

## AN ANALYSIS OF MUSIC EDUCATION DURING AND POST-COVID PERIOD

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### Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought unprecedented challenges to the field of music education. This research paper examines the multifaceted challenges faced by music educators and students during and post-COVID-19, shedding light on the profound impact on the learning environment, teaching methodologies, and overall musical development. Through a comprehensive review of existing literature, this study explores the limitations imposed by the pandemic, such as limited access to instruments and facilities, the digital divide, and the absence of ensemble experiences. Additionally, it investigates the psychological and emotional implications on students and teachers as well as the diminished motivation and engagement observed in remote learning settings. The paper also highlights the adaptation of music education to online teaching, encompassing the technical and pedagogical hurdles encountered by educators. Furthermore, it addresses the loss of performance opportunities and financial constraints faced by institutions and music programs.

**Keywords:** music education, performing arts, covid, E-resources, challenges, opportunities

The corona epidemic has caused unforeseen and unpredictable changes to our daily lives since the beginning of the year 2020. The media said that half of mankind is currently in lockdown at the beginning of April. The amenities that make it harder to maintain social distance, such as schools, colleges, places of worship, and transportation, are closed. The pandemic's effects and its preventive efforts have changed daily life in numerous ways. On a worldwide level, it has created the impression that something about the way of life that prevailed previously needs to change. Education is an area where there is a clear need for reform.

According to UNESCO (2020), 91% of students worldwide have been impacted by the closing of schools and institutions. This figure is 32 crores in India.<sup>1</sup> The lockdown started in India on 25 March. This disruption in the normal functioning of teaching has affected the lives of students, parents, and teachers in many ways.

### MODERNIZATION OF MUSIC EDUCATION

The use of science and modern technologies in the educational process during the time of lockdown has greatly eased the issues. Online courses have been offered in the sphere of education for a very long time. People who live overseas are studying music in online mode from Indian music instructors. However, it can be claimed that this revolution in music has only occurred recently on such a large scale because music is a prime experimental fine art, whose primary goal is self-cultural discipline. Whether it is the Gharanedar system or the

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<sup>1</sup> Sharma, Kritika. "In India over 32 Crore Students Hit by Covid-19 as Schools and Colleges Are Shut: UNESCO." *The Print*, 16 Apr. 2020

institutional education system, the oral tradition has always been the primary means of delivering music education.

The institutionalized educational system is experiencing this issue for the first time. Online courses in musicology are still popular and are offered through a variety of platforms, including Skype, Google Meet, Zoom, and WebEx. Every institution has done its best to use these mediums to greatly reduce the obstacles faced while keeping in mind their students and teachers, but how can one rely fully on them for experimental purposes? How well-equipped are they for preserving the musical ambiance?

Such inquiries are prevalent. The completion of the institutional teaching course is another reason why it is necessary. Although the online method is often successful for elementary school classes, it is very challenging to master the intricacies of raagdaari through this method. The only way to learn the subtleties is to sit directly in front of the Guru. However, this procedure is also necessary in the modern era.

## **CHALLENGES IN ONLINE TEACHING AND PERFORMING**

Online teaching in music is a challenge in itself, even after that both students and teachers are facing a lot of problems in this system of teaching. When learning online, students don't take learning or inspiration as seriously as they do when they are seated face-to-face. There is also a dearth of the kind of engagement and cooperation that would teach them a lot. The network issue is the primary issue, in addition to everything else. Numerous pupils attend schools and colleges in regions of the nation where the network is still very unreliable. These interruptions cause the stability necessary for music to function properly to be interrupted, which reduces the quality and results in compromises for both the teacher and the student.

In online classes for Indian classical music, using microphones and headphones poses special difficulties. These hurdles include problems with sound quality, latency, technical issues, physical restrictions, and the preservation of this art form's traditional elements.

The complexities and subtleties of the ragas and complex compositions of Indian classical music strongly rely on the precise reproduction of sound. However, the timbre and tonality of the music might be affected by differences in the sound quality communicated through microphones and headphones. Students who are attempting to understand the precise intonation and intricacies of Indian classical music may encounter difficulties as a result.<sup>1</sup> Another issue is latency, which is the time it takes between making a sound and hearing it through the headphones. Maintaining exact rhythmic patterns and performing synchronized improvisation is essential in Indian classical music. The complex rhythmic interaction and the collaborative dynamics between the teacher and the learner might be hampered by even the smallest audio transmission delays.

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Bhupender Malhotra, interview by author, 7th June 2023, Delhi

When employing sound equipment for online instruction in Indian classical music, technical problems frequently occur. Both teachers and students may find it challenging to set up and troubleshoot audio equipment, deal with connectivity issues, ensure platform compatibility, and configure software settings. These technical difficulties may impede the smooth transmission of knowledge and instruction and disrupt the lesson's flow.

Each of the many instruments used in Indian classical music requires a certain method of audio capturing in order to accurately recreate its distinct sounds. Traditional instruments with distinctive acoustics include the sitar, tabla, sarod, and flute. It can be difficult to perfectly reproduce the nuances and dynamics of these instruments using microphones; to do so, microphones must be carefully chosen and positioned.

Another issue is the preservation of Indian classical music's traditional elements online. The teaching and learning of Indian classical music mainly rely on nonverbal communication, physical gestures, and visual cues. It is difficult to communicate the intricacies of expression, improvisation, and affective qualities inherent in this art form in an internet setting when these cues may be limited.

Limited access to instruments is also another challenge in online teaching. Students frequently have access to instruments given by the school or institution in conventional music education. Students may not have the essential equipment at home when learning online. This restricts their capacity to connect fully with the content, practice, and improve their technique. Also, as the lockdown was imposed in the country the workshops of the instrument makers were shut which resulted in difficulty in maintaining the instruments.<sup>1</sup>

The largest challenges that artists reported facing were fewer opportunities, financial worries, and challenges in understanding new ways of working. This is something that has been reported anecdotally too, with artists being expected to transfer to online delivery with minimal training or support. There was also a high percentage of those reporting being overwhelmed with social media and the news.<sup>2</sup> Along with all these problems, this modernization of proper teaching has maintained the continuity of music teaching even in this pandemic and has spread positive energy in this negative environment.

## **THE IMPACT ON STUDENTS, TEACHERS, AND ARTISTS**

### **IMPACT ON STUDENTS**

- Increased stress and anxiety: The abrupt switch to online learning may have resulted in students feeling more stressed and anxious owing to a variety of reasons, including technological issues, a lack of social connection, and getting acclimated to new learning strategies.

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Mritunjay Sharma, interview by author, 10th June 2023

<sup>2</sup> COVID-19 Artist Impact Report for Artists Working in Arts and Health | CHWA

- **Reduced motivation and engagement:** Students may become less motivated and engaged as a result of the difficulties of virtual learning and the lack of in-person interaction. Their excitement for learning may be hampered by teachers' absence and their inability to provide quick feedback.
- **Feelings of loneliness and isolation:** Students who learn music online may feel lonely and isolated since they don't get the same sense of belonging and connection as they do in traditional music courses. Due to a lack of peer support, this may cause feelings of loneliness.
- **Limited performance opportunities:** Many students find inspiration and joy in giving public performances or taking part in groups and band activities. The switch to online instruction may have diminished or eliminated these possibilities, which has an effect on students' sense of achievement and personal development.

There used to be a Sadhyayan program at the University of Delhi's Faculty of Music and Fine Arts that included student performances. This program had to be suspended during covid. Additionally, the Basant Utsav festival and numerous other events were moved to an online format, which left the students feeling extremely socially and musically isolated. These programs began to organize in offline mode in 2023.

### **IMPACT ON TEACHERS**

- **Increased strain and burnout:** Teachers have had to overcome new obstacles as they adapted their music instruction techniques to online platforms. An increase in work has resulted from their need to learn new technology, produce digital products, and oversee distant classrooms. Feelings of tiredness and burnout may result from this.<sup>1</sup>
- **Limited feedback and connection:** Teachers may find it difficult to develop a personal connection with their pupils through online instruction. Relationships between teachers and students may be harmed by the inability to assess students' knowledge and make necessary teaching strategy adjustments in the absence of nonverbal indicators and fast feedback.<sup>2</sup>
- **Professional isolation:** Teachers may have a sense of professional isolation as a result of the lack of casual encounters with peers and the few opportunities for collaboration and professional development.

### **IMPACT ON PERFORMERS**

The COVID-19 lockdown has had a significant psychological impact on individuals across various professions, including Indian classical musicians.

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Bhupender Malhotra, interview

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Mritunjay Sharma, interview

- Loss of livelihood: Live performances, concerts, and teaching are the main sources of income for many Indian classical artists. Due to the lockdown, teaching sessions and concerts had to be cancelled, which resulted in a sudden and severe loss of income. This financial strain may result in despair, anxiety, and a sense of unease about the future.
- Social isolation: Musicians are used to connecting with audiences, working with other musicians, and attending events like music festivals. These social ties were broken up by the lockdown limits and physical separation measures, which produced feelings of boredom, loneliness, and isolation. Social isolation and a lack of engagement can aggravate mental health problems.<sup>1</sup>
- Performance-related stress: Musicians frequently receive a feeling of purpose, fulfilment, and identity from performing on stage, which can lead to performance-related stress. Loss of motivation, self-doubt, and performance anxiety may have occurred as a result of the lockdown's lack of live performances. Musicians might have battled to sustain their artistic momentum and suffered from a deterioration in self-esteem without regular opportunities to display their talent.
- Adaptation of new technologies: The pandemic compelled musicians to investigate virtual venues for instruction and performance, and they were pushed to adapt to new technologies and communication methods. Some musicians might have found this adjustment difficult, especially those who were less tech-savvy or uneasy with internet connections. The tension may have been increased by the learning curve and the need to maintain quality in a virtual environment.
- Future uncertainty: The outbreak and ensuing lockdown caused artists to experience a level of uncertainty never before seen. They were faced with concerns about the future of live performances, the financial viability of their line of work, and the overall health of the music business. They might have felt helpless, anxious, or afraid of the future as a result of this uncertainty, which would have had an effect on their mental health.

In terms of mental health, 44% reported the pandemic moderately affecting their mental health, with 12% reporting it affected them severely. This was reflected in what they would like from the sector - with 46% asking for increased mental health support for freelancers.<sup>2</sup>

## E-RESOURCES AND PLATFORMS

E-source or electronic source is defined as a resource that requires computer access or any electronic device that is helpful in storing data.<sup>3</sup> These sources are now commonly used in education. In today's present situation, many sources are being used in music education, some examples of which are as follows –

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<sup>1</sup> Pandit Baldev Raj Verma, interview by author, 12th June 2023, Delhi

<sup>2</sup> COVID-19 Artist Impact Report for Artists Working in Arts and Health | CHWA

<sup>3</sup> What Is E-Resources | IGI Global

- **Webinar** - Webinars have played an important role in keeping music education active during this time of the pandemic. In the coming days, webinars are being organized by some university and private organizations on various apps like Google Meet, Skype, WebEx, zoom, etc., in which everyone is allowed to participate. During the lockdown, a two-day webinar on "Music Education through Media in the Present Time" was organized by Bhatkhande Sangeet Sansthan Abhimat University, and Kashi Hindu University itself hosted a two-day seminar on "Different Dimensions of Presentation" as well. A 5-day online workshop was also organized by the Vyanjana Society, Allahabad on the topic of Voice training which featured artists like Pandit Harish Tiwari, Dr.Meeta Pandit, and Dr.Shashank Maktedar.<sup>1</sup>

The advantage of webinars is that anyone can participate. Sometimes there is also a chance to ask questions directly to the big artists. Their specialty is that if for some reason you are unable to participate in them, then the links to their recordings are available on Facebook or YouTube.

- **E-library or digital library** – A digital library is a collection of digital resources that exist only in digital form or have been converted to digital in some other way. These resources are typically stored in a wide range of formats and are accessible to users over computer networks.<sup>2</sup> Audio libraries and video libraries also come under this. This process of e-learning has provided a lot of convenience to teachers, researchers, and students. E-learning that this process is very effective for studying not only till the lockdown but also for studies, but there is relatively little material available in this type of resource in the subject of music. Audios and videos of artists' performances are still available. But the scripture material is very less available.
- **Social media** - Talented people say that artists should be heard, a lot comes from listening, and social media has made this task easier. Today we can see or hear any artist at any time through social media. Even in the time of this epidemic, many types of lectures, demonstrations, and digital programs keep happening on these social media. These are not only useful in music education but also provide a platform for artists to reduce economic problems to an extent. Various series of online concerts have been organized during the lockdown by several music societies. Foundations like Sanskar Bharati, and Pracheen Kala Kendra are some of many who organized such online programs.

## CONCLUSION

Music education wasn't taught in the same way or under the same circumstances as it is now. Since "necessity is the mother of invention," as we are now learning in the post-Corona era, this outbreak and its measures have brought about numerous changes and necessities in front

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1 Talk/Workshop – Vyanjana Art and Culture Society

2 डिजिटल लाइब्रेरी क्या हैं? | Computer Hindi Notes

of us, seminars Webinars have taken the place of libraries, e-libraries of music meetings and programs, digital programs of group classes, and online classes.

How well has the modernization of music education and learning gone? One must think. Additionally, now is the ideal time to fully implement this modernization in music because, had it been implemented prior to the shutdown, music instruction would not now appear to be a challenge. In addition to music, there are numerous more subjects. While there is undoubtedly room for improvement in these methods for teaching music, as I have previously stated, "necessity is the mother of invention," and they are far ahead of us in terms of technology and science. They cannot be improved unless we draw attention to their shortcomings when using them. Teaching music in this epidemic seems difficult for some reason because of our technological sluggishness. The challenge may have existed when music was introduced into institutional teaching from the Guru-shishya tradition, but today's institutional teaching methods have proven to be very successful. It can also be said that institutional teaching methods have significantly increased public awareness of music.

Thus, many modernization-related factors should be reevaluated while keeping quality in mind. At the same time, we ought to consider how we may develop alongside a changing world.

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## INTERVIEWS

Pandit Baldev Raj Verma (Indore gharana), Top Grade Artist, AIR and Prasar Bharati  
Dr. Bhupender Malhotra, Associate Professor, Pt. JLN college Faridabad, Haryana  
Dr. Mritunjay Sharma, Assistant Professor, HP University, Shimla