

## Music education in Bangalore schools

**B.Suvasini**

*Research Scholar, Ph.D student at university of Mysore, Mysore*

**Music** is the finest of all fine arts developed by the genius of man himself. Music has an universal appeal and is able to influence both scholar and a layman, man and animals, old and young too. Music is one of the gifts given by God to mankind. Music is an integral part of India's culture.

Music pedagogy, in basic terms refers to how someone teaches music. Pedagogy involves the study of how we learn, its effects, our goals, what we teach and how we teach it. Indian music is a systematic and methodical subject. It is needless to mention that the method of study of music and method of research work in music convey the same idea. The field of study of music is vast and it requires a spirit of love and care. It is true that practical lessons on music are more valuable than theoretical knowledge, but yet *shastras* are essential to unfold the mystery of *sadhana*.

### Importance of Music

Shakespeare in his drama "Merchant of Venice" says:

The man that hath no music in himself  
Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds,  
Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils;  
The motions of his spirit are dull as night,  
And his affections dark as Erebus,  
Let no such man be trusted".[1]

Music elevates the soul and is the most harmless of all pleasures that man can get. Singing or listening to music develops a person's intelligence, imagination, creativity and also powers of concentration. It is imminent that every citizen should learn music in some form or other.

Sage Yajnavalkya[2] in his Smriti III, 115 says,

"Even though a person may be an expert in the Srutis (Vedas), Smritis, Literature and various Sastras, if he is ignorant of music, he is but an animal standing on two feet."

Music occupies the topmost place among all the arts because of its extraordinary form. It does not need the aid of anything else in this world for its exposition. Music is considered to be the purest of all arts. Music has its own distinct world. Mahatma Gandhi had once said: "Many feuds would come to an end if only all and sundry were to learn music." Peace, stability and wellbeing cannot be disassociated from music.

"Music is our oldest form of expression, older than language or art, it begins with the voice and with our overwhelming need to reach out to others. Music touches our feelings more deeply than most words and makes us respond with our whole-being. As long as the human race survives, music will be essential to us. We need music as much as we need each other" "remarks Yehudi Menuhin[3]

Music has a rich heritage that has come to us from time immemorial. It is a language by itself. It is possible to express subtle thoughts and refined ideas through music. The musician expresses his feelings through music just as a poet expresses his feelings through words. Music has a presence in chanting of all hymns during religious ceremonies whether it is sacred rituals or funeral rites. The existence of music in our day to day life from lullaby to prayers, devotional songs, songs for festivals, patriotic songs etc. shows that music is an inseparable part of life. Today's world of technology is using music on a large scale in many fields of activity for the sake of increased production, greater prosperity and for peace, taking cognizance of the effect of music on plants, human beings and also animals. Today everything is being turned into a commercial venture. We have a social responsibility not to let the arts become a marketable commodity and to preserve, promote, propagate classical arts and enable it to grow further.

Complementing and supplementing each other, art or science, though each has its own boundaries, they move

towards completeness. Music helps us to express our thoughts, ideas and feelings. The development of the creative power in an individual merits his attention. By improving performance skills, one learns to express by giving spontaneous and uninhibited release to one's feelings and ideas—by actually using one's own creative powers.

Music elevates the soul and is the most harmless of all pleasures that man can get. Singing or listening to music develops a person's intelligence, imagination, creativity and also powers of concentration. It is imminent that every citizen should learn music in some form or other. Music is the language of emotions which has the power to correct the imbalances in personality development and to ensure harmonious development of the personality.

### Music Education

Socrates has said: "Education is a kindling of a flame, not the filling of vessel." [4] Education should become the means of discovering the latent talents of an individual, developing them properly, understanding the relationship between individuals as well as between man and nature and make these bonds stronger, developing personality in the full sense of the term; in other words a means of creating a highly developed, civilized and humane society. Only when a man develops all the three dimensions of intelligence, mind and body that he could be called a cultured man.

The education being offered in schools and colleges today helps in the intellectual growth of students but no thought has been given to the development of a healthy, strong and balanced mind. For this to happen, music will have to be included in the educational system. Plato says: "Musical training is a more potent instrument than any other because rhythm and harmony find their way into the inward places of the soul." Whenever the issue of psychological growth is concerned, one will have to definitely take music into consideration. Psychology and music are very closely related. Music is already being played while doing exercises for physical fitness. Music sharpens the sensitivity of the mind and makes the aesthetic ability of a person richer. Poetry and music have always been linked together. Study of physics can never be complete without a study of sound. Thus one should take note of the fact that all the subjects taught in schools or colleges are related to music in one way or the other. Hence it is necessary to introduce music in education by systematically making it a part of the curriculum.

Considering the importance of music in one's life, it is necessary to make it a compulsory part of the curriculum in schools and colleges. The study of music results in the development of intellect as well as the imagination. It is a revelation higher than all science and philosophy. The aim of teaching of music in schools should be to help the children to express freely their feelings, thoughts and ideas through music. Music was part and parcel of man even from the primitive man. As life became more specialized, music lost its central place in education and in a sense life also lost its integrative moorings. Several thinkers both in education and outside are trying to put music in its original position of centrality in life. This calls for a revolutionary approach to music education both in and out of school. In the ancient Greek education which is held to be model even today from the point of view of harmonious development of man, "Gymnastics for the body and music for the soul" summarized the spirit of music education. Music represented all learning for the Greeks. From the concept of integration and comparison of music with other subjects being learnt, we have come to the compartmentalised approach to the curriculum. The school experience of the child is parceled out into neatly packed and rigidly separated units or classes. Even within these compartmentalisation, the so called examination subjects are considered as the proper business of the schools and crafts, arts and music which don't feature as a main subject in the public examination are merely considered less important or sidelined. In India though formally some classes are allotted for music, the number of periods is very small and even to engage these periods, competent teachers are not found in many schools. Very often the music periods are taken up for "covering the portion" in other subjects. It is important that music should be given its due place in the curriculum in Indian schools. This calls for studies in integrated education with music as one of the elements or the key element in this integration.

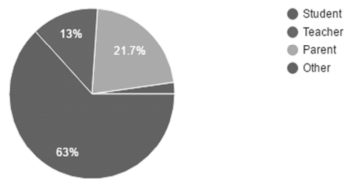
Many creative educators throughout the ages have given music a central place in the curriculum.

According to Platonic tradition, the simple ratios of the musical consonances are not only elements of aesthetic beauty, but also scientific laws that assure the stability and order of the universe. The Pythagorean school also closely connects music and mathematics.

### Music Education at Schools in Bangalore

As a part of my research work in presenting this paper I had conducted a survey and got replies from students belonging to different age groups studying in different schools at Bangalore and also from some parents. The following exhibits display the results of my survey.

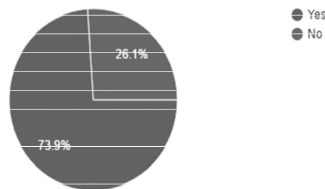
#### Exhibit A : Profession



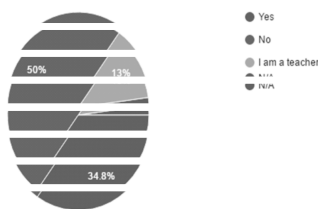
#### Exhibit B : Class in which studying



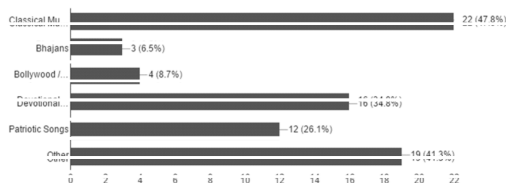
#### Exhibit C : whether school offers music class or not



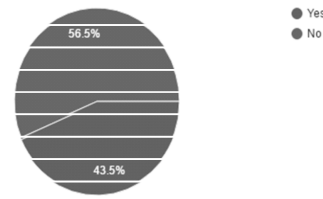
#### Exhibit D : Attending music class



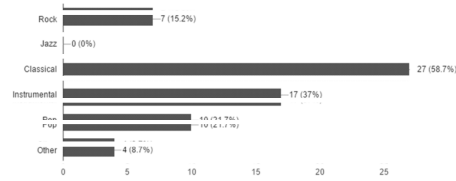
#### Exhibit E : Type of music in the class



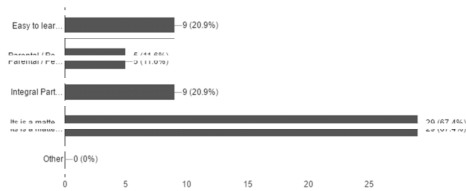
#### Exhibit F : Music learnt outside school



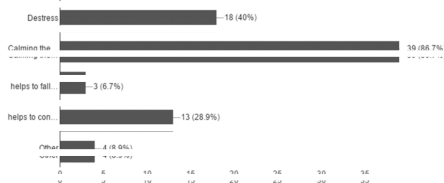
#### Exhibit G : Music preference



#### Exhibit H : Reason for Music preference



#### Exhibit I : Benefit of music



#### Inference

From the above survey it could be seen that as many as 73.9% of the schools in which the children who undertook the survey are having music classes. But since only 50% of the children are attending the classes, it shows that though music classes are there it is not taken and seriously and many do not attend. Or they attend other classes during that time. Classical music has been selected by the children as the most preferred one. Also as far as benefits of learning or listening music is concerned 86.7% of the children have selected that music helps in calming the mind.

Apart from the above survey I had also spoken to many children studying in different government schools who confirmed that music is regularly taught to them but it is

predominantly in the form of devotional or patriotic songs taught in Kannada. They are not exposed to any systematic classes in Classical music.

My interaction with some teachers in different schools like National public school, Vidyaniketan schools, Delhi public school etc. helped me in getting the information that in CBSE /ICSE schools there is option to even select music as an elective subject. But only very few students select music as elective. Music classes are conducted in these schools and even tests are conducted as being done in other subjects. But if not selected as an elective these marks are not taken seriously for ranks or grades.

However in many schools it is understood that they do not have much time to allocate for music classes since the classes for children are already fully scheduled for the other regular subjects. In such schools, children are taught some group songs to be rendered whenever there is a function at school. It is not taught on a regular basis.

My interaction with some musicians showed that many children join with them to learn music purely due to parental or peer pressure. However under each musician hardly one or two students take up music seriously, practice and develop. Most of them learn it as a pastime when they are in smaller classes and quit learning music once they reach high school.

The Subramaniam Academy of Performing arts (Sapa) founded by one of the leading violinists of India, Dr.L.Subramaniam does yeomen service in the promotion of music in Bangalore. They have a project called Music in schools through which they have tied up with a few schools in Bangalore, created their own syllabus, methodology of teaching, conduct classes at regular intervals in the schools adopted by them and even conduct examinations for the children and offer certificates. It also gives children a competitive spirit and peer pressure in learning music.

### Conclusion

Music education can be viewed with different perspective as to whether music education in the regular schools or in exclusive music or arts school. When we talk about music in schools, the immediate question which comes to our mind is religion and language. In regular schools, since the students will be from different religion and background a lot of thought has to be done as to what type of music

should be taught. Especially in Karnatak music the sahitya is predominantly based on Hindu Gods. Hence it can be taught only in some schools where predominantly students are Hindus. The scope of teaching music in general at regular schools is the pivotal area of our study. Again the method or quantum of teaching depends on how the student takes it, whether as a hobby or as a profession or they have come just to gain musical knowledge. However whatever may be the need of the students, learning classical music requires lot of energy and effort. Regular practice is must for anyone to learn music whether it is vocal or instrumental. Learning or even listening to music not only adds value to the character or behaviour of an individual, it also changes their perspective about things, improves their health, breath control, calms their mind, makes their life very systematic, to sum up, a total development in a person.

Learning music in schools helps children to have a strong memory since the musical phrases have to be remembered to perform. It also boosts their self confidence. Children learning music learn team work since many times when they give programs together they will have to follow the practice schedules together and perform together well for the success of the program. Their interactive skill also develops by this way.

When music is taught to children together with their studies in the schools itself then it will surely improve their concentration level, soothe their mind and serve as an important tool for them to reduce stress too.

### Suggestions / steps to improve music education in schools:

1. Music should also be made a subject of curriculum and given equal importance like science or mathematics considering its value in building the personality of the children.
2. By introducing innovative techniques teaching music and music as a subject should be made more interesting to the children.
3. Both practical and theoretical aspects of music should be taught to the children.
4. By teaching the history of music, it's importance should be explained to the children.
5. Music should be given importance and recognized as a valuable profession. Without an assurance on

minimum financial returns, music will not be taken seriously and considered as a valid profession. Hence the government itself should take steps to recognize musicians and also fix minimum pay for music teachers in schools.

6. Well qualified/trained teachers should be appointed in schools with equal pay in comparison to other subject teachers which will ensure commitment in the music teacher.
7. The syllabus for the classes could be made to start from easy bhajans and slowly upgraded every year with the nuances of music to ensure that when the child reaches the final year atleast a good amount of knowledge is gained by them and a few of them would consider taking it up as a profession.
8. Apart from learning, since listening of music is very important, soft music could be played in the morning hours while children enter the school, whenever there is a break, or lab activities or during physical exercise time.
9. Regular workshops, seminars, lectures on different aspects of music could be conducted once or twice in a month to create awareness in the children about the subject and importance of music. Even parents could be invited for such sessions. If there is paucity of time, it could be held on weekends or vacations too.
10. Children should be sent to participate at competitions held at different schools/organizations to encourage them and bring out their talents which will boost their morale further.
11. Depending on the composition of children in the school and taking note of their interest many types of music and also vocal and instrumental should be taught.

Even in the training of specialized musicians the old gurukula model is breaking down and formalized music institutions are taking their place. It is necessary to examine whether our own specialized music institutions can recapture the best tradition of the past and adapt the best practices of the modern music institutions.

#### **Footnotes :**

1. Shakespeare, William, Merchant of Venice, Act 5 Scene 1, Page 5
2. Sambamurthy, P., South Indian Music, Book-I, The Indian Music Publishing House, p. 4
3. Menuhin, Yehudi and Curtis W. Davis, Quiver of life from Music of Man authored published in 1979, London:Macdonald General Books
4. Search quates.com accessed on 1.6.17

