

**Centenary Library  
Bande Mataram. Vol. 1**

**New Lamps for Old—9**

THE Civilian Order, which accounts itself, and no doubt justly, the informing spirit of Anglo-India, is credited in this country with quite an extraordinary degree of ability and merit, so much so that many believe it to have come down to us direct from heaven. And it is perhaps on this basis that in their dealings with Indians, — whom being moulded of a clay entirely terrestrial, one naturally supposes to be an inferior order of creatures, — they permit themselves a very liberal tinge of presumption and arrogance. Without disputing their celestial origin, one may perhaps be suffered to hint that eyes unaffected by the Indian sun, will be hard put to it to discover the pervading soul of magnificence and princeliness in the moral and intellectual style of these demigods. The fact is indeed all the other way. The general run of the Service suffers by being recruited through the medium of Competitive Examination: its tone is a little vulgar, its character a little raw, its achievement a little second-rate. Harsh critics have indeed said more than this; nay, has not one of themselves, has not Mr. Rudyard Kipling, a blameless Anglo-Indian, spoken, and spoken with distressing emphasis to the same effect? They have said that it moves in an atmosphere of unspeakable boorishness and mediocrity. That is certainly strong language and I would not for a moment be thought to endorse it; but there is, as I say, just a small sediment of truth at the bottom which may tend to excuse, if not to justify, this harsh and unfriendly criticism. And when one knows the stuff of which the Service is made, one ceases to wonder at it. A shallow schoolboy stepping from a cramming establishment to the command of high and difficult affairs, can hardly be expected to give us anything magnificent or princely. Still less can it be expected when the sons of small tradesmen are suddenly promoted from the counter to govern great provinces. Not that I have any fastidious prejudice against small tradesmen. I simply mean that the best education men of that class can get in England, does not adequately qualify a raw youth to rule over millions of his fellow-beings. Bad in training, void of culture, in instruction poor, it is in plain truth a sort of education that leaves him with all his original imperfections on his head, unmannerly, uncultivated, unintelligent. But in the Civil Service, with all its vices and shortcomings, one does find, as

perhaps one does not find elsewhere, rare and exalted souls detached from the failings of their order, who exhibit the qualities of the race in a very striking way; not geniuses certainly, but swift and robust personalities, rhetorically powerful, direct, forcible, endowed to a surprising extent with the energy and self-confidence which are the heirlooms of their nation; men in short who give us England — and by England I mean the whole Anglo-Celtic race — on her really high and admirable side. Many of these are Irish or Caledonian; others are English gentlemen of good blood and position, trained at the great public schools, who still preserve that fine flavour of character, scholarship and power, which was once a common possession in England, but threatens under the present dispensation to become sparse or extinct. Others again are veterans of the old Anglo-Indian school, moulded in the larger traditions and sounder discipline of a strong and successful art who still keep some vestiges of the grand old Company days, still have something of a great and noble spirit, something of an adequate sense how high are the affairs they have to deal with and how serious the position they are privileged to hold. It was one of these, one endowed with all their good gifts, it was Mr. Allan Hume, a man acute and vigorous, happy in action and in speech persuasive, an ideal leader, who prompted, it may be by his own humane and lofty feelings, it may be by a more earthly desire of present and historic fame, took us by the hand and guided us with astonishing skill on our arduous venture towards preeminence and power. Mr. Hume, I have said, had all the qualities that go to make a fine leader in action. If only he had added to these the crowning gifts, reflectiveness, ideas, a comprehensive largeness of vision! Governing force, that splendid distinction inherited by England from her old Norman barons, governing force and the noble gifts that go along with it, are great things in their way, but they are not the whole of politics. Ideas, reflection, the political reason count for quite as much, are quite as essential. But on these, though individual Englishmen, men like Bolingbroke, Arnold, Burke, have had them pre-eminently, the race has always kept a very inadequate hold: and Mr. Hume is distinguished from his countrymen, not by the description of his merits, but by their degree. His original conception, I cannot help thinking, was narrow and impolitic.

He must have known, none better, what immense calamities may often be ripening under a petty and serene outside. He must have been aware, none better, when the fierce pain of hunger and oppression cuts to the bone what awful elemental passions may start to life in the mildest, the most docile proletariates. Yet he chose practically to ignore his knowledge; he conceived it as his business to remove a merely political inequality, and strove to uplift

the burgess into a merely isolated predominance. That the burgess should strive towards predominance, nay, that for a brief while he should have it, is only just, only natural: the mischief of it was that in Mr. Hume's formation the proletariat remained for any practical purpose a piece off the board. Yet the proletariat is, as I have striven to show, the real key of the situation. Torpid he is and immobile; he is nothing of an actual force, but he is a very great potential force, and whoever succeeds in understanding and eliciting his strength, becomes by the very fact master of the future. Our situation is indeed complex and difficult beyond any that has ever been imagined by the human intellect; but if there is one thing clear in it, it is that the right and fruitful policy for the burgess, the only policy that has any chance of eventual success, is to base his cause upon an adroit management of the proletariat. He must awaken and organise the entire power of the country and thus multiply infinitely his volume and significance, the better to attain supremacy as much social as political. Thus and thus only will he attain to his legitimate station, not an egoist class living for itself and in itself, but the crown of the nation and its head.

But Mr. Hume saw things in a different light, and let me confess out of hand, that once he had got a clear conception of his business, he proceeded in it with astonishing rapidity, sureness and tact. The clear-cut ease and strong simplicity of his movements were almost Roman; no crude tentatives, no infelicitous bungling, but always a happy trick of hitting the right nail on the head and that at the first blow. Roman too was his principle of advancing to a great object by solid and consecutive gradations. To begin by accustoming the burgess as well as his adversaries to his own corporate reality, to proceed by a definitive statement of his case to the Viceregal government, and for a final throw to make a vehement and powerful appeal to the English parliament, an appeal that should be financed by the entire resources of middle-class India and carried through its stages with an iron heart and an obdurate resolution, expending moreover infinite energy, — so and so only could the dubious road Mr. Hume was treading, lead to anything but bathos and anticlimax. Nothing could be happier than the way in which the initial steps were made out. To be particularly obstreperous about his merits and his wrongs is certainly the likeliest way for a man to get a solid idea of his own importance and make an unpleasant impression on his ill-wishers. And for that purpose, for a blowing of trumpets in concert, for a self-assertion persistent, bold and clamorous, the Congress, however incapable in other directions may be pronounced perfectly competent; nay, it was the ideal thing. The second step was more difficult. He had to frame somehow a wording of our case at once bold and cautious, so as to hit Anglo-India in its weak place, yet properly sauced so as

not to offend the palate, grown fastidious and epicurean, of the British House of Commons. Delicate as was the task he managed it with indubitable adroitness and a certain success. We may perhaps get at the inner sense of what happened, if we imagine Mr. Hume giving this sort of ultimatum to the Government. "The Indian burgess for whose education you have provided but whose patrimony you sequestrated and are woefully mismanaging, having now come to years of discretion, demands an account of your stewardship and the future management of his own estate. To compromise, if you are so good as to meet us half-way, we are not unready, but on any other hypothesis our appeal lies at once to the tribunal of the British Parliament. You will observe our process is perfectly constitutional." The sting of the scorpion lay as usual in its tail. Mr. Hume knew well the magic power of that word over Englishmen. With a German garrison it would have been naught; they would quickly have silenced with bayonets and prohibitive decrees any insolence of that sort. With French republicans it would have been naught; they would either have powerfully put it aside or frankly acceded to it. But the English are a nation of political jurists and any claim franked by the epithet "constitutional" they are bound by the very law of their being to respect or at any rate appear to respect. The common run of Anglo-Indians, blinded as selfishness always does blind people, might in their tremulous rage and panic vomit charges of sedition and shout for open war; but a Government of political jurists pledged to an occidentalising policy could not do so without making nonsense of its past. Moreover a Government viceregal in constitution cannot easily forget that it may have to run the gauntlet of adverse comment from authorities at home. But if they could not put us down with the strong hand or meet our delegates with a *non possumus*, they were not therefore going to concede to us any solid fraction of our demands. It is the ineradicable vice of the English nature that it can never be clear or direct. It recoils from simplicity as from a snake. It must shuffle, it must turn in on itself, it must preserve cherished fictions intact. And supposing unpleasant results to be threatened, it escapes from them through a labyrinth of unworthy and transparent subterfuges. Our rulers are unfortunately average Englishmen, Englishmen, that is to say, who are not in the habit of rising superior to themselves; and if they were uncandid, if they were tortuously hostile we may be indignant, but we cannot be surprised. Mr. Hume at any rate saw quite clearly that nothing was to be expected, perhaps he had never seriously expected anything, from that quarter. He had already instituted with really admirable promptitude, the primary stages of his appeal to the British Parliament.

# Indian Gramophone Records

## The first 100 years

The first voice of an Indian person was recorded by the Gramophone Company in 1899 in London. In 1902, first gramophone disc was cut at Calcutta. [Kinnear, 1994] While celebrating centenary of these historical events from 1999-2002, it will be interesting as well as instructive to review the achievements. During this long period, many record manufacturing companies have recorded Indian music. Although HMV - *His Master's Voice* - continues to enjoy their monopoly in this field, about half million gramophone records have been manufactured and marketed in India under variety of banners and labels. Large number of artists have recorded various musical forms and styles from different regions of Indian subcontinent. Of course, a major portion of these recordings belong to Indian film songs. However other forms like classical, light classical, folk, religious music etc. have been recorded extensively.

Due to the advancement in science, new technologies have emerged in the last hundred years. This has led to variety of formats of sound recording and reproduction ranging from cylinders to compact discs and from talking machines to laser disc players. Of these formats, gramophone records have stayed for almost eighty years and have played a significant role in preserving the musical heritage of India. Although Indian musical culture is inscribed in the microgrooves of these records, very little attention is paid in preserving it for posterity. This paper attempts to present an overview of gramophone records in India with special emphasis on 78 rpm and EP/LP records. Some aspects of collection, promotion, preservation and research of gramophone records are discussed. Efforts towards documentation and archiving have been noted.

### Cylinders and sound recording/reproduction

November 29, 1877 - 'The Invention Factory', located at Menlo Park, some 25 miles away from New York City. John Kruesi, an expert technician was busy making a novel machine as per the drawing given by his master, Thomas Alva Edison. The cost of the machine was mentioned around - \$18 with the remark - 'This should talk'. Many colleagues laughed while watching John working on this machine made up of brass and iron cylinders, diamond stylii and arrangements made for rotating these cylinders. Most funny thing was a metal cone (like a horn) with tiny needle at the narrow end.

Soon the machine was ready and Edison entered the laboratory for its inspection. He was very pleased with the workmanship of his technician. He wrapped a tin-foil around the curved surface of the cylinder tightly, placed the diamond stylus gently at one end of the foil. Using the handle on right, he began to rotate the cylinder gently but at somewhat uniform speed. Ensuring that the needle is cutting uniform groove in the tinfoil, he then shouted in the horn - reciting the famous nursery rhyme:

"Mary had a little lamb, its fleece was white as snow  
And everywhere that Mary went, the lamb was sure to go"

Everyone was watching breathlessly. Edison was pleased to see that his shouting has produced zig-zag grooves in the tin foil of one foot long cylinder. He then brought the horn and the needle in the original starting position, changed the stylus, placed the needle in the newly formed grooves and began to rotate the cylinder as before. Initially, lot of noise came out of the horn. As the needle began to pass through the zigzag groove, feeble voice of Edison came out distinctly reciting back the same nursery rhyme that he had shouted (due to his partial deafness since childhood) in the horn a minute ago.

All the persons present in the laboratory were stunned. Edison himself could not believe, since it was a rare occasion that the experiment was successful in the very first attempt. With great enthusiasm and vigor, they worked very hard, made improved versions of the machine and repeated the experiment number of times for confirming its reproducibility. On 6th December 1877 he rushed to the Patent office in New York with his machine and filed claim for the patent. On December 22, 1877 he demonstrated this machine in the office of *Scientific American* and this journal reported this discovery to the rest of the world. Once again, Edison had proved himself to be what some journalist used to call him - 'The Wizard of Menlo Park'. On January 19, 1878 he received the patent for the invention of his cylinder phonograph. Edison wrote in his diary 'The machine does not have much value'.

The invention was shelved for over ten years and in June 1888, he worked for seventy-two hours without sleep working on his improved model of phonograph which had a battery operated motor for attaining the uniform speed. [see the picture]. Later until 1911, he improved upon the models, founded Edison Phonograph Company but never liked his invention used for the entertainment purposes. Around the same time, Hester Bell and Charles Tainter did some improvements in Edison's tin-foil phonograph. These were the evolutionary changes to make machine more suitable for storing messages, letters etc. Nobody including Edison realised the hidden commercial and entertainment potential in this invention at that time.

When did the first cylinder phonograph came to India ? There are several stories and a detailed account has been given by Amitabha Ghosh in *The Record News* - TRN - 1999. pp.73-97. As per this article, the first demonstration of the cylinder phonograph was around December 1878 (within a year of its invention) at Calcutta. The oldest dealer of HMV in Delhi, Maharaj Lal & Co was founded in 1895. At that time they were selling cylinder records. These looked like a stack of bangles worn by women, and hence common man named them as 'Bangles'

and the music from the records as 'sound from bangles'. Professor H Bose, the renowned businessman of Calcutta, entered into this new business of cylinder records under the banner of 'H Bose Records' and later 'Pathe-H Bose Records'. His catalogue of 1906, lists number of cylinder recordings of Rabindranath Tagore. Most of these have been lost to history except the *Bande Mataram* sung by Rabindranath Tagore. Cylinder records were in market until 1906-10, even at the same time as the single and double side flat discs of the Gramophone and Nicole companies. Although there is no systematic catalogue found so far, it is believed that several hundreds of cylinders were recorded both privately and commercially. Unfortunately, no working cylinder machine or cylinder is found with any collector in India so far. Some of the museums and archives have stored broken, worn out machines and cylinders in the showcases as antique pieces.

### **Sound from flat discs**

Several young people were fascinated with the Edison's tinfoil phonograph of 1877 that had practically reached everywhere in next ten years. One such person was in Washington city - an emigrant twenty years old young man, Emile Berliner from Hanover, Germany. He made his living as a draper's clerk but devoted his spare time to solve the electrical problems connected with telephones and phonographs. For his patent on telephone transmitter, he received \$75,000 in cash from the Bell Telephone Company and this helped him in experimenting with the phonographs. He had an idea of using flat disc in place of a cylinder. F W Gaisberg has written an interesting story about this invention in his book *Music on Record*:

It was Bill Golden who asked me one day in 1891, if I would go with him to see a German who had started experimenting with a flat-disc talking machine record and make some trials. We found Emile Berliner in his laboratory, moving up and down in his small studio buzzing on a diaphragm, "Hello, hello!" and in his guttural, broken English, "Tvinkle, tvinkle little star, how I vonder vot you are". I was introduced to the inventor and invited to witness the making of the *first gramophone record*. Berliner placed a muzzle over Golden's mouth and connected this up by a rubber hose to a diaphragm. I was at piano, the sounding box of which was also boxed up and connected to the diaphragm by a hose resembling an elephant's trunk. He asked, "Are you ready?" and upon our answering yes, he began to crank like a barrel organ, and said, "Go." The song finished and Berliner stopped cranking. He took from the machine a bright zinc disc and plunged it into an acid bath for few minutes. Then taking it out of the acid, he washed and cleaned the disc.

Placing this disc on a reproducing machine, also operated by hand like a coffee grinder, he played back the resulting record from the etched groove. To our astonished ears came Billy Golden's voice. He explained to us how this method was superior to the

phonograph. I was spellbound by the beautiful round tone of the flat gramophone disc. Before leaving, I exacted a promise from Berliner that he would let me work for him when his machine was ready for development.

Soon Berliner invited Gaisberg and their association lasted for several years. They did everything possible to promote, popularise and market this new invention. Improved machines with clockwork motors and springs were made. They found financiers, recording artists and, most importantly, a simple method of stamping endless copies from the master disc. In order to cash in on his European rights before rival inventors could steal his market, Emile Berliner sent his agent W B Owen to London and subsequently Gaiseberg went to London in 1898 for taking the recordings. Berliner sent his nephew Joe Sanders to Hanover to build the record pressing plant.

This was followed by series of recording expeditions in Europe, Russia and Asia - including India. Michael Kinnear has given detailed history in his *book The Gramophone Company's First Indian Recordings [1899-1908]*, Popular Prakashan, Mumbai, [1994]. The first ever Indian voice was recorded in London in 1899. These were 7" diameter records with recording on one side only. These 44 records were by Captain Bholanath, Dr Harnaamdas and Ahmed who sang or recited in various languages. None of these records have been found by the collectors but these were listed in gramophone company's 'foreign' lists upto 1904.

In 1901, J W Hawd came to Calcutta and soon a branch office was opened. F W Gaiseberg arrived in 1902 for his first recording expedition and recorded about five hundred songs. These were then sent to Joseph Berliner's pressing factory at Hanover in Germany. In order to have recorded documentation, for making paper labels, the artists were asked to announce their names in English at the end of singing. This helped the technicians in Germany in making the final records ready for sale.

Hence, several records of that period have words 'Made in

Germany/Hanover' printed on label and the announcement at the end.

Initial recordings were taken from

'Nautch Girls' (dancing girls) and

'Baiji's' or 'Kothewalis'. Later on

celebrities like 'Gauhar Jan of Calcutta', 'Jankibai of Allahabad',

'Peara Sahib' recorded prolifically for the company. This continued for two more recording expeditions and about 3000 wax records were made, pressed in Germany and brought back to India for marketing. F W Gaisberg writes:

'All the female singers were of course from the caste of the public women, and in those days it was practically impossible to record the voice of a respectable woman. The songs and dances were passed by word of mouth

from mother to daughter. They began public appearances at the age of ten to twelve years. The clever ones went up to the top and sometimes travelled all over the country in great demand at the wedding feasts of the wealthy. As they began to make names for themselves many of them insisted that the word 'amateur' should be printed on record label. Fees as a rule, were very reasonable in comparison to those paid in Europe, but recording expenses were heavy, since most of the artists had to be trained over long periods before they developed into acceptable gramophone singers.

By this time, the recording medium changed from zinc to wax and the record copies were pressed in lac. Lac, Lacca, Lakh or Laksha is a hardened resin secreted by the tiny lac insects that settle closely on the twigs, suck up the plant sap and grow to form an encrustation. These are then scraped from the twigs of host plants. This raw lac called 'sticklac' is crushed to small grains, sieved, winnowed, washed and dried. This semi-refined product is the 'seed-lac' which is further processed by hot melting system, filtered and stretched into thin sheets called shellac. This shellac is non-toxic and is used in

many different applications including base for the gramophone records. Annual 'stick lac' production of India is about 15,700 metric tons which is about 75% of world lac production. Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal are the major centers for the lac production. During the first world war (1914-1919), the gramophone record industry depended largely on India for the supply of shellac. Due to high demand from gramophone record companies, India faced an extensive export orders and was the single largest supplier for about 75 years.

Availability of plenty of lac/shellac was one of the reasons for setting up a record pressing plant at Sealdah, Calcutta in 1908. As the complete factory was built there was no need to send the wax masters to Germany and as a result announcements at the end of the song also disappeared. Common workers employed in this factory called it "Bajakhana", as if it was a gymkhana of sound. In this factory, baja (harmonium) was the main instrument used in accompanying the singers and the product was the pressed record. This name sounds like 'Davakhana' (medical dispensary), 'Chhapkhana' (printing press), 'Darukhana' (ammunition store). Incidentally, Michael Kinnear's web page address on internet contains this word 'Bajakhana' as - [www.bajakhana.com.au](http://www.bajakhana.com.au) and it gives a detailed history of sound recording in India in last one hundred years.

Considering the enormous market in India, several rival gramophone companies from Germany, France and England entered the market [like the

present multinational companies]. Until 1916, about 75 different record labels/brands were seen in Indian market, the important ones being - Nicole, Universal, Neophone, Elephone, H Bose, Beka, Kamla, Binapani, Royal, Ram-a-Phone (Ramagraph), James Opera, Singer, Sun, Odeon, and Pathe. With time, all these companies either disappeared or got merged with Gramophone Company. The name His Master's Voice (HMV) and the label first appeared in 1916 and soon established their monopoly in the market.

## **Sound on vinyl discs**

Sound recording and reproduction technology was constantly changing. Initially everything was mechanical and was termed as 'Acoustic' era. Around 1925, 'Electrical' technique using a carbon microphone was introduced. Around the second world war came the magnetic heads and tape recorders. In 1931, Gramophone Co and Columbia Graphophone Companies were merged to form Electrical and Musical Industries Ltd (EMI). In 1952, EMI launched its first 33 1/3 rpm microgroove Long Playing record, along with 7" diameter 45 rpm microgroove singles of both classical and pop music. In 1954, first 7", 45 rpm extended play (EP) record was launched.

Soon, these vinyl records appeared in India too. The first microgroove record from Gramophone Co was introduced in 1958. These were 45 rpm 7" extended play (EP) records. Of the early releases, one by Ustad Ali Akbar Khan's (no.7EPE 1201) *sarod* recital record became very popular. In 1959, an LP record plant was established at the Dum Dum factory of Gramophone Company and it was inaugurated by Pt Ravishankar in May. The first LP record was released in June. In the first year about 125 LP records were issued. In the LP/EP era, HMV released lot of records concerned with social issues. A set of lectures by Pt Jawaharlal Nehru, was issued on ECLP 2302. It's mother shell was presented to President of India for preserving it as a national heritage. A *Battle Not For Seeking* (ECLP 2315) had lectures by Dr S Radhakrishnan, Dr Zakir Hussain and Lal Bahadur Shastri. Around 1965, the first stereo LP was issued in India and EMI released its first pre-recorded cassette in 1966.

Unbreakable, long lasting and long playing records became very popular and slowly superceded the shellac 78s. Ultimately, the production of 78s was discontinued in late '70s. Thus, a long era of 3.5 minutes music on a gramophone record came to an end. Audio and Video music cassettes took over LPs and EPs for about twenty years until the Compact Disc was produced in EMI factory in 1986. The 'disc' and 'the groove' returned with new optical technology that employed Semiconductor Lasers. A new era has begun at the turn of the century and the millennium which will probably lead to a 'World library of sound and pictures' which could be accessible to anyone through internet in the cyberspace.

## **Preservation Documentation, Archives and Research**

During last one hundred years, over half million records were issued, spanning all musical styles in all Indian languages. Although the recording activity began with the

cylinder recordings, the major portion of the records was issued on breakable shellac 78rpm format. Towards the end of this century, we find that not a single recorded cylinder is available in India. Same is the fate of early shellac records and soon LP/EP and cassettes will disappear. Thanks to several individuals and few institutions who have preserved some of these records. An attempt is made here to collect the information of such efforts. Section four lists some of the known collectors of Indian gramophone records. The largest collection of about 35,000 records rests with Mr V A K Rangarao, at Chennai (Madras). There are at least 100 collectors in India who possess records from few hundreds to few thousands. These individual collections reflect the taste and the liking of the collector. Majority (almost 95%) of these collectors have records of film music. The major source of collection is a junk or flea markets located in various townships and big cities. Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Kanpur, Madras have large numbers of music shops and stores who trade and sell old records. Besides, old records from the family friends and relatives also enrich the collector's mini-archive. Of course, with time, this number is becoming small. Since 1980, large number of young music lovers have also begun to collect audio and video cassettes. Similar collections of CDs will also commence soon. Unfortunately these collectors are not organised.

Ten years ago, some of the collectors in Mumbai came together to form a group of record enthusiasts. With the help, support and guidance of Mr Michael Kinneer (discographer and researcher of Indian records) from Australia, the *Society of Indian Record Collectors* was founded in Mumbai. Monthly listening sessions are held and a magazine titled *The Record News* is published. The Society has over 150 life members from all over India and abroad, and its units at Nanded, Solapur, Tuljapur and Baroda are functioning very well with the aim of preserving this treasury for posterity. This is probably a unique organisation in India.

These small efforts may not be sufficient and archival tasks involving large number of individuals and institutions will have to be taken up. Of course, the gramophone company should be the prime mover. However in an interview (*Songs From Records*, Shibashis Bandopadhyaya, "Desh", Bengali weekly C.1994 ?) the then Chairman of HMV, Mr Pradeep Chandra, said, "For reissuing our own records we have to approach private collectors. Yes, we ought to have collected and saved our properties properly. Our archive, though not very old, have some old records, may not be all. Firstly, we have to look into the state of business. The condition is very bad! Due to the government's apathy, the business of fake/pirated cassettes is increasing at alarming rate and we are facing grimmer situation. In these financial circumstances, it is impossible for the company to build the archive from the scratch."

While this is true for the manufacturers who still hold the copyright of their products, it is interesting to note such archival efforts in Europe and in America. In addition to individual collections and depositories, France (Phonothèque), England (British Library, National Sound Archive and EMI Archive) and Germany have their own archives. The Internet lists over 2000 such sites giving details about the archives of gramophone records in various countries in world, from whole continents like Africa to small Scandanavian nations like Norway. As Indians, where do we stand ? Well, as yet a National Sound Archive is a distant dream like a mirage. There are several institutions, music departments of various universities, *All India Radio* stations, Sangeet Natak Academy, American Institute of Indian Studies, New Delhi, Sangeet Mahabharati and National Center of Performing Arts, Mumbai (NCPA) have large collections of gramophone records with adequate listening facilities. These are accessible to music lovers and researchers. Unfortunately, these institutions prefer to work in isolation and there is a lack of communication between them. In last 20/30 years, a sizeable number of books and periodicals related to gramophone records have been published. Section five lists some of these. So, with the help of written, audible and visual matter available in the country, it might be possible for a researcher of 21st century to take the initiative in writing history of sound recording in India.

## Historical events in sound recording

- 1877 - Thomas Alva Edison's discovery of sound recording and reproduction. Early recordings were taken on wax coated cylinders. [cylinder records]
- 1888 - Emilie Berliner, (a German emigrant in America) invented flat disc format for sound recording. The first trial disc was 5" diameter made of rubber. Later, 7" diameter zinc and lac records were commercially released and were known as E Berliner Records.
- 1898 - Foundation of Gramophone and Typewriter Co (G & T) in London. The Gramophone Company officially registered by William Barry Owen with provisional arrangements made to manufacture gramophones, records and assembly of machines in Germany. The famous 'Recording Angel' trademark, devised by Theodore Birnbaum, first appears on the company's record label.
- 1899 - Recording of first Indian artists in London - Dr Harnamdas and Mr Ahemad - songs from Ramayan and Aayats from Kooran. In the same year, Francis Barraud's famous painting of a dog listening to the horn - *His Master's Voice* - was purchased by the Gramophone Company and first used in the *Record Supplement* of January 1900.
- 1900 - Manufacture of Lambert typewriters also taken up. Hence the name of the company changed to 'The Gramophone and Typewriter Ltd'. This name also appeared on record labels. [Later, in 1907, as the typewriter line was discontinued the word 'typewriter' was dropped both from the name of the company and the record label.]
- 1902 - First recording expedition of F W Gaisberg at Calcutta.
- 1902 - 1908 - Three recording expeditions in India taking about 5000 recordings.

- 1908 - Establishment of record pressing plant at Calcutta - announcements at the end of the songs stopped. In the same year, the Hayes factory in England also became operational. Around 75 different record companies were operating in India until about 1910.
- 1910 - A gramophone and records were sent with Captain Scott on his Antarctic Expedition. The gramophone was brought back to Britain and is now part of the EMI archives which houses about 5 million items.
- 1915/16 - Nipper, the Gramophone Dog, makes first appearance on Indian record label. [In Britain it appeared in 1909]
- 1925 - 'Electrical' recording replaced 'Acoustic' recording. Electrical recording introduced in Britain using the Western Electrical System.
- 1931 - The Gramophone Company Ltd and the Columbia Graphophone Company Ltd merge and register a holding company - Electrical and Musical Industries (EMI). Stereo recording and reproduction patented.
- 1930/31 - Bombay radio became operational. sound entered into Indian films.
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- 1952 - EMI launches first LP & EP/SP microgroove vinyl records.
- 1958 - EMI launches first stereo LP.
- 1960 - The last 78rpm record on EMI labels is issued in Britain - *Rule Britannia / Royal Event* by Russ Conway.
- 1966 - EMI releases its first pre-recorded cassettes.
- 1971 - EMI changed to EMI Ltd.
- 1973 - The Gramophone Company changes its name to EMI Records Ltd.
- 1970-80 - Production of 78 rpm records reduced and ultimately stopped. Indian Television entered the entertainment scene.
- 1986 - EMI opens its first-ever CD factory in England.
- 1980-90 - Market flooded with hi-fi equipment, audio/video cassette recorders / players. [Two in ones, VCRs and VCPs].
- 1997 - EMI celebrates its first centenary.
- 1990-2000 - Records began to slowly diminish turning into decorative pieces and antique items or 'collector's items'. Compact audio/video discs and related reproducing equipment flooded the market. CVD and DVD along with computer floppy discs took over all kinds of reel tapes - both in audio and video world. Satellite television with multiple cable networks changed the whole concept of personal recorded music and its collection.
- 21st Century - World library of music - sound and pictures - accessible to anyone through a Personal or a lap-top computer or through Cable network.

## Records and Recordings

Material used - wax, zinc, tinfoil, cardboard, plastic (vinyl), aluminium, brass, copper metal plates and thin films. Lac was used for 78 rpm records for almost 80 years. India was the major source for the raw material of lac. Regions around Calcutta and Bihar had large number of deposits of lac and this might be one of the reasons for the establishment of the first record pressing plant at Sealdah in 1908. Thickness of the flat discs of these materials varied from a few millimeters to now few micrometers [in Compact Discs].

Sizes, speeds and play times - flat disc records were made in sizes varying from 5" to 16" diameter with thickness of about 3-5 mm. Large size records were made for the transcription and studio recordings of *All India Radio*. The speeds at which these records play are - 16 2/3, 33 1/3, 45, 78, 80 and 100 r.p.m. The play time varied from few seconds to about one hour depending on the size and the speed of the record. Usually one side of a standard 78 rpm record played for 3.5 minutes, 45 for 3-4 minutes, EP [Extended Play] for 6-7 minutes and the LP [Long Play] for 20-30 minutes.

More than 98% of the 78 rpm records were in the 10 inch diameter size. A few, mostly classical, were in the 12 inch format. The early discs were one sided. They had only the matrix number-the number given at the time of recording. After about 1910, double sided records were issued. These records had different matrix number on either side and a common catalogue number printed on the label on both sides. This catalogue number was referred by manufacturers, suppliers, dealers and customers.

## **Recordings / Reproductions**

Recordings of Indian music in various languages - Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, Gujrathi, Gurumukhi, Marathi, Marwari, Nepali, Bhojpuri, Sindhi, Canarese (Kanadi), Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, Sanskrit etc. Method used for the recording also changed - Acoustic/mechanical (1877-1925), electrical (c.1926), magnetic (c.1940) and optical (c.1960/70).

## **Various types of machines**

Edison Home Phonographs were used for playing cylinders, whereas 78 rpm records were played on hand-cranked machines with huge metal horn. Around 1920, these were replaced by the box type gramophones with spring wound motors. Later on, compact size electrically driven motors were used for uniform and reliable speeds. These players and the record changers, large sized phonograms with radio and the juke boxes were very popular both at public places and in the individual houses. In old machines, steel or brass needles were used and these were available in needle tins. The gramophones used diaphragm type heavy sound boxes fitted to the machines and the needle would become blunt after playing the record for few times. Later, lightweight small size pick ups with diamond / sapphire needles (styli) became very popular and replaced the old heavy sound boxes. The new needles had very little wear and tear and hence could be used for playing the record almost any number of times.

## **Types of the recordings**

The earliest record of Indian music was recorded in 1899 in London whereas the first records were cut at Calcutta in 1902. [Kinner Michael, 1994]. 'Gauhar Jan of Calcutta', 'Jankibai of Allahabad' were some of the professional entertainers who recorded prolifically for the gramophone company. These wax masters were then sent to Germany/Britain for making singlesided records and exported back for the Indian

market. These records invariably contain an announcement at the end in English - like "My Name is Gauharjan". While this may sound amusing now, it was a very useful announcement for the engineer who would design the paper label for pasting on the pressed record.

Some of the styles of recordings - film songs (Hindi and regional), classical music (vocal and instrumental in both Hindustani and Carnatic style), folk and religious music, imitations, educational, mimicry, popular, speeches, announcements and advertisements, anthems, descriptions, bird/animal sounds, sound effects, readings and recitations, self-hypnosis, laughing, professional weeping, drama sets. The oldest and longest drama set is K M Mitter and party's *Jaydev* in Bengali, recorded around 1910, in 30 parts and duration is almost two hours. Although majority of 78 rpm records were made using lac and EP/LPs using vinyl, there are some special records. These were in translucent plastic (Film-o-Phone), bendable and non-bendable card-board (Durium, Nicole), in various colours - brown (Young India), yellow and red (Bulbul). There are records that play from inside to out (Pathe). These have grooves cut differently and recorded at 100 rpm. So they need a special turntable that rotates at 100 rpm and special needles for playing. These records have etched labels as against paper labels used by the records of other companies.

The 'puzzle' records were introduced around 1910 and continued till fifties. Each side had three different songs (of about one minute duration) not one after the other but in three separate, concentric grooves. With a slight variation of the start point, a different song would come out each time, astonishing (or, as the name suggests, puzzling) the listeners. These were produced in small numbers. Early puzzle records were on Zonophone labels and featured voices of Jankibai, Mohd Hussain and instrumental music by Talim Hussein (Shahanai). Puzzle records of films *Awara* (Hindi), *Amar Bhoopali* (Marathi), were produced and are found listed in HMV catalogues but it is extremely difficult to find the copies of these records now.

A standard 10 inch diameter 78 rpm record, which plays for about three and a half minutes will have a groove length of about 1.5 Km. Its speed will be 26 Km per hour and it will revolve 273 times.

**Estimated number of songs / records** – The total number of films produced in the last 100 years is about 35,000. The ratio of Hindi to Regional films is 1:2-3. Average of 8/10 songs per film gives about 320,000 / 350,000 film songs, out of which 100,000 Hindi film songs and rest from the regional language films. Besides film songs, about 200,000 songs of non-film music have been recorded. Old 78 rpm records had two songs per record. Hence about 250,000 titles produced. This is a rough estimate and a good starting point for the researchers in 21st century.

## Record manufacturing companies in India

Company, Period, Size, Special features etc.	Approx output
Gramophone Company, England & Calcutta.	5000

[1899-08] / 7, 10, 12" single/double side shellac records	
Nicole Records, England. [1905-09] cardboard single/double side records	1000
Beka Records, Germany [1908-10]	1500
Pathe, H Bose/Pathe Records. France & Calcutta [1908-14] Shellac [10-12"] / cylinders center start - 100 rpm records	1000
Odeon Records, Germany [1906-37] 10-12" North/South indian music	3000
Zonophone Records, England, India [1910-20] / 10" low priced records	1000
Singer, James Opera, Sun Disc records [1907-10] Bombay based records	1000
Ramaphone / Ramagraph records [1905-30]. Bombay based German company	1000
Broadcast / Jay Bharat records [1930-40] British company with business at Bombay and Madras / 8, 10, 12" records	1000
Hindustan / Megaphone, Senola records Calcutta based company [1930-]	5000
Young India, Bombay. [1940-50] films, educational, various subjects	2000
The Gramophone Company of India Ltd Calcutta, Bombay, Madras.[1908-] HMV, Columbia, Twin, Odeon etc.	500,000

Total output of gramophone records is about half million records [titles]. The number of copies of any given record varied from minimum of 500 to few lakhs, depending upon the popularity / sale.

Although number of gramophone companies were established in India until about 1910, HMV (Gramophone Company of India Ltd) survived through long years and virtually took all other companies under its wings. Some of the interesting record labels that collectors often come across are:

Gramophone Concert Record, Gramophone Monarch Record, Beka, Beka Grand Record, Zonophone, Nicole, Odeon, Royal, Rama-o-phone, Ramagraph, James Opera Disc Record, Singer, Sun Disc record, Kamla, Binapani, Cinch, H Bose and Pathe, The Twin, HMV, Columbia, Jien-o-phone, Broadcast, Jay Bharat, Young India, Aerophone, Bande Mataram, Bharat, Diamond, Dilruba, Excelsior, Megaphone, Film-o-Phone, Hindustan, Senola, Maxitone, Parlophone, Victoriaphone, Kid Kord, King, Limophone, Kohinoor, Hutchins, Movietone, New Theaters, Prabhat Records, Nishan, Nizam, Noor-E-Islam, Pioneer, Phoenix, Marwari, Regal, Rameshwar, Senola Sangeet, Saraswati Cinetone, Shahenshai, Surbharati, Swarganga, Taj, Tansen etc.

Complete alphabetical list of the record labels during 1899-1908 is published in the book *Gramophone Companies First Indian Recordings (1899-1908)*, Kinnear, 1994]

## Magazines / Publications

- *Hillandale News* - The official journal of the city of London Phonograph and gramophone society - founded in 1919 in England. Latest issue is no.229, Spring 2000.
- *The Talking Machine Review International, England* - A Review Journal published from last 25 years.
- *The Sound Record* - Journal of the Phonograph Society of New South Wales, Inc.Australia. ISSN-1036-1928.
- *Playback* - The Bulletin of The National Sound Archive, The British Library. ISSN 0952 - 2360. web site - [www.bl.uk/collections/sound-archive](http://www.bl.uk/collections/sound-archive). E-mail: [nsa@bl.uk](mailto:nsa@bl.uk)
- *The Record News* - formerly quarterly, now yearly journal of 'Society of Indian Record Collectors', founded in Mumbai in 1990. One annual issue of 1999 and 30 back issues from 1991 to 98 have been published so far. The main focus of the magazine is "The Gramophone Records". [ISSN 0971-7942]. Society activities could also be viewed on - [www.bajakhana.com.au](http://www.bajakhana.com.au)

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- Record Catalogues of HMV, Columbia, The Twin, Odeon, Hindustan, Magephone, Zonophone, Ramagraph, Broadcast, Young India, etc.

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**The Early Years:**

Dadabhai Naoroji was born in Bombay in 1825 to Palanji Dordi, a poor Athornan (a Brahmin) whose mother was left the difficult task of raising him according to prevailing customs, she arranged for his education. For the rest of her life, Maneckbai remained devoted to him. "what I am" noted Dadabhai in 1890 "Youth."

Dadabhai became a scholar at the age of 15 and had a brilliant academic career. In 1848 and 4 years later, Professor of Mathematics and Professor Orlebar of the college. (ordained priest), founded the Rastriya Sabha on 1st August 1851. The ethos of the Sabha was to its original purity and simplicity.

**Visit to England:**

On 27th June 1855, Dadabhai sailed for England with the Cama family. In 1859, Dadabhai founded Naoroji & Co.

**The London Anjuman:**

On 31st October 1861, an association was formed. Dr. Dadabhai Naoroji was its President.

**Other Activities:**

During his time in England, Dadabhai took on responsibilities as rulers of India. He was in opposition to the unjust and oppressive policies of the East India Association of which he was to keep Britain well informed. This was his first political activity. This was his first political activity, echoing Professor Orlebar's sermon.

