

# CLASSIFICATION & PRESERVATION OF DISC RECORDS

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Music started with simple forms of tribal and folk music and developed into different sophisticated classical forms. These different forms of music have come down to us through generations by word of mouth which was the only way of communicating and preserving music. But later on notations were developed which, to some extent, could give a more stable form of preservation.

## I

It was the invention of phonograph discs by Thomas A. Edison in 1876 which led to the first step in the process of preserving music as it was sung or played. Edison recorded music first on wax cylinder covered with tin foil which played back music through the phonograph. The crude wax disc invented by Edison has come a long way, passing the stage of shellac disc of 78 R.P.M. 10" to the present technically advanced micro-grooved mono and stereo Long Playing (L.P.) discs.

Discs are of different speeds and sizes and qualities. The earlier disc was of shellac which was thick and the recording quality rather poor. In India the first recordings were done in 1920. They were mostly of classical or light classical music.

The shellac discs are 78 R.P.M. of 10" and 12" and of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  mts. and 6 mts. duration respectively. This type is still popular in India but they are obsolete in the West. The technical advancement in discography progressed very rapidly after 1940, and has reached the stage of micro-grooved unbreakable vinyl discs. These discs are generally in two speeds: 45 R.P.M.

as extended play (E.P.) and micro-grooved:  $33\frac{1}{3}$  R.P.M. as L.P. The playing time of the former is 7 mts. and of the latter 15 mts. to 18 mts. each side. The L.P. discs are of two types, mono and stereo. The stereo disc can only be played on a stereo machine. The Indian pressed L.P.'s are generally mono but a few selected discs are of stereo mainly meant for the international market.

There are different manufacturers in the world market, some important ones are E.M.I. Group of England, Decca, Philips and H.M.V., R.C.A. But in India the Gramophone Co. of India, the counterpart of E.M.I. London, are almost the sole manufacturers and are bringing out discs under the label of various trade marks. The popular trade marks are H.M.V., Columbia, Angel and R.C.A.

Edison had invented an apparatus for playing back the wax discs, which was known as a phonograph. This machine has passed through various phases and is now a high precision instrument, known as Hi-Fi and stereo record player. The essential parts of a good record player are the pick-up, the stylus and good quality loud speakers. The arc of the pick-up should track correctly, i.e., it should move towards the centre hole of the record as it follows the groove, so that the stylus is always at the correct angle to the groove. It should not cause undue pressure at any point.

Before the days of micro-grooved records, different types of needles were used but after the advent of L.P. discs the problem has been solved by using sapphire or diamond point stylus. The stylus is fixed at the head of the pick-up and has two different points: the fine point with diamond or sapphire for micro-grooved L.P. and the other for 78 R.P.M. shellac disc. Before use, the stylus should be checked and L.P. and 78 R.P.M. discs be played by the respective points.

A damaged stylus can ruin a valuable disc and the reproduction will be distorted and unpleasant. The life of a good Indian manufactured stylus is approximately between 40 to 50 sides.

The quality of reproduction of good music will depend upon the quality of the balanced loud speakers fitted to the Hi-Fi machine. In India the manufacture of Hi-Fi machine is still in the infant stage but it is developing fast, indigenous firms producing these apparatus to the standard of world market.

## II

The purpose of a music library is three-fold: for aesthetic appreciation and recreation, for academic research, and thirdly for preservation of different forms of music for posterity. As an example of the type of library which can be built, I shall refer to the work we are doing at the Sangeet Natak Akademi.

The Sangeet Natak Akademi Disc library is established to fulfil these demands. The library is open to the public; any person desirous of hearing music is welcome to listen to the music of his choice. Academic research is also being conducted by listening to and availing of the documentary material available in the library. The discs are preserved keeping in mind the necessity for building up archives for the future.

Discs have to be acquired for the library from the dealers. For instance, Sangeet Natak Akademi has a standing order with the Gramophone Co. to supply 2 copies each of all classical and one copy each of all non-film music disc pressed by and released by them. To build up an archive of film music, we acquire also one copy of all L.P. film music discs. As the Akademi intends to build up an archive of all available Indian music, we are always on the look-out for discs of archival value and try to acquire them from personal collections. At present the library has a collection of 5,000 discs of Indian and world music.

As soon as a disc is received for the library it is checked and the playing quality tested. All the information such as title of the disc, musician, type of music, the coupling number and speed, is available on the central label, along with the insignia of the trade mark.

The disc is entered in an accession register of the library, the accession number is written on the small paper label pasted in the centre part of the disc. In the case of L.P. discs there is a jacket or sleeve of thicker card paper. Biographical and other details of the musician of the disc are mentioned on the cover and back of the jacket. Due to constant use the jacket is liable to be torn and soiled; therefore, it is advisable to have a cover for these jackets, preferably of craft paper. On this cover are noted the musician's name, Accession Number, Record's coupling number and, if it is instrumental music, the name of the instrument and such other data.

## III

The disc acquired has to be stored in such a way that it can be handled with least delay and safety; hence it should be kept in an air conditioned

dustproof room with constant temperature of about 60°F. (15.5°C). As far as possible the discs should be stacked in wooden cabinets.

The most scientific method is to keep each disc in a grooved vertical pigeon-hole cabinet. But as the cost of such cabinets being very high, it is usual to have wooden vertical stacking facility with pigeon-holes of 2½ inch partitions. In these pigeon-holes one may stack about 6 micro-grooved or 8 shellac discs. For economy it will be better if we have 12½", 10" and 7" discs in one place. They should be tightly stacked and no space should be left between two discs. If the stacking is loose there is danger of warping.

There are various causes of wear of records. The record accumulates static electricity. The most effective antidote to static electricity is "Parastal method". The method is to use two felt pads and two nylon brushes; the record is revolved between these pads and the brushes remove dirt while at the same time a thin film of anti-static material is spread over the record surface from the pads. There are some simpler clearing solutions such as ethylene glycol in distilled water which is very effective for cleaning.

The manufacturers provide polythene covers for the L.P. discs. This cover is a good protection against dust and scratches. While replacing a disc after use, it should always be kept first in this cover and put it in the respective jacket.

A disc should be handled very gently with utmost care. It should be held at the edges and no thumb or finger prints should be made on the playing part of the disc. Micro-grooved records do not break soon, but are very susceptible to scratches. Shellac discs being fragile, crack if handled carelessly.

Before a disc is used we should check the needle and the surface of the disc and wipe with a felt brush. The discs and record player should be handled by a single person so that he is responsible for its proper maintenance.

### **Classification**

Just collecting discs for the library will not serve the purpose of the listeners. We have to arrange them according to a system. There are various classification accepted in various libraries of the world. Shri N. Rajan has dealt in detail the philosophy and methodology of depth classification of Indian music. In my paper I would like to take up the classification followed in the Sangeet Natak Akademi Library: i.e., Dewey Decimal scheme with certain modifications for Indian music.

The general Indian music number is 780.54. The general Indian music has been sub-divided into Vocal (Hindustani, Karnatak), Instrumental, Modern, Orchestration, Folk and Film Music. These main heads are further sub-divided and the classification numbers are as follows:—

780.541 Hindustani music. 780.54 is Indian music and 1 is for Hindustani music.

- 780.5411 Hindustani Classical (Vocal)
- 780.5412 Light Classical (*Dadra, Thumri*)
- 780.54121 *Bhajan* and other Hindustani devotional music
- 780.54122 *Geet*
- 780.54123 *Gazal, Qawwali*
- 780.542 Karnatak Music (2 is for Karnatak music)
- 780.5421 Classical (Vocal) *Kriti, Raga*
- 780.5422 Light Classical music (*Padam, Javali* and other light music).
- 780.54221 Devotional music (*Tiruppavi, Devarnama* etc.)
- 780.54222 Modern compositions in Karnatak music (Non Classical)
- 780.543 Indian Instrumental music

3 is for instrument. Instruments are further sub-divided into Hindustani instruments and Karnatak instruments. These instruments have been classified as strings, key board, percussion instruments (Idio & Membrano), wind instruments.

The numbers are as follows:

- 780.54311 Hindustani string instrument: *sitar, sarod*, etc.,
- 780.54321 Key board (Harmonium/Piano etc.)
- 780.54331 Percussion instruments: *Tabla, Pakhawaj, Dholak* etc.
- 780.54341 Wind instrument (Flute, *Shehnai*)
- 780.5432 Karnatak instrument
- 780.54312 String Instrument (*Veena, Violin, Gottuvadyam*)
- 780.54322 Key board instrument

780.54332	Percussion Instrument ( <i>Mridangam</i> ) etc.
780.54342	Wind Instruments (Flute, <i>Nagaswaram</i> , Clarionet)
780.544	Modern Music (Non-classical 20th century music) (Tagore and other modern composers).
780.5441	Patriotic songs
780.545	Orchestration
780.546	Folk Music
780.547	Film Music

In the case of Folk Music the classification number is 780.546, but the disc is arranged language and regionwise. Film music disc is filed according to music director or the film in alphabetical order. Similarly in modern music the composer is important, e.g., Tagore, Nazrul Islam, Bharati. Discs are placed together according to the composer.

The classification number is indicated on each of the discs in red ink and the discs are stacked according to the classification in their respective pigeon-hole cabinets on which the class number is indicated.

### Catalogue

The listener or the research scholar requires a tool to have access to the required disc. A catalogue, therefore, gives full information of the available music. Catalogues can be of different forms; printed, loose sleeve and card. The last is the most efficient form. The data are written in 5" x 3" cards and fitted in cabinets of the same size.

The cards can be arranged in two ways. Dictionary and classified. (Sangeet Natak Akademi Library has a classified catalogue). In this form the cards are arranged in three sequences. (1) Classified (2) According to Musicians (3) According to Raga and *Title*.

The classified card is the main card; the entries on this card are the classification number, musician's name, title and *raga*, coupling number of the disc, language and accession number. This card is arranged according to classification in alphabetical order of the musician.

The second card is the musician's card. The musician entry is the main one with additional entries of title, record number, language and classification number. The cards are arranged according to alphabetical

order. For example, if a listener wants to know what record the library has of Saigal he can find it under this sequence under Saigal.

Third card is of the title and *raga*-s. The main entry is the title of the song or the *raga*. The cards are arranged in a dictionary form. If a listener wants to know what records we have of *Bhairavi raga* by various artistes, he can get under *Bhairavi* in this sequences. This sequence is particularly helpful for research scholars of classical music.

Cataloguing data are collected from the information given on the label of the disc. In case of L.P. there are various bands. In such a case we have to prepare separate cards for each band giving the musician's name, title of the song and the coupling number of the disc. In the case of Rabindra Sangeet and film music, we have to have separate cards for each song, and artists for a single disc. In such examples we have to have about 12 cards.

The quality of service rendered to music lovers will depend upon the staff and their sense of dedication. To start a disc library there should be at least two persons. A Librarian with library qualifications with a sound background of music with a spirit of service to the cause of music. He will be in charge of the organisation and do all the technical work of preparing catalogue classification, guiding the listeners and helping them to enlarge their knowledge of various forms of music.

There should be a library attendant with an educational qualification of high school, with interest in music. He will be incharge of the maintenance and up-keep of the disc library and play the discs required by the individuals visiting the library.

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*Examples of cards used for cataloguing*

1. Classified card SHIPLEY (Van), Guitar-Jogiya Guitar-Yaman Col./GE. 23915 Acc. 2440 78 r. p. m. 10'.
2. Musician card SHIPLEY (Van), Guitar-Jogiya Guitar-Yaman Col. / GE. 23915 780.5+311 Shi-Jo
3. *Raga* card. YAMAN Shipley Van, Guitar Col./GE. 23915 780.54311 Shi-ya.

*Accession No.* is the number given to a particular record when it is entered in the stock register of the library (Acc. No. 5246).

*Classification No.* is the number which indicates the classification which is followed in the library; in short, the type of the music, e.g. 760.54331. This number stands for Hindustani percussion instrument.

*Coupling number* is the manufacturer's number gives to a particular disc. This number indicates the manufacturers trademark & type of disc., e.g. H.M.V.7EPE.1223.