

Dichotomy in Music Listening Practice and Taste in Urban & Rural India

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Abstract

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. (5.1.83-88)

It is evident from Shakespeare's sonnet that ever an elevated status was bestowed to music in olden days. Even amidst the fret and fever of industrialisation and urbanisation, music in transformed form and content continues to affect human life. But down the ages, with the technological innovations, the pattern of listening also changed. India is a country known for her dichotomy, diversity and divide. Rich-poor divide and urban-rural divide are very much conspicuous in the country. Definitely a new geography of listening habits and musical taste is being configured here also, yet there is a deep divide in taste and practices in rural and urban India. The present paper makes an effort to know the music listening practice and taste of urban India, where internet penetration is deeper and thus scope of globalised patterns are strong and rural India, where web is scarce and traditional streams of music are still prevalent. Though mobile phone is an all pervasive device that provides multiple facilities to the consumer, the pattern of its use differs in rural areas from that of urban. The study intends to find out music listening pattern, digital tools used for listening, content of music, method of acquiring desired music, money spent (or not spent) for acquiring music and primary objectives for being exposed to music in rural as well as urban India. The study is based on the data collected through observation and survey methods of research by drawing samples of respondents taken from one of the most globalised urban habitat- New Delhi and from one of the most backward areas – Sonbhadra district of Uttar Pradesh state that is adjacent to Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand states. Music consumers objective behind listening is scanned by using 'Uses and Gratification Theory' perspective. The study reveals the tastes and practices of urban users, homogenised with rest of the world and that of rural users, gradually getting homogenised in listening technology still isolated and heterogeneous in content.

Key words: Dichotomy, Divide, Music, Listening habit, Diversity, Sonbhadra, Uttar Pradesh

India is a land of cultural diversity where various ethnic groups dwell in varied geographical and environmental habitat. They are identified with considerably diverse cultural characteristics as food habits, clothing, housing, language, dialect and ways of self actualization. Since long, music and art has remained a vital feature to identify the peculiarity of culture. In post independence era, western development model of urbanization-industrialization-modernization lead to the establishment and expansion of urban centers with relatively higher economic growth potential (Derne, 2005). West oriented economic growth pattern of urban centers, better known as metro cities, resulted into drastic transformation in the cultural pattern of original inhabitants as well as of the people shifted from villages to avail better livelihood opportunities.

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In this period of transition modernity was defined as relinquishing the indigenous culture and adopting the metro culture which certainly had proximity with western world. (Parande, 2012). On the other hand indigenous culture remained conserved in villages as the hinterland of India had little transport, communication and mass media exposure with the rest of the world. Thus, urban culture turned to something tantamount to 'Mass Culture', heralded and critically proclaimed by Max Horkheimer and Theodore Adorno (1947).

Ushering Change

However, a remarkable change in the trait is conspicuously visible in post globalization India. With better transport and communication connectivity, inhabitants of villages are vying to keep pace with the cultural pattern of globalized and homogenized big city centers. Although changes started occurring gradually in 1980s when the then government launched a plan to expand the network and geographical, demographical coverage of Doordarshan, Public Service TV broadcaster of India and the lone player in the field of TV broadcasting during that period, a big push in communication and culture perspective of India was visible in the first decade of 21st century when mobile phones and DTH started penetrating the hinterland (Ghosh 2012: 242-256). At present India has 168 million TV households which includes Cable & Satellite subscribers and users of terrestrial Public Service Broadcasting. (FICCI - KPMG Report, 2015). Likewise while Public Service Broadcaster All India Radio claims to have a reach of more than 99% population, after ongoing Phase –III auctions of FM radio channels, Indian listeners would have more and more options to enjoy Digital radio and FM transmission.

Urban- Rural Divide

Today's music listening trend and practice in India highly depend on availability of mobile device, connectivity and in the next step, internet. Therefore, it will be relevant to appreciate the reach and access of mobile and internet in urban and rural areas of India as the study focuses on urban-rural dichotomy. At present India has second largest number of Internet users in the world with estimated 250 million users. (IAMAI – IMRB Internet in India Report, 2014). This phenomenal growth of the number of internet users may be attributed to rising number of mobile phone subscribers. By the end of year 2014, there were 173 million mobile internet users in India. This figure had grown by 33% as compared to year 2013 and it is projected that by the end of year 2019, India will have 457 million internet enabled mobile phone users (FICCI- KPMG India Media and Entertainment Industry Report, 2014).

Basic and smartphones are widely used in urban and rural India for the purpose of listening music. According to data provided by Telecom Regulatory Authority of India, as on November 30, 2014, there were 937.06 million wireless telephone subscribers in India which constitutes 546.99 million urban and 390.06 million rural subscribers. Yet the teledensity of wireless phones stood 141.75 in urban India while rural India trailed behind with a wide gap with mere 45.13 teledensity. (Data is based on the population projects of Census data published by Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India). TRAI data further reveals that at the end of November 2014, while urban Wireless teledensity declined from 142.44 to 141.75, rural wireless teledensity increased from 44.76 to 45.13. (Telecom Regulatory Authority of India, New Delhi, 7th January, 2015, Press Release no. 04/215). Thus the nation may cherish a hope to plug the gap of urban–rural communication divide in future. According to IMAI and KPMG report, rural India is steadily moving towards a more internet friendly and exploratory mind-set.

As of 2014, the active internet user (AIU) base in rural India was 6.7 per cent of the overall rural population of 905 million and accounted for 61 million users and only 4.4 per cent of the total rural population used a mobile device to access the internet. This figure stood at a meager 0.4 percent in the year 2012, the report said (*Economic Times*, July 20, 2015).

Music of India

Down the ages music listening practice took a sharp turn in India. Classical genres of music were patronized by heads of the states and empires in pre British Era. Learning of music was transferred from generation to generation in 'Gharanas', who developed their own stylistics of oral or instrumental recital. Yet, classical forms remained confined to affluent class or taste elites (Mehta, 2008). On the other hand, 'Folk Music' (Lok Sangeet) was an all pervasive popular form recited and heard by common man. Various ethnic cultural communities of India are identified by their own 'Traditional folk music'. Some folk forms are season, festival and occasion specific also (Malik, 1983). Indian semi classical or light music includes Thumri, Dadra, Ghazal, Chaiti, Kajri, Tappa, Khayal and Qawwali (www.swaraganga.org Chaitanya Thatte).

After the inception of mass media in Indian music milieu, new forms of music became popular yet older ones – classical or folk, survived. From the mid of the 20th century, Indian Film Music started dominating the arena. Along with adoption of western tune, style and instruments, film musicians experimented with innovative fusion and often used old Indian Classical and folk too (Michael Lawrence, 2012). With the change in the technology, listeners also changed their tools of listening music. Modern India, Urban or Rural, highly depends upon basic or smart phone for recreation.

E. Bellman (2009) finds that 'In the furthest reaches of India's rural heartland, the cellphone is bringing something that television, radio and even newspapers couldn't deliver: Instant access to music, information, entertainment, news and even worship'. Kumar, Singh and Parikh (2011) reach over an inference that new media technologies are enhancing the reach of folk music. During their study they observed that pilgrims walking down 200 kms. to participate a local religious festival listen devotional folk songs on their mobile phone while they walk, with earphones attached. In another India based study, Kumar and Parikh (2010) observe the advent of small business opportunities in villages selling recorded music in the form of CDs, DVDs and digital audio, video clips which can be downloaded directly on mobile phone. These shopkeepers procure already recorded content and also attend musical events to record the music to be sold later. The study of Smyth et al. (2010) examines the entertainment motivation of urban migrant laborers for possessing mobile phones. Phone is the only source of entertainment for them as they reside in small makeshift accommodations on construction sites. It gives them the privilege of privacy and small instrument can provide them multiple audio visual entertainment without disturbing other mates. The study of James D. Belcher and Paul Haridakis (2013) employs Uses and Gratification theoretical approach to analyze music listening motives and music genre preferences. The study identifies set of reasons people have for listening to music. Further it identifies and examines the way in which different variables work together to explain music related discussion. Kraus et al. (2014) observe that selection method was related to liking for and emotional response to music, attention paid to the music and perceived consequences of hearing the music. Individual listener characteristics were associated with selection behavior. They indicate that control is an important aspect of one's everyday music experience.

Above mentioned studies focus on sharing, digitization of folk music, interrelation between New Media and Folk Music, use of mobile in agricultural development, music selection behavior and motives, discussions about music. The present paper intends to explore the listening pattern, taste, changing traits in music listening and methods of acquiring music in urban and rural India. The comprehension of these aspects is expected to determine the future, and subsequently the market of music in fast growing economy of India.

Field Sites

The study is empirically located on two field sites, namely, New Delhi and Sonbhadra of Uttar Pradesh.

New Delhi

Delhi will be the fastest growing city in Asia over the next five years with the economy growing at an average annual rate of 8.5% (Bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-05-22). Keeping in view the high growth rate and global tangency, National capital of India, Delhi has been selected as one of the two geographical areas to vividly present the dichotomy. The present per capita income of Delhi stands at Rs 230000 against the national average of Rs 61564. According to NSSO survey report released on June 15, 2015, Average national literacy rate in India is 71% while that of Delhi is 86%. Indian census data (www.census2011.co.in) revealed that the population of Delhi was 1.68 crore. (16.8 Million) with 11320 per square kilometer density and population growth rate of 21.21% from 2001. Due to the availability of better infrastructure, civic amenities business and Industry has been growing fast in and around Delhi, consequently, there is better employment opportunity and greater migration of job seeking youth from all over the nation. According to a discussion paper of UNESCO (2013), "...with over 350 million of Indian youth employment opportunities are insufficient. This poses additional pressure on young people to migrate in search of jobs. The push of poverty in rural area results in overcrowding in cities and towns.....According to NSSO 64th round, 81 percent of migrants originate from rural areas..."

Youth getting settled in Delhi for employment and education or those whose parents shifted and they are born here, are conspicuously visible group in transport and offices as well as educational institutions. Cultural conflict prevailing in them is well explained by S Varalakshmi, a scholar at the sociology department of AU. She terms the social schism is a result of a society suffering from colonial hangover. "It is our tendency to accept anything foreign as better than ours (music, products, language and culture) and that leads to this problem. Post-independence, the language of the upper classes continued to remain English. Even the politically powerful, if they are not polished and not English educated, are usually referred to as leaders from the grassroots" (<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/visakhapatnam>).

Sonebhadra

District Sonebhadra of Uttar Pradesh is surrounded in south by Rewa, Sidhi districts of Madhya Pradesh, Sarguja of Chhattisgarh and Palamu of Jharkhand states. The district itself and surrounding areas are home of over 16 indigenous communities who speak their own dialects. Entire territory of the district is located on the plateau of Vindhya and Kaimoor series of hills and almost 37 % land is covered with dense forest. While the total area of the district is 7388.80 kms and population is 18826132, the population density is mere 270 per square kilometer. Literacy rate of the district is 66.18 percent. The landscape of the district exhibits a contrast of two civilizations – modern and primitive. For centuries the district remained isolated from rest of the world due to uneven terrain, dense forest cover and wild animals but the scene started changing in post independence era when abundant quantity of coal and other minerals were discovered buried below thick forest. Though in some areas, heavy industrialization took place yet it could not bring a change in the living of tribal. While tribal communities independently lead their livelihood from forest products in non industrial area, in industrial areas, they were destabilized and coerced to lead more miserable life in which on the one hand their centuries old source of livelihood was plundered and snatched (forest, water and land) and on the other the benefits of industrialization were taken by outsider migrants who later further exploited and victimized these indigenous people.

The district is also inhabited by farmers who are more aware and are in better touch with rest of the world. Their awareness and connection also depends upon the extent of landownership.

This paper presents informal semi structured interviews and sessions of participantsField observation with audio and/or visual recording, field notes taken by the researcher on the field sites. Questions were asked in Hindi or local dialect, simultaneously recorded and later transcribed into English. Two widely varying field sites have been selected to examine the dichotomy of music listening practice, having a distance of over 750 kilometers- rural area of Sonbhadra, a remote district of Uttar Pradesh state and the national capital- New Delhi. The sites selected for the study and the methods used to carry on research work have been given in detail. These widely different sites were selected to project the diversity prevailing between 'developed' and 'underdeveloped' parts of India. This is also explored in the study that how fast the 'trailing' population of India is striving to adopt technical and content 'modernity' in music listening. In the present study, qualitative method of research was used to achieve objectives of study. As Wimmer and Dominick (2011) have discussed, qualitative method is appropriate to view behavior in natural setting. It also helps achieve the depth of understanding about the phenomenon under the study. In the design, this research is flexible in nature to discover, if any, the facts about the subject that were not under consideration before the inception of the study. Small sample of respondents have been taken in the study as data collected from each is not quantitative yet enormous. Further , it is not being claimed that essentially entire population of geographical locations under study have the same behavior, so to collect the exploratory data, Non probability sampling methods were used.

Since the present study aims at the study of behavior, researcher could only invite respondents to participate in the process of research. There was no qualification or restriction for being sample. All music listeners of selected geographical area were treated as universe. There is only one screener question in the schedule; hence, it was Unqualified Volunteer Sampling.

The study is concerned to understand the patterns of music listening and taste in urban and rural India. In the present study, pattern would be determined by the time spent on music listening by the subject, he/she prefers to listen alone or collectively and the preference of device for listening music. Taste would be examined by knowing the type of music heard by the subject – Classical, Folk, Religious, Indian Film, Western or other. Moreover, research would also explore the preference of subject for lyric, singer, instrument or musical composition. Further, the study would also aim to find out how many similarities/ dissimilarities exist between rural and urban pattern and taste, what are the changing traits of listening in rural and urban India and how much homogeneity/heterogeneity prevails. Next target of the research is the understanding of music market in urban and rural India. The big question is about way of acquiring music and the average money spent by people exclusively for music listening. Accordingly, following Research Questions have been set for the study : How much difference prevails in Music Listening pattern and taste between people of urban and rural India?; What are the methods of acquiring musical content and how much is the expenditure for listening music in urban and rural India?; and How the new technology is being used for listening and acquiring music?

Patterns of Listening

In order to understand the pattern of listening music, the researcher observed and talked to the respondents of Delhi (Urban) and Sonebhadra (rural) about their listening patterns. The first question was about internet access. While all the respondents had an access to internet through their mobile phone or laptop, in Sonebhadra, people did not have an access to internet on their Mobile phone. Average time spent for listening music by Delhi people was half an hour to One and half hours, it was observed that they keep the ear phone of their mobile plugged into their ears while travelling in metro or bus. Thus they use music as their time filler. The time of listening highly

depends on the occupation. While listening time span of students was one to one and two hours, working people could manage lesser duration ranging from half an hour to one hour. Majority of listeners of Delhi used mobile phone and lap top, tablet as their device for listening pre downloaded songs or even FM radio. With multiple private entertainment channels like Radio Mirchi, Red FM, Radio Fever, Big FM, Radio City, and public service broadcasting channels like Fm Gold and FM Rainbow, Delhi has a wider reach and choice of listening music through radio and all the mobile phone sets provide facility to connect radio channels. Yet, listeners preferred enjoying the music downloaded in their phones through internet PCs or mobile music apps. According to the website of Delhi Government, over 2.6 million personal four wheelers are registered in transport department. Automobile manufacturers sell all the vehicle pre installed with music system along with FM Radio receiving facility. Car commuters listen music/radio while driving on the roads of Delhi. MrShankaran, who drives average 60 kilometers everyday to reach his office said, "During peak office hours in the morning and evening the roads of the city remain clogged with traffic. In the slow moving traffic, listening music keeps me stress free." Most of the listeners of Delhi prefer to listen music alone. Occasionally they enjoy music with family or friends while in wedding ceremony or festive celebrations. While travelling in public transport, they keep alienated from the surrounding crowd as ear phone of their mobile phone remains plugged in to their ears.

Rural listeners responded in a very different way. Their listening span was observed to be longer as their occupation did not require mental involvement rather it was physical. They said that whenever they are at leisure and working in the fields for agriculture or mining, they keep listening. The prime occupation of the people of Dadhram and Gopalpur villages of Sonbhadra is allied. The topography of these villages includes farming plains and rocky hill plateau. People residing in the village either work in farms or do the mining in stone quarries. While working in quarries or plough, they put their mobile on listening songs. While at home, they also switch on their traditional radio sets. In hinterlands, people do not have an access to radio through mobiles as all the mobile sets available in the market are compatible for only FM channels and interior rural areas only receive AM stations of All India Radio, public service broadcaster of India which is accessible through traditional radio sets only. Small shops located on link road or market area of the village facilitate the downloading of songs in the mobile sets. Even these shops do not have internet facility, hence, the shopkeepers get all kind of songs as per taste of villagers from district headquarters and then procure it for residents of the village in retail. Rural listening habit was observed to be very divergent from that of urban. Here people mostly don't use earphones, rather, listen on inbuilt speaker of mobile. A scholar of culture of villages, DrRamashankarShukla revealed that while labourers work in group in fields, males play folk music aloud on their mobile to make it heard by their female co workers. Sometimes this practice may also be explained as an effort to woo their female colleagues. Even while working alone in farms or stone quarries, they use inbuilt speaker of mobile instead of ear phone. Most of the households possess radio sets also. Folk and film music broadcast on radio AM channels from time to time is enjoyed by the entire family.

Across rural, urban population, people shifted listening practice from other traditional devices to mobile 4-5 years back when shift in technology was actually introduced in their respective areas. Portability, convenience, tuning ease, quality of voice was attributed to the preference of mobile over other devices. Amritlal of Gopalpur village has been listening music for last 22 years. He stated, "Our village lacks regular electric supply, so cost of batteries consumed by radio is approximately 39 rupees per month. Fine tuning the radio station was also not so easy on traditional radio sets. In music cassette players, the sound of the cassette degenerated after repeated listening. It is quite easy to use a mobile phone for listening songs. The quality of music remains the same until you delete it."

Kumkum Bano of Delhi also found it quite inconvenient to tune in radio stations on old radio sets. "Frequency setting is not so difficult when you listen radio on mobile or when listen downloaded songs", she said.

What Do They Listen

The content of Music enjoyed by people in villages ranges from Indian Film music to a variety of folk music. Upper strata of village society which constitutes land owners and members employed in cities have different taste from that of lower strata which is made of farm labors, Quarry workers and other artisans. Mobile downloads of lower strata contains a mix of old and new popular film songs as well as folk songs sung by popular and local singers. Shop owners selling music manage the digital recordings and provide to the buyers as per their taste. People still like Kishor Kumar, Lata Mangeshkar, Muhammad Rafi, Ash Bhonsle and Mukesh, singers of Indian Film Music who dominated Film Music for over four decades in 20th Century. (Ganesh Anantharaman, Bollywood Melodies : A History of the Hindi Film Song, Penguin Books India, 2008).

It was observed that even people of villages have greater inclination to Hindi film music. Despite deep penetration of film music in the routine taste of people, folk songs. Kajari, Biraha, Lachari, Sohar etc are traditional folk song genres of eastern UP. Some contemporary singers like ManojTiwari, MaliniAwasthi, UrmilaSrivastava, Mantu Mishra, Nirahuaetc are very popular among village community. Villagers of the area under study , as responded by them, selected songs on the basis of music and lyric. They did not express their liking for a particular singer.

Though Hindi Film music song is liked by the listeners of Delhi too, there taste and selection of song is widely diverse from that of village listeners. In the playlist and downloaded songs of younger lot of Delhi, Mika, SunidhiChauhan, Arijit ,ShreyaGhoshal and Darshan are some common names. Hindi songs included in their taste are either contemporary or hardly two decade old. As villagers possess a mix of Hindi film songs and folk songs in their store, listeners of Delhi mostly possess western rock, pop and bands in their mobile. Common among them are Justin Beiber, Zack Knight, Linkin Park, Akon, Metallica and Green Day. Respondents of Delhi select songs on the basis of lyric and singer is also a significant factor for them.

How do they acquire

For music streaming, GAANA, SAAVN, WYNK and HUNGAMA are the apps that allow users listen music free and also offer paid subscription which allows user download the song and listen music offline. (*Gadget 360, gadgets.ndtv.com*). For PC users, songs can be downloaded from numerous sites including *pagalworld.com, song.pk, gaana.com and saavn.com*. These apps and websites are popular among users of Delhi. They also use youtube for streaming and downloading music and song. Exchange of songs among friends, too, is a common practice. For music listening, dependence on internet is very high in Delhi. Yet hardly the listeners of Delhi spend money to acquire songs. Very few users informed they pay subscription amount to mobile app providers. Usually the listeners of Delhi download one song at a time and thus keep adding their collection of songs.

Users of village certainly pay for the music they listen on mobile but they pay the facilitators, not actual providers of music. Middlemen shopkeepers of the village arrange music from city headquarters in bulk and get it to village to be sold in retail. Here transfer of data on mobile is not calculated in MBs or GBs rather it is according to songs of average three minutes duration. Villagers pay around 15 to 20 rupees for 50 songs to the shopkeepers. Even these shopkeepers don't earn their bread solely by selling music. Their main business is electronic device repairing, call recharge , sim card or anything like grocery store.

Conclusion

This study primarily focused on the dichotomy in music listening pattern and taste, use of digital technology, and pattern of acquiring music, prevailing between globalized urban settlement like Delhi and backward rural area, Sonebhadra. A combination of qualitative research methods were used on both sites to find the answer of research questions mentioned earlier in this paper.

Findings of the research reveal that a deep divergence exists between urban and rural population of India regarding their use of technology and music listening practice. Average rural user has relatively much lower income than that of urban counterparts. Even if they acquire a smartphone, they can not exploit its technology due to the lack of internet connectivity. Traditional AM radio is still visible in rural area while it is considered to be an obsolete kind of device in Delhi, unavailable even in market. Notwithstanding, villagers spend more time for listening music and they prefer to enjoy collectively. Adhering to the tradition, villagers still get their self actualization in folk songs and old Hindi film songs while in contrast Delhi listeners appear more inclined for western along with new Hindi film songs. Downloading the song from free websites and apps is a common phenomenon in Delhi while rural people of Sonebhadra still use radio sets and buy songs in bulk from local shopkeepers.

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