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THE SILENT SCORE: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE MUSIC RESEARCH ECOSYSTEM IN INDIA AND THE WEST

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ABSTRACT

India, a civilization with one of the world's most ancient and sophisticated musical traditions, presents a modern paradox: a vibrant performance culture coexists with a near-invisible music research ecosystem on the global stage. This paper quantifies this disparity by updating and expanding upon a foundational 2018 study on the state of music research in India versus the West (defined as North America and Europe). Using a comparative methodology, we analyze four key pillars of research infrastructure from 2018 to 2025: (1) dedicated research centers, (2) scholarly output in high-impact journals, (3) presence at international conferences, and (4) the commercial and academic publishing ecosystem. Data is drawn from academic databases (Scopus, Web of Science), university and research center websites, conference proceedings (e.g., ISMIR, NIME, ISME), and journal indexing platforms like SCImago. Our findings reveal that while India has shown nascent growth in the technology-focused, Sound and Music Computing domain, driven by computer science departments at premier institutes, it remains critically underdeveloped in comprehensive, interdisciplinary music research. The West continues to dominate in the number of funded research centers, high-impact journal publications, and a robust publishing industry that translates research into pedagogy. We conclude that this gap is not due to a lack of talent, but a systemic failure to institutionalize, fund, and create interdisciplinary pathways for music research. The paper proposes a multi-pronged policy, funding, and institutional strategy to build a sustainable and globally integrated research infrastructure for Indian music.

Keywords: *Music Research, Comparative Analysis, Musicology, Music Education, Research Infrastructure, Higher Education Policy.*

1. Introduction

Research and innovation are the lifeblood of any academic or cultural field. They ensure that a tradition does not merely survive as a static relic but evolves, adapts, and engages with the contemporary world. For a field as complex as music, research spans a vast spectrum from historical musicology and ethnomusicology to cognitive science, acoustics, education, and cutting-edge computational technology, such as Music Information Retrieval (MIR).

India possesses one of the world's most profound and continuous musical legacies, with sophisticated theoretical frameworks dating back millennia. Yet, this rich heritage stands in stark contrast to the nation's contemporary output in formal, global music research. A foundational PhD thesis from 2018, *"A Comparative Study of Music Education in India and the West" (Vasudevan, 2018)*, provided a comprehensive, data-driven analysis of this disparity, concluding that India's music research landscape was "ignored or neglected completely," lagging behind the West in all measurable metrics.

This paper seeks to revisit and update that 2018 analysis. In the years since, has India begun to close this gap? The introduction of India's **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**, with its stated emphasis on "multi-disciplinary" and "holistic" education, and the global explosion of AI in music technology, make this a critical moment for re-evaluation.

This study argues that while nascent pockets of high-tech music research have emerged within India's premier engineering institutes, the overall ecosystem remains fragmented and globally isolated. The structural barriers identified in the earlier analysis—a lack of interdisciplinary centers, insufficient funding, a weak publishing infrastructure, and a chasm between traditional *gurukulas* and modern academia—largely persist.

This paper will first outline the methodology for this comparative analysis. We then investigate three core areas: (1) The Infrastructure for Research: A comparative look at dedicated research centers; (2) The Output of Research: An updated analysis of scholarly publications and conference presence; and (3) The Ecosystem for Dissemination: A review of the state of music magazines and pedagogical publishing.

2. Methodology

This study employs a comparative, mixed-methods approach, analyzing the music research ecosystems of India and "the West" (primarily the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and key European Union countries like Germany and France).

The methodology is an update of that used in the previous 2018 study, focusing on quantitative data from 2018 to 2025 to identify trends.

Our analysis is based on four key metrics:

- **Research Centres:** We conducted web-based searches to identify and profile dedicated music research centers. These were cross-referenced with major international networks (e.g., the **Sound and Music Computing (SMC)** network) and prominent university websites. We compare centers based on their focus (musicology, tech, cognition), scale, and interdisciplinary nature.
- **Journal Publications:** We use the SCImago Journal & Country Rank portal, which draws from the Scopus database, to quantify the number of indexed, peer-reviewed music journals originating from each country. We also analyze the presence of Indian-affiliated authors in the proceedings of top-tier conferences, which serve as primary publication venues in music technology.
- **Conferences:** We analyze the location of major, internationally recognized conferences in music education (e.g., **International Society for Music Education (ISME)**), musicology (e.g., **International Musicological Society (IMS)**), and music technology (e.g., **International Society for Music Information Retrieval (ISMIR)**; **New Interfaces for Musical Expression (NIME)**; **International Computer Music Conference (ICMC)**) to determine India's role as a host and participant.
- **Publishing & Dissemination:** We conduct a qualitative assessment of the commercial and academic ecosystem for music-related publications, including magazines and publishers of pedagogical "method books," comparing them to Western counterparts.

3. Findings and Analysis: The “Where” of Research – Centres and Institutions

Research is a vital activity for any field to grow and flourish. Lack of research limits the opportunity to develop or update the art form. For music, research needs a systematic and rigorous study, perhaps even more than performance requires.

Our initial 2018 study found that in a global list of 80 music research centers, India had zero, and in the specialized field of Sound and Music Computing (SMC), India had only one. Our updated analysis shows minor, but telling, changes.

3.1. Centers of Research and Teaching: A Global Comparison

A review of the global list of music centers of research and teaching showed a profound disparity. Our initial analysis revealed that the United States, with 4.27% of the world population, accounted for 23 centers, and the United Kingdom, with 0.87%, accounted for 14. It is highly disappointing that India, despite having 17.74% of the world population, was not listed as having a single comprehensive center.

Table 1: Centers of Research and Teaching among USA, UK, Europe and India (2018 Data)

Countries	Percentage of Population in World	Centers of Research and Teaching
USA	4.27%	23
UK	0.87%	14
Europe	3.96%	25
India	17.74%	0

A continental summary from the initial findings also illustrated this imbalance: Asia possessed only 2 centers compared to 33 in North America and 39 in Europe.

3.2. Specialized Sound and Music Computing (SMC) Centers

In the specialized, technology-focused domain, the gap remains large but shows a singular point of presence for India. The **Sound and Music Computing (SMC) network** identified 112 research centers globally, with Europe hosting the majority (92).

Table 2: SMC Network Sound & Music Computing Research Centers across Continents

(Data from SMC network website)

Continent	Sound and Music Computing Research Centers
Europe	92
North America	14
Asia	3
South America	3
Total	112

When comparing SMC Centers by country population percentage, the disparity remains stark:

Table 3: Sound & Music Computing Research Centers across USA, UK, Europe and India

(Data from SMC network website)

Country	Percentage of Population in World	Sound and Music Computing Research Centers
USA	4.27%	11
UK	0.87%	20
Europe	5.11%	72
India	17.73%	1

3.3. The Indian Landscape: Nascent, Fragmented, and Siloed

While India has not made a significant global impact, a few centers and groups are contributing towards music technology research. The most visible music research in India is now emerging from the Computer Science and Engineering (CSE) departments of the **Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs)** and **International Institutes of Information Technology (IIITs)**, focusing on computational analysis.

Table 4: Research Centers in India (2025)

S.No	Research Centers (Music Tech)	Institution	Country
1	CompMusic Research Group	IIT Madras	India
2	DONlab, Dept. of Computer Science and Engineering	IIT Madras	India
3	Digital Audio Processing Lab	IIT Bombay	India

The most impactful contribution arose from the **CompMusic Project (Computational Musicology)**, an **European Research Council (ERC)**-funded project (2011–2016) coordinated by **Universitat Pompeu Fabra (UPF)** in Spain. This project partnered extensively with **IIT Madras** and **IIT Bombay**, acting as a major catalyst for computational musicology for Indian music.

The problem, however, is one of fragmentation and siloed research. Traditional musicology and music education research remain locked within "Music Departments." India still lacks a large-scale, dedicated, interdisciplinary institution for music that successfully integrates engineering and humanities, such as the **Center for Computer Research in Music and Acoustics (CCRMA)** at Stanford University.

Table 5: Comparative Analysis of Music Research Centre Models (2025)

Feature	Western Model (e.g., CCRMA, IRCAM)	Indian Model (e.g., IITs, IIIT-H Labs)
Primary Focus	Interdisciplinary (Music, Tech, Cognition)	Tech-centric (SMC, MIR, Signal Processing)
Institutional Home	Often a standalone center or joint-dept.	Typically a small lab within a CSE dept.
Faculty	Core faculty from Music, CS, Psychology.	Primarily CS/Engineering faculty.
Output	PhDs in Music Tech, compositions, patents.	CS conference papers (e.g., ISMIR, NIME).

4. Findings and Analysis: The "What" of Research – Scholarly Output

The output of a research ecosystem is measured by its publications in high-impact journals and presentations at major conferences.

4.1. Conference Presence

To gain global attention, it is essential to present findings in international educational and research forums. Our analysis of conference statistics confirmed that Europe and North America dominate both the hosting and the output of music research events.

Table 6: Music Tech Conferences Across the Continents (Data from SMC network)

Continent	Percentage of Conferences	Tech. Conferences (Count)
Europe	61%	45
North America	25%	18
Asia	14%	10
Total	100%	73

A comparison by country demonstrates the severe lack of hosting and participation opportunities in India:

Table 7: Tech. Conferences in Music Among USA, UK, Europe & India (Data from SMC network)

Countries	Percentage of Population in World	Tech. Conferences
Europe	7.05%	34
UK	0.87%	11
USA	4.28%	3
India	17.74%	1

Global Music Educational Events & Conferences: Out of 258 overall conferences reviewed, North America and Europe accounted for 225. Asia conducted around 23 conferences, with India hosting only one. This imbalance is evident in the data:

Table 8: Global Music Educational Events & Conferences Across USA, UK, Europe and India

Countries	Percentage of Population in World	Global Music Educational Events & Conferences
Europe	5.45%	125
USA	4.28%	70
UK	0.87%	17
India	17.74%	1

While an analysis of proceedings from 2018–2024 shows a small but consistent presence of papers from Indian institutions at the **International Society for Music Information Retrieval (ISMIR)** and **New Interfaces for Musical Expression (NIME)**, the volume is minimal compared to global leaders.

4.2. High-Impact Journal Publishing

Our updated SCImago Journal & Country Rank analysis for the "Music" category (2023–2024) confirms the original finding: India does not have a single internationally recognized, high-impact music journal.

Table 9: Journals, Conferences & Proceedings Across USA, UK, Europe and India (Ref. SCImago)

Countries	Percentage of Population in World	Scopus-Indexed Journals (Music)
USA	4.28%	46
UK	0.87%	36
Europe	4.77%	36
India	17.74%	0

The absence of high-impact journals is a major reason for India's "silent score." Many Indian scholars instead publish in local, non-indexed journals, including those on the **University Grants Commission Consortium for Academic and Research Ethics (UGC-CARE)** list. While UGC-CARE aims to regulate quality, the lack of indexing in Scopus or Web of Science renders much of this content invisible to the international research community.

An analysis of top music publications indexed by Google Scholar further highlighted the absence of pure music research from India:

Table 10: Publications/Journals Across the World Comparison of USA, UK, Europe and India

Countries	Percentage of Population in World	Journals (Top 20)
USA	4.28%	8
UK	0.87%	5
Europe	0.96%	3
India	17.74%	0

Among 351 music publications reviewed in the initial study, only seven were from India. All seven were related to music technology (e.g., the CompMusic project at **ICMC** and **ISMIR**), and none represented pure music education, musicology, or psychology research.

5. Findings and Analysis: The “How” of Research – The Dissemination Ecosystem

Research is only useful if it is disseminated. This requires a robust ecosystem of magazines, trade publications, and pedagogical publishers, which is lacking in India.

5.1. Magazines and Public Scholarship

Magazines, as print or digital media, play an important role in propagating information about the art. In the West, a massive, commercially viable music magazine industry exists, evidenced by the high circulation counts: *Rolling Stone* (1,467,971), *Music Alive* (500,000), etc.

Table 11: USA Music Magazines (Ref. Cision media research, 2017)

S.No	Magazine	Circulation Count
1	Rolling Stone	1,467,971
2	Music Alive	500,000
3	Alternative Press	297,222
4	M Music & Musicians	160,000
5	Revolver	150,000

No magazine from India secured a place among the top music magazines globally. In India, the Sangeet Natak Akademi (SNA) provides financial assistance to periodicals, but the output is small. Out of 19 periodicals funded by SNA in the 2017–2018 period, only two were dedicated purely to music, with *Sruti* being the most internationally visible.

5.2. Pedagogical Publishing (Method Books)

In the West, a massive industry translates academic pedagogy into commercially accessible "method books" (e.g., Hal Leonard, Oxford University Press Music). This industry underpins music education, providing standardized, high-quality material.

In India, learning remains an oral, *guru-shishya* tradition, which is valuable but not scalable. The publishing ecosystem for music books is in a very bad state with limited resources. Except for Carnatic Music Book House, no other center in India has a complete bookstore for Indian classical music, and the quality of printing of the few available books is often not up to the mark. No Indian music publisher could secure a place among the list of 100 Top Music Publishers World Wide. This failure to create a high-quality, standardized pedagogical publishing industry prevents the systematic application of research findings to educational practice.

6. Discussion: Why the Gap Persists

Our analysis confirms the original study's findings and emphasizes four key structural failures:

- **The Two-Culture Chasm:** The separation between the "tech" focus of the **IITs** (which treats music as a data problem) and the cultural knowledge of the humanities departments prevents the development of true interdisciplinary research.
- **The "Local" vs. "Global" Trap:** The reliance on non-indexed local journals, even those on the **UGC-CARE** list, isolates Indian scholars, creating an invisible body of knowledge that cannot be cited or recognized globally.
- **Lack of a "Performer-Scholar" Pathway:** The academic and performance tracks are almost entirely separate, hindering the development of research that is both scholarly rigorous and practically informed.
- **No Sustainable Funding Model:** The few bright spots, like the **CompMusic Project**, were often fueled by foreign funding, failing to establish a permanent, Indian-funded infrastructure for long-term growth.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

Our analysis confirms that India's music research ecosystem remains critically underdeveloped and globally isolated. While there has been laudable growth in music technology research from within engineering departments, this is insufficient to build a holistic research field. The country lacks the dedicated interdisciplinary centers, the high-impact journals, the international conference presence, and the pedagogical publishing industry that are foundational to a healthy research environment in the West. This is not a failure of talent, but a failure of policy, funding, and institutional imagination.

To bridge this gap and give India's musical heritage the modern research infrastructure it deserves, we propose the following actionable recommendations:

- **Policy & Funding:**

  Create a "National Mission for Music Research & Technology," analogous to other national missions. This should be a joint initiative between the Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Electronics and IT.

  Earmark a dedicated 10-year fund for establishing 3–5 "National Centres for Music Research" (NCMRs), explicitly modeled on international interdisciplinary centers like IRCAM or the **Center for Computer Research in Music and Acoustics (CCRMA)**.

- **Institutional Reform:**

  Mandate Interdisciplinarity: These new NCMRs should be co-located at institutions that have both strong engineering and humanities faculties. It is very important to start breaking down boundaries between departments and start focusing on interdisciplinary research in music.

  Create a "Performer-Scholar" Cadre: Establish prestigious PhD and Post-Doctoral fellowships specifically for professional musicians, encouraging them to engage in research without abandoning their performance careers.

- **Ecosystem Development:**

  Fund Global-Caliber Journals: Provide grants to launch 2–3 new, peer-reviewed, Scopus-indexed music journals from India with an international editorial board.

  Create an "Indian Hal Leonard": Fund a public-private partnership to create, publish, and distribute a national series of high-quality, standardized, multi-lingual pedagogical "method books" for all major Indian instruments and vocal styles, developed in collaboration with both gurus and academic musicologists.

India does not need to choose between its ancient *gurukulas* and modern research. It needs to build the bridges that allow them to inform each other. Until it does, its rich musical score will remain silent to the rest of the scholarly world.

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