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Instrumentality of music in cultural diplomacy between India and Pakistan

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Abstract: Music is cathartic and can express emotions in ways that language struggles to accomplish. This paper intends to analyse how cultural diplomacy, especially music, can serve as a crucial conduit in ameliorating the relations between India and Pakistan. It traces the evolution of music, its dynamics in bilateral politics and the everyday lives of people of both countries. Forging people-to-people bond through art and cultural exchanges can potentially provide an alternative to the hegemonised antagonistic discourse conquered by the two governments. The paper addresses, whether music can be the language of diplomacy? How does the shared legacy of music of the Indian subcontinent stands in contestation to the idea of the perpetual difference of us versus them between India and Pakistan? Can music play any role in ameliorating bilateral relations? The paper primarily uses the naturalistic elements of qualitative methodology, anecdotal references and briefly historicises the syncreticity of music.

Keywords: cultural diplomacy; music; India; Pakistan; South Asia.

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"It is not easy, however, to be evil when music is playing."

-John Miller Chernoff

1 Overview

Diplomacy can be comprehended as managing relations between countries; it is a skill in dealing with people in challenging circumstances without displeasing or offending them.¹ Culture is a complex phenomenon that includes various dimensions such as belief, knowledge, morals, art, laws, customs and any other proficiencies and habits created by a

human member of society. Culture is a relatively fuzzy concept; however, in this paper, the above-stated definition of culture shall be attributed as a foundation for cultural diplomacy. Diplomacy can be primarily comprehended as an interaction between actors from different nations to develop mutual cordial relations. In today's volatile geopolitical scenario, diplomatic means play a dynamic role in a country's efforts to realise political ends and endorse its progressive and positive image in the global arena. Given the development of offensive and fatal military capabilities, no country relies solely on military and economic instruments in its interactions with other countries as they are premised on the maxim of destruction and disharmony. Amidst the stated predicament, cultural diplomacy is now often seen as a subset of public diplomacy, which is communication by a government to influence foreign audiences positively. There are myriad facets to cultural diplomacy, which entails social cohesion, a nation's reputation and foreign policy objectives. Cultural diplomacy has evolved predominantly due to the revolution in information and communication technology (ICT). It has resulted in the shrinkage of the globe in terms of the availability of resources that leads to speedy exchange and the free flow of media and other kinds of ideas. The Information Technology revolution has abridged spatial and temporal limitations with reference to the flow of information and ideas. Cross border music exchange in the stated context, thus, is not constraint by the territorial geographical spaces of nation-states marked by political hostilities. The inclusion of popular practices in diplomacy pertains to the cultural representation, participation of people and influence.

Albeit cultural diplomacy has not received much acknowledgement in international relations; politicians and diplomats have notably regarded cultural diplomacy as a lesser tool of diplomacy, which some view as a lesser tool of foreign policy. The lack of scholarly attention has further exacerbated this unrecognised component of diplomacy. This paper intends to analyse how cultural diplomacy can serve as a crucial conduit in ameliorating the relations between nations, particularly India and Pakistan. This aspect of diplomacy has never been diligently explored, at least in the region of South Asia. Ergo forging people to people contact through art and cultural exchanges, the two countries, i.e., India and Pakistan, can provide an alternative to the hegemonised discourse conquered by the governments of the two states, which is highly antagonistic. In exploring the potential of music in cultural diplomacy in ameliorating bilateral relations, the article, however, does not doctrinally adhere to this subset of diplomacy as the sole panacea of decades of conflict on ethnic, religious and territorial lines. Nonetheless, the underexplored subset of diplomacy, a means and not an end, can play an incremental role in abating mutually constrained bilateral relations.

The paper intends to address the following questions: can music be the language of diplomacy? Why has music not been taken seriously while studying international relations? How can a relationship between music and diplomacy be configured? Can music play any role in ameliorating ties between India and Pakistan? How the shared legacy of music of the Indian subcontinent stands in contestation to the idea of the perpetual difference of us versus them between India and Pakistan? The paper primarily uses the naturalistic elements of qualitative methodology, which refers to studying real-world situations as they unfold. Symbolic Interactionism is a qualitative theory based on the relationships among individuals within a society and how they make sense or attribute meanings to the world around them. It examines how human beings construct their worlds and realities based on their interactions with other people in everyday life. These interactions produce meanings, and the meanings get evolved through an

interpretive process concerning stimuli. The paper shall also briefly historicise the syncreticity of music in the Indian subcontinent.

2 Comprehending culture and diplomacy

Conventional government to government diplomacy is gradually mutating towards public diplomacy. Therefore, cultural diplomacy can be comprehended as an adjunct of public diplomacy, broadly defined as the public, interactive dimension of diplomacy that engages multiple non-state indicators thus is not limited to government interactions. In recent decades, public diplomacy has become progressively vital to the practice of diplomacy. However, the potential of music can be explored and employed through both apparatuses (at the level of government) and non-state actors (NGOs and media). Albeit, the actual manifestations of diplomacy can be realised outside the rigid framework of conventional state to state diplomacy. Culture, as Spencer-Oatey (2012) sums up, is “a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioural conventions that a group of people shares, and that influence (but do not determine) each member’s behaviour and his/her interpretations of the ‘meaning’ of other people’s behaviour.” American scholar (Cummings, 2009) brings together many of the facets of cultural diplomacy as:

“...the exchange of ideas, information, art and other aspects of culture among nations and their people in order to foster mutual understanding’ which ‘can also be more of a one-way street than a two-way exchange, as when one nation concentrates its efforts on promoting the national language, explaining its policies and point of view, or “telling its story” to the rest of the world...”

Cultural diplomacy can be broadly comprehended as the deployment of a states’ art, music, and literature as an integral component of the nations’ foreign policy diplomacy leading to national representation through popular culture. According to Mark (2009), cultural diplomacy as a subset of public diplomacy can prospectively become a more viable alternative for states to inculcate cultural components in government’s foreign policy. However, to realise its fullest potential, states need to explore its possibilities, allocate more funds, and focus on how to deliver it best. Cultural diplomacy has many advantages as it helps create forums for interaction between people of different countries, laying the groundwork for the forging of companionships and strong connections between people of different nationalities. It helps to create a mutual ‘foundation of trust’. The participative immersive orientation of the popular culture and music makes it an instrumental tool of cultural diplomacy *musicalising* the political.

The concept of cultural diplomacy can be comprehended in terms of power. Nye (1990) defines soft power as “the ability to achieve one’s purposes or goals” and “the ability to get others to do what they otherwise would not do.” He has differentiated between the various facets of power: the hard and soft power based on resource behaviour and tangibility. There are multiple means through which power is exercised. Firstly, power is used by limiting the range. Secondly, it can be exercised by preventing one to do something, and lastly, power is executed by moulding someone’s view or opinion, and it is the third facet of power that takes into the form of soft power, which forms an integral adjunct of cultural diplomacy. Soft power, as opposed to hard power, does not premise its instrumentalities on damage or destruction. Instead, it adopts a path

towards harmonisation and peaceful coexistence. Power, in a sense, is performative and is continuously negotiated amongst individuals. Music, in that sense, can create relationships as symbolic power and arbitrate ideas through performance (Gienow-Hecht, 2018). Contextualising in symphony orchestras, Fosler-Lussier (2014) argues that music can play an incremental role in international dialogue as it possesses the credentials to invoke 'emotional elective affinities' to communicate through non-verbal means.

According to Einbinder (2013), cultural diplomacy was conceptualised and strategically implemented differently across nations. For instance, France (through Institut Français and Alliance Française) and Germany (through Max Muller Institute) emphasised the promotion of their language abroad; the British concentrated on education (through British Council) while the Canadians highlighted their pluralistic demography and culture (for instance, the Indian diaspora). Diplomacy is the symbolic act par excellence as it is premised on the exchange of legible signs that may seem political initially but are fundamentally semiotic (Ahrendt, 2018). Diplomacy, therefore, can be comprehended as the accurate interpretation of the legible signs which gives symbolic diplomacy its characteristics. Music, thus, can serve in forging stronger bonds because of its ability to transcend linguistic and verbal barriers. There are recorded instances where the efficacy has been proved, and it has directly impacted the individual's decision making. One of the most popular ones is the testimony of the US Airforce airman who repudiated to drop a bomb where the great Mozart Beethoven was born and educated (Hecht, 2009). In one of the instances in South Asia, vocalist Mukhtar Begum trained in Hindustani classical vocal music had inundated the Nizam of Hyderabad, bringing to the extent that the Nizam expressed his wish to crown her (Anasuya, 2020).

Traditionally, governments have played an active role, though desultorily, in pursuing cultural diplomacy in ameliorating ties with fellow nation-states. For instance, the US' Jazz diplomacy as a tool of foreign diplomacy responded to the growing rivalry with the former Soviet Union. The cold war that heightened the tensions between the two power blocs, State Department of the USA, in 1956, commenced sending Jazz artists such as Duke Ellington and Dizzy Gillespie as cultural ambassadors for music tours to foreign nations to share their music and mitigate the narrative of racial inequalities and discriminations in the US and to ameliorate its public image (Cox and Jenks, 2021). Musical diplomacy, however, in conservative circles, is attributed as a tool for cultural imperialism rather than a cross-cultural process assuming audiences as the passive actors. In the stated context, Lussier (Statler, 2012) argues the duality of the US musical diplomacy where the US galvanised (pushing) musical performances as an adjunct to exercise influence over the target countries. On the other hand, the free flow of ideas and art organically creates a 'pulling' effect, culminating in a more reciprocal relationship. What differs with reference to the case of India and Pakistan is that historically shared culture and music inadvertently makes music a potent tool of diplomacy; however, the apprehensions and inconsistencies in pursuance of coherent peace-building initiatives of the two nation-states stand in contestations to explore and employ this subset of cultural diplomacy.

Music as a cultural activity has played an active role in a significant part of the human's way of life. Historically, during the reign of Catherine de' Medici in the mid-16th-century musical court performances formed a crucial adjunct of French diplomacy. Scholars see such endeavours of the queen to distract and appease diplomats and ostensibly show the economic prowess by organising lavish performances despite

various extortionate wars that France indulged in Welch (2018). European thinkers realised entirely before the efficacy of music as an effective medium of communication through nonverbal means. Concerts were organised for the kings and not the nation; however, those performances went beyond the king and included magnificence and divine insinuations. The political and social elite in Europe were interweaved with two kinds of networks, i.e., insider networks and small-world networks. Insider networks were fundamentally chains of individuals connected through family, friendship, marriage, collegiality, common belief or purpose. Small-world networking is formed through connected individuals and small groups at a social or geographical remove from one another. Mapping social relationships provide one way of conceptualising the role of diplomats in stimulating and furthering musical connections. On the other hand, there is a whole branch of research (cognitive psychology) that studies the effects of music on the human body (Parker, 2000) that universalises human emotions and perpetuates transcendence across national boundaries.

3 Comprehending the relevance of diplomacy between India and Pakistan

The question often crops up why India and Pakistan have not been able to materialise on the aspect of cultural diplomacy despite its credible potential of success. The reason lies in the adversarial history and electoral politics of both nation-states. The reference in the Indian subcontinent can be taken as a partition of India and germination of a new state called Pakistan. The new state of Pakistan was mandated to be new in every sense; a land with a different language, culture and history of its own, premised to have no cohesion with India. Pakistan had to be splattered as ‘non-India’, and ergo, the evidence of shared music, culture and language were to be sabotaged to give Pakistan its distinctiveness. The Mujahirs incessant promotion of Urdu as the national language in a quest for a homogenous national identity culminated in threatening the other ethnic and linguistic minorities and their cultural practices (Jaffrelot, 2015). Historically, Pakistan has debarred the Sufi version of Islam that emphasised pluralism and arts. The germination of extremism in Pakistan can be attributed to General Zia ul-Haq, inspired by a fanatic and authoritarian Mughal emperor, Aurangzeb, whose version of Islam was extremist and puritanical. On the contrary, the elder brother of Aurangzeb called Dara Shikoh, was liberal and a Sufi. Interestingly, recently Pakistan initially banned a play called Dara (based on the life on Dara Shikoh) as Pakistan’s official history tows much adherence to Aurangzeb (Schneider, 2015), which subsequently detested mainstreaming alternative Islamic cultures. *Qawwali* had strong ties with the Hindustani classical music, however with the growth of fundamentalist Islam in the 1970s, to foster contrariety from the Hindustani classical music, *Qawwali* commenced to be performed in Arabic *maqamat* (melodic modes), imitations of the Islamic call-to-prayer made its way into the music, and inserted verses that used Arabic instead of Urdu (Jones, 2014) catering to the burgeoning orthodoxy in Pakistani masses.

The army, a predominant functional unit in Pakistan, is currently continuing the same legacy of bifurcation. Post partition, the Indian forces were twice as large as the newly formed Pakistan, and the adversarial foundation of bifurcation raised security challenges for the new state. Consequentially, Pakistan spent an average of 57% of the total expenditure on defence for three consecutive years, i.e., 1949–1951 (IBRD, 1952). The

substantive resource allocation to defence privileged the military as a crucial institution in decision making and the political process of Pakistan since the 1950s. The country has been not successful in evolving into a substantive democratic polity for several reasons. The political institutions, constitution, and parliament did not mature, and the existing ones witnessed a decline creating a political vacuum to be filled by an organised institution, i.e. the army. However, it would not be fallacious to comment that the army wields power even if sham democracies are erected in between. The Army in Pakistan try to reinvent itself to remain relevant, and that relevance is manifested in the form of a tautological anti-India narrative. In a nutshell, the Pakistan Army would have inhibitions pertaining to people-to-people exchange between India and Pakistan since it posits a challenge to their dominance and the power equations domestically. On the contrary, in India, the political narrative altogether is not that exultant. Political parties often invoke anti-Pakistan sentiments to secure the vote bank, often through a larger nationalist discourse. For instance, in the provincial election in Bihar (India) in 2015, the Bhartiya Janta Party's (BJP) national president Amit Shah professed that if the party loses elections in Bihar, there will be a spree of celebration in Pakistan (Basu, 2015). Albeit the party suffered a defeat in that election, a perpetual series of rhetoric was used by political honchos to consolidate the vote bank and spread antagonism for vested interest. The warmongering narrative, primarily driven by the incumbent ruling dispensation coupled with jingoist narratives by Indian media, seizes the prospects of amelioration of bilateral relations. The right-wing Hindu nationalist party, the BJP, tries to triumph electorally through such jingoistic narratives. The germination of identity politics to brew the nationalist discourse has led to cultural essentialism being towed on divergent views in both countries.

India and Pakistan both have the lion's share as far as disputes and distrusts are concerned. Whether it is the classic case of Kashmir, which has been the core of all conflicts since 1947 to the Siachen conflict to the subsequent wars of 1965, 1971 (Liberation of Bangladesh) and 1999 (Kargil) or the nuclear sprint which altogether made a scenario hardly left to rejoice for. Furthermore, the sporadic cross-border firings, the major terrorist attack on Mumbai (2008) and the latest Pulwama attack (2019) in Indian Kashmir has led to the perpetual degeneration of already restrained relations. However, despite all such imbroglios and offences, the cultural bonds between the two countries, especially the artists and intellectuals, remained robust, though not publicly admitted (Nadeem and Gauhar, 2009). Bollywood movies are readily available for Pakistani audiences, and music can smoothly sail through virtually non-porous borders. Famous veteran Bollywood actor Shatrughan Sinha's² visit to meet Zia-ul-Haq and his family was the most publicised event in the early 1980s. Even in the reign of political upheavals, cross-cultural ties were still flourishing. It has been around seven decades of partition; a whole new generation has come up which has not faced the traumatised phase of bifurcation and concomitantly did not intend to carry the same baggage of pessimism as the predecessors. According to Google Trends³, Indian movies, television shows, and celebrities have made into the top-ten searches on Google search engine over the recent years in Pakistan (Google Trends 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020) (Trends, 2021). Through exchanges in music, art, dance, theatre, and artists, cultural diplomacy can initiate peace processes between India and Pakistan and decrease political anxiety. The central heritage of India and Pakistan are bound by civilisation legacy which dates to centuries; civilisations of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro, the classical dance, poetry, paintings, folklores and the like stand testimonies to it. The classical musical instruments

are the same in both the countries, e.g., *Tabla, Sarangi, Sitar, Santoor, Dhol* and the like.⁴ Such similitudes stand in contestation to the discourse between the two countries that has been reduced to relatively diminutive seventy years of the post-partition period, further hegemonised by perceptions propelled by the respective political classes.

Classical music was performed primarily in princely establishments and elite public spheres until 1947 (pre-independent India), notably in North India. Naqvi (2021), tracing the history in the Indian subcontinent of women performing artists revered as ‘Mallika’ (Queen) elaborates that in pre-colonial, the courtesans belonging to Hindu and Muslim households were invited by the royalties to perform at the popular occasions. Their songs and performances manifested through their life experiences, and poetry contributed to the Indian semi-classical genre known as *Chaiti, Dadra, Ghazal, Hori, Kajri* and *Thumri*. With the advent of colonial rule on the Indian subcontinent, the British gauged the social influence that courtesans commanded over the royal elites and thus commenced targeting such women performers. It culminated into the ‘Anti-Nautch’ movement attributing courtesans as prostitutes. On the other hand, the postcolonial partition enfeebled the syncretic links of *Rubabis* performing in the Golden Temple (preeminent spiritual site of Sikhism) for generations got disbanded. Bhai Mardana, a Muslim and one of Guru Nanak Dev’s (founder of *Sikhism* and is the first of the ten Sikh Gurus) companion accompanied Nanak on his voyages, used to play the *Rubab* (a musical instrument) and sing. For generations after that, Bhai Mardana’s descendants, known as *Rubabis*, were entrusted with composing Guru Nanak’s preaching to *kirtans* (devotional songs). Bhai Mardana and the *Rubabi* tradition, emblematic of syncretism in the Indian subcontinent, fell prey to India’s partition that made *Rubabis* migrate to Pakistan (Khalid, 2018), and the tradition thereafter ceased to exist. The cross-cultural fusion of Hindu temple music and Islamic Sufi *silsilas* led to the germination of a genre of music called *Qawwali* which is still quite popular across South Asia (Subramanian, 2017). The *Sufi* music at the experiential level focuses on the temporal transcendence by bringing the listener into the proximity of the ‘realm of God’. Hinduism and its derivative religions are premised on the conceptions of ahistoricity and an antiteleological worldview as opposed to Islam (and other Abrahamic religions) that perceivably endorse teleological narratives bounded by time. However, Jones (2014) argues, “what brings together these two seemingly opposing viewpoints, in the sacred music of Hindu, Sufi, Sikh, Jain, Buddhist, and other traditions, is the sounding together of time and timelessness, history and eternity, of the human and the divine”.

The doyennes of music in the Indian subcontinent included personalities such as Begum Akhtar from India (known as *Mallika-e-Ghazal*, i.e., Queen of Ghazal) and Noor Jehan from Pakistan (known as *Mallika-e-Tarannum*, i.e., Queen of Melody) are familiar names in both countries. Bollywood⁵ (Hindi movie industry) movies and artists are crowd pullers in Pakistan. It is a general perception that children of Pakistan know Indian musicians and singers more than their own. Bollywood movies are readily available at local Pakistani movie shops, making Indian film stars household names (Khatlani, 2020). Many Indian artists have voiced towards helping the ‘Lollywood’ Pakistani film industry through training in acting, direction, etc. This mutual popularity potentially forges peaceful relations between the two nations. The exchange of artists, cultural programs, movies, concerts, and the like would also help generate income on both sides; ergo, it becomes the case of a positive-sum game on financial terms. Overall, the focal point of cultural diplomacy is the long-term nurturing of relationships between the countries and

thus should not be limited to short term quantifiable gains (Schneider, 2006). It provides an open platform where myriad ideas and information can be mutually exchanged.

To commemorate the 50th anniversary of independence as nation-states in August 1997, virtuoso Indian music composer A.R. Rahman composed ‘Gurus of Peace’ with the acclaimed Pakistani *qawwali* singer Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, giving a clarion call for mutual peace and stability in the bilateral ties. In Pakistan, the pop and rock genre of music reached its zenith in the late 1980s and 1990s. Nazia and Zoheb Hassan, pioneers of Pakistani pop music, became immensely popular for their chart-topping song ‘Disco Diwane’ (Disco Lovers) in India. The song of the 1980s become so beguiling in India that a remixed version of it was re-released in a Bollywood commercial movie called ‘Student of the Year’ in 2012 (IMDb, 2021). Popular Pakistani bands like *Jal*, *Junoon*, and erstwhile *Strings* have a considerable fan base in India (Times, 2009). These bands rose onto the wings of the cable television network (music television channels like Channel V and MTV) in the 1990s and early 2000s. In 1997, *Junoon*’s single “Sayonee” achieved the status of the bestselling song in South Asia and West Asia and ranked at the top of Channel V and MTV charts for two months straight. *Strings* compositions for the Bollywood (Hindi movie industry) cinema titled ‘Yeh Hai Meri Kahani’ (this is my story) in 2005, followed by ‘Aakhri Alvida’ (last goodbye) in 2007 and ‘Koi Aanay Wala Hai’ (someone is coming) in 2008 peaked their popularity in India. The songs assimilated them into the mainstream Indian music industry. Beyond the commercial viability of the compositions, it manifested a schema of adulation of the art transcending discordant political affiliations.

The cross-border camaraderie premised on music took a toll in 2008 due to the terror attack by the extremists with explicit links with Pakistan on the financial capital of India, Mumbai. The anti-Pakistan sentiments gained strength, and consequentially, the artists from Pakistan were barred to perform or work in India. However, the ban was lifted in few years, and the mutual musical bonhomie between the two nation-states survived. On the political role of musical bands, Bilal Maqsood, founding member of erstwhile band *Strings*, asserted, “We used to say that we want to stay away from politics. But given the last five years in Pakistan we couldn’t keep that up anymore” (Mujumdar, 2012). Consequentially, politically charged songs titled ‘Beirut’, ‘Ab Khud Kuch Karna Padega’ (now I have to do something) and ‘Main to Dekhoonga’ (I will see) were released. In one of the instances, prior to the Pakistan-based band *Strings* performance at the President’s House (*Rashtrapati Bhawan*) of India in 2014, Faisal Kapadia, lead vocalist of Karachi-based band *Strings*, said, “It is a huge honour to play for the Indian President. This gig will bring three neighbours (Bangladesh, India and Pakistan), who were once one country, together under one roof. If there is any effort, even in terms of softer power, towards peace, I am all for it. As for India and Pakistan, we haven’t had an easy past, but these concerts can make things go in the right direction” (Khurana, 2013). In 2016, the Indian Ocean (known for pioneering the blend of Indian classical, Rock and Jazz) and Junoon (known for experimenting with rock music blended with traditional Sufi mysticism) from India and Pakistan respectively played together to commemorate common cultural heritage between the two countries. Both the music bands admitted to bilateral ties not improving in the foreseeable future but asserted that their “signature music might have the power to bring people closer... music can show how people are the same” and how it can be a conduit to peace amidst political stalemate. One of the members of Junoon, Salman Ahmad reminiscence of singing along Bollywood movie songs growing up in Pakistan. He says, “That was my window into India – its culture, its

people, its human drama... it also made me want to become an artist” (UNESCO and MGIEP, 2016).

4 The potential of music for forging bonds

Let us comprehend the idea of ‘forging bond’ in a reverse manner, meaning how music echoes the idea of ‘disruption in bonds’ in the relation between the two countries. Music artistically and emotively expresses anti-establishment or protest themes, including anti-war songs and pro-establishment ideas. Subramanian (2017) argues that the music incongruities reinforce the boundaries that the partition created. When music can be used as a tool to reflect a level of disagreement or as a site to register a strong protest, it can be argued that it possesses the same power to amend the relations between the two perceived hostile neighbours. Even though both the countries share a common musical heritage, the post-partition independent India and Pakistan had to rely on the idea of ‘difference.’ Pakistan had to adopt a different set of musical forms that was important for the new country idea of existential distinctiveness.

When it comes to the link between music and the history of international relations, it reflects ethnocentrism, which can create friction amongst the countries involved (Gienow-Hecht, 2018; Commuri, 2009). However, what makes India and Pakistan different is the analogous shared cultural values and heritage. There is a credible potential of music between the two countries, which is the critical aspect of cultural diplomacy that forms a fundamental component of any society. Even Plato, in his works, gives a unique space for music as education to develop moral character. Unfortunately, music has not been given its due acknowledgement in education for the holistic development of a student as the Greek philosophers stressed it.

As a shared civilisational heritage binds India and Pakistan, it shares a common language and cultural norms. Even the language *Urdu* the lingua franca of Pakistan (as part of nation-building projects premised on the idea of difference vis-à-vis India), is popularly associated as the language of Muslims in the Indian subcontinent. However, the language commenced developing around Delhi in the twelfth century, heavily influenced by Arabic and Persian and sharing its origin with Hindi (spoken by a vast populace in the north, central and western India) due to its similar phonology and grammar (UCL, 2021).

Music, therefore, can be a vital phenomenon towards delimiting territorial boundaries and expanding towards peace, eventually reducing biases, prejudices, and conjectures. The musical instruments and classical oeuvres share an unsurprising commonality. In the social context of the Indo-Pakistan scenario, emotions and sentiments towards music can induce positivity. Legendary singer Mallika Pukhraj who performed for the All India Radio migrated to Pakistan post-partition and commenced performing for Radio Pakistan. Upon the golden jubilee celebration of the All India Radio in 1977, she was invited to India and was conferred with the ‘Legend of Voice’ award (Khatlani, 2020). Her timeless rendition of Hafeez Jallandhari’s ‘Abhi to main jawaan hoon’ (But I am still young) can still be heard being hummed in ordinary households in the Indian subcontinent. Musicians at both sides have been very enthusiastic over the decades about organising musical festivals, as classical, pop, and other genres are admired and popular across the Indian subcontinent. Revered Pakistani singers like Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, Farida Khanum, Ghulam Ali, Ali Zafar, Atif Aslam have enthralled Indian audiences with their

musical endowments, and the same has been in the case of Pakistan where many Indian singers like Pankaj Udhass, Udit Narayan, Lata Mangeshkar, Asha Bhosle, Sonu Nigam, Arijit Singh are well renowned. Music serves as a universal language that transcends borders by uniting myriad language, religious, and cultural backgrounds.

The death of the Indian subcontinent's doyenne of music, Indian playback singer Lata Mangeshkar on February 2022, often attributed as the 'nightingale of India' and even 'South Asia' (Noorani, 2022; Kugelman, 2022) triggered a plethora of obituaries from Pakistan (Bikhchandani, 2022). Mangeshkar's friendship (Mangeshkar, 2008) with Pakistan's playback singer Noor Jehan bestowed with *Malika-e-Tarannum* (the queen of melody) title became one of the most discussed subjects across the Indian subcontinent of how their musical bond transcended the perpetual cross border animosity. The historic reunion of the two where they "came running... embraced each other like long-lost friends...weeping" on no man's land at Wagah border between India and Pakistan in 1951 (Modi, 2022; Bagga, 2022) was emblematic of how two doyennes of music lay the territorial bifurcation of landmass frivolous. Even though they sang patriotic and nationalistic songs for their respective countries, for instance, Mangeshkar's *Ae Mere Watan Ke Logon* (O people of my country) and Jahan's *Ae Watan Ke Sajelee Jawaano* (O beautiful youths of the country). Nonetheless, their mutual admiration and friendship, and fanbase friendships transcended their respective nations' confined territorial limits.

In the Indian context, the latest addition is the Coke Studio⁶ Pakistan which has gathered humongous popularity amongst Indians. Its euphonious intermixing of classical and pop music, which often entails insightful social messages and an inimitable blend of classical and western musical instruments, gives a sense of familiarity to Indian listeners since both sides entail a shared civilisational legacy. In the words of (Monie, 2011):

"Judging from its (Coke Studio Pakistan) trans-border popularity, it has breathed new life into the rich musical tapestry of the subcontinent by harvesting the unique music of the region, at once diverse yet instantly recognisable as part of a continuum. This has been Pakistan at its finest, reminding us of the shared cultural heritage that predates our religious differences. Reading the hundreds of comments on YouTube and Facebook, it is clear that it has struck a similar chord with many fellow expatriates."

One of the most popular video sharing websites and online social media platforms, YouTube, offers an insightful observation of how citizens of India and Pakistan interact with each other. A typical behavioural pattern is observed concerning the type of videos uploaded on YouTube. In the series of videos observed, the comments section of uploaded political videos is marked by trademark cross border hostility and vituperation. However, there are diametrically opposite responses, especially on the music videos. This conflicting exhibitiv behaviour reflects how music checkmates the perpetual antagonistic narrative between the two neighbouring nations. Amidst the acknowledged disliking for Pakistan on political and geopolitical grounds amongst Indians, the Coke Studio of Pakistan stands as an exception. Prior to their Coke Studio experience, they had the only antagonism influenced by the popular or the hegemonic hostile discourse between the two nations, but post-listening and experiencing the cross-border music, a receptivity in behaviour is observed in knowing more about the other facets of the neighbouring nation-state. Music as an *affect* played a deterministic role in slightly deescalating the vituperative cross border narratives. They could have denounced merely the art since it hailed from a country that shares historical hostilities with their own country that is India. However, the music's sheer power compelled them to curb

preconceived perceptions or beliefs affirmatively. So, the power of culture or music per se superseded the political discourse heavily premised on antipathy. Even social media feeds are flooded with positive reactions and encouraging comments by Indians whenever Coke Studio Pakistan uploads their new oeuvres. Music thus can be a vital phenomenon towards delimiting boundaries and expanding towards peace, eventually reducing mutual biases and prejudices (Fosler-Lussier, 2014). In India and Pakistan, music as a tool of cultural diplomacy is not confined to meticulous promotional campaigns, aggressive and direct government interventions as the familiarity of culture and shared heritage inadvertently creates a fertile ground for bridging the gap and strengthening the severed ties that are predominantly political. The governments of both countries rather than initiators can play a potent facilitator, making borders porous in exchange for ideas and art.

5 Can music be one of the languages of diplomacy?

The relevance of music in international relations has gained much prominence for the past seventy years, focusing on the USA. During the Cold War, music commenced playing a substantive role in the geopolitics between the US and the erstwhile USSR. Cultural diplomacy played an instrumental role as it provided a platform to artists, writers, and musicians who highlighted and invigorated national conscience and reflected on society. However, the idea of music acts as an instrument and as a forum designed to perpetuate impression, identity or hegemony and acts as a channel for the manifestation of resistance and power (Gienow-Hecht, 2018). For instance, the US realised the potential of Rock and Roll music as a crucial element in loosening up the communist societies and offered a different narrative on freedom. Furthermore, hip hop music that germinated in the US, though spread across the globe, retained its character of the voice of the marginalised and disaffected people in a nation-state.

The cultural turn to international relations has led to the exploration of music as a potential diplomacy aspect. Music is the most effective instrument to combat social stigmas and political problems in society. The things that cannot be conveyed through dialogue, a musician possesses credentials to work on it very subtly. Historically, a new sense of community can emanate from shared musical experiences to create space for imagination for political change and social cohesion. From the revolutions to myriad social movements, music has always been an effective adjunct to propagate the ideals and sustain the momentum of the movements. The effectiveness of a social message augments when communicated through a musical note. The Zubin Mehta's concert in Kashmir, for instance, was primarily premised on peace in the valley. Serious music, it seems, matters because it transcends antagonistic social forces and has the capability of serving as a mediator and may evoke the feeling of transnationalism.

During a musical performance, the music plays the only role and another plethora of activities. The words and the tones create a sense of transcendence delimited by the nations' territorial boundaries. It acts as a bridge and may ignite conversations that share varied experiences and beliefs. Ergo, music can be a suitable initiator of conversations, but the conversations may not be limited to only that (music).

6 Major impediments against cultural diplomacy

Nietzsche claimed that potentially music was the “most accessible art form – because it makes a more powerful and involving impression than the other arts.” Its ability to transcend makes it universally appealing. Even due to its universal nature, there are challenges, especially in India and Pakistan, where the conventional discourse supersedes all other dimensions. Firstly, the protocol about culture that has been signed between the two countries should not remain only on paper and suffer the ill fate like other South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) agreements. Secondly, media serves as an artery between the two nations to share news, updates, and information. It must play a more active role by not getting enmeshed in grousing and vituperative debates that have become a routine affair on both nations’ popular news channels. The need of the hour is not to ‘sensationalise’ the news but to ‘sensitise’ as the former leads to the formation of preconceived notions based upon conjectures which lead to perpetual vitiation in an individual’s mind for one’s counterpart. Thirdly, the problem of cross-border terrorism serves as the biggest impediment to build and sustain an atmosphere of friendship and cooperation. Extremists can hijack the initiative if the government on both sides indulge in the decades-old blame game and do not cooperate in annulling the cross-border intrusions from Pakistan. Fourthly, strict Visa regimes make travelling across the borders inconceivable and are subsequently difficult to secure. For instance, Indians living in a faraway state like Tamil Nadu or Assam must travel to New Delhi to visit Pakistan. Correspondingly, the Pakistanis face a similar situation and must go to Islamabad, where the Indian High Commission is located. Despite these adversities, people who make it to each other’s countries find love and affection. Ordinary individual misses one’s neighbours, friends and the spirit of accommodation. When the two countries softened their border for the first time, a few years post-partition for a day or so, hundreds from one side flocked to the other. None bothered about religion. They only knew that people from across the border had come – with whom they had lived for centuries in harmony, bifurcated by a line stretched in a matter of night that altered their nationality, identities and mutual relations. However, the prospective gains of non-governmental cultural cooperation between India and Pakistan are substantial and can only be a failure amidst monumental blunder or grave security.

7 Conclusions

The present politics between both countries do not possess the depth of shared legacy of aesthetics, especially in music. The fundamental contestation is that India sees complications with Pakistan regarding territory and geography, whereas Pakistan premises its disputations with India in terms of ideology. Therefore, it becomes quite complex as both countries need to acknowledge a common heritage as the idea of difference not only propagate the wrong notion of different music (to perpetuate the idea of being distinct from one another) but also serve as a roadblock to peaceful coexistence.

Cultural diplomacy is limited to that of diplomats stationed as the representative of their respective countries. It goes beyond the level of people to people interactions and cultural and social exchanges between them. However, in India and Pakistan, the diplomats stationed in both countries are in the limelight only when their stationed

countries' governments summons them. The potential of the diplomats as far as the relevance of cultural exchange is concerned is not explored to its truest potential.

As the music plays a vital role in ordinary citizens' lives in both the countries as it humanises India for the Pakistani masses and vice versa; therefore, diplomatic investments as according to Mahiet et al. (2014) "most likely to produce returns where music is already valued, practised and discussed." Such kind of endeavours and practices helps in opening more alternative 'spaces' that helps in ameliorating the restraint social and political positions amongst the nations.

The overarching goal for such an endeavour is to influence policies that primarily drive relations between the two countries. The body of literature in International Relations relies predominantly on the 'objectivity of the knowledge'. However, the study of music can transcend the given context, say, political hostility between two nations. The signing of an adequate cultural agreement between the two countries would encourage the exchange of mutual music, literature, art and fashion.

Track II mechanisms between the two nations like Neemrana⁷ Dialogue should be encouraged. Most recently, the two governments have decided to resume the same to facilitate people to people exchange. However, there is a certain level of apprehension as India has repeatedly echoed that 'terror and talks' cannot go hand in hand. However, it is pertinent to note that the citizens of both countries cannot be subjected to persistent hostile narratives and that there is a need for a certain level of engagement on both sides. If civil societies or ordinary people are convinced to mend the situation, it will be difficult for the institutions or ruling establishments to contest the idea of peace and coerce them to resolve the contested issues.

Some constructive proposals dealing with, for instance, relaxed visa policies, broadcasting cultural content, mutual cultural exchanges, joint seminars, academic exchange programs between the educational institutions, collaboration in the archaeological field and promoting film festivals should be brought to the table. Terrorism, gradually becoming a global phenomenon, is no longer primarily a problem of national security and national defence – but it is now both a problem of individual humans and of the global community of humankind where individuals or the citizens have become the primary stakeholders. Ergo, it would not be an exaggeration to state that the states' government often serves as impediments in the arena of cultural diplomacy. A better comprehension of other's cultures and conventions is the initial step to forge bonhomie at the international platform between countries. If both sides continue to maintain the level of interest in increasing people-to-people contacts that have already been demonstrated, then even the devil in the details may not be able to impede the Track II process. Music is cathartic, and ergo can express emotions in a way that language can never accomplish. Musical diplomacy, therefore, should not be used only to advance national interests but to advance intercultural communication, albeit it should not be a one-way street. Music may not serve as the pivot to resolve political hostilities or relinquish ideological inclinations. However, it indeed possesses the credentials to act as a conduit of 'goodwill' amongst nations, as Friedrich Nietzsche (2007) aptly believed: "without music, life would be a mistake."

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Notes

- 1 *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (8th edition).
- 2 Shatrugan Sinha was then a celebrated Bollywood film star who later joined the BJP and even became a Cabinet minister in Vajpayee's government (from 1999–2004).
- 3 Google Trends is a website by Google (largest internet search in the world) that analyses the popularity of top search queries across regions and countries.
- 4 <http://www.heritage.pk/category/culture-of-pakistan/musical-instruments>.
- 5 Bollywood is a portmanteau derived from Bombay (the former name of city Mumbai in India) and Hollywood (American movie industry).
- 6 Coke Studio, as a branded concept (marketed by Coke), originated in Brazil, which soon become a crowd puller owing to its polyglot and polyrhythmic musical traditions. Coke Studio of Pakistan is quite popular in India and its popularity surpasses that of Coke Studio India itself. Coke Studio draws upon the Indian classical tradition of improvisation by the musicians, as well as the Western classical tradition of structure and arrangement, where the producer uses his creative vision to harness the raw musical energy into a cohesive piece of music.
- 7 The India-Pakistan Track II was first held in 1991–1992 at Neemrana Fort in Rajasthan and took its name Neemrana Dialogue from there. The name itself reflects that the dialogue was not always held in third countries.

Appendix

Web links of the songs mentioned in the article.

- 'Gurus of Peace'
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=re0gCNGsNhE>
- 'Disco Diwane'
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mWzTZE-B1fM>
- 'Disco Diwane' Indian Bollywood Remixed
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mcL6ZErM49Q>
- 'Sayonee'
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-8anr6et3Lw>

- ‘Yeh Hai Meri Kahani’ (This is my story)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qhHL-EOIqqQ>
- ‘Aakhri Alvida’ (Last Goodbye)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LreJKeDf2cI>
- ‘Koi Aanay Wala Hai’ (Someone is coming)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5c-k4tOpAhs>
- ‘Beirut’
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xPaO_q6v508
- ‘Ab Khud Kuch Karna Padega’ (Now I have to do something)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BBO9MYZiWgE>
- ‘Main To Dekhoonga’ (I will see)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LsyyR2Yo83M>
- ‘Abhi to main jawaan hoon’ (But I am still young)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CXISUXBTDU_s
- ‘Ae Mere Watan Ke Logon’ (O people of my country)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f7G9iQR5uyU>
- ‘Watan Ke Sajeel Jawaano’ (O beautiful youths of the country)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BA4rCh2OUO0>
- ‘Paar Chanaa De’ (Coke Studio Season 9) by Shilpa Rao and Noori
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TrPvQvbp3Cg>