

# The Music and the Muse / Prateeksha Sharma

## An Identity for Kumar Gandharva



Kumar Gandharva (L) In Full Bloom (R) Younger Day  
*This paper is an attempt to trace two aspects of creative artists: 'Bildungsroman' (novel of formation) and 'Künstlerroman' (novel of the artist). The subject of the former is the development of the protagonist's mind and character, in the passage from childhood through varied experiences- and often through spiritual crisis-into maturity, which usually involves recognition of one's identity and role in the world. The latter, the 'artist novel' represents the growth of an artist from childhood into the stage of maturity that signalizes the recognition of the protagonist's artistic destiny and mastery of an artistic craft.*

Generations of Indians, for hundreds of years, have grown up singing Kabir, from oral traditions to classical traditions, from rustic village *mandalis* to sounds polished and honed through years of *riyaaz* and *sadhana*. Among the classical sounds one of the most prominent and far reaching voices is that of Pandit Kumar Gandharva (KG) (1924-1992) a voice both rich in its classical understanding of ragas, a voice imbued with the meaning of the text it attempts to deliver, and a

voice capable of creating mystery and a reverence about the depth and colossus of the literature it has set out to explore. This paper tries to trace the sojourn of Shivaputra Komkali to the iconic Kumar Gandharva: the crisis of identity and the development of the artist from the prosaic to the poetic, from the mundane to the spiritual.

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At the outset it may be noted that the present attempt is not an exercise in voice analysis as much as to understand why is it that KG's voice stands out on the firmament of Indian music in its rendition of Kabir, while numerous others sing the poet saint, equally well, if not better? Why is it that generations of people seem touched to their inner core by his singing more than that of any other musician of the tradition (of classical music) or training? What is it, that makes Kumar Gandharva a mystery and an enigma that reaches a peak during his Kabir bhajans?

The above concerns are explored on the basis of observation and logical reasoning. It relies on the observations of some people who had learnt with Kumarji himself, reading about him, working on Kabir in my own musical journey and interacting with a number of people who associated with Kabir's thought and philosophy and KG, people who had heard KG in person, people who learnt his music with his students, critics and admirers, his own students and followers. KG is an enigma that not only haunts but also continues to grow right in front of us. *"Time"*, according to Van der Post (1975), *"has a knack of putting the truly great...well ahead of us, rather than in the past darkening so fast behind."* KG today looms larger on the scene of the human spirit than he did in his own lifetime.

Kumarji belongs to the class of artists whose echoes linger on in the aural memories of millions all over India, a formidable legacy for anyone to carry forward and a giant task to

comprehend. Much like Kabir, he grew up in a manner never experienced before him; he was a man detached from his times, the institutions of his times and the sensibilities attached to those institutional structures. If Kabir was a weaver who simply and irreverently composed verses that shook the frame of all tradition and authority; KG equally powerfully shook the tradition of music and stepped aside from the main current of being 'certified' by any one *gharana* (school of music). Given his extraordinary ability to sing any and all of them with equal facility- the choice to not affiliate him to any one *gharana* was a great act of rebellion, an act unheard of in his time, a radical breakaway from the prevalent order and injecting a new level of thought into the entire gamut of Hindustani music's exploratory process.

*"Sunta hai guru gyani, gagan mein awaaj ho rahi jhini jhini..."* (meaning, the one anointed by the guru, hears...hears an inaudible, imperceptible cosmic sound) is a very popular bhajan of Kabir sung by KG. This song alone can be an initiation for one into the world of both Kabir and Kumarji and numerous listeners venture unsuspectingly near KG and Kabir, coming with the quest for enquiry aflame in their minds about the nature of everything and perhaps the most significant being WHO AM I? Those questions of philosophy, which have haunted the human mind eternally, assume a new light when put forth by Kabir and when KG spoke in that voice, says Raghava Menon (2001), "The Kabir Bhajans on the other hand are laden with the monochrome of timelessness."

How did KG become what he became is a question that one wishes to examine in this piece- the voice, the identity, the expression, the intensity, the depth and so on. Though Kumarji is a subject worthy of many studies that have been carried out and no doubt will be carried out in future too, I will restrict this presentation to the psychological aspects alone and the process of 'individuation' within the theoretical framework developed by C.G. Jung.

## The Child: A Crisis in Identity

It is very well known about Kumar ji that he was a child prodigy. A prodigy is always a challenge for society to understand, for s/he confuses everyone with his/her prowess and ability. It seems uncanny and is given various connotations depending upon the arena where the prodigy has appeared. In the field of music prodigies are not only found once every few years, their method also remains similar. Society down the ages has largely been based on conformity; and individuality is frowned upon for it is perceived as a threat to the prevailing institutions. In such a situation reports Menon(2001),

*Kumar was born with a supernatural memory...He could...reproduce a three-minute record of any of the well-established musicians of the day with a fidelity that made his singing of them seem like musical photographs. Considering the number of years that these musicians had spent in mastering their art, this eerie facility of a seven-year-old lad seemed miraculous...People who had no interest nor understanding of music came in hordes to hear him and look upon him...(p.40)*

Literature abounds about KG telling us about his genius and the fact that how while he was just a little boy he had become the cynosure of all eyes, a crowd puller and a musician par excellence. "But what surprised Kumar ...was not his ability to sing but the response he had on those who heard him. For that he was not prepared. All he thought he was doing was...he sang it (a song that he heard) the best way he could"(Menon, 2001, p. 49).

When a small boy of seven comes under public gaze what could be the possible effect on the developing ego of the child? What would he have thought about himself and about his admirers? How would he have dealt with all the adulation or to that extent not only him, how do all 'celebrity' children handle an invasion into their lives by effusive adults who

they do not understand?

From the viewpoint of the child whose developing concept of self is subject to the kind of exposure that KG was receiving at that point in his life and he was being celebrated for his singing, his 'voice' was paradoxically was not his own- he was an accurate imitator, an excellent mimic and the world was adulating his ability to mimic; not necessarily his musicianship. Like a small boat that is tossed in the giant sea of careless waves Kumar's ego had been laid bare for the world to examine, study, wonder about and comment upon. A child was in the 'limelight' without knowing why, or assimilating in the true sense the reason for being there. Psychologically, all children who are in the 'public eye' undergo this phenomenon of 'premature exposure' without having the ego strength to deal with the impact of it and someday face the possibility of a neurosis or hopelessness.

When the ego is sufficiently developed it can handle success and failure, criticism and appreciation with a fair degree of equanimity. But a child imitating an adult, and being adulated for that ability will sooner or later only come to feel confused about his/her own identity\*.

\*Another famous and celebrated artist currently on the world music scene is Michael Jackson, also considered a child prodigy. Much later as the whole world now witnesses a lot of his childhood pain surfaces in the form of abnormalities which showed up in adult life, to the confusion and surprise of the world. If we extend the analysis about the lack of ego strength in the child, whose concept of self is not well defined it appears to be true in this case too.

### **The Personality**

Author, voice instructor, and singer Carolyn Sloan (1999), reflecting on the process of self-discovery through the voice says,

*"I have learned that singing is about self-examination and observation, though not self-criticism... Along with courage and ability to question, experiment, and observe, a singer also must have an unfailing persistence and desire to solve what may seem to be unsolvable mysteries... A singer must become his or her own ally, searching for clues and solving these mysteries for him or herself. A singer needs to become a detective... We must balance our need to control with a necessity to let go so our true voices can surface. We do not create the voice. The voice is and creates us. It teaches us that we must be open to being stimulated and to experiencing our lives without inhibition. As a singer, it is imperative to be a spiritual master (p.5)."*

A voice is like an identity. Every human being needs a 'voice'. In effect voice is the expression of the individuality of a person. It is not necessarily a speaking voice alone, it is an expression of the soul of the individual- it can be a 'voice' that expresses itself through speech, through writing, painting, gardening, cooking, cleaning, teaching, farming, or any other vocation. A 'voice' is not limited to the function of the larynx alone. It is a multifaceted, multi-hued, aesthetic expression of the inner life of a person. As many roles a person perform in life or society, at least that many are the visible expressions of his/her individuality or 'voices'.

Voice is the fundamental aspect of a singer. When a singer is appreciated for excellent rendition of another's singing, in a sensitive individual it may produce confusion about who actually is being celebrated- the original voice or the cover-version. In such a state, it becomes urgent and necessary for the child to search himself out, for it is evident that he is not being celebrated for himself but because he can be somebody else. This search for identity, when it is felt becomes the struggle.

In discussing about primal therapy, Arthur Janov (1970) talks about development from the point of view of a child, *"Struggle is what keeps a child from feeling his hopelessness. It lies in being the performer...Instead of being himself he struggles to become another version of himself. Sooner or later the child comes to believe that this version is the real him... It is that moment of icy, cosmic loneliness, the bitterest of all epiphanies. It is the time when he begins to discover that he is not loved for what he is and will not be (p. 29)."*<sup>7</sup>

KG was not known to be neurotic as a child or as an adult but one is wont to believe that precocity had its internal roots in a troubled spirit. Raghava Menon (2001) sheds light on this aspect too, *"He merely puzzled over these issues inwardly...merely suffered quietly... The problem was what to do, (p.64)..."*

So, a search for his own inner expression would have begun long ago in the soul of the child. It would no longer be enough to merely ape another great artist, because the inward restlessness demanded an original release, an outlet- not merely a borrowed identity. Kumar Gandharva had set out on the path of *" 'individuation'- a process referred to by Swiss psychologist C.G.Jung as a search for self; an expression of that biological process by which every living thing becomes what it is destined to become from the beginning"* (Gandhi, 2001, p. 20).

At a later point in his life when he came in touch with Anjani Bai Malpekar, who took him into the realm of the science of sound, or Nada Yoga, did he for the first time have a real glimpse of what he had sought all along? Before that, he was seeking without knowing. The inability to ask anyone or ask the exact questions for want of a facilitating environment (both then and now) produced suffering. These experiences of pain, the beginning of the individuation is in fact transformative experiences that may be viewed as *"... the dark*

and bitter night of the soul..." shares Raghava Menon (2001, p64). And interestingly, this is the view of transpersonal psychology too.

Experience of change, transformation or transition is in fact a point of crisis in the life of an individual. How the human encounters and deals with the process, assimilates the change and transforms himself and his destiny is the essence of transpersonal experiences. Stanislav Grof and Cristina Grof (1990), the former being among the pioneering figures in the transpersonal psychology movement say, *"One can also encounter experiences of fear, loneliness, insanity, or death during transpersonal sequences originating from collective or universal domains. The transpersonal realms contain both light and dark elements, and both the 'positive' and the 'negative' can inspire fear...However, the fact that fear sometimes arises when an individual moves into the realms of light and beauty is somewhat perplexing"* (p. 48)

When the artist began to question the environment around him it became imperative for him to understand who he was himself, what was the singing that he needed to do and what was the way ahead of him? Kumar needed to find his own face and distinguish it from the numerous faces that were being mirrored within him in his day-to-day quest. His struggle became introverted and was not limited to a search for voice and identity alone; it became a quest for affiliating the soul. Even when he went to study music at the house of his guru Professor Deodhar, he remained aloof about affiliating himself to any gharana; chronicles Menon (2001) *"...while there was a flexibility with respect to Kumar on the characteristics of Gharana, he was inflexible in his vision of what music should be, boundless, beyond frontiers and paradigms"* (p. 89)."

Kumar Gandharva was a musician first and he, had already examined the structures of the gharanas while still a child, so now the need was to find his own voice, his own identity from within the musical tapestry he had seen, studied and



examined all his young days. At this point perhaps, his Guru gave him a teaching assignment *"Kumar was designated to teach all those students who did not have too clear a picture of what style they wanted most to follow. In a certain sense this was a wise technique to adopt for Kumar himself was not still quite decided on what contour he himself was to give his art"* (Menon, 2001, p. 89)

As yet, he had not found a way out for himself. He was troubled and occasionally happy. Troubled, because of the restlessness that gnawed at his heartstrings constantly and making him unsure where his precocity and genius were headed after all. The hero who is on the path of inner transformation has to face all his demons and fears when they come face-to-face with him. Few are moments of passing joy for an individual who cannot share the pain of his quest with anyone. But fortunate are those who do not give up in spite of the uncertainty.

Janov (1970) further elaborates on the need for authenticity, *"Because we were unified human beings, the real self will constantly press to surface and make those mental connections. If there were no intrinsic need to be whole, then the real self could be put away for good; it would lie peacefully within us and never make any attempt to intrude into our behaviour. What drives neurosis is the need to be whole again, the need to be our natural selves. The unreal self is the barrier, the enemy which must finally be destroyed (p. 41)."*

The unconscious in us is always pressing to express itself, mostly through dreams and fantasies, sometimes through experiences of illness too. When a young man seeks himself from all the haze that surrounds him, in some voices he finds a resonance of his own inner calling. The search had started finding results. While discussing about self-realization of the unconscious, Anthony Stevens (1982) notes that, *"everything in the unconscious seeks outward manifestation,*

*and the personality too desires to evolve out of its unconscious conditions to experience itself as a whole...It is not I who create myself, rather I who happen to myself (p. 140)."*

## **A Break from Tradition**

From the child who apes every audible sound in its environment to its nearest degree possible to becoming an *artiste par excellence* was a singular journey. Often in the musical tradition one is taught that the lyrics or the poetry of the work is subservient to the mood of the raga. That means every 'khayal' or 'bandish' of a raga should sound like the raga from which it is born and not have a distinct identity of its own. Kumarji was among one of the few people who dared to challenge this fixity. For him every lyrical form had its own life and needed to be honored for its own sake, and not alone the sake of the raga. *"This quality is one of the principal characteristics of the Kumar Gandharva Gayaki,"* points out Menon (2001), further elaborating, *"Kumar sang out of the Bandish and not out of the Raga. He subordinated the Raga to the Bandish, never letting the Raga take priority over the Bandish. This was a unique turnaround in the culture of the Hindustani classical musical heritage. This was the cause of the passion and intensity with which Kumar invested his performance. His Raga Vistara took on the lineaments of the Bandish on account of which the Raga has come to exist. So he showed the possibilities the Raga in that particular embodiment of the Bandish he had chosen to sing. This was the consequence of a highly developed and delicate literary grasp of the nature of the words of a language and the way they are spoken while being sung ( P. 86-87).*

There is one significant point in the biography of KG, which many ascribe as the reason for maturity of his musical thought. That was a six-year long, near fatal illness

that he faced, in the course of which he was forbidden from singing. The only voices that he could hear were the folk singers of his neighbouring areas. This prolonged absence from active singing was a return to the inner environs for KG, and that is where he honed his art in a new way *"This is a well-understood practice and is often called Mauna Sadhana, which irrigates and fertilizes the unconscious mind of the Sadhak (Menon, 2001, p. 84)"*

Though Kumar had reached heights in his musicianship early enough, this period of forced withdrawal and a near brush with death, deepened his insights into the world of the 'swara'. Possibly this was also the time when he became more inclined towards the bhakti tradition in poetry.

### **Illness and Transformation**

A life of seeking becomes a life of pain, questions and uncertainty. Since many do not tread this path the seeker is usually left alone to look for answers till the next person can come and point out a little of the way ahead. Illness is usually a time that leaves many a person alone with not much else except their inner reservoirs to fall back on- as it did Kumarji. It was an experience of silence, an experience of using the ear to a new end, an experience of growing from the soil of, Dewas, Malwa, *"Dewas was a singing country... The folk do not sing in the strict sense. They are telling things to each other and this speech sounds like song... A folk tune does not have Raga, what it has are the seeds of feeling... Lying in bed he discovered this simple truth"* (Menon, 2001 P. 93).

In finding out this simple truth maybe Kumar Gandharva found himself out. And now it was a new journey that stared ahead of him-the internal journey having borne fruition but the world outside much the same. This is not an unknown phenomenon for the Grofs' having experienced an entire gamut of transpersonal

experiences share, for example, someone who returns to a familiar situation may find the culture and the individuals within it unreceptive to his or her new capacities.

The reborn hero must enter the long-forgotten atmosphere where men who are fractions imagine themselves to be complete. He has to confront society with his ego-shattering, life-redeeming elixir, and take the return blow of reasonable queries, hard resentment, and good people at a loss to comprehend. Because of the magnitude of their transformative experiences... they may also face the very real problem that the everyday world around them is often not very receptive to their newfound discoveries" (C. Grof & S. Grof, 1990, p. 214).

After having completed a long journey (though visibly in a short span of time) in classical music, inverting it within himself- moving away from the realm of ragas to the kingdom of the *swara*, becoming fully musically quiet, except for the aural input of the folk singers that went into him, Kumarji brought about a most extraordinary change in his life through a lateral technique of *riyaaz*- simply through his ear and silent practice. It was as if he fought the tuberculosis by dint of sheer willpower- a triumph of the spirit. In terms of therapy this is termed as psychoneuroimmunology- where the immune system gets an impetus from the mind to fight illness and combat the disease. Music therapy and a lot of holistic practices these days are increasingly orienting themselves towards this multimodal approach.

### **Poetic Underpinnings of Kumar Gandharva's Gayaki**

Though bhakti singing in the form of bhajan has been practiced long before KG appeared, he seems to have established a new method in the tradition- not for him a bhajan where the facial expressions of the singers "...have to show any devotion or faith in the syrupy fashion of our inheritance"...(Menon, 2001,

p. 100). Kumar Gandharva brought Kabir (and the *bhajan*) to life simply because of his fusion of the folk and classical forms of music with poetry. Placing the poetry into the rustic countryside ambience it had grown out of, his songs acquired a new root, never before seen in *bhajan* singing. One sometimes wonders what made him choose Kabir's Nirgun *bhakti* as his 'voice' over the sagun *bhakti* (Not that he limited his repertoire of bhajans to Nirgun *bhakti* alone) As in the Nirgun tradition, the deity is a formless, divine entity, Kumarji ascribed that same formlessness to the 'swara'. Kabir's poetry is an ocean of spiritual philosophy.

### **Concluding Comments**

Kumar Gandharva brings to life his words with new meanings, because for the first time a singer explores the swara in the same objectivity as the poet who utters the syllables. In other words the soul of the artist becomes the voice of the man. So there is no separation between the two identities. When one man sees within him another completely reflected, automatically the former's poetry becomes the latter's expression. There is a merger. *"Thus does the Self accord itself recognition through that organ of consciousness-the ego- which it has given rise to. In one place Jung defines ego as a 'relatively constant personification of the unconscious itself, or as the Schopenhauerian mirror in which the unconscious becomes aware of its own face"* (Anthony, 1982,P.140)

In triumphing over illness, Kumarji rewrote the script of his life. He used his own music to heal himself out of a near death situation and gave succour to innumerable others after that. The myth of the wounded healer came alive once again for the world. Thus Kumarji, demonstrated in his own lifetime the power of healing that music offers, opened out new avenues. Possibly without realizing he became one of the most eminent

case studies for music therapy in India, rendering both the lyrical content of Kabir to its full glory and his own musical improvisation to carve out a hitherto unknown, unforeseen, uncharted path for all those who dare to follow; in the process literally and figuratively becoming the 'voice' of Kabir for the times we live in.

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# Discourses on Music / Prateeksha Sharma

[Music- A Path to Wholeness](#)



### **The author practicing on the Veena**

Music is the essence of life, spirit and creation. To understand our musical selves is the beginning of our journey to becoming whole from the disjointed, often scattered selves we become as a result of socialisation and acculturation. When we turn to music we unknowingly turn to mother nature who coded music into us even while we were being formed from the various elements, and in this turning we connect ourselves to our inner deeper selves- sometimes which does not reveal itself to us in our mechanistic daily survival rigmarole. Wordsworth, in his autobiographical poem, The Prelude, in a reflective passage of Book 1 says,

*Dust as we are,*

*the immortal spirit grows*

*Like harmony in music*

**-William Wordsworth**

Though we come from the five elements and return back to them, the spirit creates newer vistas for itself and continues to scale heights that the body alone cannot scale. The spirit grows while the body withers. Such is nature's playground. And the more the spirit grows, greater is the harmony it produces- within itself and with the world around. Such is music; such is life. Music is a reflection that mirrors every aspect of life, within its infinite folds, shades, hues and contours.

According to Yaksha, who codified the explanations for the word *sangīta*, around 500 B.C. the word *sangita* is explained by its symbolic substitute word *bharata*: *bha* from *bhava*(emotion), *ra* from *raga* (the modal-scalar framework for melody), and *ta* from *tala* (the rhythmic and metric structure). The specific Bharata invoked in the definition of *sangita* is the legendary sage who is said to be the author of the *Natyashastra*, the most important early treatise on music and theatre[i]. This explanation of music clearly portrays how from time immemorial the Indians have known about the inextricable link between emotions, melody and rhythm.

The word '*music*' etymologically comes from the '*muses*'- Greek goddesses who inspired poets, painters, musicians etc. The word traces its history via Old French *musique* and Latin *musica*, to Greek *mousike*, a noun use of *mousikos* 'of the muses', an adjective derived from *mousa* 'muse'- John Ayto[iii] aptly comments :

"the specialisation of the word's meaning began in Greek- first to 'poetry sung to music,' and subsequently to 'music' alone.

According to the Greeks, Apollo was the patron god of music, dance and poetry. He earned the epithet of '*musagetes*' –the leader of the muses[iii]. Interestingly Apollo was also the patron god of the healing arts, medicine and archery (Recall the number of hospitals and clinics named after him) Thus, music became synonymous with healing from the dawn of time.

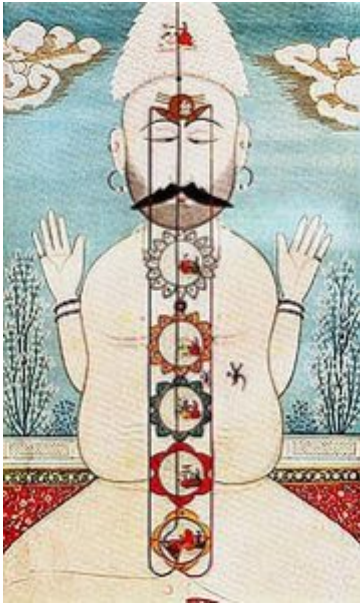
[i] Rowell, Lewis (1992) first Indian edition 1998. *Music and Musical Thought in Early India*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt.Ltd.

[ii] Ayto, John (1997), *Bloomsbury Dictionary of Word Origins*, Delhi: GOYLSaaB

[iii] *Mythology: myths, legends and fantasies*, (2003) UK:



## Chakras and Sound



**Late 18th century A.D Kangra school Painting of Yogin with six chakras**

In addition to our visible, gross body we also have the subtle body in the form of an energy field around it. The physical body contains the most dense and therefore visible energy. This energy continues forming layers of energy fields around the body which are not usually visible to the naked eye. This magnetic field energy that surrounds the body is called "aura". The aura is created by the energy of the *chakras*- the psychic, whirling energy processing centres of the body. According to yogic theory, there are approximately 72,000 *nadis*, astral nerve tubes, the most important of which is the *sushumna*, the astral body counterpart to the spinal cord. On either side of it are two *nadis* known as *ida* and *pingala*, which correspond to the left and right sympathetic cords in the physical body[i]. There are six points in the body where these three *nadis* intersect and these points also correspond in location to the major nerve ganglia

(cervical plexus, solar plexus, sacral plexus and so forth) located along the spine in the physical body. In healthy people, the *chakras* are vibrant and spin with vigour, while in those who are not well the chakra petals are dull and spin sluggishly, says the American Hindu priest Thomas Ashley-Farrand[ii]. Interestingly, these *chakras* respond to the sound of Sanskrit, a fact which was noticed by ancient Indian mystics with “second sight”, the ability to see clearly in the subtle realm. These outcomes were carefully written down and can be found in the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads* and the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*. It took time before the sages arrived at the mechanism behind the impact of Sanskrit on the *chakras*. And they concluded that the total number of petals or spokes composing those six *chakras* is fifty. Similarly, the Sanskrit alphabet consists of fifty letters, with each one corresponding to a particular petal of a *chakra*. When a *mantra* built from the language is chanted, our *chakras* vibrate in tune with the Sanskrit sounds because Sanskrit is ... “an energy-based language first and a meaning-based language second”. Not all the words of the Sanskrit *mantras* have meanings. It is the energy coming from the subtle body that provides the key to the effectiveness of the *mantra* chanting. Each *chakra* has a corresponding *Bija mantra* or sound vibration. Irrespective of who chants the *mantra*, at the sound of the *Bija mantra*, the *chakras* spin with greater energy and vigour, giving corresponding strength to the body. It is also said that the *chakras* correspond to the musical scale with each *chakra* representing one *swara* of the octave.

Human society uses music in various ways. Some of it is used in education for those who become musicians or those who endeavour to develop a fine aesthetic appreciation of life, in particular the arts, around them. It is utilized in religious ceremonies and rituals, as a means of entertainment and in imparting health to the body. Each of these applications of music is explained briefly.

[i] Vishnu Devananda, Swami (1995: third edition), *Meditation and Mantras* New York City: Om Lotus Publishing Company

[ii] Ashley-Farrand, Thomas (2003) *Shakti Mantras: Tapping the great goddess energy within*, New York: Ballantine Books.

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## **Music Education**



### **Republic Day Parade- A School Band**

There are two aspects of music education- music in education and music as education. Training in music from an early age for the purpose of disciplining the mind and making a career out of some aspect of music constitutes music education. When a child begins to train in music in a systematic manner a number of changes occur in the personality of the child- from disciplining to becoming methodical, refinement of senses, time management (as the child also is involved with academic pursuits due to that age). It is a boost to the self-confidence of the individual as his/her musical ability sets them apart from their peers and the artiste is a source of attraction for everyone around. Since music tends to be a performing art, the necessary exposure to the stage automatically makes the child confident and able to deal with

issues related to shyness, introversion, and fear of public speaking. After the training phase, the next phase of the musician is to contribute to the social fabric in the same capacity- a role which maybe performed as a teacher, an entertainer, a healer, in the industry or attached to a spiritual organisation.

Music in education is a somewhat different application of music, in which music is utilised to improve the educational output of students. The main impact of music here is felt due to its ability to let students involve themselves in group musical experiences, which allow an expression of emotion in a medium other than speech. These experiences could be ranging from singing, playing musical instruments together, writing lyrics and setting them to music to making musical plays and productions and so forth. A competitive, performance oriented production with such activities has been seen to bring about both behavioural and academic improvements in healthy school going children as well as those suffering from mental handicaps, hearing handicaps and various other neurological and/or developmental disabilities. Such musical experiences not only foster socialisation, but also bring about group cohesiveness, enhancement of interpersonal skills, learning due to imitative behaviour and more adapted socially cooperative mannerisms.

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## **Music in Healing**



Music appeals to the emotional side of the human nature. Music stirs, births, expresses, fires, harnesses, channelizes and tempers emotions. Music precedes the development of language as a form of expression. That is because music is present in nature even before the human is born as an individual or a species. In his bid to emulate the sounds of nature man becomes musical. And yet in amputating himself from this connection with nature, in the process of socialization and civilization the human loses touch with the lyre within, coming to a point of dis-ease or an absence of ease.

Man has instinctively known forever about the healing aspects of music. Speaking about this knowledge in context of Indian music, Alain Daniélou the late Director of the International Institute for Comparative Music Studies and Documentation, Berlin, opines that "a general Sanskritic theory of music, termed *Gāndharva Veda*, was elaborated at a very early date." He continues saying that it seems that the *Gāndharva Veda* studied every use of musical sound, not only in different musical forms and systems but also in physics, medicine and magic. Music makes the human 'whole'- in harmony and in balance. Don Campbell says that bringing a body in to balance requires observing the orchestra in it's entirety, it's current condition and past experience, it's inherent strengths, it's potential for improvement. And the real genius of healing lies in teaching the body, mind, and heart to discover and play their own music-not something that has been dictated by social norms. If one is to examine healing in terms of emotion, then the process of healing involves the

transformation of one kind of emotion into another. The *Natyashastra* of Bharata mentions about nine primary emotions or *rasa-s*. Rasa is the Permanent Mood when it is revealed through enjoyment[i]. The nine[1]accepted Rasa-s are: the Erotic (*Sringara*), the Comic (*Hasya*), the Pathetic (*karuna*), the Furious (*Raudra*), the Heroic (*Vira*), the Fearful (*Bhayanaka*), the Odious (*Bibhatsa*), the Marvellous (*Adbhuta*) and the Tranquil (*Santa*). The catalytic process of music is aimed at transforming the dominant emotion into another emotion or reducing the severity of the emotional experience, incase the dominant emotion is a disease producing condition or itself an offshoot of the disease. For example sadness at one extreme becomes depression, which can in an extreme case also lead to a suicidal tendency. Music used appropriately with this emotion can aid in an expression that may not be spontaneously available to the individual due to disease related pathology.

It has been noticed that during conditions of illness, it is human tendency to revert to prayer, because of the impact faith has on the psyche, and the immune system. The greater is the patient's faith that they will get well and the more they silently pray, the lesser is their expectation from medical cures alone and also greater is the likelihood of them becoming well due to their own willpower. The reason is twofold: first, prayer takes the mind of the patient away from the disease and negative thoughts. Secondly, it gives a positive affirmation to the body's own immune system to fight the disease. Music unobstrusively becomes a catalyst in this process.

If one is to use music for therapeutic purposes, it is crucial to understand two principles: Entrainment and Isoprinciple. Entrainment is simply the principle from physics that tells us that our biorhythms tend to synchronize with the rhythm, tempo, or pulse of the music. We instinctively choose slow music when we want to calm down and faster music when we want

to energize ourselves. The isoprinciple states that in order to change a person's mood with music, one must first begin with music that reflects the state he/she is in to start with. If one is feeling depressed one cannot simply put on "happy" music to change the mood. It must be done slowly and carefully.

When we mention the term music therapy we need to remember that in therapy, music is specifically used to achieve non-musical goals. Music can both be used as an alternative, stand-alone therapy as well as a complementary therapy in addition to traditional medical procedures.

There are four levels of music therapy practice:

- Auxiliary level: All functional uses of music for non-therapeutic but related purposes;
- Augmented level: Music therapy used to enhance the efforts of other treatment modalities
- Intensive level: Induces significant changes in the client's current situation
- Primary level: Singular role in meeting the main therapeutic needs of the client.

Music therapy is an interpersonal process in which the therapist uses music and all its facets- physical, emotional, mental, social, aesthetic and spiritual- to help clients to improve or maintain help. The music used in therapy maybe specially created by the therapist or client or it maybe drawn from the existing literature in various styles and periods.[ii]

[1] Bharata admitted eight rasas, but later writers admitted nine rasa including *Śānta* or *Śāma*

[i] Prajyananda, Swami (2002) *A Historical Study of Indian*

*Music*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt.Ltd.

[ii] Bruscia, Kenneth (1991) *Case Studies In Music Therapy*, (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) Barcelona Publishers,

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## **Some Concerns in Designing Therapy**



To utilise music in its therapeutic aspect we need to identify music that corresponds to our various emotions. If a particular melody attracts us, we could examine what is so special about it. Is it the lyrics, the voice, the intonation of the words, the interplay of instruments, the use of silence in the song or something else? However, when we use music as a complement to certain other procedures we have to study all the above aspects as well as the musical abilities of the individual who is the recipient of the treatment, and their preferences regarding the setting. There can be many a setting for a therapy exercise in music- from a community centre to a hospital ward, the studio of the therapist to the school-room, even a park or the home of the patient. In terms of participation it can be an individual who receives therapy, a couple, a family, a group or any other set of like-minded people.

Then one has to choose the kind of musical experience –between listening to music, recreating music, making new music and an



appropriate musical medium, whether it would be the voice of the participants or instrument, or a combination of them. Similarly, one needs to carefully choose what music to use—some existing music, which is known to both or known to one alone or a new music to be created jointly. Once these factors have been accounted for music therapy can be designed for any kind of disease or condition: from childbirth and immature babies to patients suffering from cancer, HIV/AIDS and those with burns and other trauma. It can also be used in treatment of psychiatric illnesses of schizophrenia, substance abuse, depressions, phobias and for rehabilitation to neurological conditions of multiple sclerosis, stroke, autism, developmental delays and handicaps, Alzheimer's and Parkinson's Diseases. Even in operation theatres the use of music can help in carrying out a safe surgery by reducing the stress levels of all involved, with a possible reduction of the dosage of anasthesia required by the patient and in post-surgical recovery. Further uses may be to promote self-actualization, to stimulate developmental growth, to manage pain and to treat musical problems.

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## **Music in Healing Discourses on Music -6 Prateeksha Sharma**



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## **Music and Ritual Discourses on Music -5 by Prateeksha Sharma**



Ritual is an innate part of the human life. Ritual whether in the form of an invocation, a sacrifice, a fast or a penance, a holy dip in a river, ringing the bells, a prayer or an *aarti* they all contribute to disciplining the mind to focus. Every spiritual and religious tradition uses music to help in focussing. Prayer brings the mind to a point of concentration, and in a one-pointed thought about the object of prayer. The object maybe the form of a diety or a formless entity, musical sounds help in making the mind still and gathering the thoughts from all the various directions the mind is usually scattered in. Therefore, spiritual music has its own special parametres and singers. When we go into a house of worship the sound of the music playing instantly snaps the chord from the noise of the world and introverts the senses.

In India, with its unique tradition of community singing in *bhajans*, *satsangs* and *sankirtan* music is the predominant element that unifies the consciousness of the participants. Even if people are unable to sing, for not knowing the language or the lyrics, they usually join in the community act with something as simple as clapping. Such community activities, which are a part of the life of a householder, especially in certain communities or the post-retirement phase of life, are a prescription to stall the modern day affliction of alienation among the elderly; which often leads to mental, physical and spiritual decay. This kind of community musico-religious programmes are also a mechanism for those who are involved to remain active, busy and involved in a meaningful social exchange- by not being solely dependent on their

families at all times. The greater is the social and physical involvement of an individual the less likely is the person to fall prey to degenerative diseases.

TO BE CONTINUED.....

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# Music Education Discourses on Music -4 By: Prateeksha Sharma



Republic Day Parade- A School Band

There are two aspects of music education- music in education and music as education. Training in music from an early age for the purpose of disciplining the mind and making a career out of some aspect of music constitutes music education. When a child begins to train in music in a systematic manner a number of changes occur in the personality of the child- from

disciplining to becoming methodical, refinement of senses, time management (as the child also is involved with academic pursuits due to that age). It is a boost to the self-confidence of the individual as his/her musical ability sets them apart from their peers and the artiste is a source of attraction for everyone around. Since music tends to be a performing art, the necessary exposure to the stage automatically makes the child confident and able to deal with issues related to shyness, introversion, and fear of public speaking. After the training phase, the next phase of the musician is to contribute to the social fabric in the same capacity- a role which maybe performed as a teacher, an entertainer, a healer, in the industry or attached to a spiritual organisation.

Music in education is a somewhat different application of music, in which music is utilised to improve the educational output of students. The main impact of music here is felt due to its ability to let students involve themselves in group musical experiences, which allow an expression of emotion in a medium other than speech. These experiences could be ranging from singing, playing musical instruments together, writing lyrics and setting them to music to making musical plays and productions and so forth. A competitive, performance oriented production with such activities has been seen to bring about both behavioural and academic improvements in healthy school going children as well as those suffering from mental handicaps, hearing handicaps and various other neurological and/or developmental disabilities. Such musical experiences not only foster socialisation, but also bring about group cohesiveness, enhancement of interpersonal skills, learning due to imitative behaviour and more adapted socially cooperative mannerisms.

**TO BE CONTINUED.....**

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# Chakras and Sound Discourses on Music -3 By: Prateeksha Sharma



In addition to our visible, gross body we also have the subtle body in the form of an energy field around it. The physical body contains the most dense and therefore visible energy. This energy continues forming layers of energy fields around the body which are not usually visible to the naked eye. This magnetic field energy that surrounds the body is called "aura". The aura is created by the energy of the *chakras*- the psychic, whirling energy processing centres of the body. According to yogic theory, there are approximately 72,000 *nadis*, astral nerve tubes, the most important of which is the *sushumna*, the astral body counterpart to the spinal cord. On either side of it are two *nadis* known as *ida* and *pingala*, which correspond to the left and right sympathetic cords in the physical body[i]. There are six points in the body where these three *nadis* intersect and these points also correspond in location to the major nerve ganglia (cervical plexus, solar plexus, sacral plexus and so forth) located along the spine in the physical body. In healthy people, the *chakras* are vibrant and spin with vigour, while in those who are not well the chakra petals are dull and spin sluggishly, says the American Hindu priest Thomas Ashley-Farrand[ii]. Interestingly, these *chakras* respond to the sound of Sanskrit, a fact which was noticed by ancient Indian mystics with "second sight", the ability to see clearly in the subtle



realm. These outcomes were carefully written down and can be found in the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads* and the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*. It took time before the sages arrived at the mechanism behind the impact of Sanskrit on the *chakras*. And they concluded that the total number of petals or spokes composing those six *chakras* is fifty. Similarly, the Sanskrit alphabet consists of fifty letters, with each one corresponding to a particular petal of a *chakra*. When a *mantra* built from the language is chanted, our *chakras* vibrate in tune with the Sanskrit sounds because Sanskrit is ... “an energy-based language first and a meaning-based language second”. Not all the words of the Sanskrit *mantras* have meanings. It is the energy coming from the subtle body that provides the key to the effectiveness of the *mantra* chanting. Each *chakra* has a corresponding *Bija mantra* or sound vibration. Irrespective of who chants the *mantra*, at the sound of the *Bija mantra*, the *chakras* spin with greater energy and vigour, giving corresponding strength to the body. It is also said that the *chakras* correspond to the musical scale with each *chakra* representing one *swara* of the octave.

Human society uses music in various ways. Some of it is used in education for those who become musicians or those who endeavour to develop a fine aesthetic appreciation of life, in particular the arts, around them. It is utilized in religious ceremonies and rituals, as a means of entertainment and in imparting health to the body. Each of these applications of music is explained briefly.