

## RAP MUSIC A LATEST TREND IN MODERN INDIAN MUSIC

**Dr.Amanpreet Kaur Kang**

*Asst. Professor, Music Vocal, GGS Khalsa College for Women Jhar Sahib Ludhiana*

Against modern Indian music there has been an accusation by a certain select group - that modern Indian music is not Indian at all. Additionally some would be reluctant to concede that it is even music. About this second opinion I withhold any discussion. But as to the comment that modern Indian music is not Indian - that is an intriguing point of view which in my opinion deserves to be discussed. The reason being that this charge has been made by a select and quite influential group of music lovers. This group is of the firm opinion that:

- a) Modern Indian music does not follow any of the raag note patterns of Indian music,
- b) This music has none of the characteristics of being typically Indian – in other words Indian folk-music.
- c) For accompaniment with this music, it is all too easy to use foreign 'orchestral' music.

We need to keep in mind especially that the above accusation has been made primarily around Indian Film music. It is through Film music that Modern Indian music finds its most popular expression. Among the above mentioned group of critics is a section which has cultivated the strong viewpoint that the mixing of Indian music and western music and the joint use of these different styles of music is not possible. A similar view is held even by Aakaashbaani (All India Radio), in whose light classical music department (not denoted as modern music) the harmonium is considered to be an 'untouchable' instrument.

Here I would like to say a few words about that unfortunate instrument, the harmonium. Developed through a fusion and modification of the 'accordion' and the 'organ', it is by far the most popular musical instrument in India. The use of this instrument is universal; it finds favour from leading exponents of classical Indian music, the lowliest of music students and even the street singer. Thus it has become our national musical instrument. Talented classical musicians (prominent among these being Ustaaad Abdul Kareem Khan, Fayyaaaz Khan and Akhtari Bai) have given us such disparate styles of music as Thumri, Bhajan, Qawwali and Gazal; these as well as artists of 'adhunik' (modern) music have and continue to use the harmonium to accompany.

A progressive culture is never afraid of foreign influence. Even when an excessiveness of imitation does manifest itself, our culture will ultimately reject it and progress towards an all encompassing unity. The long history of India is full of accounts of our defeats at the hands of foreigners and tales of their reigns. However none were successful in uprooting our civilization and culture and sowing the seeds of foreign influence in our soil; rather, India has always managed to enhance its own greatness by absorbing what's good in them.

Likewise influence of RAP Music is quite visible on Modern Indian Music. Let's Talk About RAP means what we meant by it. RAP, or rhythm and poetry as it is called, is not new to western music. It has been so closely associated with hip hop that these two terms are often used interchangeably

Baba Sehgal introduced Hindi rap in the nineties with albums including *Thanda Thanda Pani*, *Dilruba*, *Main bhi Madonna*, *Manjula* and *Dil Dhadke*. His album *Thanda Thanda Pani* (1992) sold 100,000 copies in three

and a half months and brought rap music to the Indian club scene. . Despite their success, nobody suspected that the hip hop culture will find roots in India. It was already a sensation in the Hollywood music industry led by popular names such as Eminem, Snoop Dogg, Tupac Shakur, Biggie etc. Baba Sehgal's song 'Thanda Thanda Pani' was itself inspired by famous rapper Vanilla Ice's song 'Ice Ice Baby' Apache Indian, another artist of Indian origin was the earliest UK artist to make an impact on the UK charts with a series of hits during the nineties. Fakhar-e-Alam is popular for introducing the bhangra/rap genre of music in Pakistan with his debut album *Rap Up* in 1994. Alam was met with amusement in 1993 when he launched an unusual single *Bhangra Rap*, but the single was broadcast on MTV and he is still considered a pioneer of bhangra/rap culture in Pakistan. Bohemia introduced Punjabi rap with his debut album *Vich Pardesan De* (2002) which was recognized internationally.

With the advent of MTV in India, early 2000s saw a surge in Indian rappers who rapped mostly in English, following the suit of American rappers. Hip-hop culture, including graffiti and b-boying started seeping into the club scene and street culture of big cities like Delhi and Mumbai. Following the launch of Bohemia's second album *Pesa Nasha Pyar* (2006), whose tracks like *Kali Denali*, *Kurti* and *Sahara* became massive hits, there was a new-found interest in Desi languages during the late 2000s. Female rapper Hard Kaur made many popular tracks for Bollywood including *Move Your Body* (2007) and *Talli* (2008) which incorporated rap music in Bollywood. Even though there were several occasional hits during this period, the desi hip hop scene remained limited largely to the underground, with a very niche loyal audience.

The second coming of rap on the Hindi music scene can be attributed to Yo Yo Honey Singh. His debut album *International Villager* in 2011 made a huge breakthrough in Indian music and Bollywood industry. It changed and energised the rap music scene altogether. Although he has been often criticised for using explicit words in his lyrics yet his songs such as 'Chaar Bottle Vodka', 'High Heels', 'Blue Eyes' and 'Brown Rang' have a huge fan following. Encouraged by its success a large number of budding rappers emerged and the genre finally started to get the right attention it deserved. It also saw an increase in production of rap music, especially in the Punjabi music industry. Many talented rap artists like Raftaar, Badshah and Irfan Khan benefited and made a name for them. While the rap music found many takers but the lyrics used in many songs came in for criticism by many people. They felt that a lot of songs emphasised on topics such as money, girls and drugs or even promoted violence. However, plus side is that this new found popularity has given rise to many new artistes who focus on serious issues ailing our society and write songs about these. New artistes like Naezy, Brodha V, Divine and initiatives like SlumGods have given some respect to the hiphop/rap culture in the country. Divine's recent song 'Farak' talks about a mother's love and initiatives like SlumGods are using hip-hop to showcase the positive side of the slum Dharavi in Mumbai. Talking about the rise of new talent in the field of hip hop, Brodha V says, "I like to see people bringing their own styles to their music. About the future of the hip hop scene in the country, Brodha V says, "A lot of youngsters are into rap and hip hop. So, it's definitely the future of the Indian music scene." Currently, he is working on his new album and is going to announce his India tour soon. Another rapper who is promoting hip hop genre is New Delhi-based KRSNA . He has recently launched his hip hop label 'Right Now Entertainment'. He claims it to be the first hip hop label of the country. When asked about rise of the hip hop culture in the country, Krsna says, "I think hip hop in India (or desi hip hop) has come a long way in

the last four years. People have started becoming receptive to it. I've been a hip hop artiste for more than 11 years, so I have really seen how things have changed and the evolution of the genre in India. Ten years ago, we wouldn't have dreamt of making a living in India with this kind of music, but that's where we're at now." Not only the metropolitan cities but even other cities have seen a rise of talented artistes who are pursuing a career in this field. Many rappers from the North are working hard, encouraged by its popularity. The hip hop culture has come quite far from the days when people had no idea about it to a genre people are acknowledging and appreciating it. Whether it is because of the mainstream artists or the newbies that remains to be seen. These days even the remixed versions of old Bollywood songs like Tamma Tamma Loge (Badrinath ki Dulhaniya), Humma Humma (OK Jaanu) and many more such numbers add a twist of rap to make the songs more appealing. The hip hop genre is here to stay, it seems.

There is no doubt that in recent years, Indian music has a tremendous global impact all over the world. It has become an integral part of musical genres and is incorporated in various music terms of other country. This globalisation of Indian music in such a huge scale is because of the extensive efforts by our musicians who make the unknown aware of the rich tradition of Indian music. This interaction also leads in enrichment of our own music culture. We wish that such exchange of music continue in the years to come.

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