

***The Making of Recorded Music***  
**Business Practices in the early Records Industry, 1900-1908<sup>#</sup>**

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Early in the autumn of 1902, an American employee of a London-based British firm was sent on a mission to Calcutta. As much as the firm employing him, 'The Gramophone and Typewriter Limited', was an unknown entity in Calcutta, little was Frederick William Gaisberg aware what awaited him on his maiden visit to a British colony.

Four years earlier, in 1898, Gaisberg had been reassigned from his position in Emile Berliner's gramophone company in the US, where he had been doubling-up as a recording supervisor and a piano accompanist for the artists being recorded. He was sent to London to join the 'The Gramophone and Typewriter Limited' (GTL)---the British sister concern of Berliner's American firm---as their principal recording engineer. As he set sail to India in 1902, Fred Gaisberg was deeply aware that his singular mission was to record music in British colonies and other countries of the Far East. This was aimed at widening GTL's repertoire of records from, and for, countries of Asia, where the market for recorded music was struggling to be born.

Although the Orient was a different, if not difficult territory for this American engineer, he was full of a missionary-like zeal. Leaving Britain for India his travelogue succinctly notes

The object was to open up new markets, establish agencies, and acquire a catalogue of native records. Tom Addis, accompanied by his good-looking wife, was the business head, and I had as my helper young George Dillnutt..... As we steamed down the Channel into the unknown I felt like Marco Polo starting out on his journeys<sup>1</sup>

**Introduction: Entrepreneurship & Entertainment**

At the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we observe a highly competitive and rapidly internationalising business in recorded music throughout the Northern Hemisphere. This business was orchestrated by private capital germinating in countries on both sides of the Atlantic, some of

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<sup>1</sup> GAISBERG (1942:52)

which had never managed a territorial foothold in the Indian sub-continent. The nascent exports in records to British India, part of this process of internationalisation, rested on an emergent but categorical division of labour: broadly between, investor and managers of records firms from countries in Europe and America; secondly, recording engineers, who often switched their loyalties to rival firms within and across these countries; thirdly, indigenous financial and cultural interlocutors in colonial and sovereign countries; and lastly, the commercially intuitive local musicians and singers.

At the apex of this growing pyramid stood the techno-theocrats of the game, viz. the 'recording engineers'. At the turn of the century, the very idea of disembodied sound---music and voice---was scarcely two decades old; and commercial records a decade old business on both sides of the Atlantic. Capturing the human voice was considered complex and specialized since it was not a stand alone task; it involved a deep knowledge of and experience with a whole array of tasks that preceded and succeeded the moment of audiography, i.e. of 'writing sound'. Recording engineers, who orchestrated events in permanent and make shift studios, were first and foremost technicians---most with a passion for music, some even playing the odd instrument. Nevertheless, they gradually came to develop an understanding of entrepreneurship in the growing business of musical entertainment.

As the demand for new recordings multiplied in the USA, Britain and France, the stock of the recording engineers rose exponentially. When the business expanded beyond national boundaries, the once studio-bound engineers were sent on long journeys to record music--- by train within their continents, and on ship across continents. All of a sudden they became the prime movers, sometimes the fulcrum, of the emerging business of sound recording in North America, Western Europe and, as we shall see, in India. For example, C.J. Hopkins, in-charge of the wholesale and export business of the Columbia Company, embarked on a years recording journey across the globe in October 1902. But the most legendary figure of the music industry was another American, Fred Gaisberg. His visit to India in 1902, whose immediate motivations were touched upon the outset of this essay, was the first of his three recording visits to India during the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Following him, were over a dozen recording engineers sent to the Indian subcontinent by rivalling firms from Britain, Germany, USA and France.

While the figure of an Occidental traveller is far from novel in the history of the Indian sub-continent, there is something distinct about the folklore of wandering sahibs during the Raj. Perhaps because of the many, often rivalling shades of myth, fact and fantasy embedded in the lore of 'Mad Dogs and Englishmen'. Fortunately, the journeys of the recording engineers have reached us through the 'travelogues' penned by them, variously found tucked away in their autobiographies, serialized in in-house publication of firms, or as feature articles in international trade magazines. They form a vital component of the otherwise thin corpus of archival material on this, much neglected, domain of Indian media history. Retracing the specific motivations, objectives and contexts of each of these recording journeys tells us more than simply the travellers' engagement with the cultural economy of colonial India. However, while making sense of these travelogues, the ethnographic assumptions of the engineers ought to be questioned if our reading of their experiences is to help in reconstructing the musical and commercial landscape of the period. This becomes doubly crucial as the intentions of the Roving Recordists in colonial India pertain to neither administrative power nor intellectual power; rather, they were associated with another constituent of power, i.e. commercial power---more precisely, early 20th century capitalist power.

In studies on recorded music in India, the marginalisation of research on its formative contours is both, surprising and paradoxical. For, this was not only the first mass media of the electrical era but recorded music continues to inhabit a crucial role in subsequent media industries, right until the present<sup>2</sup>. A closer look at existing scholarship indicates the predominance of musicological, ethno-musicological and anthropological studies---as is the case to some extent

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<sup>2</sup> Links with not only cinema but also private/FM radio and increasingly internet and mobile based delivery systems; for an outline of the changes in the MI in the post-1991, globalisation years, see PARTHASARATHI, V. (2007) "The Ecology of Creative Industries: The Indian Music Industry Un-played" in **"The Future of India's Creativity": Report of the Planning Commission Taskforce towards a National Mission for Creative and Cultural Industries**; Asian Heritage Foundation/Planning Commission, New Delhi.

even internationally. This has barred systematic and thorough industry studies including, or perhaps consequently, explorations on past configurations of the music industry. This is not to deny that some ethno-musicologists have raised significant culturalist issues, such as the role of the gramophone in redefining spectatorship<sup>3</sup>; however, their disciplinary moorings and methodological options have prevented them from integrating their examinations of musical practice and form with the larger commercial and industrial locale within which recorded music emerged in India.

This paper proceeds from a sense of recognising the interplay between entrepreneurship and entertainment, between the dynamics of commerce and culture. In our case, the core issues concerning entrepreneurship and entertainment are multiple, simply because recorded music touched upon a plethora of human activity. It is not a matter of our offering the political economist's angle on what may appear to be a well-trodden cultural ground; nor, superimposing a culturalist interpretation over commercial data; rather, it is asking how an interdisciplinary approach to 'media history' would enable us to refigure that seemingly familiar ground both, in epistemological and methodological terms. We work through a general narrative, often detouring into specific arguments, to show how seemingly 'textual' issues of (technologically) capturing disembodied music and of (commercially) propagating such music, find a connect with the 'economic' activities (of production, trade, distribution and consumption) of recorded music. This would yield a vibrant sense of the textures of a cultural economy of music; and simultaneously, a set of anthropological insights into the business of early recorded music.

## 1. The Pre-conditions of Emergence

The Anglo-American team led by Fred Gaisberg arrived in Calcutta with an elaborate and bulky plethora of recording equipment---and about 600 blank discs. For the tour, a specially designed falling-weight driven motor was built, to dispense with the heavy storage batteries and clock springs.

It took three days to unload our thirty heavy cases and pass the customs officers. Our agent, Jack Hawd, had arranged a location and had assembled a collection of artists, who watched us curiously as we prepared our studio for recording. It was the first time that the talking machine had come into their lives and they regarded it with awe and wonderment.<sup>4</sup>

But it is not the technological standing of audiography that is of interest to us. Nor was Gaisberg the kind to record all and sundry, irrespective of whether potential 'artists' were short-listed by his firm's expatriate agents or by---as typical of colonial transactions---indigenous intermediaries. What attracts our attention is the manner in which Gaisberg 'sourced' potential singers and musicians, given the aims of his voyage.

I met the Superintendent of the Calcutta police, who placed at my disposal an officer to accompany me to the various important entertainments and theatres in the Harrison Road. Our first visit was to the native "Classic Theatre" where a performance of Romeo & Juliet in a most unconventional form was being given..... I had yet to learn that the oriental ear was unappreciative of chords and harmonic treatment and only demanded the rhythmic beat of the accompaniment of the drums. At this point we left.<sup>5</sup>

Soon after familiarising himself with the musical landscape of Calcutta, the American realised that the resident 'Englishmen' he was to liaise with were clueless about Indian melodies---neither their musical quality nor, importantly, their commercial value. Making enquiries through the freshly appointed liaison staff of The Gramophone and Typewriter Limited (GTL) in Calcutta, and immersing himself into the cultural world he was engulfed in, Gaisberg began familiarising himself with the musical landscape of Calcutta. Almost immediately he came to dislike and privately disdain the music he heard.

One had to erase all memories of the music of European opera houses and concert halls; the

<sup>3</sup> FARRELL, G. (1997) "The Gramophone comes to India", *Indian Music and the West*; Clarendon, Oxford (pp111-43).

<sup>4</sup> GAISBERG (1942:54)

<sup>5</sup> GAISBERG (1942:54-55)

very foundations of my musical training was undermined.<sup>6</sup>

Taking matters into his hands, Gaisberg resorted to identify and experience at first hand the most admired singers performing in the capital city. This was not to understand the new world of music and aesthetics, but to gauge the tastes of connoisseurs and patrons of performances and enumerate songs and singers that were popular. Focused and single-minded, Gaisberg was quick to recognise that it was from among these people that would emerge the consumers of his recordings. Attending performances at theatres, private parties and fêtes in different pockets of Calcutta, he began zooming in on probable singers.

That evening we heard another celebrated singer, *Goura Jan*, an Armenian Jewess who could sing in twenty languages and dialects. Her great hit that evening was an adaptation of "Silver Threads Among the Gold". Her fee was 300 rupees per evening and she used to make a brave show when she drove at sundown on the Maidan in a fine carriage and pair. Hers were among the six hundred records which proved a firm foundation for our new enterprise. ....She knew her own market value, as we found to our cost when we negotiated with her.<sup>7</sup>

Among the numerous singers identified and recorded by the American, from a makeshift studio in a city hotel, the most prominent were Gauhar Jan and Malka Jan---the latter charging 3000 rupees for her recordings. The five hundred songs recorded on wax masters during the Indian-leg of his Far Eastern recording sojourn were sent to the records pressing factory of GTL at Hanover, Germany.

Gaisberg was aware that the singers he recorded in India, however prominent in the colony, were unknown entities for the technicians in the German factory. For these technicians to have accurate, 'recorded' documentation on the singers' names---to make paper labels for the finished discs---he had asked the singers to announce their names, in English, at the end of their songs. Several discs from his recording visit have 'Made in Germany/Hanover' printed on their label and the signatory announcement by the singer---often rapidly uttered, lest the disc ran out of time---"*My name is Gauhar Jan*". Little did he realise that his foresight in surmounting a very practical task would turn into a stylistic signature, even a fad, in the times to come.

The finished records were shipped all the way back to India in the spring of 1903, three months after Gaisberg left India for Japan. Significantly, these 7 and 10 inch discs, larger in size than those sold in India during the previous decade, were inscribed with recordings only on one side. But they sold exceedingly well in the two largest cities of the colony, Calcutta and Bombay.

This fascinating, now well-known course of events begs the question: why did Fred Gaisberg tour India precisely in 1902?

Answering this seemingly chronological question makes us step back from recounting Gaisberg's accounts, and sift through the dynamics of the early history, and even pre-history, of recorded music in a plethora of regions: viz. in Britain, from where Gaisberg was sent; in America, where he started his career; and in British India, where he spent three months. For, the emergence of a business in recorded music in India was not an organic process. Neither was it purely the outcome of technological diffusion from the West, nor a consequence of the cultural entrenchment of the Raj; nor still, the consequence of British industrial expansion in a colony. It was a result, and the incremental result, of varying combinations of all these; and much more. As a corollary, it would be fruitful to grasp the milieu of encounters that shaped the dynamics of early recorded music in British India. To do so, one needs to begin by identifying the complex of contending forces---of technology, of entrepreneurship, of cultural practice---that co-determined the emergence of 'music on record'.

In the fading years of the 19th century, advertisements for Talking Machines in newspapers of Bombay and Calcutta were as unusual as the machines in these cities. The earliest local retailers, predominantly large dealers of western musical instruments, did not emphasise the

<sup>6</sup> GAISBERG (1942:54)

<sup>7</sup> GAISBERG (1942:55-56)

difference between the principal formats---the disc and the cylinder---as evident in their advertisements<sup>8</sup>. The brands most frequently advertising in English-language newspapers were Columbia, G.T.L. and, less so, Pathe.

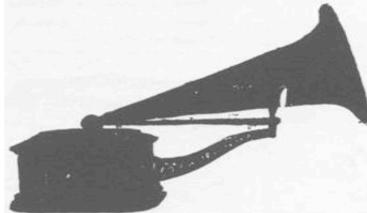
Until around 1901, the singular objective of these firms was to only sell machines in India; selling discs or cylinders of Indian music was remote to their commercial priorities. Firms remained content with replicating a uniform set of recordings, at their respective factories in Europe and America, for sales all over the world---given the advantage of scale this brought---including in India. Under these conditions, what existed was not a (recorded) music business, let alone a records business, but a Music Instruments business. The Talking Machine was another product in the large export trade of Western musical instruments, albeit more akin to the Pianola or Music Box due to its 'automated' nature.

After the turn of the century, two factors amended these primordial conditions.

Hitherto, the element of novelty was the prime factor for the Talking Machine's popularity in India. With improvements in equipment and recording quality, the perception of recorded music started changing from curiosity to avid attraction. But most of the discs and cylinders sold in the Indian market were 'English airs'---snatches of comic shows, acts of mimicry, songs and dance melodies etc; the records themselves were single-sided, with playing time of 90 to 120 seconds. Business was not necessarily profitable for all domestic retailers of this imported product<sup>9</sup>. But sensing a growing demand for 'Indian' music by the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, domestic retailers began pressing their overseas record suppliers for greater volumes and variety of local music.

On their part, for the Euro-American firms the necessity to sell local music was provoked from another condition that characterised the increasingly distinct market for recorded music. In the early years of the century, international trade in machines unfolded in a situation that was not only non-monopolistic but saw varying formats---the principal two being the disc-based and cylinder-based machines. Consequently, competition between leading Euro-American equipment makers equally signified a race between rivalling recording technologies, and therefore between formats of the 'Talker'<sup>10</sup>. Thus, precisely when the character of recorded music began being a matter of distinction for the small but interested Indian consumer-listener, the content of 'music on record' became the locus of attention for foreign entrepreneurs. In short, an inter-linked set of influences on the supply-side overlapped with the emergent demand for local music. And this was not unique to India, as the same story was un-spooling in other regions of Asia.

*Just Received.*  
**GRAPHOPHONE & PHONOGRAPHS.**



Columbia Graphophone from  
Rs. 50 to 125.  
Columbia Graphophone 10"  
Record, at Rs. 2-4 each.  
Columbia Graphophone 9"  
Record, at Rs. 1-4 each.  
Edison's Concert Phono-  
graphs, Rs. 175-  
Edison's Home Phonographs,  
Rs. 50.  
Edison's Standard Phono-  
graphs, Rs. 65.

**Esoofally Hiptoola & CO., Jewellers**  
6-2, Chowringhee & 10, Radha Bazaar, Calcutta.

In response, the first years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw entrepreneurial moves on two fronts: to capture emerging markets for recorded music; and, in the process, to ensure one format prevailed over the other. This brought a great deal of urgency among firms---hitherto competing to primarily sell machines---to aggregate a repertoire of recordings from outside the 'home' countries, in local languages and styles. In other words, recording 'native' music in all nooks and corners of the world became the new mantra for firms.

<sup>8</sup> For instance, see INDIAN MIRROR 1<sup>st</sup> Nov. 1898 Advertisement by Harold & Co. (p1)

<sup>9</sup> For instance, Mutoscope and Bioscope Company in Calcutta---who with S. Rose & Co. in Bombay were G.T.L.'s principal agents in India---were said to have accrued losses of £3000 in 1900; DE, S.K. (1990) **Gramophone in India: a brief history**; Uttisthata Press, Calcutta.

<sup>10</sup> MARTLAND, P. (1997) **Since Records Began: EMI the first 100 years**; Batsford, London

In October 1902, a few months after Gaisberg set out for India, C.J Hopkins---in-charge of Columbia's wholesale and export business---embarked on a yearlong global recording expedition<sup>11</sup>. Leaving London first for South Africa, he went up the east coast of Africa, from where he sailed to Colombo and India. Hopkins, unlike Gaisberg, was quick to realise that the search for 'new business' meant venturing into towns of the mid Gangetic plain, such as Lucknow and Kanpur, in addition to the three principal port cities. Much to his surprise, he found that in India Talking Machines of various formats were "as well-known as in Europe and the States"; and moreover, that his firm, Columbia, was selling more machines based on the cylinder format than the disc format. This was because the latter could play pre-recorded discs whose available repertoire still consisted of western music, while cylinder machines enabled people to make home recordings, on blank cylinders, of songs, chants and tunes of their choice.

The natives make their own records and there is consequently a big demand for blanks. The records so made are nearly all of them of a religious character and nearly all vocal. Needless to say they are in the native dialect. There are several dealers in Bombay making these records, and each native dealer has his own repertoire. They charge five rupees each for them, about six-eighths of your money.<sup>12</sup>

As much to counter any threats from cylinder machines as to consolidate the trade in disc-machines, the leading players in the latter from both sides of the Atlantic, Victor and GTL, decided to divide the world into two zones, where each had the sole right to sell their records. This unique practice, an early form of cartelization, had its own peculiar history. In 1900, Berliner's US Gramophone Co. lost a patent infringement suit, filed jointly by Columbia and Zonophone<sup>13</sup>, and was barred from manufacturing records in the US. Berliner's machine manufacturer, Eldridge Johnson, was left with a large assembly line and an inventory of machines with no records to play on; he filed a suit that year to be permitted to make records himself. Johnson won the case, and his new company---appropriately named Victor---was formed in early 1901. In the same year, Johnson and GTL struck a multi-layered pact: the gist of this arrangement was that GTL was guaranteed at least 50% of Johnson's current and future capacity of machines, plus 25% of profits<sup>14</sup>. But the implications for British India are to be located in another component of the deal---in the territorial rights to markets. As much to prevent competing with each other, as to jointly acquire a better niche in the globalising records industry, the world's markets were divided between the firms: GTL had the rights to sell in Europe, the British Empire, Russia and Japan; and Victor everywhere else<sup>15</sup>.

Thus, by 1901 the status of GTL was complex: it was neither a subsidiary of the American firm, nor did it compete with the latter; though all GTL's capital was raised in Britain, its principal managerial and technical personnel were American. The head office of GTL in London, did not manufacture anything! The machines it exported to India were assembled by importing parts from Victor in the US; and its miniscule collection of 'Indian' records, were pressed in Germany. All it had in London was a recording studio, and of course, a corporate office.

Importantly, GTL realised that while their 'hardware'---machines imported from Victor---could be exported the world over, the 'software'---its repertoire of discs---had to be customised for particular regions. This realisation stemmed from their experiences with the market for records

<sup>11</sup> *TMN* Vol. 6/81, Oct 1<sup>st</sup> 1908 'A Record Globe-Trotter' (p313). Before this epic journey, Hopkins had traveled through France, Belgium, Holland, and for 18 months in Russia. And since his world tour, he had also circumnavigated South America, remaining in this trade for 13 years of his life.

<sup>12</sup> *TMN* #11 Mar. 1904 'An Ambassador of Commerce: Charles Hopkins of Columbia' (p243-44) p243

<sup>13</sup> Zonophone was founded in 1899 by Frank Seaman on the basis of, industry legend says, designs and technology stolen from Berliner (Seaman's previous employee), and machines copied from Johnson. In his lawsuit, Seaman, allegedly in cahoots with Columbia, argued that patents held by Columbia concerning cylinders were applicable to any type of recording where a stylus vibrated in a groove. In 1900, Seaman obtained a restraining order on Berliner and Johnson to stop making discs and machines respectively. KOENIGSBERG, A. (1987) *The Patent History of the Phonograph, 1877-1912*; APM Press, New York. ALDRIDGE., B. (1964) *The Victor Talking Machine Company*; RCA Sales Corporation; GELATT, R. (1976) *The Fabulous Phonograph* (2nd rev. ed.; first publ. 1956) Macmillan, New York.

<sup>14</sup> ALDRIDGE (1964:45); for an analytical account on this, see JONES (1985:76-100).

<sup>15</sup> A not so minor amendment was made in 1907 when Victor took the much closer and lucrative Japanese territory from GTL, in return for (effectively) Africa. Such deals typified the practice of restrictive international agreements between US and European firms in the two decades before the First World War; see M. WILKINS (1970) *The Emergence of Multinational Enterprise*; Cambridge/Mass (I: pp 6-77).

within Britain, in Europe and in Asia<sup>16</sup>; from these specific encounters, newer ways of going about their business emerged.

In the race to record 'native' music, and thereby push their format over others, GTL resorted to a modus operandi history had witnessed before: they organised 'Recording Expeditions' to frontline countries of Europe, and thereafter to their colonies. For instance, in Russia GTL initially recorded folk music and bands, besides comic records. William Darby, assistant to Gaisberg during his India visit, was the first Berliner employee to make such an Expedition in the spring of 1899, from Berlin to Russia. But by end-1901, GTL's Russian branch realised that if well known Russian musicians were recorded then these disc-records could be sold at higher prices to buyers--- an overwhelming majority of whom were the richer, 'cultured' strata of the Tsarist aristocracy<sup>17</sup>. Based on the success of this approach, GTL sought to try it in another market. In the spring of 1902, it sent Fred Gaisberg to Italy to convince some of the reigning 'stars', initially hesitant to record, to sing for the horn. This recording expedition was clearly motivated by the sense of competition perceived by his firm in the early years of the century. Gaisberg was particularly keen to travel to Milan to hear a young singer who was creating a sensation, and possibly to making his records. On hearing this singer, Gaisberg was extremely impressed; but Enrico Caruso, 28 years old in 1902, wanted the unheard of fee of £100 for 10 records<sup>18</sup>. This session turned out to be one of the most important, if not the most important, in the early business of recorded music<sup>19</sup>.

Following the success of their Italian sojourn, GTL was bursting with confidence, and wanted to replay this strategy outside Europe. So, later that year, Gaisberg was packed off on a 'Far Eastern Recording Expedition', during which the first and most vital stop was British India.

## 2. The Conditions of Emergence

The significance of Fred Gaisberg's expedition should not be misconstrued as being the first to commercialise sound recording in India, as is often done<sup>20</sup>. It is more prudent to judge the historical weight of the American's forays into the British colony by looking at what it conveyed in as far as the commercial practices of foreign firms in India. What is noteworthy is not the strict sequence of events Gaisberg's expedition resulted in; rather, the overlapping set of activities it led to, and the existing phenomenon it acted upon, within India.

By the time Gaisberg's recordings were being vended in India, GTL realised two traits in foreign markets: that the modus operandi of recording expeditions to Russia, Italy and India bore immediate results; and that British India was a an important, and possibly large enough, potential market to be on the horizons of its Euro-American rivals. Learning from this, GTL undertook another Recording Expeditions to India in 1904-05, led by William Sinkler Darby--- the firm's first recording engineer to be sent on a 'recording expedition' from, as explained earlier, Berlin to Russia.

Recognising that business with British India was more extended and profitable than with most Asian countries, rival British firms---hitherto selling their 'English' repertoire of records in India---were not to be left behind. In parallel with GTL's forays, they embarked upon recording expeditions as well: either exclusively to India, or as part of their other Asian expeditions, with and without Indian agents 'officially' on board.

<sup>16</sup> For instance, despite the common language, American music and musicians were not always a success in Britain; Belgians complained about the Parisian accent in the records from GTL's French catalogue; and, recordings in southern China did not sell in the north of the kingdom.

<sup>17</sup> TMN #4 Aug. 1903 'Talking Machine Talks: No.4 - The Gramophone and Typewriter Ltd.' (p59).

<sup>18</sup> The current scale was in the order of \$2-5-10 a selection. Despite GTL's London office refusing to pay such an amount, the engineer took a gamble. These red labelled discs, released in March of 1902, sold at double the price of reigning black labelled records. ALDRIDGE (1964:51-52).

<sup>19</sup> Caruso's records are estimated to have been the biggest contributor to GTL's success in these years of bitter competition among European firms. Equally, these records proved potent for the singer's career; the record 'E Lucevan Le Stelle' fetched Caruso his first contract with the Metropolitan Opera Company in New York; MARTLAND (1997) **Since Records Began: EMI the first 100 years**; Batsford, London.

<sup>20</sup> JOSHI (1988), MANUAL (1988)



In 1904 Nicole Freres from London sent a recording expedition to India. Originally a manufacturer and exporter of musical instruments, Nicole was the first firm to manufacture disc records in Britain<sup>21</sup>; it had been recording music in practically every European country, something that its chief, C.H. Krieger, saw as an endeavour at continually enlarging the “borders” of the firm<sup>22</sup>. Its expedition to India in 1904 was led by John Watson Hawd---until recently the Calcutta Branch Manager of GTL---and Stephen Carl Porter and recorded musicians in Calcutta. The following year, in September 1905, “Nicole Freres (India)” was registered in London as a separate company to acquire the Indian branch of Nicole Freres’s business for the manufacture and dealership in Talking Machines<sup>23</sup>.

The existence of a potentially, large market in British India was also sensed by entrepreneurs and traders from across the Atlantic. In 1905, The American Talking Machine Co. sent a recordist to India, after touring China<sup>24</sup>. A race was on to can greater amounts and variety of ‘native’ music from what was increasingly recognised as the largest market for records in the Old world. The importance given by Euro-American firms to produce ‘Foreign Catalogues’ became the key to their forays into, and success in, the nascent records markets in countries like India.

Thus, there emerged a new set of conditions governing the business of this ‘new media’ in India.

For, until 1902 foreign firms were content with selling ‘western’ music and oral forms recorded abroad, at best some ‘native airs’ perceived to have a market in India. But the Recording Expeditions brought alive the demand for pre-recorded music that was tucked away in British India. More precisely, the spate of expeditions by leading European firms concertedly succeeded in opening up India as market for ‘native’ records: i.e. music recorded in the colony but manufactured in abroad. Not surprisingly, from around 1905 western trade magazines---hitherto concerned with activities and opportunities in the Atlantic world alone---began carrying frequent reportage, interviews and editorials on the significance of selling in, and investing to sell in, the Old and New worlds.

The race between these individuals and the emanating dynamics of trade it fuelled, had two, interrelated consequences. First, it rapidly propelled the expansion of this business within India. This was equally true of other ‘emerging’ markets of recorded music during the mid 1900s, be they Imperial territories like Australia, or kingdoms like China. And this propulsion took different forms. Unlike GTL, which sent expedition after expedition, or Columbia, whose early Indian operations lacked coherence and persistence, Pathe chose another path into the Indian market. Central to its strategy for expansion, was an appropriate groom, ideally an indigenous entrepreneur in the same sector. Pathe went into partnership with Hemendra Mohan Bose, one the earliest importers and dealers of Talking Machines in Calcutta who subsequently ventured into making non-commercial, cylinder recordings on imported

<sup>21</sup> Others were making only the master disc in Britain, the rest of the processes being completed abroad---like GTL at its Hanover facility.

<sup>22</sup> TMN Vol. 2/10 Feb. 1905 ‘The Nicole Disc: An Interview with G.H. Krieger’ (p413, 415)

<sup>23</sup> TMN Vol. 3/30 Oct. 1906 ‘Trade Topics’ (p257)

<sup>24</sup> TMN Vol. 3/28 Aug. 1905 ‘Trade Topics’ (p151)

machines. With the assistance of Pathe, Bose transformed his interest into a commercial venture; and Pathé got a foothold into the market of Bangla recordings. From 1905-06 their cylinders were based on the New Model Phonograph, and were aggressively advertised in Calcutta's newspapers by his concern 'The Talking Machine Hall'.

The social basis of domestic entrepreneurship was different from that of the foreign firms: they were equivalent of modern day venture capitalists--- investors, or traders unconnected with the business of musical instruments---for whom the incipient business offered investment opportunities, unrestricted by government regulation and monopoly interests. Importantly, the earliest domestic ventures in recorded music were born largely through collaborations between an indigenous entrepreneur and foreign records manufacturer, such as between Bose and Pathe of France. By 1907, we do finally see the onset of Indian firms producing pre-recorded music and manufacturing disc-records, albeit at cottage-industry scale---the foremost labels being James, Singer and Sun Disc records<sup>25</sup>. Looking at all domestic firms we find those owned by entrepreneurs in Bombay were able to build a better place in this business (due to, among other factors, their pre-existing overseas networks) than those started by entrepreneurs in Calcutta. This illustrates the general observation that domestic industries, across different sectors, found a fertile germinating ground in the new economic space created by the Empire in Bombay, unlike in Calcutta where the imperial division of economic space was perfect<sup>26</sup>.

On the other hand, and often as a result, such trade proved a vital catalyst in the growth of individual, especially European, firms. The growing consumption of machine and records in 'foreign' and/or 'colonial' countries contributed immensely to the expansion of leading Euro-American companies. The balance sheet of GTL amply illustrates this: in 1906-07, when its net profit climbed to £246733 from £53885 in 1901, a staggering 60% of the firm's profits came from outside Britain<sup>27</sup>! And this was before Fred Gaisberg's younger brother, started out on his recording expedition to India--- GTL's third foray in four years.

Setting out for India in 1906, William was well aware that GTL's previous two recording expeditions to India---by his brother in 1902 and by Darby in 1906---"had only touched centres, such as Calcutta and Bombay"<sup>28</sup>.

Our tour of 1906 was something in the nature of exploring--- in the way of seeking out fresh native talent. Our party consisted of three Europeans, a native writer, and four native boys whom we had hired at Calcutta--- with an untold amount of kit and baggage.<sup>29</sup>

On what was his first assignment outside the shadow of his more revered sibling, William Gaisberg was determined to take the race for the Indian ears, and pockets, into the unknown hinterland. The opening page of his three part travelogue, reproduced in the firm's in-house magazine ten years later, has a photograph of William along with his crew---the leader clad in a safaari uniform, tie and wide hard-brow hat, an archetype hero from the lore of "mad dogs and Englishmen". Perhaps unsure about the success of his ventures into the hinterland of the colony, the photograph was modestly captioned "We leave Calcutta"---aptly encapsulating the spirit of what was going to be an expedition within the Expedition.

The American's years in London had shaped other aspects of his being besides the colonial attire. In typical British fashion, his travelogues almost immediately zoom in on that favourite English theme: the Weather. This obsession ceaselessly punctuates his rich chronicle of the conditions of travel and stay, his trysts with 'native' music and musicians, during the weeks spent outside the capital city. The United Provinces and parts of Punjab, reeling under the partial failure of monsoons, were crucial to William's itinerary in the North. But it is difficult to pinpoint whether it was the weather, the music, or the music-culture that was the biggest torture for the American born engineer.

I have painful recollections of our first singing party, which started about ten o'clock at

<sup>25</sup> KINNEAR (2000)

<sup>26</sup> R.K. RAY (1992) 'Introduction', **Enterprise and Industry in India**; OUP, New Delhi (pp1-69) p38

<sup>27</sup> MARTLAND (1997) **Since Records Began: EMI the first 100 years**; Batsford, London

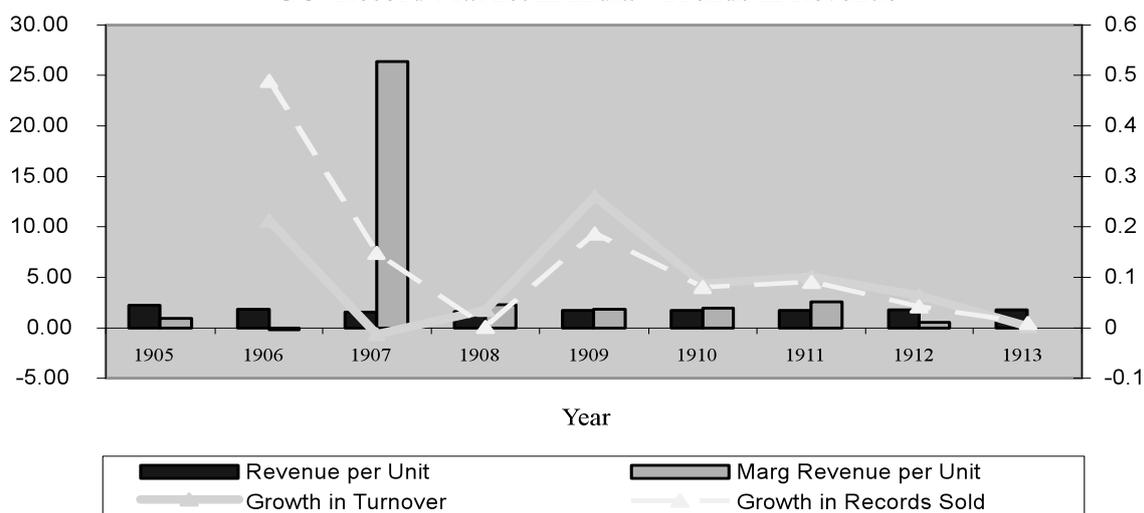
<sup>28</sup> William Gaisberg's expedition was two-staged---in the summer of 1906 and winter of 1907---as he succumbed to the heat during the first leg, and returned to London.

<sup>29</sup> THE VOICE Vol. 2/? 1918 'THE ROMANCE OF RECORDING: INDIA -- CRTICLE I' BY WILLIAM C. GAISBERG (p7)

night and lasted until the small hours of the morning, and was not finished even then. You must remember that we went out to India to furnish records for the natives, and not for Europeans, so that during our whole tour we were associated practically entirely with the natives, and during this first party of ours our bungalow was crowded with natives. European chairs were not used; we all had to sit on our haunches. Just try this for ten minutes and see how painful it is!<sup>30</sup>

From Calcutta, he went first to the heart of what was once North India's cultural hub, the capital of Awadh, Lucknow; and from there, his entourage went to Ferozepore in Punjab, where he recorded about 200 titles in two languages, over three weeks. His journey from northern India to the Deccan meandered through cities of the Gangetic plain, the west coast and the peninsula. In Hyderabad, Gaisberg and his team made about 200 new records in Telegu, "Canarese", Marathi, Arabic and Persian---a clear sign of the cosmopolitan character of Hyderabad. Unlike his sibling, William was more charitable towards the melodies he heard; Indian music, he observed, "is not particularly pleasing to the European ear but it arrests attention", and in many ways "is unspoilt by European ideas". From Hyderabad the expedition moved further south to Madras, where William noticed the marked difference in the features of people and the "entirely different tone of voice" compared to those from northern India. Assisted by George Dillnutt---who had played the same role with the elder Gaisberg---William recorded 300 discs in Tamil, Telegu and Canarese, harvesting a rich repertoire of the much needed South Indian recordings for GTL.

GC' Record Market in India - Trends in Revenue



But other players lurking in the Indian market were also on the ascent, as was the case abroad. In Europe, by the middle of the first decade, the German production machinery was at its zenith. So much so that the former commercial monopoly of Britain, sometimes even in its colonies, was under threat, and captions like 'German Peril' were common in the press<sup>31</sup>. By 1906 the total production in Germany of Talking Machines for inland and export stood at 250,000 units a month; and that of Records at 1.5 million units a month<sup>32</sup>.

In 1906, Beka Records from Berlin announced its sole agent in India, Burma and Ceylon---Vallabhdas, Lakhimdas & Company of Bombay<sup>33</sup>. Established in 1898 by Vallabhdas---then an importer of machines and discs, the largest in western India---it was a partnership between the founder and Lakhimdas Rowji Taitsee, a trader/investor in Bombay. But it was the other German firm International Talking Machine GmbH---recognized by its 'Odeon' label---that had been increasingly active in India. In the gradually proliferating records market of India, the two leading German firms were as much pitted against each other as against other European firms

<sup>30</sup> *The Voice* Vol. 2/? 1918 'The Romance of Recording: INDIA -- Article I' by William C. Gaisberg.

<sup>31</sup> But generalizations are misleading, since the impact of foreign competition on British firms varied with industries, and within sectors of an industry; ALDCROFT, D. (1968) "British Industry and Foreign Competition, 1875-1914" in D. Aldcroft (Ed.) **The Development of British Industry and Foreign Competition, 1875-1914**; University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1968 (p28-29).

<sup>32</sup> *TMN* Vol. 5/58 May 1907 (p147)

<sup>33</sup> *TMN* Vol. 4/40 May 1906 ??? (p153) 'Trade Topics'.

like GTL, Pathe and Nicole, and less so American ones like Columbia and Edison. By 1906, when the makers of Odeon released its 'South Indian' catalogue, it had established itself as the principal rival to GTL in British India. This was precisely why during his expedition William Gaisberg found it necessary, despite his meandering itinerary, bouts of bad health and other delays, to keep his "most important dates, to travel South"<sup>34</sup>. The Odeon-GTL rivalry was doubly intense because they were the only two among the big firms operating in the colony to make both, machines and discs<sup>35</sup>. In 1907, two years after International Talking Machine GmbH had perfected a new material to make disc-records called 'Empedite'<sup>36</sup>, it sent a recording expedition to India.

By mid 1907, Talking Machine importers in India became more vocal in asking foreign records manufacturers to devote more attention to recording Indian songs, for which they found a growing demand<sup>37</sup>. On the supply-side, a correspondent of the 'Zeitschrift fur Instrumentenbau' drew attention to the fact that records in at least five different Indian languages readily commanded sale; he further clarified for German manufacturers

".....even if the Western nations refuse to class the screams and cries which pass for Indian songs as music" they gratify the taste of the majority of record buyers in India.<sup>38</sup>

Motivated possibly in part by this but in large part by not wanting to be undone by its national and international rivals, Beka dispatched an expedition to India. Its recordings in the winter of 1907-08 harvested a repertoire of 400 records, including a large number of songs from popular proscenium-theatre. The German firms had finally taken their battles to India, and by the end of 1907 India was next only to Britain and France in the quantum of discs imported from Germany<sup>39</sup>. More striking is the fact that while in 1906 GTL catered to the largest chunk of demand for records, by 1908 Beka had amassed a repertoire of 1000 recordings from India---allegedly the same as GTL had<sup>40</sup>.

Perhaps this forced GTL later that year to send George Dillnut to India---who, having assisted the Gaisberg brothers in India, was now rich in experience---to lead its fourth recording expedition to British India.

### 3. The Creation of Discourse

Modern enterprises do not only make products; intrinsic to their processes of production is a drive to create value-systems for, and around, their products. Signalling a radically distinct mode of musical activity in India, record firms were compelled to create---in addition to new business practices for recording and vending---new mechanisms of retailing and marketing what was produced. The key business practice that united vending and marketing into a seamless continuum was advertising.



<sup>34</sup> *THE VOICE* Vol. 2/3, 1918 'The Romance of Recording: India - Article II' by William C. Gaisberg (p7).

<sup>35</sup> *TMN* Vol. 3/36 15<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1906

<sup>36</sup> *TMN* Vol. 3/28 Aug. 1905 (p153)

<sup>37</sup> *TMN* Vol. 5/60 July 1907 'Trade Topics' (p227)

<sup>38</sup> *TMW* Vol. 3/4 Apr. 1907 'India a Fertile Country' (p1)

<sup>39</sup> *TMN* Vol. 5/67 1<sup>st</sup> Dec. 1907 (p534)

<sup>40</sup> *TMN* Vol. 6/77 June 1908 'Notes from India' (p148)

From the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, advertising was a growing dimension of commercial and industrial activities in India. Unlike today, the norm was for newspapers to carry advertisements on the first and last few pages, such that all news was, so to say, bundled between the advertisements. By the early years of 20<sup>th</sup> century, we observe a profusion of advertisements in English and vernacular newspapers. Firms and retailers aimed to extend commercial messages beyond product-information, and thus sought to invent fresh, arresting, informational discourses to convey the merits of their products. This often led them to ape the grammar of news reportage and thereby, along with the invisible hand of the page designers, astutely blur the distinction between news and advertisements. Some readers were uncomfortable with this evolving landscape of newspaper advertising, as the following observation in 1903 demonstrates:

Kanhi kuch log aisa bhi karne lage hain ki apne vigyapan samachar-patron mein aisi riti par samacharon hi ki bhanti aur unhon-ke beech mein chapva dete hain ki teen chauthai padhe jaane ke pashchyaat pathal ko gyaat hota hai ki samachar nahin, vigyapan hai<sup>41</sup>

Sceptical about the motives and mechanisms of advertising, these readers were convinced that advertisements, particularly of medicines, were grossly misleading. The only one to benefit from this explosion in advertising, they conclude, "is the Newspaper who gets a good income so that they can provide it to people at low prices"<sup>42</sup>.

As a greater number and assortment of imported, consumer goods got retailed for the rising upper middle class and British residents, the practice of advertising caught on. Glancing at advertisements in domestic newspapers provides a prism to all the hectic activities in the machine and records trade. By the middle of the first decade we see a rapid increase in the number and frequency of advertisements for machines and records, by a plurality of concerns: agents of foreign firms, foreign firms themselves, domestic record manufacturers, and of course, local shops and trading houses. Some retailers from the three large cities started to advertise in newspapers from other cities, including in those from smaller towns---the first sign of an embryonic 'national market' in recorded music.

However, a narrowly economic take on advertising as a distributive mechanism alone does not offer much purchase in our analyses. While advertising was a component of the costs accrued to a manufacturer, and thus part of the process of production, advertising was equally a part of the process of manufacturing the consumers of these records. Besides shaping the selling of hardware, advertisements simultaneously sought to shape tastes---of recorded music as a symbolic form, and of listening as a cultural practice<sup>43</sup>. This lends advertisements as a site to grasp the commercial and ideological discourses constituting, and emanating from, the milieu in which the Gramophone proliferated in India---as much as they contributed to mechanisms therein. However, since advertisements do not involve merely acts of representation, translation or transliteration, they necessitate---and this is a methodological point---being scrutinised beyond their textual and visual embodiment<sup>44</sup>.

One of the central challenges in the historical study of advertising is to demonstrate and explain how "the discourse through and about objects" evolved in a particular milieu<sup>45</sup>. In our case, this entails unravelling how advertisements mediated values and information on 'music on record'. However, a sweep of advertisements over a decade suggests their discourse variedly emphasised a media technology, a cultural practice, a knowledge form and a political object. In other words, ingrained in the propagation of recorded music was an acknowledgement that 'music on record' did not represent an ordinary product. We therefore feel it pertinent to examine the contexts and content of the gramophone's commercial representation during the years before and during the recording expeditions.

We should remember that before the Gramophone, the quintessential symbol of a 'techno-

<sup>41</sup> SARASWATI Oct. 1903 'Vigyapano ki dhoom' by Shyambihari Mishra & Sukhdevbehari Mishra (p348-353) p350

<sup>42</sup> *ibid*, p352

<sup>43</sup> This was the logic driving the entrepreneurs in Europe and America, albeit reiterated more by editors of American trade journals.

<sup>44</sup> Our intention is not to scrutinise representation alone, such as in FARRELL (1997). Rather, to understand advertisements and advertising's part of, and in intimate empirical relationship with, elements of the wider political economy of recording music and merchandising machines; see PARTHASARATHI (2005).

<sup>45</sup> WILLIAM LEISS, STEPHEN KLINE & SUT JHALLY (1990) **Social Communication in Advertising**; Routledge, New York

cultural' music practice was the Pianola--- the latest addition to the series of 19<sup>th</sup> century inventions in the mechanical reproduction of music. Akin to the Piano and the Pianola, owning a Gramophone was as much a sign of wealth as of social status in India---what Fred Gaisberg had termed "a hallmark of affluence"<sup>46</sup>. Whereas the Piano stood for an active and informed musical practice---which required skill, knowledge and labour---the attraction of the Pianola was its automated musicality; thus listening to, or playing along with, melodies churned out by a Pianola was portrayed as recreation, especially for those not skilled in music. Numerous advertisements for the Pianola and Music Boxes dating from the 1890s evidently demonstrate that the conditions for the commercial propagation of 'mechanised music'---a colonial intervention---existed in India well before the advent of the Gramophone. The records trade built upon this fertile terrain through two arguments, as illustrated in the following copy from an advertisement.

Reasons why people buy Gramophones and Gramophone Records

A desire to hear songs or musical selections that are familiar

To hear some song or pieces of music that you know well, but wish to listen to some particular performer's manner of rendering

A wish to study cultured music, excerpts and numbers from the great opera and composers, sung by the world's most famous artists or played by the master orchestras and bands of the principal music centres

To enjoy the best options in your own homes

Every Gramophone Record is a Work of Art<sup>47</sup> (*original underline*)

The first argument stemmed from projecting 'music on record' as a means of pleasure, to hear singers from distant cities and music from aspired cultures within the comfort of the home. And the second, by pitching the 'automation' of the disembodied voice provided by the Gramophone as being advantageous for both, learning and listening to music. In other words, recorded music was projected as being, not only a superior form of consuming music but, in tune with the wider technological modernity of the times.

We also recollect that before 1902, the singular objective of European and American manufacturers was to sell, not recorded music, but machines in India. It is thus not surprising to find that in their earliest advertisements, local dealers and importers simply listed Talking Machines as an additional product along with Harmoniums, Organs and Music Boxes<sup>48</sup>. By 1899, we see a primordial 'product differentiation' whence some vendors like Paul & Sons in Calcutta put out separate advertisements for Phonographs and Gramophones<sup>49</sup>. A handful of these advertisements occasionally portrayed visuals of the machines, and carried rudimentary pronouncements on the virtues of this 'new media'; these pronouncements were predominantly rationalistic and the written text was the core of this explanation: viz. "They Permanently RECORD HUMAN VOICES and reproduce them naturally"<sup>50</sup>. Such an emphasis enabled the discursive agencies to play upon the possibility of people wanting to sing or speak themselves into permanence. Thus, advertisements provided a phenomenological take on the powers of audiography; they reiterated a consciousness of the way recording was transforming aurality qua aurality. This consciousness stemmed from the use of both, the cylinder-based machine that enabled non-professionals to capture the spoken word, and the disc-machine that could only replay pre-recorded sounds.

Moving away from evaluating the emphases on language in advertisements leads us to other insights. During the mid 1890s it was rare for newspaper advertisements to have **visuals of Talking Machines**, or of a number of models of machines<sup>51</sup>; even at the beginning of the 20th century, and for consumer goods in general, an image system around products was a nascent phenomenon in the commercial landscape of British India. But from the years of the recording expeditions, we see a definite change in the incorporation of visuals of machines in English

<sup>46</sup> GAISBERG (1942:57)

<sup>47</sup> CAPITAL 5 Nov. 1908 Advertisement by The Gramophone Company: 'Music for the love of it' (p929)

<sup>48</sup> INDIAN MIRROR 1 Nov. 1898: Advertisement by Harold & Co. (p1)

<sup>49</sup> INDIAN MIRROR 12 July 1899: Advertisement by Paul & Sons "The Phonograph" (p1);

<sup>50</sup> (*original caps*) INDIAN MIRROR 2 Aug. 1899: Advertisement by Dwarin & Son "Phonograph and Graphophone" (p1).

<sup>51</sup> This was not due to the incipient state of print-advertising technology, and/or that of advertising practice in general. For, during these years the same newspapers carried many visually rich advertisements for other products: be they three-column photographs---prominently in advertisements for Organs---or detailed pencil sketches, like in advertisements for Dewars whisky showing men attired in a suit socialising in a 'drawing room' with glasses in their hands.

language newspapers. The qualitative and quantitative aspects of this change involved an increase in column-space of the graphic, greater visual detailing of the product and the greater frequency of publication of such visually centred advertisements. Of significance in the visual constitution of the advertisements was the entry of the now legendary 'His Masters' Voice' logo--depicting a dog listening to a Gramophone<sup>52</sup>---during 1903, along with GTL's existing 'Recording Angels' trademark.

Wanting to extend commercial messages beyond merely propagating product information, firms gradually had to invent new and more persuasive, informational discourses arguing the benefits of their products. Agents of foreign firms and local vendors alike chose a varying set of semantics to underscore the quality and external finesse of their machines: especially their tone arms--a vital component---and brass horns---vital to the gadget's visual appeal<sup>53</sup>. Others sought to expand the market by festive offers, most notably during the Pooja season in Calcutta and Christmas in Madras. This was as much an indication of the existing competition, as the recognition of the spending patterns of the trendy upper middle classes, who formed the bulk of the consumers of this 'new media'. Soon foreign firms like GTL too realised the importance of advertising aggressively and intensively during local festivals---like the Pooja season in Bengal---as they were used to in Britain during Christmas.

From 1902 to 1908, during the expedition years, we also find gradual yet concerted efforts in advertisements to fashion a harmonious transition between the inherited modes of musical practice and the burgeoning culture around recorded music. The proliferating sales of machines, and the advent of cheaper machines in the market, led to the entry of successively newer social profiles of consumers; in tandem, advertisements increasingly began suggesting that recorded music could accompany, or even enhance, pre-existing forms of entertainment introduced. The most common illustration of this was records of melodies based on the Waltz, what were called 'Dance Records'. The advantage of these lay, as one advertisement proclaimed, in enabling the "general public in out stations where a Good Band is often unprocurable, to enjoy a Dance to music played by the finest Bands"<sup>54</sup>. With Dance Records, mimicking colonial high culture became less dear; it was cheaper to play recorded music during private parties than to hire bands<sup>55</sup>. What we see is commercial representations by the records industry seeking to create a synergy between the aspirations about entertainment and the economic rationality of recorded music. Importantly, this rested on an evolving set of foci: that this new technology could have varied uses, and that the passive listening of music was not necessarily central to its principal application.

Amidst all this, fascinating is the changing pronouncements in the advertisements of the Talking Machine Hall, which sold the cylinder format by Hemendra Bose. In its earliest years, the firm chose to capitalise upon the familiarity and popularity of the names behind the music; thus, its advertisements highlighted the names of prominent people in their repertoires, viz. Rabindra Nath Tagore, Dwijendra Lall Roy, Lall Chand Bural et al. However, tempered by the rising Swadeshi wave during the second half of the first decade, we spot a gradual repositioning by the Talking Machine Hall. From mid-1906, its advertisements carried many a jingoist rhetoric: "Records made in your own country", "...much superior to records made by foreign artists..." or simply, "Swadeshi records"<sup>56</sup>.

<sup>52</sup> This logo had its roots in Francis Barraud's 1895 painting, the eponymous canvas of Nipper and the phonograph; through a sequence of compulsions and interests, adoptions and adaptations, a work of art had ultimately gotten transformed into a commercial insignia; *THE VOICE* Vol. 8/9 Sept. 1924: 'The Story of 'His Masters' Voice' by Alfred Clark (p3-5).

<sup>53</sup> Retailers like Mullick Brothers in Calcutta spelt out in their advertisements the technical quality of products in more general terms: viz. 'no metallic sound', 'new patented tapered arm' and 'improved records'; see *ABP* 2 Jan. 1905: Advertisement by Mullick Brothers 'Agents: The GTL' (p11); *ABP* 19 Sept. 1905 Advertisement by Mullick Brothers (p8)

<sup>54</sup> *CAPITAL* 3 Dec. 1908: Advertisement by The Gramophone Company 'Gramophone and Band Music' (p1143). This advertisement goes on to specify that on purchasing the listed set of "Dance Programme Records", 100 "Ball Programmes" would come free.

<sup>55</sup> Although an individual's investment in machines varied could range from Rs.40 to Rs. 1600, the recurrent costs on purchasing records was comparable with the price of one ticket to a Concert or a Ball.

<sup>56</sup> Three advertisements by 'The Talking Machine Hall' in *ABP*: 30<sup>th</sup> Apr.1906, 21<sup>st</sup> May 1906 and 3<sup>rd</sup> Jan. 1907.

## Conclusion

We began this paper by recognising that studying the formative contours of the business of recorded music called for addressing the making of two inter-related objects: of the principal cultural form under investigation---recorded music---and that contributing to its wider circulation viz. advertisements.

The practice of Recording Expeditions, aimed at expanding the repertoire of recordings, was an innovative means of garnering surplus. Central to the aims of the roving recordists was sourcing a specific object---music---and bringing back a unique product, wax discs. Once brought back, these were processed through many stages<sup>57</sup>, like any other commodity, before being replicated in large numbers into the finished product---records. Thus, in its essence, Recording Expeditions involved the export from India of disembodied music as a 'raw material', and the import of 'music on record' as a finished product; consequently, this business practice was greatly in tune with the wider dynamics of colonial extraction. And in this process, the role of the roving recordist resembled that of traders, involved as they were in identifying, sourcing and buying the requisite raw materials.

While these forms of extraction---financial, symbolic and material---contributed to the emergent redefinition of the economic organisation of musical entertainment, this redefinition itself rested on the creation of a commodity system in music. This scenario, unfolding in a little over 10 years, began altering not only the nature of music as a cultural practice but, through it, the epistemology of what constituted music and musical entertainment. We found that much before the physical advent of the Talking Machine in India there existed an image-system of music-making instruments, which prepared the ground for a glut of advertising discourses around the Gramophone. This nudged us to incorporate an understanding of the cultural and ideological representation of recorded music, something that was a crucial structuring element in entrepreneurship around early recorded music<sup>58</sup>. In doing so, we emphasised the dialectics between the commercial discourses on musical instruments pre-dating the Gramophone and the fresh set of discursive practices accompanying machines and records. We realised that advertisements created a landscape of value systems to which, and within which, individuals were addressed in their overlapping identities of a consumer, a listener, a technophile and a nationalist. Having done so, we found that this rich commercial imagination of machines and recorded music overtime came to complement the wider order within which the entrepreneurial dynamics of recorded music itself had germinated.

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<sup>57</sup> During the first half of the 1900s, tasks of processing wax recordings and replicating the stamper by firms, often took place in different locations. For instance, where as the wax discs brought back by Gaisberg were processed into metal stampers at GTL's facility in London, the master-discs were then shipped to another destination---its factory in Hannover---where the finished product was manufactured.

<sup>58</sup> Elsewhere we have shown that it was the conditional outcomes of the relationship between the expanding contours of, and contests within, the expeditionary forces that account for the changing grammar of advertisements; see PARTHASARATHI, V. (2005) "Construing a 'New Media' Market: Merchandising Recorded Music, 1900-1911" in B. BEL, B. DAS, V. PARTHASARATHI & G. POITEVIN (Ed.) *Communication Processes - Volume 1: Media and Mediation*; Sage, New Delhi.