

CHAPTER XIV

Music and Education in India.

"In future years it is to be hoped...that the study of the national music of the country will occupy, as it should, a foremost place in all Indian Schools."

Captain Day, 'Music and Musical Instruments of Southern India,' p. 7.

The essential error in modern Indian education, as understood by Government, missionaries, and Anglicised Indians, is a refusal or inability to recognize any responsibility to the past. The consequent break in the continuity of the historical tradition is fatal to Indian culture. It is much as if the caretakers of some ancient building, of complex origin, and various ages, hitherto accustomed to make additions and enlargements where and when required, had suddenly abandoned this process of development, in order to pull down the whole building, with the intention of rebuilding it upon a new plan, with the result that most of their energies became occupied with the provision of temporary huts for the inhabitants of the old house thus turned out into the cold. While scarcely any time was thus left for the serious work of reconstruction, and the needs of the day continued to grow faster than ever before, it would not have been surprising if some of the builders and their critics had regretted their haste in abandoning the old building, and reflected that their labours would have been better directed in building a new wing worthy of the old, than in pulling down what already existed. This is in fact just what is happening in India to-day; the destructive rather than constructive character of much of the education given in Indian schools and colleges is being recognized, but so slowly, that it is an open question whether any part of the old structure can be saved, to witness that the ancient builders builded well.

Take music as a single case. The importance of music in education could hardly be over-estimated, "Is not," says Plato, "education in music of the greatest importance, because that the measure and harmony enter in the strongest manner into the inward part of the soul. ...The man who hath here been educated as he ought, perceives in the quickest manner whatever workmanship is defective, and whatever execution is unhandsome, or whatever productions are of that kind; and being disgusted in a proper manner, he will praise what is beautiful, rejoicing in it and receiving it into his soul, be nourished by it, and become a worthy and good man... Education in music is for the sake of such things as these"

These words a modern Welsh writer does but echo when he says: "Rightly studied, music has all the exactness of pure reason and science, all the expansiveness of the imaginative reason, all the metaphysic of the profoundest philosophy, and all the ethic of the purest religion in it...It is an energy of the mind in the first instance, and is of incalculable advantage in obtaining dominion over the body..... Music, properly taught, includes all that is generally conceded to belong to a liberal education."

These ideas are far more clearly recognizable in Indian than in English culture. But English education, as hitherto imparted and understood in India, has merely ignored the importance of music and art in education. There is in India no educational institution under European guidance where Indian music has

any place whatever in the scheme of education. There is no Indian university where Indian music is recognized.

Of Europeans engaged in education in India, it is safe to say that not 1% have any knowledge of Indian music as a science, or appreciation of it as an art. The majority frankly regard it as so much noise. This is only one instance, but a typical one, of the unfitness of Englishmen to control Indian education; they are unfitted alike by lack of knowledge and by lack of sympathy. The only place for English teachers in India to-day, whatever it may have been in the past, is in the employ of Indian educationalists, to whom alone they should be responsible. They should be engaged only for special purposes, as in Japan, and should not be allowed to control in matters concerning the aim of method of education as a whole. The control of Indian education is of so much importance that the necessity of gaining this would alone justify the present endeavours to attain political freedom.

Indian girls are often taught to play the piano in English schools, especially in Mission schools. The only result of this is that they lose the power of appreciating their own melodies; their execution scarcely ever reaches a high level; they cannot afford so expensive an instrument as a good piano in after life ; and they despise the inferior taste of their parents and companions at home, who understand Indian music, and for whom European music is meaningless. A writer on Scottish song has remarked, in words most applicable to India: "I have often wondered if the introduction of the cheap piano has anything to do with the decline of song as a means of expression amongst the people. Before the era of universal piano playing, the people used to think music; and from thinking to expressing is but a step....now their ambition is to have a piano* and to have their children learn to play. ' Learning music ' to them means learning to play the piano, and so that unfortunate instrument has become to them, as to the vast majority, a substitute for music in the brain....many....think it a mark of inferiority to confess acquaintance with their own songs when they can have English music and a piano."#

Music in fact, is contemplated in modern 'English' education in India by no means as an energy of the mind, but essentially as an accomplishment; and it is in the vast majority of cases only as an accomplishment that European music can be taught in India.

The introduction to India of the piano, and Western music generally, is sometimes defended on the plea that both types may be ' enjoyed.' The superficiality of this view is evident;—as if the origin and purpose of music were but 'amusement.' Music and art are not amusements invented by idle men to pass away the time of other idlers; they are expansions of personality, essential to true civilization, expressions of the human spirit, confirming the sincere conviction that man does not live by bread alone. Music, even more than plastic art, is a function of the higher consciousness. The true musician is the Keltic harper who hears the music of the fairies, or the Indian singer who hears the voices of gandharvas. Only such, like Guttilla, can call angels down from heaven. I heard of one living singer at Tanjore, who had no voice or power to sing, but longed to express devotion to the Lord in music: he called upon Sarasvati, and like Caedmon, his lips were opened. This true music is as exalted as its source. All great art is truly of supersensuous origin. If art and music are thus expressions, manifestations, it is obvious that the result of imitation and borrowing of the natural modes of expression belonging to other nations whose idiosyncrasy and environment are different, must be disastrous ; and in point of fact, the attempt to

replace Indian by Western music in India, results only in vulgarization, —that essential vulgarization which, as Ruskin remarks, consists in not understanding the effect produced by the imitation.

There may be some whose broad culture enables them truly to appreciate the music evolved by temperaments and in environments so different as those of East and West. There must necessarily be few, and meanwhile the standard of Western music in India is set by those altogether out of touch with it, a bourgeois public satisfied with gramophones. One thing is certain, that a pretence at the same time of despising Indian and of admiring European music is for a true Indian ridiculous. Western culture may be, and will be, of value to the East, but it must be as a post-graduate course—it will not stand in the place of mother milk. We cannot understand others by ceasing to understand ourselves.

Pierre Loti in his book on India, describes the music which he heard in Travancore. The Maharajah's musicians had been playing. "This orchestra, he says, " and these singers belong to the Maharajah....How far away this prince's dreams must be from ours, how different his conceptions of the sorrows that belong to love and death. But this exquisite and rare music of his, reveals to me something of his soul, something that I should never see in our short and formal interviews, burdened with ceremony and foreign words." Now mark the effect of the introduction of European music at such a court; the Raja replaces his group of skilled musicians, whose music even to a stranger is in some measure an interpretation of the national genius, by a newly trained brass band, the performances of which may, with good fortune, rival those of a third rate German band in England. The Raja buys also gorgeous gramophones and a mechanical violin, paying fabulous sums to have them decorated by their English manufacturers. The true artistes of the past he neglects; the hereditary craftsmen, makers of exquisite inlaid and painted lutes and marvellous drums, are left to starve; and to the cultured stranger it can but seem that his must have been an inferior race, with little learning and few traditions worth preserving, for he finds there no new revelation of humanity, only a distorted image of himself.

Quite possibly such a Raja is at the same time 'progressive' and 'enlightened.' He spends money on 'female' education; adopts the Resident's suggestions of founding a museum, or the like, and believes himself to be all that he can or should be. There can be few more depressing sights than that of such men destroying with one hand what they endeavour to build up with the other.

Suppose, for the sake or argument, that one were to admit a superiority of harmony to melody, of European to Indian music. It would be much as if we should say that Greek architecture was superior to Gothic, or vice-versa, instead of recognizing that each is the expression of a different temperament in relation to different environment and different needs; but let that pass, and ask even on this assumption of superiority what does and must result from an endeavour to introduce European music into India at the cost of Indian.

The comprehension of harmony, especially of its later developments, is even in Europe necessarily confined to those who have had an elaborate musical education, more particularly intellectual than emotional. Only those, moreover, who can afford to pay the cost of expensive concerts, can often hear this highly elaborated music. But in India music is not only for the wealthy virtuoso; it is a part of the national life, it is still an art, not an accomplishment or an intellectual exercise; the music of India is

found in the hearts of the people. Rob them of this, by setting up a false standard of 'correctness,' and in a hundred years, how many Indians will have learnt to appreciate elaborate harmonies, or even have the opportunity of hearing European music adequately performed? Probably not one in ten thousand. At the same time, the possibility of creative expression, now common amongst Indian musicians, must die out; for it is not easier to use a foreign musical language than to use a foreign literary speech. So long, in fact, as education is founded upon a foreign culture, you can only produce 'accomplishments' and impart 'useful information'; you cannot give the means of creative self-expression, possible only in the mother-tongue, whether of speech or song.

And if, in a hundred years, some slight acquaintance with European harmonized music should be acquired by a small section of the community, how many will have forgotten in that time the refinement and vitality of their own melodies, and have turned instead to the gramophone and cheap harmonium, or whatever more vulgar mechanical devices may by then have been invented? Almost all will have so forgotten and so turned away, for it is the gramophone and the harmonium, and the cheap ill-taught piano, that stand in India for European music.

It is certain then, that, while the importance of music in education can hardly be over-rated, such education must be primarily an education in Indian music, if it is to have any value as a discipline or as an art, or in any more serious sense than as a mere accomplishment. This is not to say that Indian music must not change or be influenced in any way by changed conditions; but that such change must be organic, not sudden, and that it must be an evolution in accordance with the bent of the national genius. In all education schemes, music must be taken into account as a part of everyday life. Religious songs, songs of agriculture and the crafts, of the love of the land, folk songs must be heard in every school.

In hundreds of Indian schools under more or less direct British control, the only musical education received to-day is the annual singing of a bad translation of the English National Anthem. All this is puerile. The object of education must be to make good Indian citizens, and this can only be effected by using the national culture and the national languages—literary, musical, artistic—as the medium of instruction.

In all these respects, music is but the type of every factor in culture and education. The people's intelligence can be developed primarily only by means of education in the national culture. One must learn to understand that with which they are already familiar before it is possible to understand the unfamiliar, and relate it to one's own life. Only vulgarity can result from imitating what one does not so understand and cannot so relate to one's own individuality. The first necessity in India to-day is National Education.

Music has sometimes been divided into two kinds, folk-music and art music, much as art is sometimes classified into decorative and fine. Both distinctions are half-truths, and sometimes obscure the deeper fact that all art has a fundamental unity. But, accepting the distinction as a temporary convenience, it may be remarked that, in spite of the neglect of Indian art-music in recent times, the folk-music of the people is still everywhere to be heard, and it is only in a living relation to this that a national school of music can be preserved. The attempt to denationalise Indian music by learning European music instead

is the sure way to an extinction of the musical faculty, comparable to that which took place in England after the time of Charles 1. This decadence coincided with the day when no gentleman's education was considered complete until he had made the ' grand tour' on the continent—and returned from it to turn up his nose, as the Rev. S. Baring Gould remarks, at his old English Manor house, and to call in Italian architects to tear it down and substitute for it a Florentine Palazzo. This is what English-educated and ' England-returned' Indians are doing in India to-day.

As a matter of fact no School of Music has arisen and flourished in Modern Europe that has not been founded on National folk-music, and been concerned with the expression of national aspirations and ideals. Russia may be taken as an example. The founder of the Russian School was Glinka (1803-1857) who was called by List the ' Prophet-Patriarch' of Russian music. He grew up steeped in the folk-music of his own country, and early in life, conceived the idea of composing a national opera. This ambition he eventually satisfied in 'The Life of the Tsar' (1836), an opera which marked an epoch in the musical history of Russia. As Mrs. Newmarch has said:

'The more thoughtful critics saw that the opera was now in the best sense of the word, and marked a fresh departure in Art—the will of a genuine school of Russian music....He did not merely play with local colour, but recast the primitive speech of the folk-song into a new and polished idiom, so that hence forth Russian music was able to take its place among the distinctive schools of Western Europe.'

India may learn from England's experience. From the age of Purcell to the present day, the music of England has been essentially foreign— Italian, German, Russian, Hungarian, but not English. "The question now to be considered" says a writer quoted above "is whether English music is capable of resuscitation. One thing is certain; the present vogue of training English musicians to lisp in the tongue of the foreigner can have no beneficial outcome. It is emphatically not that way that salvation lies." It was long believed that the English people were actually unmusical, and that there were amongst them no folk-songs, comparable to those of other European nations, the foundation of their schools of national music. This opinion has proved in recent times erroneous; a vast body of English folk-song still exists, and is known to the last generation of country folk, though the present generation is generally scornful of the old songs. It is however, with the true folk-music that the hope of a School of English music rests. The movement for the teaching of folk-music as a part of all educational schemes is growing stronger daily. Its importance has long been recognised in other countries, as Denmark and Hungary.

As Mr. Sharp remarks, the spectacle of a great progressive nation like England, "intent upon the instruction of her people in their own folk-songs," gathered, very often, from the lips of illiterate peasants is a strange one. And yet, if in India we have no more love for our own music than England had in the early nineteenth century, we too must pass through a long epoch of barrenness and formalism, before we awaken to the fact that we have neglected the one thing vital, that is the music living in the hearts of peasants, uneducated and illiterate—but more truly Indian than their ' educated' ' superiors'. We too, in time to come, shall be intent upon the instruction of the people in their own folk-songs. Would it not be wiser to bethink ourselves in time, to save what is with us now, instead of making so needlessly hard the task of those that will come after us, and so needlessly barren our own lives and the lives of those who like some of us have not understood?

These are the days of nation building. Yet how many ' nationalists ' are in truth ' denationalists' in their lives and aspirations! They want to be 'free,' to compete with Europe on her own lines, to be 'progressive,' 'advanced,' to gain political power and material success. It is not with these that the future of India lies. It lies in the lives of those who are truly Indian at heart, whose love for India is the love of a lover for his mistress, who believe that India still is (and not merely may be, when duly 'educated ') the light of the World, who to-day judge all things by Indian standards, and in whom is manifest the work of the shapers of India from the beginning until now. Without these, there can be no Indian future worth the name. How may they be known? Like answers unto like; but, if an empirical test be asked for, I believe that the love of Indian music and the comprehension of Indian art are tests unfailing.

The direct results of making Indian music an essential part of the educational ideal may be many and various. We have already seen that a proper education in music is everywhere recognized as an invaluable aid in the training of character—the true aim of education. But some aspects of the result may be noted in greater detail. There can be no true patriotism without patriotic education. The primary aim of education in India should be the production of Indian citizens. No Indian can be a true citizen of the world, except by being first an Indian citizen, and from that standpoint entering into the life of humanity outside of India. This however is not the time for cosmopolitanism, it is the time when India herself needs Indian citizens ; and education in Indian music is an essential part of education in Indian citizenship, whether for those who may never learn a word of English or see even a Raja's brass band, but are more Indian at heart than many of those whose false education has brought so much that is vulgar, so much that is unlovely into the life of modern India, or for those whose life-work leads them into other lands, to bear the message of the East, or to become intellectual parasites, as the case may be. In schools then, Indian folk-music must be taught as a matter of course—religious, agricultural and craft songs, and songs of the love of the land—not forgetting " Bande Mataram." These songs must be orally taught, or to a drum or tambur accompaniment only, not to the piano. To older students the really quite simple theoretical part of Indian music should be taught, as European musical theory is taught in European schools. The result of this education in taste will be that, as the boys and girls grow up, they will be in a position to understand and care for the most highly developed art music of India.

In almost all cases, it will be found that Oriental art, and music and literature have been produced for audiences far more cultivated, in respect of imagination and sympathy, than the audiences appealed to by the artist and musician in the modern West. A great part of this cultivation depended on the existence of a common national culture, in which all shared in the measure of their capacity. The result of this is that the artist in his art relies on his audience to understand refinements and suggestions which now are not understood by reason of the divorce of education from the real life and desires of the people. Hence it is that the 'educated' of to-day have lost their love of Indian music, and find amusement in gramophones. They are no more able to understand real Indian music than the frequenter of London music halls could understand Greek drama. The restoration of Indian folk and art-music to its proper place in Indian education will alter this, and restore the necessary attitude of mind, the preparation, which are required to understand the self expression of India in her music.

How exactly opposite the result at present attained can be, the following episode, only too typical, will illustrate. Not long ago a relation of my own, mother of many children, well educated, and

understanding Tamil, some Sanskrit, and English, sang for me certain Tamil and Sanskrit songs. Meanwhile her son, who was then a student at a Government College where his own language, and much more his own music, was ignored and despised, continued to work a gramophone, showing neither any appreciation of the Indian songs, or any respect for mother or guest. If 'civilisation' be the production of, in the best sense, civil persons, how had it failed here! I have met also many who have been ashamed of their own music, even of their own language. The same results may be seen, depending on the same causes, in Scotland and Ireland. Ireland has had the strength to react in time, and renationalise her education, as far as might be in the face of educational authorities quite as unimaginative as those we are familiar with in India. The only hope in India lies in a control of education by Indians.

Another direct result of the present neglect of Indian music in education is what I may call the boycott of Indian musical instrument makers in favour of manufacturers of gramophones and harmoniums. This fact, further elaborated on p. 160, I present to workers in the Swadeshi movement for due consideration in all its ramifications and parallels.

Education in Indian music, that is, education in folk music in elementary schools, will make possible the education of older boys and girls, and young men and women, who possess musical talent, in the art-music of India, song, the vina, the sarangi. The advantage of these over more mechanical instruments lies in the fact that only the truly musical can master them. A gramophone, and even a piano, often enables the most unmusical person to inflict a suffering audience with his ideas. It is true some efforts have been made by Indians in recent years to provide for education in Indian music, and some of these may be briefly noticed. The Gayan Samaj in Poona and Madras; the Academy of Music in Calcutta, founded by Raja Sir I. S. M. Tagore, Mus. D. (Oxon.); the Bengal Music School in Calcutta; schools in the central Provinces; individual teachers such as the Ustad of Baroda, court musicians of the Gaekwar, and others: all these by their publications and through their pupils have contributed to the preservation of Indian music. But the influence of even these schools is not always certain. One of the most important is the Gandharva Maha Vidyalaya, or Indian Musical College in Lahore, founded in 1901, for the "revival of ancient Hindu music and its diffusion among the general public." It is a musical college with a variety of courses, extending over periods from six months to two years in extent. The learned principal is assisted by six other pandits. But even here the decline of true Indian music was to be remarked. When I visited the college in 1907, I found 14 boys learning the harmonium, and one only the vina, the classical and best instrument of India. One wonders how any college professing to teach Indian music can allow a harmonium within its doors. They told me it was so easy,— in three months you can play a tune on it, and earn money at weddings and other entertainments. It is said that the vina takes sixty years to learn, and it is hard to find ten more to play it in. Assuredly the harmonium is easy, it does not require musical talent, merely a little, very little, perseverance. It is above all easy as played in India; the player attempts no harmonies (wisely perhaps), but picks out a mere succession of notes, the bare skeleton of some Hindustani air, omitting lesser intervals and cadence; or an English music hall ditty. Yes, it is easy. Is not that the secret, or one of the secrets of the degeneration of Indian taste? It is easier to boil your cloth in an aniline dye, than to spend months in producing a beautiful and permanent colour; easier to pick out notes on a harmonium than to play the vina or violin; easier to subscribe for shares in a Swadeshi

factory than to re-organize and support a village industry; easier to drift than to swim. But for India, is it worth while, is this the Art of Living? Is not an India thus subdued in soul more lost than any India governed by the sword could be?

One cannot gather grapes of thorns; you cannot in the long run get something for nothing. Do not let us pretend that it is possible. If our ideal is one of purely material prosperity, and we have no time for music or the arts, let us have done with them altogether; but if we think that music and the arts belong to the most significant, the most real part of our lives, let us cherish them accordingly. Let us decide; but in either case do not let us pretend that the harmonium and the gramophone are compensations for Indian music. It is not possible for anything to be a compensation for the loss of Indian music.