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INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ADVANCED RESEARCH (IJAR)

Article DOI: 10.21474/IJAR01/23050
DOI URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21474/IJAR01/23050>



CONFERENCE PAPER

FROM GURU-SHISHYAPARAMPARA TO DIGITAL PEDAGOGY: SOCIO-ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION IN INDIAN MUSIC EDUCATION

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Manuscript Info

Manuscript History

Received: 04 January 2026

Final Accepted: 08 February 2026

Published: March 2026

Key words:-

Guru-ShishyaParampara, Music Education, Digital Pedagogy, Socio-Economic Development, Cultural Economy.

Abstract

Indian music education has historically evolved through the guru shishyaparampara, a personalized and immersive system rooted in tradition, devotion, and experiential learning. While this model ensured artistic depth and lineage based transmission of knowledge, its reach remained limited to select disciples within specific socio-cultural contexts. With the advent of institutional structures in universities and music departments, indian music gradually transformed into a structured academic discipline, making certification, professional recognition, and wider participation possible. In the contemporary digital era, the emergence of online platforms, virtual classrooms and social media has further transformed music pedagogy. Digitalization has democratized access to training, expanded geographical reach, and generated new income avenues for musicians through online teaching, content creation, and global collaborations. This change has significantly contributed to employment generation, skill development and economic monility within the music ecosystem. This paper critically examines this educational shift from traditional to institutional and digital methods, and analyses its socio-economic implications. It explores how formal education, technological integration, and policy support have redefined career concerns regarding commercialization, authenticity, and quality control. By situating music education within the broader discourse of socio-economic development, the study argues that a hybrid pedagogical model integrating tradition with technology holds the potential to sustain cultural heritage while fostering economic prosperity.

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Introduction:-

Indian music has historically been preserved and transmitted through rich pedagogical traditions that emphasize both artistic excellence and cultural continuity. For centuries, the Guru – shishyaparampara remained the primary mode of music education in India,

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where knowledge was imparted orally through close interaction between the teacher and the disciple. This system was not merely a teaching method, but a holistic educational framework that incorporated discipline, dedication, and long-term guidance. Generations of musicians were trained through this personalized approach, ensuring the preservation and continuity of various musical styles, gharanas, and performance methods within the Indian classical music tradition (Newman, 1990). However, with the socio-cultural transformations of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Indian music education gradually began to shift from exclusive traditional settings to more structured institutional frameworks. Reformers such as Pandit Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande and Pandit Vishnu Digambar Paluskar played a crucial role in systematizing music education by introducing standardized curricula, notation systems and music institutions. His efforts laid the foundation for the integration of music into universities and formal education systems across India.

This transformation enabled music education to reach a wider segment of society and contributed to the professionalization of music as a viable academic and career oriented field (Ranade, 2006). In recent decades, rapid technological advancements and the expansion of digital communication have further transformed the landscape of music education. The rise of online platforms, virtual classrooms, and social media has created new possibilities for teaching and learning music across geographical boundaries. Digital technologies have enabled musicians and teachers to reach a global audience, offer online training programs, and generate income through virtual instruction and content creation. As a result, music education today operates within a dynamic ecosystem that combines traditional mentorship, institutional training, and digital learning environments (Manuel, 1993). This transformation has significant socio-economic implications.

The institutionalization and digitalization of music education have expanded opportunities for employment, entrepreneurship, and cultural exchange within the music industry. Musicians could now engage in diverse professional roles, such as performers, educators, researchers, digital content creators, and cultural entrepreneurs. At the same time, these changes raise significant concerns regarding the preservation of traditional teaching values, quality control in online education, and the commercialization of artistic practices. Therefore, this paper aims to examine the transition from the guru shishyaparampara to contemporary digital pedagogy in Indian music education, with particular emphasis on its economic dimensions. By analysing the historical evolution of music pedagogy and the impact of modern technological innovations, the study seeks to understand how music education contributes to cultural sustainability as well as economic development in contemporary Indian society.

Transformation in Music Pedagogy:-

The pedagogy of Indian music has undergone a significant transformation from traditional models of transmission to institutional and digital frameworks. Traditionally, Music education in India was imparted through the Guru – shishyaparampara, where knowledge was transmitted orally from teacher to disciple through close personal interaction and long – term training. This system emphasized discipline, imitation, and continuous practice, allowing students to internalize musical aesthetics and stylistic nuances of specific gharanas. The personalized nature of this pedagogical model ensured the preservation of musical traditions across generations (Wade). In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Indian music education gradually began to take on an institutional form. Reforms such as Pandit Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande and Pandit Vishnu Digambar Paluskar played a key role in organizing music education, introducing notation systems, structured curricula, and establishing music institutions. His efforts led to the establishment of music schools and university departments, making music education more accessible and academically recognized (Mukherjee). In recent years, technological advancements have further transformed music pedagogy through digital platforms and online learning environment. Virtual classes, instructional videos, and digital archives have enabled musicians and students to connect globally, expanding the reach of music education beyond geographical limitations. As a result, contemporary music pedagogy now reflects a hybrid model that combines traditional mentorship, institutional training, and digital learning practices.

Socio-Economic Dimensions of Music Education:-

Music education in India has gradually evolved from a purely cultural practice into an important component of the creative economy. With the institutionalization of music education in universities, academies and training institutes, music has become recognized as a professional field that offers diverse career opportunities. Students trained in music can pursue careers as performers, teachers, researchers, composer, and music producers. The presence of music departments in universities and specialized institutions has contributed to the professionalization of music education and has created structured employment opportunities in the cultural sector (Throsby 2001). In recent decades, the growth of digital media and online learning platforms has further broadened the socio-economic scope of music

education. Today, musicians can earn income through online teaching, digital performance, music production, and content creation on platforms like YouTube and other social media networks. These developments have enabled musicians to reach wider audiences and establish independent career beyond traditional performance circuits (Schofield 2012). Moreover, music education also contributes to the broader cultural economy by supporting industries such as entertainment, tourism, and media. Music festivals, concerts, and cultural events create economic opportunities for artists, organizers, and local communities. Thus, the expansion of music education not only preserves artistic traditions but also plays a significant role in socio-economic development by generating employment and promoting cultural entrepreneurship (Throsby 2001).

Challenges in the Digital Era:-

While digital technologies have expanded the scope of music education, they have also introduced several challenges for the traditional pedagogical framework of Indian music. One of the major concerns is the decline of the intense learning environment that was central to the guru – shishya tradition. In online learning systems, personal interaction and close guidance between teacher and disciple are often limited, which can compromise the deep musical understanding and aesthetic sense development through long-term training. Second major issue is quality control in digital music education. The availability of numerous online tutorials and learning platforms has made music education easily accessible; however, it has also created situations where learners may receive fragmented or incomplete knowledge. Unlike institutional or traditional training systems, many digital platforms lack standardized curricula or evaluation mechanism, which can influence the quality of learning. Additionally, the increasing commercialization of music in digital media sometimes leads to a focus on popularity and visibility rather than artistic depth. Social media platforms often prioritize instant content consumption, which can encourage simplistic or entertainment oriented presentations of music rather than rigorous artistic training. Therefore, while digital technology has democratized music education, it is essential to balance accessibility with the preservation of traditional pedagogical values and artistic integrity (Farrell).

Conclusion:-

The evolution of music pedagogy in India reflects a continuous process of adaptation to changing social, educational, and technological contexts. Traditionally, the Guru-ShishyaParampara served as the foundation of music education, emphasizing close mentorship oral transmission and immersive learning. This system played a vital role in preserving the artistic depth and stylistic traditions of Indian music for generations. With the rise of music institutes and university departments in the twentieth century, music education became more structured and accessible, allowing a wider segment of society to pursue music as an academic professional field. In the contemporary era, digital technologies have further expanded the reach of music education by enabling online learning and global connectivity. These developments have created new socio-economic opportunities for musicians, but have also presented challenges related to quality, authenticity and commercialization. Therefore, the future of music education lies in a balanced integration of traditional pedagogy, institutional frameworks, and digital innovation. Such a hybrid model can ensure both the preservation of India's rich musical heritage and the sustainable socio-economic development of musicians and the broader cultural sector.

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