
Some Studies on Sitar-making Industry in Southern Maharashtra

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ABSTRACT: *Around 50 km from the bustling city of Kolhapur, sits the small town of Miraj with crowded by-lanes, where one can relive age-old stories of a traditional craft that has its roots in this previous royal city. This musical city is having strong historical background. The music is flourished through these artisans nearly from 250 years. The craftsmanship is something of a gharana in itself with successive generations of families engaged in creating beautiful stringed instruments, such as the Sitar, Tanpura and the Swarmandal over centuries. These people are having one ancestor with the widely spread family tree consisting more than 250 families...commonly known with the surname... as 'Sitar-maker'. Their pride, however, seems to be diminishing by the day. These artisans are now struggling to survive. They say, partially in joke, "We are good at two things — making sitars and living from hand to mouth".*

KEYWORDS *Miraj, Sitar-maker, Sitar, Tanpura, Stringed instruments, Music, Musical instruments.*

INTRODUCTION

Music is the greatest creation of God which touches the soul and explores unspoken desire, humanity and peace. There is nothing like music to relieve the soul and uplift. Music is capable of enchanting both the heart of man and God. If we focus on Puranas and Grants, Devi Devatas found their spiritual strengths in the musical sound, like Krishna is tuned with Bansuri, Sarasvati with Veena, Mahadeva with Damaru, etc. Music is the only thing in the world which is capable of breaking boundaries to unite people from different backgrounds, cultures, heritage, caste and creed. It is rightly said that when words and letters fail the best option is music. The music is the best way through which one can express feelings like anger, love, passion and joy. It is a voyage of getting purely spiritual sound and delivering a supernatural delight.

Music is likely to have begun with singing, clapping, or beating hands on different surfaces. At the time of civilization, the oldest musical instrument is believed to be the Divje Babe flute in a cave in Slovenia unearthed in 1995 which has been dated 60000-43000 years old [4]. In 2008, another discovery was made – a bone flute in the Hohle Fels cave near Ulm in Germany, dating back 43,000 years [4]. The five-holed flute has a V-shaped mouthpiece and is made from a vulture wing bone and thus the efforts were done to flourish the music. Music is classified into Indian Classical Music (ICM) and Western Classical Music (WCM). ICM involves enormous amount of mathematical structure without words, it can mentor joy and emotions, feelings, tuning to nervous system even cure heart and brain hemorrhage. It is more closely related with nature than WCM. ICM is rooted spirituality while WCM roots in individual experiences, entertainment, occasions with dance and celebrations etc. The main difference is that ICM is based on Ragas, nodes, Sa Re Ga Ma these seven frequencies, specifying times of days or seasons. Again, ICM is divided into Hindustani Music of North India and Karnataka Music of South India. Hindustani classical music is largely known for its instrumentalists, while Karnataka classical music is renowned for its virtuosic singing practices. Few renowned Hindustani classical instruments are the Sitar^a, Sarod^b, Tambura^c, Shwarmandal^d, Tabla^e, Violin^f, Vina^g, Mridangam^h, etc.

- a. It is plucked stringed instrument derived from Veena, an ancient Indian instrument, having seven strings.
- b. It is a stringed instrument which is known for a deep, introspective sound, in contrast with the texture of the sitar, with sympathetic strings that give it a resonant, reverberant quality.
- c. It is also called as tambur, tanpura, tanpuri. It does not play melody but rather supports and sustains the melody of another instrument or singer by providing a continuous harmonic bourdon or drone.
- d. It produces a large number of notes; it is also known popularly as surmandal.
- e. It is a percussion instrument, consisting a pair of drums used in traditional ,classical music.
- f. It is a smallest and high pitched instrument from string instrument family
- g. It is also spelled as veena, bina consisting multistringed ancient instrument with different designs Saraswativeena, Rudraveena, Mohan veena and others
- h. It is percussion instrument commonly known as Pakhawaj.

All these instruments are developed largely in major parts of India, since Indian people love the music for peace calm of life. Among all of these instruments Sitar one is the most enchanting instrument. How did it ever strike someone to stick a piece of wood on a dried pumpkin, build this bridge and that and twist some strings on it, to make this wonderfully resonant thing and generates swaras of different frequencies called Sa Re Ga Ma. The instruments are also known as Tanpura and Sitar. The reason behind this study is very surprising. These incredible pumpkins are specially grown for instrument making in the arid land of Pandharpur, in the South East of Maharashtra, place is known for Vitthal Temple. The designers and developers of Sitar are commonly known as "Sitar makers". The authors feel proud being the citizens of same city i.e. Miraj District Sangli. The large Muslim communities of Miraj city are Sitar makers but strongly believe that these pumpkin farming is only the blessings of Lord Vitthal in Pandharpur Taluka. The pumpkins in this area are suitable for the purpose. It takes more than nine months to have fully grown and naturally dried pumpkins in that specific sacred land. The voyage of making Sitar starts with the dried pumpkins, wooden piece, and seven strings etc and ends in a beautifully carved instrument. The best thing is the passion and hospitality of Sitar makers. This instrument making procedure starts from ancestors of Muslim community around 1700 centuries and continued by their successors. The authors feel elegant to say that these Sitar is not only vital part of Indian Classical Music but also plays a key role in Western Classical Music

SOCIO-ECONOMIC ANALYSIS:

Throughout the history, the people of India have developed numerous systems for classifying the Musical instruments. The ancient Hindu system divided instruments into four categories: Stretched (strings), covered (drums), hollow (wind), and solid (bells). Under the string instruments, Sitar is the most fascinating instrument. For 30 years the author has been observing and walking through the by-lanes of Miraj city. Here one can relive age-old stories of traditional crafts.

Ustad Abdul Karim Khan Saheb^a, the founder of *Kiranagarana^b* of *Khayal gayaki^c* associated for the emergence of Sitar makers. He was the great Guru of Pandit Bhimsen Joshi, Hirabai Badodekar, Vinayakrao Patwardhan etc.^d He would sit with the forefathers of Sitar makers in the 'dargah' to get tonal quality and resonance that was needed for his music. This traditional art has been followed for successive generations by these Sitar making families. Craftsmen evolve their own making techniques. Miraj Tanpura and Sitar are noted for its unique tonal quality and resonance. The art was flourished under *Mughal Emperor* and *Patwardhan Sarkar^e*. Even Pandit Ravi Shankar^f also admired Miraj for its superior Sitar.

This paper is aimed towards the socio-economic impact of instrument makers i.e. Sitar makers. First there is a need to study "Socio Impact", which relates with not only with the individual Sitar maker and the family of Sitar maker but also it gives immense pleasure to society and larger community. It relates micro (i.e. Sitar maker and his family) and macro (i.e. whole community) levels. The 'socio' factor mainly deals with the standard of living of the seller (i.e. Sitar maker), the buyer (i.e. player) and the listener (i.e. society) as a whole. Almost three generations ago, they were working together under one roof and now divided into pieces. But as

the business slowed down, the families were pitted against each other, and thus this fighting only added to their misery. Thus the Socio Impact is also vital aspect for research work.

Secondly “Economic Impact” is an essential aspect for the study since there are two faces of coin. This aspect includes the cost incurred, pricing policy, per capita income, profit earned, sales, turnover, market structure, employment, financial structure working capital and fixed capital, financing, marketing practices, etc.

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- a. He was an Indian Classical singer and the founder of KiranaGharana.
 - b. Kirana Gharana is one of the most prolific Hindustani Khyal Gharanas, and is concerned foremost with perfect intonation of note (swara) or sur.
 - c. It is one of the singing patterns of Indian Classical Music.
 - d. These are the renowned singers of Kirana Gharana.
 - e. These two were the rulers.
 - f. He is the famous Sitar player.

It tries to pay attention towards the scheme launched by the Maharashtra Government ‘*Instrument cluster*. The state has already stepped up its efforts to support Sitar makers. Approximately one-acre plot has been reserved in the MIDC to develop a cluster of musical instruments manufacturing units.

The upcoming centre will have raw material bank, training institute, instrument workshop, marketing and an e-marketing cell," said Shivaji Daund, IAS and Managing Director of Maharashtra Small-scale Industries Development Corporation on Dec.2016. It seems to be easy however one needs to do with hardship to make this successful.

Further due to unavoidable reasons, their pride is diminishing day by day. These artisans are deprived of various welfare schemes by the Government and are losing their pride as they are on the edge of hand and mouth. The profit-earnings ratio is not satisfactory and also it is not sufficient to uplift their standard of living. Making one Sitar may take a minimum of 25 days and also they are producing as per the demand only. Therefore, young generations are not ready to enter in this business. They do not have enough places to work. Most of them are doing their working small homes without sufficient infrastructure facilities. They even are facing cut throat competition with new electronic musical instruments and online marketing. Also the consumers are demanding foreign instruments, like guitars, in India which is like death knell for these instrument makers. As a unique art, they are not getting prestige status in the society. It is essential to study the whole scenario in an analytical way and find optimum solutions for the wellbeing of the society. It is a part of the study to think about ways and means to their upliftment on socio-economic backgrounds.

SIGNIFICANCE

This is an untouched area of our culture and heritage which needs strong support by the Government through the focus on socio economic study of their backgrounds. With the help of this study, there would be an attempt to enlighten our traditional art, culture which is on the edge of vanishing. Through this study, genuine efforts will take to keep the real facts in front of society and the government which will help to flourish this cottage industry to the small-scale and large scale level with funding support and subsidy schemes. It accounts individual musicians’ earning capacity and their “social graph”. The unity among Sitar maker community factor is vital for the study as this is creating obstacles in forming “instrument cluster” by government. So the true attempt is going to be done to assemble these people under a single umbrella.

This study focuses on basic needs of Sitar makers on their socio-economic reformations. In this context, considering a musical instrument as an agent can be extremely helpful in making a bridge between instrument makers and society.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

To study social, educational, technical and economic background of Sitar makers in MirajCity.

To analyze economic growth of the Sitar makers.

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- To access the difficulties and hardships faced by Sitar makers in promoting their business.
 - To depict challenges and opportunities faced by Sitar makers to manage their business.
 - To study and suggest guidelines for the growth of this cottage industry to Small Scale Industry.
 - To optimize for Socio- economic background.

CONCLUSION:

The study will help in understanding the present socio and economic conditions of these Sitar maker community. The authors propose to workout feasible and workable solution for the said community. It will definitely help in uplifting the condition of these families.

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