

Meaning Significance and Relevance of Protest Music in Context with Indian Music

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Reference to this paper should be made as follows:

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Artistic Narration 2020,
Vol. XI, No. 1, pp.6-9

https://anubooks.com/?page_id=6863

Abstract

When we speak about music in general terms it is something which is appreciated by everyone. Musical sounds are waves of certain frequencies that are soothing to heart and mind. These melodic and rhythmic waves of various wavelengths are then given words that become more effective, and the impact produced is increased and intensified.

Protest song is a song that is associated with a movement for **social change** and hence part of the broader category of topical songs (or songs connected to current events) it may be **folk, classical or commercial** in genre.

Protest music has become the latest trend in India these days but it has roots in the history. Various musicians and bands throughout India have made an effort to stand against the social issues and raise theirs now with the help of no better medium than music. **Music has been a mirror of the society** from the time immemorial and it plays a vital role in the revolution of Indian history. Music is a **universal language** and has an immortal power to reach directly to the souls of people.

What started as folk songs telling tales of ancestors and the struggles that they went through has now become chants of resilience as people **write to fight** for the thing that matters.

We, as a country have always had our **culture strongly rooted in music**, classical and folk alike. **Cultural activism** was always one of the most effective tools to mobilize people into making a social change. Although it suffices to say that in recent times, activism and culture have been directly compartmentalized. The mainstream artists choose to remain apolitical in their art. But amidst the silence of the ones who have influence and who can influence these are noises that still speak out against what they feel is wrong with the society.

Keywords: Social Revivalism, Protest Song, Protest Music, Universal language

Introduction

The topic of my article is a wide subject of study worldwide, but in India history of Protest music is deep-rooted but doesn't have any reference or specific literature regarding the subject. It was present in every era but was never addressed as a form/genre of music. This topic is a general overview of the subject and my research is purely based on the internet and personal experience and knowledge.

When we speak about music in general, it is something that is appreciated by everyone. Music sounds that are waves of certain frequencies that are soothing to heart and mind. These melodious rhythms of different wavelengths are then put into words and then become more effective and their impact becomes more intensified.

Indian music has always fulfilled the ideology of "**Satyam Shivam Sundaram**" *i.e. Life is experienced as "Sat-Chit-Anand," or "Truth-Consciousness-Bliss."* -to reflect the divinity within, during medieval ages Kabir, Nanak, Chaitanya, Mirabai, Tulsidas, Gyaneshwar, Surdas and Tukaram made it a powerful instrument for the spiritual as well as social revivalism. Mughal Emperors who were great patrons of music, liberalism, and spiritualism mark the chief characteristics of the contemporary music.

A protest song is a song that is associated with the cause to bring about social change and inspire the audience, the general public to become catalysts change and hence forming a broader category of thematic songs (or songs connected to current events) it may be folk, classical or commercial in genre.

Social movements that have an associated body of songs are -

- Abolition Movements
- Women's Suffering
- Labour Movements
- Human Right Movements
- Anti-War Movement
- Counter-Culture movement
- Feminist Movement
- Sexual Revolution
- Gay Rights
- Vegetarianism
- Environmentalism

Benefits of music

Music is an important part of life. It reduces stress and is helpful to reduce pain and provide comfort both physically and mentally. Studies have shown that listening to

music benefits overall well being, helps regulate emotion, and create happiness and relaxation in everyday life. It has been accepted universally that both listening to and creating music has a positive effect on mood and mental health of a person, leading to an increase in the efficiency of our brain processing. Music puts forward a very strong impact on the listeners when it is listened to or created with the purpose of sending out a message or creating an impact on the society. The language of music knows no barriers it is a universal language, it is a cementing force for people of all classes. One such form of music is **Protest Music**, and in contemporary times protest music has been a regular feature of movements in India. The Dalit rights movement especially uses music to further its goal. *Kabir Kala Manch* is one such well-known group of singers who use their music performance to raise awareness and support for their cause. Another such group is the *-The Casteless Collective, a 19-member band combines folk with hip-hop. Known for Bhim Rap, a song on Ambedkar's work*

Significance and Purpose of protest music

These Songs are usually written to be a part of the movement for cultural and political change and to galvanize the movement by drawing people together and inspiring them to take action or in-still in others the feeling to be the cause of change. This type of music has the vibe and energy that drives in oneself the passion and the feeling of being the causes of change. Protest songs are fast and loud that emphasize the cause they are trying to put forth to the general public, when people hear it they are aroused with the sense of responsibility to the society and the people and then their country.

From the time immemorial protest music has been the means of communicating people's feelings be it dissatisfaction, grief, anger, and Indian musicians whether from the medieval ages to the modern times have used music as the tool to portray the people's feelings in general. What started as folk songs telling tales of ancestors and the struggles that they went through has now become a chance of resilience as people unite to fight for the things that matter. Cultural activities were always one of the most effective tools to mobilize people into making a social change although it suffices to say that in recent times activism and culture have been strictly compartmentalized, the mainstream artist chooses to remain apolitical in their purpose to impart a message through music.

scavengers, a Delhi based band, is popular not only for their music but also their political heavy lyrics on the territorial division in Kashmir to censorship under the current government to human rights abuse in Manipur. Thodur Madabusi Krishna, a Carnatic music vocalist is choosing to speak out against caste elitism in Carnatic music. He moved away from the mainstream and launched a Carnatic music festival of his own to speak out against the elitism in Carnatic music industry. Not only individual artists and bands but also the mainstream musicians are using the power of music to influence the masses. The famous

Bollywood songwriter and composer Ram Sampath has composed a number of songs that have portrayed the sad plight of women in India, the song “*MujheKyabechegaRupaiya*” highlights the Dowry culture prevalent in various parts of India, “*O-RiChiraiya*” highlights the Gender Bias women face in the Indian society. With people coming out and raising their voices against various social issues collectively it becomes important for an artist to use their platform to provide a support for the issues. Realising the discontent among people in Indian musicians from various spheres, genres and cultures have used the platform of “*Coke Studio*” to highlight the various revolts, revolutions, and struggles that are being faced in different sectors of the multi-faced Indian society. Protest music and musicians are no longer limited to street plays and local indie musical bands/groups; it is gradually sweeping the wider and more diverse range of musicians.

We are making progress in our music, using it as a weapon to bring about the change we want to see in our world, in the society we live in. Music has become the language of the masses, not only music is healing the minds and hearts of the people, but it is also healing the world and getting it rid of the social evils that are eating up the society.

The time has come when the power of music has been realized by all unanimously and it will continue to change the society for its progress and for the betterment of the people.

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