

## **Carnatic Music and Cultural Diplomacy: A Classical Music Tradition as Soft Power**

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**Abstract:** Cultural diplomacy has emerged as an essential instrument in contemporary international relations, with artistic traditions serving as vehicles for fostering cross-border understanding and strengthening bilateral ties. This article examines how Carnatic music, the classical music tradition of South India, functions as a significant tool of India's soft power strategy in building and maintaining diplomatic relationships worldwide. Through historical analysis and case study examination, this research explores the role of Carnatic music in India's cultural diplomacy initiatives from the post-independence era to the present day. The study analyzes landmark performances, institutional frameworks such as the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), educational collaborations, and the impact of digital platforms in disseminating this art form globally. Drawing on Joseph Nye's conceptual framework of soft power, the article demonstrates how Carnatic music has transcended its traditional boundaries to become an effective diplomatic asset. Key findings reveal that Carnatic music performances at prestigious international venues, academic programs in foreign universities, and digital accessibility have significantly enhanced India's cultural presence and influenced international perceptions. The article also examines challenges including language barriers, limited accessibility, and niche audience reach, while proposing strategies for expanding the global footprint of this classical tradition. This research contributes to understanding how traditional art forms can be strategically leveraged for diplomatic objectives and cultural exchange in an increasingly interconnected world, reinforcing India's vision of comprehensive development by 2047.

**Keywords:** *Carnatic music; cultural diplomacy; soft power; Indian classical music; international relations.*

**1. Objectives:** The present study aims to:

- a) Examine how Carnatic music functions as a significant instrument of India's cultural diplomacy and soft power within the context of international relations.
- b) Analyse selected historical and contemporary case studies that demonstrate the role of Carnatic music in strengthening India's bilateral cultural relationships with other nations.
- c) Evaluate the contribution of institutional frameworks, particularly the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), in facilitating the global promotion and dissemination of Carnatic music.
- d) Assess the role of educational initiatives, university collaborations, and digital platforms in extending the reach of Carnatic music beyond its traditional geographical and cultural boundaries.
- e) Identify the key challenges and emerging opportunities involved in effectively leveraging Carnatic music for India's diplomatic objectives and broader cultural exchange programmes.

**2. Methodology:** This study employs a qualitative research methodology combining multiple approaches:

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**Literature Review:** An extensive review of scholarly works on soft power theory, cultural diplomacy, and Indian classical music traditions forms the theoretical foundation. Primary sources include Joseph Nye's seminal works on soft power (Nye, 1990, 2004, 2008) and academic publications on cultural exchange.

**Case Study Analysis:** The research examines specific instances of Carnatic music performances at international venues, including M.S. Subbulakshmi's United Nations General Assembly performance (1966), the Festival of India in the United States (1985), and various bilateral cultural exchange programs.

**Institutional Analysis:** The study analyzes the role of governmental and non-governmental organizations, particularly the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), in promoting Carnatic music through cultural exchange programs, scholarships, and international collaborations.

**Documentary Analysis:** Historical records, government publications, newspaper articles, and archival materials documenting cultural exchange programs and international performances are examined to understand the evolution of Carnatic music as a diplomatic tool.

**Interview Excerpts:** Published interviews with prominent musicians, diplomats, and cultural administrators provide first-hand perspectives on the role of Carnatic music in cultural diplomacy.

The methodology integrates these diverse sources to present a comprehensive analysis of how Carnatic music functions as a component of India's soft power strategy.

**3. Introduction:** Cultural diplomacy has emerged as an important dimension of contemporary international relations, enabling nations to build mutual understanding, cooperation, and goodwill beyond formal political engagement. As a core component of soft power, cultural diplomacy allows countries to project their artistic, intellectual, and philosophical heritage on the global stage. Among India's diverse cultural resources, its classical music traditions occupy a prominent place, particularly South Indian classical music, known as Carnatic music. India's rich musical heritage has increasingly been employed as a means of strengthening bilateral relationships and enhancing its global cultural presence. Carnatic music, with its long history and strong aesthetic and spiritual foundations, has played a significant role in representing India internationally. This article examines how Carnatic music contributes to India's cultural diplomacy efforts by reinforcing cross-cultural understanding, expanding international engagement, and supporting India's broader vision of comprehensive national development by 2047. As global interactions become more interconnected, traditional art forms are no longer viewed merely as cultural artefacts but as active agents of diplomatic engagement. Music, in particular, possesses the ability to communicate across linguistic and cultural boundaries, making it an effective medium for international dialogue. Within this context, Carnatic music offers a compelling case for understanding how cultural traditions can be mobilised to serve diplomatic and soft power objectives.

**4. Cultural Diplomacy and Soft Power: Theoretical Framework:** Cultural diplomacy refers to the strategic use of cultural expressions to foster positive international relationships and shape favourable perceptions of a nation. The concept is closely associated with the idea of soft power, introduced by Joseph Nye in 1990, which emphasises that national influence extends beyond military and economic strength to include culture, values, and institutions. Nye elaborated this framework in his later work, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, identifying three key sources of soft power: a nation's culture, when it is attractive to others; its political values, when they are upheld domestically and internationally; and its foreign policies, when they are perceived as legitimate and morally credible. In contrast to hard power—characterised by coercion through military force or economic sanctions—soft power operates through attraction, persuasion, and voluntary alignment.

In his discussion of public diplomacy, Nye further argued that cultural outreach forms an essential component of what he termed “smart power,” a strategic combination of hard and soft power resources aimed at achieving long-term diplomatic goals. Within this theoretical framework, cultural practices such as music serve as subtle yet effective instruments of influence.

India’s longstanding engagement with the world through its cultural heritage—including dance, music, literature, and philosophy—illustrates the practical application of soft power. Carnatic music, with its centuries-old lineage, emphasis on improvisation, sophisticated raga structures, and intricate tala systems, exemplifies a cultural form that appeals to diverse audiences while retaining its distinct Indian identity. As such, it functions as a powerful vehicle for India’s soft power and provides a strong theoretical foundation for examining its role in cultural diplomacy.

**5. Carnatic Music: A Cultural Ambassador:** Carnatic music, a classical genre originating in South India, is known for its intricate compositions, emotive ragas (melodic frameworks), and complex talas (rhythmic cycles). Its spiritual essence and emphasis on improvisation make it a unique art form. Historically, Carnatic music has been used not only for personal and artistic expression but also as a medium for cultural exchange.

**5.1 Historical Context:** Carnatic music has been influenced by and has influenced various global music traditions. The British colonial period saw the documentation and dissemination of Carnatic music to Western audiences through scholarly works and recordings. Post-independence, India leveraged its classical arts to build cultural bridges through international tours and educational initiatives. The government recognized early on that cultural exchange could serve diplomatic objectives by creating goodwill and fostering mutual understanding between nations.

**5.2 Role of Cultural Institutions:** Organizations like the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) have been instrumental in promoting Carnatic music globally. ICCR, established on April 9, 1950, by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, India's first Education Minister, was founded with the specific objective of actively participating in the formulation and implementation of policies pertaining to India's external cultural relations. The organization sponsors artists for international performances, organizes cultural festivals, and facilitates collaborations with foreign institutions.

The ICCR operates through a global network of 38 cultural centres in 36 countries and maintains 11 regional offices within India. These centres organize outreach programs including panel discussions, lectures, exhibitions, essay competitions, performances, screenings, and language learning courses. The organization also grants scholarships and fellowships to international students wishing to study in India, with more than 3,500 scholarships offered annually.

Through these sustained efforts, Carnatic music has reached audiences in Europe, the United States, and Southeast Asia, fostering a deeper appreciation of Indian culture. The ICCR's cultural exchange programs send more than 150 cultural troupes annually to perform abroad, with Carnatic music featuring prominently in these initiatives.

**6. Carnatic Music in Bilateral Relations: Case Studies:** India has strategically used Carnatic music as a diplomatic tool to strengthen relationships with various countries. Several case studies highlight its significant impact on bilateral relations.

**6.1 India–US Relations: The Festival of India (1985) and University Collaborations:** One of the most significant moments in the international presentation of Carnatic music was the Festival of India, held in the United States in 1985. This landmark cultural initiative featured eminent musicians such as M. S. Subbulakshmi



and L. Subramaniam, alongside the Hindustani violin maestro V. G. Jog. The ensemble was further enriched by Zakir Hussain on the tabla and T. H. Subhashchandran on the mridangam. Presented at the University of Maryland, this concert offered American audiences a rare and compelling experience of both Carnatic and Hindustani traditions, as well as the artistic harmony between the two classical systems of Indian music.

The Festival of India played a crucial role in strengthening Indo-US cultural relations and generated sustained academic interest in Indian classical music across American universities. In the years that followed, institutions such as Wesleyan University, the University of California, and Harvard University introduced structured courses and programs in Carnatic music. These initiatives attracted students from diverse backgrounds and contributed significantly to the recognition of Carnatic music as a serious academic discipline, while also fostering cross-cultural musical collaboration and dialogue.

A particularly noteworthy contribution to Indo-US cultural exchange was made by Professor Jon B. Higgins of Wesleyan University. As a Fulbright scholar, Higgins studied Carnatic vocal music in Chennai between 1964 and 1967 and made his debut at the Tiruvaiyaru Tyagaraja Festival in 1965, earning the affectionate title “Higgins Bhagavata” in South India. Upon returning to the United States, he played a pioneering role in institutionalizing Carnatic music education at Wesleyan by bringing his guru, T. Viswanathan, along with V. Tyagarajan, V. Nagarajan, and T. Ranganathan, as visiting faculty. Higgins also actively performed and lectured across the United States, thereby expanding public engagement with Carnatic music.

The program he established at Wesleyan University continues to this day and is widely regarded as the longest-running university-based Carnatic music program in the United States. Higgins later returned to India during 1981–82 as a Senior Research Fellow of the American Institute of Indian Studies, further strengthening academic and cultural ties between the two countries. His untimely death in a hit-and-run accident marked a profound loss to Indo-Western cultural exchange, but his legacy endures through the institutional foundations he laid for the study and appreciation of Carnatic music in the United States.

**6.2 M. Balamuralikrishna and Indo-French Relations:** M. Balamuralikrishna, one of the most revered figures in Carnatic music, was honoured by the French government with the prestigious Chevalier of the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres in 2005 for his contributions to global music. His recognition by France highlights the deep cultural exchange between India and France, showcasing how Carnatic music has been embraced internationally.

France has shown a keen interest in Indian classical music, particularly through institutions like the Cité de la Musique in Paris. The collaboration between Indian and French musicians has resulted in fusion performances that blend Carnatic music with Western classical and jazz traditions. This cross-cultural engagement has strengthened diplomatic relations between the two nations, creating artistic bridges that complement formal diplomatic channels.

**6.3 M.S. Subbulakshmi: Carnatic Music Icon as Cultural Ambassador:** M.S. Subbulakshmi, known as the “Queen of Carnatic Music,” played a pivotal role in India's cultural diplomacy through her international performances. Her career as a cultural ambassador included several landmark performances:

- a) **Edinburgh International Festival of Music and Drama (1963):** M.S. Subbulakshmi was invited to perform at this prestigious festival in Scotland, marking a significant milestone in her career and introducing Carnatic music to Western audiences. Lord Harewood, director of the Edinburgh festival, had heard her singing on All India Radio in Delhi and flew to Madras to experience a live concert before extending the invitation.

- b) **Carnegie Hall, New York:** She performed at Carnegie Hall, one of the most renowned music venues globally, showcasing Indian classical music on an international platform.
- c) **United Nations General Assembly on UN Day (1966):** M.S. Subbulakshmi became the first Indian musician to perform at the United Nations General Assembly in 1966, playing a significant role in introducing Carnatic music to global audiences. She was invited by U Thant, the then UN Secretary-General, to perform on October 23, 1966, on United Nations Day.

Her performance at the UN was a landmark moment in India's cultural diplomacy, earning international recognition for Indian classical music. The performance featured a carefully curated repertoire that included the universal prayer "Maitreem Bhajata" composed by Chandrasekharendra Saraswati, the Sage of Kanchi, which carried a timeless message promoting world peace and friendship. Her renditions of devotional compositions transcended linguistic barriers, fostering appreciation for Indian music and enhancing India's soft power. As the first Indian artist to receive such an honour, her presence at the United Nations underscored the cultural diplomacy potential of music.

- d) **Royal Albert Hall, London (1982):** Her performance at this iconic venue further solidified her status as a global ambassador of Indian classical music.
- e) **Festival of India, Moscow (1987):** Participating in this festival, M.S. Subbulakshmi played a pivotal role in cultural exchanges between India and the Soviet Union during the Cold War period.

These events not only highlight M.S. Subbulakshmi's illustrious career but also emphasize her role in promoting Indian culture globally. She played a key role in fostering goodwill and cross-cultural exchange between India and the world. Her music transcended linguistic and geographical boundaries, making her an influential figure in India's soft power diplomacy. In 2016, the United Nations Postal Administration issued a commemorative stamp to mark her birth centenary and the 50th anniversary of her historic UN performance, further acknowledging her contribution to cultural diplomacy.

**6.4 Carnatic Music in the United Kingdom and Europe:** Carnatic music has played a significant role in strengthening India's cultural relations with the United Kingdom and Europe. The UK-based Darbar Festival has become a premier platform for showcasing both Carnatic and Hindustani classical music, attracting global audiences and musicians. The festival has not only promoted Indian classical music but has also facilitated collaborations between Indian and Western musicians, enhancing cultural exchange.

Academic institutions in the UK and Europe have also contributed to the global reach of Carnatic music. The School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) at the University of London offers courses and research programs dedicated to Indian classical music, attracting students from diverse backgrounds and fostering deeper cultural ties between India and the UK.

Beyond the UK, several European institutions have embraced Carnatic music education. The Rotterdam Conservatory in the Netherlands and the University of Music and Performing Arts Munich in Germany have hosted Carnatic music workshops, allowing international students to engage with this classical tradition. France has also shown keen interest, with institutions like the Cité de la Musique in Paris organizing Indian music concerts and collaborations between Indian and French musicians. Such initiatives have fostered artistic exchange and strengthened Indo-European cultural relations.

The presence of Indian cultural organizations, such as the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan in London, has also played a crucial role in promoting Carnatic music. Through performances, workshops, and educational initiatives, these

institutions have ensured that Carnatic music continues to thrive in the UK and Europe, reinforcing India's cultural diplomacy and strengthening bilateral ties.

**7. The Role of Digital Platforms:** In the modern era, digital technology has expanded the reach of Carnatic music beyond traditional concert halls. Online platforms like YouTube, Spotify, and dedicated streaming services have allowed global audiences to access Carnatic music effortlessly. Initiatives like the Margazhi Festival going digital during the COVID-19 pandemic further underscored the adaptability of this classical tradition.

Digital platforms have democratized access to Carnatic music, enabling enthusiasts worldwide to experience concerts, tutorials, and lectures from renowned musicians. This technological transformation has not only preserved the art form but has also created new avenues for cultural diplomacy by reaching younger, tech-savvy audiences across the globe.

**8. Impact on the Indian Diaspora:** The Indian diaspora plays a crucial role in promoting Carnatic music abroad. Organizations such as the Cleveland Thyagaraja Festival in the United States and the London International Arts Festival provide platforms for Carnatic musicians to perform and educate international audiences. These festivals serve as cultural touchpoints, strengthening the Indian diaspora's connection to their heritage while enhancing India's soft power.

The Cleveland Thyagaraja Festival, also known as the Cleveland Aradhana, is an annual celebration of Carnatic music that attracts thousands of participants from across North America. Such diaspora-led initiatives demonstrate how cultural traditions can be maintained and promoted across borders, contributing to India's diplomatic objectives through grassroots cultural engagement.

**9. Music Education: A Catalyst for Cultural Diplomacy:** Music education plays a critical role in preserving and promoting cultural heritage. By teaching South Indian classical music to both Indian and international students, educators act as cultural ambassadors, fostering appreciation for India's artistic traditions.

**9.1 International Schools and Universities:** Several institutions abroad now offer courses in South Indian classical music, often in collaboration with Indian cultural organizations. Examples include:

- a) **University of California, Berkeley:** Offers programs on Indian classical music, with visiting artists conducting workshops on Carnatic traditions.
- b) **Wesleyan University:** A pioneer in teaching Indian music in the United States, Wesleyan includes Carnatic music in its world music programs, inviting Indian artists as faculty. The program established by Professor Jon B. Higgins continues to operate and represents the longest-lasting university-based program in Carnatic music in the United States.
- c) **SOAS - School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London:** Features South Indian music as a core component of its ethnomusicology programs, fostering cross-cultural studies.
- d) **Singapore Indian Fine Arts Society (SIFAS):** While based in Singapore, SIFAS collaborates with universities and cultural organizations across South Asia to promote Carnatic music through structured education and public performances.
- e) **Royal Conservatoire of Scotland:** Includes workshops and performances on Carnatic music as part of its world music curriculum.

**9.2 South Asian Institutions and Cultural Diplomacy:** South Asian institutions play a pivotal role in promoting Carnatic music and fostering regional cooperation:



- a) **Kalakshetra Foundation:** Based in Chennai, this premier arts institution collaborates with ICCR to host students from South Asia and beyond, integrating Carnatic music training into cultural exchange programs. The foundation's outreach programs in countries like Sri Lanka and Nepal promote peace and mutual understanding.
- b) **Annamalai University:** Renowned for its Department of Music, the university offers degrees in Carnatic music and welcomes international students, facilitated through ICCR scholarships. Their performances in South Asian festivals enhance cultural connectivity.
- c) **Shankar Mahadevan Academy:** Though primarily online, this academy has expanded its reach to include students from South Asia, creating a digital platform for cross-cultural engagement. Its collaboration with ICCR enhances accessibility to structured music education.

These institutions not only preserve and disseminate Carnatic music but also contribute to cultural diplomacy by:

- **Organizing Collaborative Performances:** Joint concerts featuring artists from different South Asian countries serve as symbols of regional unity.
- **Student Exchange Programs:** Scholarships and training opportunities encourage cultural immersion and knowledge sharing.
- **Collaborative Research:** Partnerships between Indian and South Asian scholars advance the understanding of shared musical traditions.

**9.3 Building Cross-Cultural Competence:** Music education not only imparts technical skills but also instils cultural awareness and sensitivity. By engaging with Carnatic music, students gain insights into Indian traditions, philosophy, and history, contributing to a deeper understanding of the culture. This cross-cultural competence is invaluable in fostering mutual respect and collaboration among nations.

**10. Perspectives from Musicians and Cultural Diplomats:** The role of Carnatic music in cultural diplomacy is further illuminated through the reflections of musicians and diplomats who have actively engaged with music as a medium of cross-cultural communication. Their insights provide experiential grounding to the theoretical framework of soft power discussed earlier, demonstrating how musical practice translates abstract diplomatic ideals into lived cultural engagement.

- a) **Music Beyond Boundaries: T. M. Krishna's Social Vision:** Renowned Carnatic vocalist T. M. Krishna has consistently articulated the need for music to transcend insular artistic spaces and engage with broader social realities. In an interview with *The Hindu*, Krishna emphasized that while the technical and aesthetic foundations of Carnatic music remain firmly rooted in classical ragas such as Kalyani, Kamboji, and Todi, the larger purpose of music lies in its ability to move beyond rigid socio-political boundaries. He described music as a fundamentally human endeavour, capable of opening pathways of dialogue across communities and borders (Krishna, 2018). This perspective reinforces the argument that Carnatic music, when presented thoughtfully, can function as a bridge between cultures rather than as a closed or elite artistic tradition.
- b) **Universality and Cultural Dialogue: Aruna Sairam's Global Engagement:** Internationally acclaimed Carnatic vocalist Aruna Sairam offers another important dimension to this discourse through her emphasis on universality and cultural dialogue. Known for her cross-cultural collaborations, including performances with Western and Middle Eastern musicians, Sairam has described Carnatic music as a universal expression of human feeling that does not require cultural translation for emotional resonance. Her performances abroad—including innovative adaptations such as presenting a Hebrew song through Carnatic musical idioms in

Israel—were consciously aimed at making the tradition accessible and emotionally engaging to new audiences. Such artistic choices illustrate how classical music can function as a subtle yet powerful diplomatic tool by winning hearts rather than asserting cultural identity.

- c) **Institutional Vision and Soft Power: Vinay Sahasrabuddhe and ICCR:** From an institutional standpoint, Vinay Sahasrabuddhe, during his tenure as President of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), has repeatedly highlighted Indian classical arts as integral components of India's soft power strategy. Writing in *The Indian Express*, Sahasrabuddhe argued that India's philosophical and artistic traditions have generated sustained international goodwill and should be consciously employed to strengthen cultural understanding. Initiatives such as the ICCR's *Kala Vishwa* series were specifically designed to help international students engage deeply with Indian culture, including classical music traditions, thereby fostering enduring cultural relationships rather than short-term diplomatic visibility.
- d) **Diplomacy as a "Silent Collaboration":** From a diplomatic point of view, music often works quietly but powerfully, creating spaces for understanding where formal negotiations may struggle. It acts as a gentle, non-confrontational medium through which trust and emotional connection can emerge. Former Foreign Secretary Nirupama Rao, herself trained in Carnatic music, has described music as "the last form of diplomacy," highlighting its ability to communicate honestly and humanely when words and official language fall short. She suggests that when musicians from different cultural backgrounds perform together, they create what she calls a "world inside silence," where empathy and mutual respect take precedence over political differences. This idea of music as a form of silent collaboration can be seen in initiatives such as the 2025 collaboration between Chennai-based musical ensembles and the Polish *Concerto Glacensis* choir. Rather than serving as a symbolic cultural display, the collaboration functioned as a shared artistic experience that fostered dialogue through sound and collective expression. A similar approach was evident during the 2019 Mamallapuram Summit, where Carnatic cultural heritage was consciously highlighted to build what was described as a "Chennai Connect" between the leadership of India and China. In this context, music was not merely ceremonial but played a meaningful role in creating an atmosphere of cultural familiarity and openness. Her reflections, published in *The Hindu*, further emphasize that music enables communication through silence, emotion, and aesthetic experience, moving beyond the constraints of formal diplomatic frameworks. Her establishment of the South Asian Symphony Foundation reflects this belief in practice, demonstrating how musical collaboration can simultaneously address humanitarian concerns and contribute to sustained cultural diplomacy.
- e) **The Artist as a Global Citizen:** Contemporary Carnatic musicians view their art not as a static museum piece, but as an evolving bridge to the world. Performers like Varijashree Venugopal and Karthik have noted that when they perform on international stages, the goal has shifted from "representing India" to creating a shared human experience through rhythm and raga. This sentiment was echoed during the 2024 Margazhi Festival, where Governor R.N. Ravi described Carnatic music as a carrier of core Indian values that resonate globally, serving as a distinct cultural identity for the diaspora and beyond. Taken together, these perspectives from musicians and diplomats underscore the argument that Carnatic music operates effectively as soft power not through overt cultural representation, but through empathy, dialogue, and shared aesthetic experience. Their reflections affirm that cultural diplomacy, when rooted in authentic artistic practice, is capable of sustaining meaningful intercultural relationships over time



**11. Challenges and Future Prospects:** While Carnatic music has successfully contributed to cultural diplomacy, certain challenges remain. Language barriers pose a significant obstacle, as many Carnatic compositions are in South Indian languages such as Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, and Sanskrit. Limited accessibility to training, especially in regions outside South India, can hinder wider adoption. Additionally, the art form's complex technical requirements and the perception of it as a niche genre can limit its audience base.

However, ongoing initiatives offer promising prospects for expanding Carnatic music's global reach. Online music academies and digital platforms have made learning more accessible. Government support through organizations like ICCR continues to facilitate international performances and educational exchanges. Cross-genre collaborations that blend Carnatic music with jazz, world music, and electronic genres are creating new artistic expressions that appeal to younger and more diverse audiences.

The integration of Carnatic music into school curricula in India and abroad, combined with increased funding for cultural exchange programs, could further enhance its role as a diplomatic tool. Additionally, creating more platforms for international artists to learn and perform Carnatic music would strengthen its global presence and impact.

**12. Conclusion:** Carnatic music stands as a powerful symbol of India's cultural diplomacy and soft power strategy. By incorporating this classical art form into global cultural exchange programs, India not only strengthens its international presence but also fosters mutual understanding and respect among nations. The historical journey from M.S. Subbulakshmi's groundbreaking UN performance in 1966 to contemporary digital platforms demonstrates the enduring relevance and adaptability of this ancient tradition in modern diplomatic contexts.

The case studies examined in this article reveal that Carnatic music has consistently served as an effective vehicle for cultural exchange, creating positive associations with India and opening channels for dialogue beyond formal diplomatic engagements. Institutional frameworks, particularly the ICCR, have played a crucial role in systematically promoting Carnatic music through performances, educational initiatives, and international collaborations.

The continued promotion of Carnatic music through educational programs, digital platforms, and diplomatic initiatives will play a crucial role in shaping India's soft power strategy, reinforcing its vision of comprehensive national development by 2047. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected yet culturally diverse, traditional art forms like Carnatic music offer authentic pathways for building bridges between civilizations, demonstrating that cultural diplomacy remains an essential component of contemporary international relations.

Future research should examine the quantitative impact of cultural diplomacy initiatives on bilateral relations, explore the economic dimensions of cultural exchange programs, and investigate how digital technologies are transforming the dissemination and reception of traditional art forms in global contexts.

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