system where the knowledge of music was transmitted from Gurus to selected Sishyas through a traditional pathway known as '*Guru-Sisya Parampara*'. In this system, students used to go to the Guru's house, lived with them as a part of Guru's family doing all the upacharas and got educated. Here, the ardent disciple just followed the guru in an unquestioning and dutiful spirit. Ethics, values and character formed the core of this education system. The Gurus took the responsibility not only in imparting knowledge but also in moulding the students personality and directed them to gain wisdom. This system gave the students enough knowledge with ample insights to deal with worldly and spiritual issues. It had very strong moral base and the goals of education were not materialistic.

The Gurukula system emphasized that the students brought together from various background live in harmony with love and understanding. It was expected of the students to adhere to the code of conduct drawn by the gurus. Certain musicians of those times did not have the constraints of material compensation. Instead, students served Guru's family in many other ways. Till that time, there was no print media in our nation. Hence, the oral method of teaching was more prevalent till pre-19th Century. Many great musicians of past and even

present hail from this system. Hence, even now, certain people strongly believe that Gurukula system is the most successful system for learning music.

Fine arts thrive only when they are well patronized. In those times, Kings and Zamindars were prime patronizers of music as they felt pride in having scholars and talented artists in their courts. The fine arts specialists were not only given a honourable status but their general needs like home, food etc., were also fulfilled. Such favourable conditions attracted several talented artists from everywhere. In this way, Kings and Patrons helped musicians and Gurus that made the Gurukula system run effectively. However, with the change of time, there occurred various technological advancements that brought changes in the socioeconomic-cultural conditions of the society. They contributed to changes in the fine arts too. Loss of kingdoms and raise of democracy replaced the Zamindari system. Artists faced financial crisis due to loss of patronage that led this system gradually disappear. These conditions further resulted in the shift of music education from Gurukulas to the Institutions. Hence, Gurukula System has almost become a thing of past now.

### **INSTITUTIONALIZED SYSTEM**

The introduction of music in the educational curriculum is an important landmark that laid a strong foundation for the systematic study of music in various aspects such as practical, theoretical and historical. Though there is no exact time period when the music institutions came into existence, but very few were established, especially in the latter half of 19<sup>th</sup> Century. These institutions with a regular financial base attracted the music maestros for some years. And in this regard, it may be stated that G.N.Balasubramaniam, Muttiah Bhagavatar, Musiri Subramania Iyer and Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer were few examples to the aforementioned fact<sup>1</sup>. In the due course of time, it gained more prominence due to which several Music schools and colleges were established in major cities of India within short span of time. These institutions exclusively taught music with a framed syllabus in every course from basic to advanced level.

Due to the vast information available in the form of Scriptures, Inscriptions, paintings, literature and Oral tradition etc., there arouse a need for an in-depth study or research in this field which resulted in the introduction of research programs like M.Phil and PhD in Universities. Therefore, several Colleges and Universities adopted music as one of their departments to teach various music courses. Institutionalized education has given an equal opportunity to all the sections of society to learn this traditional art which was limited to only few in the Gurukula system. Though several Stalwarts guided many students, this approach was not very effective in due course, as the objectives of the institutions became more pronounced that subsided the purposes of Gurukula teaching methods.

Even though, a person has lot of interest to pursue this art, sometimes it is not possible for many of them to attend these courses regularly as they have their own profession/career to earn their livelihood. Moreover, music is almost a passion for many of them who pursue it on

their personal interest. Therefore, understanding the need and demand for distance education in this art, several universities started offering courses both in regular as well as distance mode. In the later half of 20th century, the distance mode of education or correspondence courses came into existence. Through this mode, many music aspirants who were not able to attend courses through regular mode, got an opportunity to pursue them in distance mode where students had to attend the contact classes yearly once for a period of 10-15 days approximately before attending the exam. But, it was observed that a personal touch was missing in the distance learning. So, many passionate aspirants started approaching Gurus for advanced learning, in addition to their education in the institutes with mutual convenience<sup>2</sup>.

### **ONLINE SYSTEM**

Due to the advancement in technology, there emerged different kinds of media such as print, broadcast, electronic, film and online media etc., to satisfy the needs of every generation. All these media played vital role in propagating Carnatic music and thus contributing to its development in various aspects. The contribution of Gramophone and Radio to the music world was so significant through which certain master's voices were recorded and preserved. Especially, Broadcast media like Radio brought a revolutionary change in the history of music and music education. Those who could not afford institutionalized education or personal guidance, would wait for the teaching programs on Radio like Gaanavihaara, Amrutha Gurukula, Sangitha Sikshana, ee paata nerchukundaam etc., and Workshops conducted by Vidwans. Interviews with eminent artists and musicologists were also aired. These were useful to the music aspirants and also listeners who were interested in knowing the experiences of popular artists. Further, this became a reason for the advent of recording devices like tape recorders and CD Players. Later, almost everything got digitalized. And now, many of these are made available through various Web sources.

Carnatic Music is an ocean where one can never reach the shore in his lifetime. The framework of the syllabus is very limited in any particular course which might be sufficient for that course. But, an enthusiastic and a passionate student will never get satisfied with a mere qualification. He/She will always try to gain more knowledge and upgrade himself in varied aspects of the subject. At such point of time, there comes the need to find out the new ways that help him to uplift in all dimensions of the field where all aspirants could learn the subject where ever they are and whenever they need at their own pace. This resulted in the utilization of Internet or Online Media which started growing in demand in the later half of 20th Century. Very soon, it became a boon to the world where huge information on different subjects was made available through various kinds of Online Sources/Web sources and other social media platforms. Most important thing is one can easily share this information at a time to many people. The ease of availability and rapid growth in its usage resulted in huge demand for it all over the world.

Today, we are in the 'Internet Era', where Internet is accessible to almost every household. Every one can utilize online media to explore and gain immense knowledge regarding any aspect of subject at their own convenience. There are several Carnatic music web sources that cater to pre-recorded audio-video lessons. In these videos, though there will not be any individual interaction with the recorded teacher, a passionate learner can utilize it either to learn or as an aid for his practice. Certain Web sources even have the facility to interact with desired Gurus through Web Applications (Web Apps) or Social Apps where one can learn the subject from a selected Guru through 'Online' at their comfort. This further saves a lot of time, energy and money too.

### ONLINE MUSIC INSTITUTIONS

Though Gurukula system dwindled, music institutions came up, and many schools started offering music as a subject. But, there existed a few passionate learners who wished to learn music from specific gurus. With the expansion of cities and due to academic pressures, it took lot of time, energy and money to reach them. So, these music aspirants started approaching online Music Institutions or specific Gurus through online sites and learning through several social Apps such as Skype, Google Duo and Zoom etc. Due to the changing lifestyle, this '*Online mode/Virtual mode*' has been well accepted and is now being utilized by many of them who could not attend Colleges or Universities either in regular or distance mode. Especially, in the pandemic period, during Corona, this online method of learning has become much more prevalent everywhere. This situation has even forced several masters and institutions to teach music online. Several Workshops, Lec-Dems, Seminars and Concerts and competitions regarding Carnatic music had been conducted Online.

Today, several renowned musicians and academicians established their own institutions or many of them collaborated to form academies or organizations which run both online and offline. They not only provide online courses but also conduct exams through their official web sources. The people interested in learning Carnatic music were able to learn the compositions with notations from eminent Gurus directly at the comfort of their homes no matter how far they are<sup>3</sup>.

Examples of few popular Online Music Institutions and their web sources:

- Acharyanet - [www.acharyanet.com](http://www.acharyanet.com)
- Shankar Mahadevan Academy - [www.shankarmahadevanacademy.com](http://www.shankarmahadevanacademy.com)
- eAmbalam - [eambalam.com](http://eambalam.com)
- Global Academy of Arts, Languages and Culture (GAALC) - [gaalc.in](http://gaalc.in)
- Learn Carnatic Music Online - [learncarnaticmusic-online.com](http://learncarnaticmusic-online.com)
- GO4Guru - Online Carnatic music [www.go4guru.com](http://www.go4guru.com)

- Vidya Subramanian Academy - [www.vidyasubramanian.com](http://www.vidyasubramanian.com)

### **CARNATIC MUSIC WEB SOURCES**

In general, one may browse Internet for different kinds of purposes such as biographies or the brief histories of various Vaggeyakaras, Lakshanakārās (musicologists) along with their musical and literary works; audio and video recordings of Great Vidwans; collection of the meanings, Notations, Audio and Video lessons of the compositions; collection of articles in Journals and Magazines; reading E-books; online libraries for research papers and dissertations, to purchase music instruments etc., through various kinds of Web sources such as Websites, Podcasts, Blogs and Discussion forums. Each kind of Web source has its own purpose that serves certain kinds of needs.

In general, Carnatic music is taught both practically and theoretically. There are certain Carnatic Web sources that cover either only practical or only theoretical aspects or sometimes both of them in brief and very few of them in depth. For ease of convenience, these are broadly classified into two categories based on the purpose as Practically Useful Web sources (PUW) and Theoretically useful Web sources (TUW).

### **PRACTICALLY USEFUL WEB SOURCES (PUW)**

PUW are those that provide practical content of the subject such as lyrics, meanings, notations or audio-video lessons or recordings etc., that is useful to learn and gain the practical knowledge on the subject. These can be further classified into two categories. First Category includes those web sources that are useful for listening purpose and second Category includes those web sources that are useful for learning purpose.

Examples of PUW for Listening purpose:

- Sangeethapriya - [www.sangeethapriya.org](http://www.sangeethapriya.org)
- Music India Online - [www.mio.to](http://www.mio.to)
- The Internet Archive - [Archive.org](http://Archive.org)
- [Sujamusic.wordpress.com](http://Sujamusic.wordpress.com)
- [Meerascarnatic.blogspot.com](http://Meerascarnatic.blogspot.com)
- Surasa - [Surasa.net](http://Surasa.net)

Examples of PUW for Learning Purpose:

- Carnatic Music Audio Archive - [www.shivkumar.org](http://www.shivkumar.org)
- Acharyanet - [www.acharyanet.com](http://www.acharyanet.com)
- Swarasindhu - [Swarasindhu.in](http://Swarasindhu.in)
- Raga Surabhi - [www.ragasurabhi.com](http://www.ragasurabhi.com)

## II. THEORETICALLY USEFUL WEB SOURCES (TUW)

TUW are those that provide various kinds of theoretical information on Carnatic music. The theoretical part of the subject begins with the music terminology, different types of Srutis, Talas, Swaras and their Swarasthanas, History of Indian music, Janaka-Janya Raga paddhati, structure of different types of compositions, Biographies of Vaggeyakaras, 72 Melakarta system, Pancha dasa Gamakas, Tala dasa Pranas, Carnatic music Instruments, Raga Lakshanas and advanced concepts such as 22 Srutis, Grahabhedam, Acoustics, Lakshana Granthas, Role of media in development of Carnatic music, Seats of Carnatic Music, different kinds of classical music systems and so on. Some Web sources may also provide certain articles or books relevant to the subject. Though there are several theoretically useful web sources, only few of them are selectively mentioned based on the quality and utility of the content<sup>4</sup>.

Examples of few widely known TUW are:

- [www.carnaticcorner.com](http://www.carnaticcorner.com)
- [www.karnatik.com](http://www.karnatik.com)
- [www.indian-heritage.org](http://www.indian-heritage.org)
- [Carnatica.in](http://Carnatica.in)

### YOUTUBE - A POPULAR LISTENING AND LEARNING PLATFORM

Unlike an online institution, or a Web source, YouTube is a unique platform that provides different types of content such as audios and videos of artist performances, music lessons, interviews, documentaries, films and many more. It has been observed that several masters have taught lessons to a single or a group of few selected students. There is a big list of Carnatic music YouTube Channels (CYC) that are useful for learning and listening purposes. YouTube Channels for learning teach basic lessons of Carnatic music along with the fundamental concepts such as Sruti, Swaras, Sthayi and tala etc. But most of them are created by people who have limited knowledge. Some of them are even created and uploaded by amateurs. Hence, out of them, only few are selected based on the eligibility of Guru, method of teaching and quality of the content. But, one should also have a check on certain things such as published date, Subscription, Views, likes, dislikes, Downloads, official web source, Time Duration, Language and response through comments etc.

Examples of CYC useful for learning purposes:

- Octaves Online
- Temples Guide
- Aditya Music

- Swara Shruti
- Swara Music Academy
- Shivkumar Kalyanaraman
- Prof. Mysore Nagamani Srinath's Online Gurukula
- E-CarnaticMusic
- Swaralaya – Music Beyond Boundaries

Especially, during Corona period, the concert platform which was usually offline earlier has become Online. Several Sabhas have conducted the concerts which were live streamed on certain official web sources, YouTube channels and various other Social media platforms like Facebook and Zoom etc. Few examples of the YouTube channels which presented the Online concerts are: Mulund Fine Arts Society, BizGoa, Nadham Carnatic Classical, Parivadini Music, Lasya – The Culture Hub and many more.

### **CARNATIC MUSIC APPLICATIONS (APPS)**

Not only Web sources, Mobile Apps are also the most often widely used software Applications these days. These Apps can be broadly categorized as Subject Apps and Social Apps.

### **SUBJECT APPS/ CARNATIC APPS**

In regard to Carnatic music, there are numerous subject Apps on different platforms that deal with varied topics, especially for Sruti, laya and compositions. Some of the Apps provide content in general and few of them are exclusive. There are also certain apps that are exclusive to a Vaggeyakara/Composer and Artist. Most of these Apps can be installed for free and few of them are prepaid.

Few examples of Subject Apps:

- Sruti Apps - Tanpura Droid, Sruti Carnatic Tuner, Dhvani Tanpura
- Laya Apps - Pro metronome, Tuner and Metronome
- Lyrics of Compositions - Sahityamala, Lyrik Karnatik
- Audios of Compositions - Saregama Classical, Carnatic Tutor, HCL Music Best of Carnatic
- Beginner Apps (for Carnatic beginners) - Shruthi Laya: Carnatic Aide, Sadhakam: Swara Gnanam Trainer, Carnatic Singer, Carnatic Music, Carnatic Companion, Octavesonline etc.
- Composer Apps - Ramadasu Keerthanalu Telugu, Annamayya Keerthanalu Telugu
- Artist Apps - 100 Top Nithyasree Mahadevan S, 150 Bombay S. Jayashri Songs

## II. SOCIAL APPS

Social Apps are intended for those who cannot attend college regularly but are interested to learn a subject from a Guru through virtual mode. One can utilize the Apps like Skype, WhatsApp, Zoom, Google Duo etc., that provide the audio, video facility along with text message, photo sharing options which are highly recommended for communication purposes. These Apps basically require strong data connection to use them effectively.

## CONCLUSION

This research article mainly deals with the evolutionary process of Carnatic Music education system from its early times to the present. The technology has been upgraded time to time to make the knowledge available for every generation so that it can be utilized to the utmost extent with ease and convenience. The Carnatic music education through Gurukula System was highly prevalent at its initial stages. But, due to certain reasons like technological advancements and changes in the socioeconomic conditions (downfall of Zamindari system followed by the raise of democracy), it got replaced by the Institutionalized system that has been well accepted and followed still now.

But, in general, for many, Music is only a passion not a profession because of its low career opportunities. In such situations, many music aspirants who could not attend institutions either through regular or distance mode still have the opportunity to learn through Online/Virtual mode. They are certain ways to learn through Online such as Online Music Institutions, Carnatic Web sources, Carnatic Applications etc. As we are living in the '*Web World*' now where the internet is highly accessible to almost everyone, if a person has a passion to learn the subject, Online media provides an excellent opportunity to learn from any Specific Guru at their own convenience.

Though there are several Carnatic Music Web sources that serve various kinds of purposes like Education, Research, Marketing and Current Affairs etc., this research article mainly focuses on those Web sources that are primarily useful for education purposes. These Carnatic Web sources help a lot in learning and understanding many practical and theoretical aspects which the student might not be aware of before. Sometimes, the same content might be present on different web sources.

So, there arises a need to consider certain criteria such as author credibility, Coverage of content and currency etc., to avoid the confusion in the process of selection and utilization of a suitable web source. Finally, the research paper concludes that the process of evolution of Carnatic Music Education from Gurukula to Online System has made the impossible possible where one can listen and learn at their own comfort devoid of any physical strain. Though the whole thing is in the finger tips, its proper utilization is needed to attain the utmost benefits.

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