

Melodic Pathways to Sustainability: Integrating Music in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals



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Abstract

Music, an essential key of human civilization carries the power to culturally, morally and emotionally enrich the society by promoting a more harmonious world. It has shaped different societies and cultures across the globe from generation after generation. Being a universal language, Music has the power to inspire, motivate, educate, heal and unite a nation or a society. Music is considered as the life-blood of the culture of a society that empowers social harmony. This paper highlights the vital role of integrating music in achieving the culture of sustainability through its multifaceted impact. The blueprint towards a better and more sustainable future, 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) or Global Goals were adopted by United Nation in 2015 which is considered as a universal call for transforming lives. The impact of music on sustainability would help in the development of innate skills, intuitive talent in human being, promotes creativity and intellectual ability, facilitates cultural exchange, enhances emotional intelligence and well-being, encourage social cohesion and community building, and fosters environmental awareness, cross-cultural collaborations, inclusive education and economic growth. A sustainable society empowers a citizen to act sensibly and make informed decision with collective actions which eventually improves the standard of our lives, protects our ecosystem and preserves the natural resources for future generations. The aim of the research is to undergo an analysis and study the importance of integrating music and paving a way to prepare an individual for success in all the aspects of life.

Keywords : Music, Sustainability, Sustainable Development Goals, Culture and Social Harmony

Research Paper

Introduction

Music, being an Intangible Cultural Heritage, encompasses conventional music genres and styles that preserves cultural diversity and supports community engagement fostering creativity in cultural innovation and evolution. As the impact of Music on society is multifaceted and it's exert influence can be perceived in various aspects of human life and civilization, therefore, Education in Music acts as a principal key to pave a way for attaining sustainability.

Music is all around us - whether it's the traditional narrative verses of our grandparents to melodious Bollywood songs to American pop music. Music, a

universal language serves wide range of approaches for embracing sustainability that drives into a positive environmental and social change. The Music Industry acts as a catalyst or a powerful agent as it reaches to millions and millions of people through its musical productions. Incorporating and engulfing themes on sustainability in the songs recorded and released, would create an awareness among their fans which would, ultimately, encourage the society to think, realize and take actions from their end. Artistes, within the music industry, play a significant role in cultivating sustainability and these collective efforts of the society and artistes may open a door for a greener future in music along with our planet - a better place to live in.

Culture & Sustainability

With an eye in the current scenario, a high collapse of the sustained life has been perceived through the lens and, now it is questionable if still sustainability is possible (Engelman 3)? By observing the situation, it is a matter of concern for drastic cultural shifts and a series of developments. Various calls for “cultural revolution” was proclaimed by number of environmentalists across the globe. For sustainability, a Religious Scholar Karen Armstrong explains “Sustainability” as the second “Great Transformation” towards a solicitous way of living (S. J. Wolcott 2) while A Great Environmental Leader David Korten considers the current situation as a “Transition of Exception” that will lead to “advanced humanity” in near future (S. J. Wolcott 2). According to these Great Thinkers, the non-sustainable situation of today’s generation is because of interrelated behaviors and relationships that originates from a specific set of views and opinions worldwide.

Since decades, generations have adopted a false dichotomy that we, human beings and environment have separate divisions which is untrue. We, human beings are nature’s child and nature is throughout within us. Despite this reality, we continue with the belief that culture and biology are two separate pillars and nature is often taken as an “object like natural resources”. The entire “culture” encompasses art and music that comes under the category of nouns. Kagan illustrated how the art i.e., music has been delineated into a separate list of category from sustainability, rather than integrating it for whole life (S. J. Wolcott 2).

Being an important and crucial component of sustainable development, Culture describes our perceptions, understanding and appreciations to one another and, also to natural resources (Naibei 7). Unlike other forms of culture, Music creates a robust connection between our ecological and social atmosphere. It is highly essential to understand the diverse link between nature-culture-music in new areas of study for artists, ecologists, sustainability and social practitioners.

Music as a powerful tool for Sustainability

The Brundtland Report of 1972, i.e., The Internationally acknowledged necessity term “Sustainable Development”, at-first did not included “culture” in its triplet of social, environment and economics. Since then, there has been a sky-scraping discourse regarding the importance of embracing art and music for sustainability.

Indeed, for over past 20 years, the essence of “culture” i.e., Art and Music was rarely a matter of concern. But, with great initiative of UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of suggesting the UN that “culture” should be included and recognized as the fourth parallel important pillar of sustainable development. Therefore, the Millennium Development Goals of the post 2015 include “culture” in its agenda (S. J. Wolcott 6). The UN Economic and Social Council, moreover, suggests that since the inclusion of culture in its Agenda would pave paths for multiple dimensions like increase in artists creative skills, knowledge and rich development in cultural heritage and, also, plays a crucial role in the development of social, economic and environmental concerns; therefore it should be considered as a “mainstream” for overall development (S. J. Wolcott 6).

Recognizing the power of Music in cultivating, and understanding the importance of sustainability, among the billions of people across the globe would help to create a sustainable future. The on-going environmental catastrophe requires collaborations from outstanding musicians, concert promoters, organizers, publishing companies and other music groups. It is believed that when a concept or an idea or thought are shared or expressed in a rhythmic form i.e., in a musical tune, the general public gets connected to it emotionally. Therefore, in today’s context, it is a urge to the upcoming musicians to create music on various significant contemporary aspects related to the environment as it will eventually result in the rise of awareness and consciousness in the minds of the society towards the clear green-environment.

An outstanding gift from the Music fraternity to the environment is the “Earth Song” written by the renowned musician, lyricist, composer and performer Michael Jackson (Hothi 131). Another remarkable project “Music of the Earth” – a four movement contemporary mini symphony, is a collaboration by the Imperial College PhD students and seven other young highly acclaimed composers across the globe whose theme centers on about preserving our beautiful planet (Imperial).

Recent studies and researches have confirmed the significant role that music plays in creating and preserving interpersonal (social) and intrapersonal (self) connectivity. Turino, has explained how “Ethnomusicology” has underlined the significance of music in curving people’s social identities (S. J. Wolcott 4). Therefore, a number of researches are



coming into the scenario regarding the benefits of music on improving internal harmony that includes one's physical, psychological and spiritual well-being.

Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's), are a universal framework that covers a wide range of sustainability concerns. It was adopted by the United Nation (UN) on September 25, 2015, where 17 prominent SDG's were included in the Agenda. It discusses and examines the challenges and offers unique opportunities for global collaborations and transformative changes as a result of which by working together on these SDG's an equitable, sustainable and prosperous future for the entire globe can be created.



Source: <https://www.enel.com/company/stories/articles/2023/06/three-pillars-sustainability>

By Integration of Music-Seven SDG's could be achieved

A node to establish connection between Music and Sustainability Development Goals has been tried through Literature Reviews. Among 17 (seventeen) SDGs, 7 (seven) SDGs could be achieved by its implication:

SDG 1 End poverty in all its forms everywhere

Poverty, being a central issue of Sustainable Development Goals, the United Nations along with other organizations have taken number of projects as well as strategies to solve and achieve the included target. As the subject-matter of this paper, the different forms of arts have been considered as a highly treasured tool to remove poverty. The United Nation Development Program, along with a group of artists and musicians have created a documentary on "Baixada Never Gives Up" which sought to make the 2030 Agenda more approachable for ordinary citizens residing in the outskirts of Global South (Echenique 35).

Another instance is taken under study – A non-profit company, hailing from South Africa, namely the Field

of Band Foundation (FBF) was founded in 1997 whose principal objective was – "To create and provide opportunities of life skills among the younger generation through mode of music making, singing and dancing" (Echenique 35).

Various other organizations are taking collective initiatives by unboxing various musical programs, similarly to FBF. The primary focus of these organizations is to inculcate music and musical education; but also aims to develop better human beings with skillful abilities that can contribute developments and improvements for a better society.

SDG 3 Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines Health as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (Echenique 36). Therefore, Health needs to view as a Global concern and, it is highly influenced and affected by various situations depending upon social, environmental and economic.

Now, the question here arises about how music can be a medicine to solve this major issue. To answer this question, I would like to bring into the table regarding the prominent initiative – Music as Global Resource (MAGR). The International Council for Caring Communities (ICCC), in 2001, organized its first symposium on the importance of music, healthcare, technology and culture where scholars and experts from different fields and sectors, along with the concerned members of United Nations discussed and put their heads together and has been investigated how music might be a medium to improve health issues and make a way for quality life (Echenique 38). As a result of this Music as Global Resource (MAGR) was created as an initiative to support and promote music programs addressing social, economic and health related issues.

In Liberia (country in West Africa), after post-bellum, a pilot project entitled "Sanitation" was conducted which uses different taglines and phrases as a rhyming music promoting health practices majorly related to the importance of use of clean water, sanitation and hygiene (Echenique 39). Another remarkable project in Africa, "Music for Ebola Awareness" and "Singing and Dancing for Health" (Echenique 39). An Indian organization "The Music Therapy Trust" provides music therapy to kids and youth who undergoes major issues like - mental and psychological conditions, difficulty in verbal and



non-verbal communication, depression, anxiety, stress etc. (Echenique 40).

The aforementioned music projects and programs demonstrates how music can facilitate and support SDG 3 when used as a tool for positive message communication. The musical programs does not directly suggests on resolving health related problems but to create awareness in shaping a healthy atmosphere to live in.

SDG 4 Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long opportunities for all

It is widely acknowledged that Education plays a significant role in achieving sustainable development and SDG 4 does straight justice by emphasizing how important high quality education is important for everyone in the society, without any background concern.

Musical Education has been considered as one of the indispensable part of human life. Musical Education, other than paving ways for harmony, tonality, and musical structures also benefit students by developing social - cognitive skills, problem-solving skills and critical-thinking skills. About more than 2000 years ago, the great philosophers - Plato and Aristotle also endorsed the idea that music promotes health and helps people to become a better citizen. The National Education Policy, 2020 incorporates music education which is a great initiative by the Government of India to transform the nation in all aspects.

Therefore, inculcating Music in Education can have a significant impact on a student's development because it not only teaches music but also develops social and moral values.

SDG 8 Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

In the framework of UN's sustainable development model the postulation of development is inextricably linked to economic growth and SGD 8 is a supreme example that outlines ten targets concerning the prime issues of economic growth, employment opportunities and decent work (Echenique 41).

The impact of music industry is the most obvious example of how music can be a powerful tool for economic growth. According to a study, the Government of Georgia received over \$129 million in revenue from

the music industry in 2009 which was directly used to remunerate approximately 19,000 jobs (Echenique 42). Moreover, according to IMI report, with the value of INR 1,068 crores, 0.006% GDP of the nation, the music industry (recorded) in India provided immediate employment to about 1,460 people (THE INDIAN IMI MUSIC INDUSTRY 8).

Several initiatives and programs are integrated not only to produce good musicians but to also encourage and empower students with well-equipped abilities which would help them to connect and support their respective communities and groups in the society. Another example is the "Playing for Change Foundation" (PCF) that focusses on to experience multiple art forms, in which music play an important role in bringing a positive change by engaging youth in the low or backward communities across the world (Echenique 42).

These programs and initiatives related to music should be included and promoted more to solve the greatest challenges of the world.

SDG 11 Sustainable cities and communities – make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

SDG 11 highlights the significant focus on the development of cities and communities. As estimated, more than half of the population resides in the cities for which there are remarkable challenges faced by the urban people.

To support SDG 11, music education programs can promote cultural heritage and embrace social inclusions and equity belonging from different cities and communities (especially from urban areas) (Echenique 43). The musical education encompass marginalized groups or individuals who are physically ill or disabled creating an atmosphere of learning and developing their social and cultural skills (Echenique 43).

The Sheila Woodward's of United States and South-Africa initiated a special project for Juvenile offenders, by incorporating music as one of the significant tool that engulfs a positive effect on aspects like - culture, intellect and social in child's mental health (Echenique 43).

Another significant Spanish initiative, Project Coral Allegro encourages the social inclusion of visually-impaired children by practicing choral singing (Echenique 44). The Coral Allegro's educational program enhance their pupils various skills which



enables them to assimilate in the society with more freedom (Echenique 44).

Several other musical programs, if integrated, then the society belonging from different cities and communities of future generations would see a drastic growth, ultimately gaining their respectable identities.

SDG 13 Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impact

One of the most crucial challenge, our society must look upon is the drastic change of climate. SDG 13 highly put emphasis and lay hold off to the urgent and serious issue of the current scenario that needs immediate response. Among the three primary goals of SDG 13, the 13.3 target highlights the attention towards public awareness and education about major issues on climatic condition. In order to accomplish this goal, it is important to establish educational institutions or facilitate some programs that can create a smooth path in the communication of the intended messages. As an alternative to scientific education, Music could convey important messages through its range and capacity, and can create an emotional bond between the musician, audience and the environment.

Cheng Yusi, a famous researcher believes that music has a beneficial transformational power for the sustainable development, and, he worked on a project in which the lower secondary schools in London, UK were given training on music-SD (topics essentially related to climatic change) through a novel pedagogical approach (Echenique 45). As a result of the outlined project, the level of student's activeness, participation, being enthusiastic, focused, positive transformations got increased (Echenique 45).

Veiga, Nichols and Holuszko had worked on a similar program, where students from mining branch of engineering were taught various lyrical melodious songs related to social and environmental aspects of mining (Echenique 45). As mining industry play a fundamental role in the reduction of natural resources, ultimately affecting the climatic condition, therefore, there calls an immediate need for the individuals who understand and honesty recognize how their work leave impact on the environment.

These programs could be adopted as an example to achieve the SDG 13 and assist in creating an emotional bond with awareness through music between the students and the centered subject.

SDG 16 Peace Justice and strong institutions

The social and economic stability have been affected by the constant violent conflicts across the globe. The difference of opinions between the political leaders, disparities in religions and historical cultural divides have caused acute harm in maintaining the harmony and peace.

SDG 16 stands as a core target in achieving the sustainable development. Arts have been one of the pillar for achievement of this target similarly like the other SDGs.

Music has the potentiality to unite people beyond the divided conflicts in our societies and many organizations have constructively used music to foster and nurture peace in the society. One of the instance is the case of "KOSOVO" where music is used to promote peace (Echenique 47). The drastic cultural divide among the Albanian, Siberian and Roma gypsies have up reared the national and international initiatives meant to conciliate the situation left by the conflict (Echenique 47). By using an ethno musicological approach, a researcher Pettan S. discussed about how the musicians of Rome carried out their duties as peacemakers and the impact was so positive that the three different cultures who were frequently engaged in conflicts unite together and enjoy their music (Echenique 47).

Music Without Border (MwB), another important project that seeks to resolve the conflict between Albanian and Siberian communities by musical collaborations between youngsters whose taglines, lyrics and rhymes pondered into establishing a healthy atmosphere (Echenique 47). The outcome of the project was so globally acknowledged that another 47 projects were adopted in Northern Ireland, Rwanda and Bosnia-Herzegovina (Echenique 47).

Music in India for a sustainable future

Over the past several years, India's musical concerts, jingles, practices have experienced an unprecedented surge in popularity. Majorly, musical concerts have created an atmosphere where like-minded individuals travel from one part of the country to another in order to witness these concerts permitting them to roam freely. However, these events and concerts have missed a sense of consciousness that arises when a group of artists, philosophers, audiences and individuals having similar broad perspectives come together. Precisely, our unadulterated passion for music might create a concern and awareness for the existing environmental situation.

But unfortunately, these events seem to cause more harm than good because of the heaps of rubbish generated and a total disregard for the space that is completely left dirty and wrecked.

India's first ecologically crafted Music Festival – "Echoes of Earth" held at the Embassy Riding School in Bangalore tend to change its narratives that concentrated on three main areas – water, electricity and garbage to reduce waste and their carbon impact (Vohra).

some of the musical initiatives concerning sustainable development goals–

- **Humne Hai Thaana : Sanitation Anthem By Mission Swachhta Aur Paani - Initiative By Harpic, India & News 18 Network**

- This anthem is a part of Mission Swachhta Aur Paani an initiative by Harpic, India and News 18 Network that concerns about the healthy sanitary habits, especially among the youngest generation.
- Composed and Produced by Ricky Kej (a 3-time Grammy Award Winner)
- Video URL : <https://youtu.be/GthkO4pC0uk>

- **The Mission Paani Anthem – an Initiative By Harpic, India & News 18 Network**

- This anthem is an initiative by Harpic, India & News 18 Network to raise awareness about the urgent water crisis the nation is facing.
- Music composed by A.R.Rehman; Lyrics by Prasoon Joshi and Vocals by Antara Nandy.
- Video URL : <https://youtu.be/qk0YRiJr99g>

- **Anthem RED-Voice Against Poverty & Inequality**

- Anthem RED is a Tamil album exclusively dedicated towards eliminating poverty and maintaining equality.
- Music composed by V Gokula Krishna; Lyrics by Karthik Gandhi & Ethiraj (Rap) and Vocals by Keshore Kumar & Munish KMD (Rap)
- Video URL - <https://youtu.be/fp-wUNaE3Ys>

- **CS Banna Hai Shaan Se – an original song dedicated to CS students (in collaboration with CS Cart India-One Top Solution For CS Students)**

- By CS Parshvi Parekh
- Video URL - <https://youtu.be/dULGV9fAaZw>

- **HEATWAVES HEATS – a song on Climate Crisis, Environmental Awareness, Global Warming and Climate Change**

- An attempt to raise awareness on the rapid climatic change and global warming
- Music written, composed, produced and perform by Sawan Dutta.

- Video URL - <https://youtu.be/WBh8eLuICFs>

- **Aar Kobe?**

- In the heart of Kolkata, on 9th August 2024, a tragic incident shook the nation to its core where a young trainee doctor was brutally massacre at RG Kar Medical College. This song is not simply a protest song but a cry and urge for peace and justice.

- Singer, Lyricist, Composer – Arijit Singh

- Video URL - <https://youtu.be/ZnQTfen-yTI>

Findings

1. Creation of good and lyrical thematic music by the musicians and composers.
2. Bolstering community based musical programs related to environmental concerns.
3. Musical collaborations across the globe.
4. High responsibility of the Advertising market, Event promoters and Mass-Media to accelerate the on-going programs among the common public.
5. Encourage for a formally designed curriculum on the academic field regarding the importance of music for a sustainable future.

Conclusion

The integration of Music in the framework of Sustainable Development Goals has the power and potential to improve the holistic development across the globe by strengthening emotional, social and cognitive development. Nevertheless, in spite of all of its advantages, musical programs and music education still faces challenges with regard to funding schemes, lack of resources, fail of strong and biased policies and lack of active community based programs. By implementing suggested solutions to these issues, we can leverage the transformational power of music to create a more sustainable and inclusive society.

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