



The Metaphysics of Sound

by

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Toward the One, the Perfection of Love, Harmony, and Beauty,
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Series I

Number 1

Voice is the sign of personality. Words such as the European **persona** and the Hindu **purusha** show that the basis of characteristic is in sound, in other words, energy. It is speech which distinguishes man from animals, and every vocal expression reveals something of the nature of the sentient being which utters it. The tiger which is known for its ferocity can give a terrific roar, and the rabbit which is so timid hardly emits any sound.

Mankind has not yet realized the part sound plays in the physical constitution. Not only have choice of food and habitat made the body of man different from that of the apes, but the life of man was a different sort of life, a form of life which has manifested in a somewhat different body. For the body of man can receive the vibrations which the animal cannot contain, and for which the sub-human kingdoms have no capacity. This life, when impregnated by thought, gives rise to speech which is such an important characteristic of human kind.

We can learn a little about the nature of animals with only a slight knowledge of the mysticism of sound. The earth element, for instance, tends to make the voice dense or dull. We can notice this somewhat in the croaking of the frogs which live close to the ground, and in burrowing animals. The snake which also lives close to earth has no speech but can emit hisses. No doubt the snake has its dance, or movement, its rhythmical activities drawn from the earth-plane, but its lack of life or spirituality is evident from the absence of voice. On the other hand the eagle lives in high places and has a strong air quality in its voice. The eagle has certain Urouj characteristics which are evident from the way it flies and secures its prey. The snake also has Urouj characteristics which are evident in the way it coils itself at various times.

According to the most sacred traditions, God created the world through sound. Each form has been a vehicle of sound. Not only is man the perfected creature from the mental and psychological points of view, but in him are the possibilities for perfection in all arts. No doubt the spider exhibits greater skill, the nightingale sings more sweetly, the peacock displays more beauty, the swan has more gracefulness. This shows that the animals may have perfected some one quality or attribute which is the property of their species, but that is all. Man is the best vehicle of purusha; man has the greatest capacity for all aspects of sound and with these aspects of sound comes the capacity for every aspect of perfection.

Thus in man we find something of everything we find in the plants and animals, and even something of the mineral kingdom. Indeed from the esoteric view, in addition, man has capabilities and faculties which also belong to sentient beings of the unseen world, which can be revealed in him while he is here on earth. It is said that man was made in God's image, for in man is the capacity for all the Sifat, and in the purification or self and development of these Sifat, the divine image in man becomes manifest.

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Number 2

The part sound plays in the spiritual evolution of man can hardly be overestimated. Man, attracted by the beauties of creation, not only draws the qualities and characteristics of the mineral, animal and vegetable worlds to himself, he may even become so steeped in them that he loses sight of his true nature. It is not necessary or desirable that he rid himself of these properties; they come to him for a purpose; they are provided for a purpose; and according to the mystical view, that purpose is the perfection of properties in order to fulfill a life's purpose.

To become perfected there is a positive and a negative method of purgation, and in Sufism it is the positive form which is most desirable. Of course there are occasions when one has to be purged of viciousness; yet every characteristic is drawn from the elements, and through their purification man becomes better. For instance a man may have a bullish nature, being somewhat like the bull, and the astrologers will attribute that to the influence of Taurus. Neither this nor any other animal-like characteristic is necessarily evil. By the negative system of purgation, the bull would become an ox, docile and serviceable, but with the virility destroyed. In the spiritual life what is desirable is to obtain the serviceability with the virility, for the virility represents life and the object is to add to life, to fulfill life and life's purpose, and not to detract from anything.

A bull-like personality shows the presence of the earth element, along with the fire although the fire may be out of rhythm. Taking the fire element away the bull becomes ox-like. Instead of destroying anything, one first brings rhythm and balance in the spiritual life. One does not destroy the earth element nor take the fire away. It may be that the other elements are added gradually. By presenting an ideal before man and by instructing him in sacred breathing one adds to the breath the etheric element which makes the breath sacred and holy. This is pictured as the chariot in the Bible which is associated with the four zoa: bull, lion, eagle and man, symbolical of the elements and properly balanced in the perfect man. In the Scriptures of India these are depicted instead as bull, lion, horse and elephant.

Through proper purification the breath is better controlled and balanced. Thus at the very beginning a mureed is instructed in **Nayaz**. The sacred studies and meditations help to bring the ego under control also and this also purifies and refines the voice. As the voice is softened the more appropriate elements and attributes are drawn in through breath and thought. By softening a voice, one does not make a strong person weak; one only helps him to reserve his strength for such times as it is needed. One helps preventing that strength from being destructive, or from paining sensitive persons; that same power which may have caused offense then becomes a wall of defense to others.

We find people with angelic qualities and we also find animal-like persons. There is nothing wrong in that. There may be a piece of rock with a vein of metallic ore. That ore may not look like any metal and still less like a setting for jewelry. To make it serviceable processes of refinement are needed. So also the process of refinement is needed for every human soul, not to make one different but to bring out from that very soul the best that was in it, to fulfill the very purpose of its creation.

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Number 3

Speech can be divided into strong, accentuated or Jelal; weak, unaccentuated or Jemal; and whisper. Of course these are not the only forms of division of speech and these differences may be regarded as relative, but until one senses these divisions further knowledge is difficult to obtain.

What is meant here is that each person, in general terms, will be speaking in a loud tone, a soft tone, or in a whisper. When lecturing or calling out a loud voice may be desirable, while in general conversation softer speech is desirable, and in the presence of sick or sleeping persons, whispering is best. At the same time modulations are needed to express necessary emotions, to produce certain desired effects. While actors know something about this, they suffer considerably in their efforts not knowing that proper physical control is needed before desirable emotional control can be obtained, and being for the most part ignorant of the relation between the physical, emotional and mental parts of speech.

Ordinarily strong voice comes from outer power. Persons with strong wills can often accomplish their desires by a firm or gentle voice, and sometimes even by a sweet, persuasive voice. An officer in the army and a teacher in the grade school may obtain similar ends by very different usage of voice. Yet the teacher may have to depend more upon personal will, while the officer relies upon his authority.

A motor may give excellent service without emitting any loud sound. It often gives a gentle hum when in suitable condition. When it is noisy, something is wrong. Besides, its power does not depend upon its sonority, but upon the force within itself—in other words, upon its spirituality. A motor may drive much machinery without being overlarge or noisy.

If we study the life of Mohammed we find that on the battlefield he used a terrifically strong voice and in times of peace he spoke in the most gentle manner, and with the greatest success in each instance. In him both Jelal and Jemal brought victory. When attacked he overcame through the display of power, and when consulted he succeeded through the display of gentleness. However, the Jemal voice is not a whisper, for the whisper limits expressibility. In whispering will-power has to be suppressed, and even breath subdued.

The knowledge of mysticism is most valuable to the student, and the addition of the etheric element in the breath often produces a desirable Jemalic tone, in the sense of softness and gentleness, but not in the sense of effeminacy or weakness. The true Jemali **expresses gently**, that is to say, in the quality of voice. This indicates harmony between Jemal and Kemal. Also the true Jelali harmonizes with the divine, for there are many loud-voiced persons who convey through their speech nothing but ego; they may affect the atmosphere around themselves but they do not greatly influence others.

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Will-power can best be developed by placing the center of the voice in the heart. It is not that the voice actually comes from that region, but the power can be engendered from the heart which is the center of life in the physical form. Through the blood, through the psychic magnetism and through the etheric body this power is easily conveyed to the vocal organs. That is why some people have so much psychic power in the voice, but the spiritual person is able to replenish this power so that he does not suffer after speaking.

Voice may be physical, mental or spiritual and all aspects of speech and sound may be affected by the emotions. By physical voice is meant that speech which is based upon physical energy, chiefly expressed as a hello or greeting, especially from a distance. When the substance of speech is held in thought it is called mental, and when the thought is held by feeling and feeling dominates speech then it may be called spiritual.

Sufis do not neglect the physical or mental aspects of voice. Indeed they may perfect them more than other people, for in the Mevlevi and Chisti schools much attention has been paid to singing and chanting and in the Rufai School of Sufis, direct speech has been used for the highest spiritual purposes, all sounds ultimately flowing into the name of Allah. To accomplish this purpose the center of speech is kept in the heart always, for where life is there voice is, there power is, there perfection is.

One may say that on the outside speech is an effort of man and on the inside sound is the Will of God. This sound within has two aspects, one universal, one particular. The Universal Sound is **Saute Surmad** and the whole body is its instrument. The particular aspect is the Spirit of Guidance which is located in the heart of man, if only he knew it. Both of these aspects are referred to in Khatum where it says: "Open our hearts, that we may hear Thy voice."

It is this voice which becomes the intuition and illuminates the mind. Mind is feeble, ineffective, without will; but when the Divine Will is active, then mind becomes a marvelous instrument. This spiritual activation of mind is called inspiration, and inspiration can arise either from listening to **Saute Surmad** or to the heart. In the former case man is asking God: "Use me for the purpose that Thy Wisdom chooseth;" in the second case, there is often an objective or concentration in view and one prays then, "Give sustenance to our bodies, hearts and souls."

There are two ways by which the voice of man becomes, so to speak, the voice of God: one from training the voice so that the sound arises from the heart; the other is not especially to cultivate the voice, but to keep the mind inspired. As it is so difficult to master the mind, even Sufis have chosen rather the cultivation of voice in the heart. Of course an intellectual person may prefer educating the mind, but with a devotee, it is not always so necessary or so desirable.

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The truth is that if one depends wholly upon Allah, He will give one at all times that knowledge which is most essential. All wisdom is His, and it is at the disposal of His servants. So there is no advantage in distinguishing various paths except that one may be called the path of knowledge and another the path of love and devotion. Both lead, sooner or later, to that Universal Goal, which is the seeking of every soul.

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Number 5

Many people do not realize how important heart is even in a physical sense. The heart is much more than a pump for the blood, as some have said. When the blood enters the lungs it is purified physically and atomically; it receives certain energy also from the spheres, but this energy is of the sphere of mortality and change. When the blood comes into the heart, it receives the highest energy; the universal love and life and light permeate it. So it is the heart which is all-healing.

Physical scientists have long noticed that the muscles of the heart are different from all other muscles of the body, and the heart had to have a separate classification from voluntary or involuntary. For all the rest of the body belongs to Kadar (the voluntary parts) or Jadar (the autonomic parts), but heart is really the physical organ of Kaza, the Divine Will. Now it has been noticed that the heart muscle alone has, compared with the rest of the body, something like immortality; and if there is anything like immortal life, it enters and flows through the heart into the physical body, and also to the mind.

Sufis have several esoteric practices, and especially those connected with Zikr, in which there is a blowing upon the heart. This awakens the heart to life and uncovers the divine seat within heart. So from the beginning some disciples are taught to repeat, "This is not my body, this is the temple of God." Then later they blow or glance upon heart and the heart becomes sensitive, then the disciple becomes sensitive and the inner life awakens more and more.

This awakening and this sensitivity begin to make themselves known in the character and in the voice. Sometimes sweetness, gentleness, even firmness and power are awakened in that manner. And this heart-concentration is not to be compared with the opening of chakras in the manner of certain esoteric schools of India; those methods were all right, no doubt, for their time. But the union of mysticism and science does not depart from the practical life; and even the ancient Upanishads, which contained so much of the wisdom-teachings of the most ancient times, base their technique upon heart-concentration and heart-development. So in Sufism, all attention is given to heart.

There are several aspects of this. One aspect comes in meditation wherein the heart-life becomes more of a realization as the ego-self is controlled. Another aspect comes in esotericism when one blows on or glances at heart, and in prayer also when one touches the heart. Also in both prayer and concentration, the feeling of heart is aroused and this feeling begins to express itself through man. Actually this may mean the calling forth of the Divine Life. So there comes a time when this reaches the voice also.

So from heart-cultivation is life-cultivation, and what is voice? Voice is expression of life, and the more life one has the more variable the quantitative and qualitative aspects of voice, the more word-control, breath-control and self-control. Then one can use voice; one can employ sound for the fulfillment of life's purpose and for the expression of the divinity from within.

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Number 6

In the spiritual training of voice, two aspects of life are needed which may be called God's and man's. By man's point of view is meant his physical characteristics, his emotional qualities, and his outlook on life as an individual. Of these, the chief physical characteristics are breath, power of speech, control over speech and the general physical condition. Persons who have had difficulty with the breath are not necessarily inhibited from development through sound and music; only with them the training may have more of a therapeutic aspect than a spiritual and holy one. For one may bear in mind that music can be used for healing and psychic development as well as for spiritual unfoldment.

The emotional qualities do not interfere with spiritual development through sound except where they arise from or cause irregularities in the breath. Some emotions, such as horror or fear, make voice culture difficult. Other emotions may be combined with spiritual music in such a way as to produce ecstasy, and ecstasy in its turn stimulates certain emotions. For that reason, while ecstasy is excellent in overcoming the downward pull of the lower forces in man's nature, constant cultivation of it may make the practical life difficult and may also cause ecstasy to become a source of distraction rather than a means to the ultimate goal. Still so few people actually experience ecstasy that generally there is not much danger from this source.

The outlook on life changes with one's spiritual unfoldment, and music helps in this because music tends to make people sensitive. Lovers of music and art help refine their own natures without always directing their course in life. What they require mostly is rhythm, regularity and balance. Therefore, the esoteric training helps them to overcome the weaknesses due to sentimentality and temperament. Master of temperament is not one who avoids it; master of temperament is he who can control his own psychological states and disposition, and who will therefore become less and less a cause of his own experiences of pain and annoyance. This leads to a surer success in either the artistic or musical life.

So from man's point of view, spiritual development through music or sound may be quite complicated and may require much patience. In some respects, however, it is the most interesting path and when Sufism was first brought to the West from the East, it was felt that it could best be expressed in music, the universal language. Already people are beginning to appreciate each other's arts, which is a great step forward toward universal human understanding.

Now from the standpoint of God—if it can be said that the divine outlook can be properly expressed in words—man has a certain path of development and this may ultimately bring out in him the characteristics of the saint or sage or master or prophet. The Jemali development tends mostly toward the line of the saint, and that of the Jelali toward mastery; and these lines of development are expressed through the voice, although the average man may be unaware of it. Yet, properly speaking, all who seek God seek perfection; and all who seek perfection find it in the attainment of **baqa**, the holy life. Thus, from the divine standpoint, all is Kemal; and it is only that God may be using us as His wisdom chooses.

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Number 7

There are two aspects of spiritual training through music: expression and audition. Expression has three parts: **Gayān**, **Vadān** and **Nirṭya**, which is to say, singing, instrumental music and dancing. Each of these has its role in one or more schools of Sufism, although in some schools, preference is given to certain methods, and in other schools no attention may be paid to other methods. Nor is this necessary, for many disciples have taken the training in one or more schools to round out their character and to fulfill their purpose of life.

Instrumental music may appear more complicated than the other lines, because in singing and dancing one uses the body directly. In this sense, **Vadān**, as it is called, stands between the forms of expression and the forms of audition, for an instrumentalist can be greatly affected by the music he is playing, in the same manner as the members of his audience.

Vadān has been divided into three portions: the playing of wind instruments; the playing of stringed instruments, bowed or plucked; and the playing of percussion instruments, especially the drums. Of course, the piper cannot be at the same time a singer, but he can direct the breath as from the heart in the same manner as a singer. Through the flute or reed or horn, man may express the same varieties of feeling as through the human voice, although the sound apparatus is very different from the human body itself.

Some Sufis use the **ṇay** or nasal flute in their sacred convocations, and in some respects this is even higher instrumentation than making use of the mouth. Then the breath can be trained exactly as in the case of a singer and speaker, and all the emotions and grades of feeling and thought may make their impressions on the breath, and through it on to the instrument. Thus, the instrument expresses life: the whole *Masnavi* is based fundamentally on the song of the flute, which is life itself. Whatever the material from which the flute is made, it is expressing the life of the player.

Players on any wind instruments may receive more or less the same training as spiritual singers, who are called *Kawwalis*. The practice of *Zikr* and the knowledge of mysticism is most beneficial to them. However, they should learn to control speech and to draw in the energy of the sphere through the breath. This is one aspect of it. The other aspect, of course, is the practical application of heart-reliance so that all the life of the soul of the musician may make itself known through his music.

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Number 8

Players of string instruments, whether these are plucked in some fashion, or bowed, have a much more complicated path than other students in music; and it often happens that their spiritual training involves other lines than the special work given to singers and players on wind instruments. A vina player, for instance, in addition to becoming acquainted with all the complications and nuances of style, melody and rhythm, must also acquire the psychic power in his finger tips and in his hands, and also feel a close attunement to his instrument as if the instrument were to become part of his very being, so to speak. And in a general way this applies to all plucked instruments, those struck by the fingers or by a plectrum or some other tool—in all these, the same general principles apply.

For such persons, a knowledge of the emotions is most valuable; and if they control and direct the emotions through breath and thought, they become able to convey life itself through their music. Of course, a vina player or an instrumentalist using cithara or guitar, or even such lowly instruments as banjo and ukulele, also benefits most by feeling the life within the heart; and they can also gain some by proper mystical training in singing and dancing. The ability to concentrate, the faculty of feeling and the knowledge of sound vibrations are all most valuable for such persons.

No doubt it requires a longer training to adapt bowed instruments to spiritual usage. Of course, every instrument can be made to respond to the Voice of God in the soul, but it is always easier to convey a message through the breath directly than through the finger tips, and still more difficult to convey it through an instrument like a bow. No doubt the blood reaches the finger tips, and there are various ways of magnetizing them and letting power go out through them; and then, when one is able, one can also feel that power go through an instrument held in the hand, and the eyes and ears and whole personality can become one with the instrument and the instrument becomes one with them.

The same principle holds for percussion instruments—in the spiritual use of drums, finger tips and knuckles are used, and not a stick. Sticks can be used especially on large drums and gongs, but they are not employed in Sama or Zikr, the spiritual music of Sufis. Drums are of especial value for their rhythms, and the sound of drums can cause one to become insensitive to the sounds and noises of this world. When the player has had the training in magnetization of finger tips, and knows how to bring it, he can convey something of the message of his soul so that player and auditor both benefit, and the souls of all hearers can be raised above the denseness of earth. In Africa and other parts of the world, drums have been used for conveying ordinary messages, but it is possible for the deepest feeling to become expressed through percussion instruments.

The kanoon of the Arabs, the koto of Japan, and the harp and piano of the Occident combine in various manners the string and percussion instruments. When one's fingers are placed on a keyboard, magnetic conduction is always direct. In a complex instrument like the piano or organ, which has fixed intervals, it is not so easy to induce spiritual states through music. The

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player has more difficulty in bringing his entire instrument under control. It is very different with the musical instruments of India which can be tuned to the very heart of the player; it is as if he were tuning his soul and permitting that tuning to be heard in and through his instrument; and by that means, he can convey a spiritual message to his audience. This is part of Vadan. This is the perfection of spiritual development through a stringed instrument.

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Number 9

Coming to the consideration of the dance. This is one of the most intricate of all arts. For whatever the art is, one must enter it with the whole heart to be perfect, and sometimes the mind is used also. But in the dance the whole body has to be employed also, so that in some respects the perfect dance is the apotheosis of all art.

When we consider that the whole universe is made up of vibrations and that all these vibrations pulsate in rhythmical movements according to a cosmic law, we perceive that the very basis of life is movement. Growth is movement and decay also is movement. So the dance of the Divine Siva has had a most important place in spiritual development and spiritual metaphysics, and the right concentration upon Siva enables the devotee to feel both the divinity in movement and the movement in divinity.

It may be impossible to define dance in its purest sense. There are dances of the body, and there are dances of parts of the body such as the arms, legs, hips, head, torso. The mind also has its dance, and not only the imagination, but the whole mind. This can be seen in the wild jumps for joy after a sensational discovery or successful invention. The body then may not show much grace, perhaps; but if one could see the same or the corresponding movement in the mental sphere, there might be all grace and loveliness.

Then there is the dance of the heart in love, and this takes in all aspects from the seen through the unseen. All dances are intoxicating in some way; all raise one above the denseness of earth, from what is commonly known as "hard reality." Actually there is not much reality in the hardness, it is only the hardness one rises above; and it may be that one comes nearer to true reality in rising above this hardness than beforehand. Sometimes the lover seems to feel himself much nearer reality in his condition; and while his ecstasy may be blinding, it may also be life producing.

One difference between the mystic and the ordinary person is that the mystic may comprehend his condition and will not be controlled by it, not be a slave to it; while the ordinary person may experience ecstasy and then feel lost without it and not know why. So the dance of the heart is most important for it directs all life currents.

Beyond the dance of the heart is what may be called the dance of the soul, and in this there is stupefaction and wonder for one is no longer an individual while experiencing. For the dance of the soul is the life of the universe itself which is depicted in Nataranya, the world-dancer or world mover—in other words, Siva.

In fana-fi-Lillah, one begins to enter into the joy of the Lord, Who is the Beloved. Then one is conscious of nothing else but God. In **baqa**, the all-pervading life, one perceives the universal oneness, and then love and life take on new aspects. This constitutes the spiritual rebirth and strictly speaking, the spiritual life.

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Number 10

The first and last instruction for the spiritual guidance of dancers is that they find the center of their own being. This is in the heart, but as has been explained, this heart is really much greater than the physical heart. The dancer can benefit greatly by concentrating upon this heart center in all aspects. For instance, there is the physical aspect of regarding the heart as the center of gravity in movement. There is another physical aspect of regarding heart as above the center of gravity and using it as a center of attraction to elevate one. There is the use of heart as center of feeling, and most of all, as center for intelligence.

The great tragedy in the life of Isadora Duncan was that she thought she had found the center of her being in the solar plexus. She was right in seeking a center of balance within herself, even within her physical vehicle. She may have been correct in finding the actual physical center there, but the concentration thereupon always has deleterious, harmful psychic results, and continued concentration may produce an effect opposite to that desired.

Those who have found the center of being in the heart obtain the most joy in dancing. In younger people especially, it sometimes means a natural way for self-expression. Then more vigor and vitality manifest, and with them life, which is the essence of spirituality. Often without any profound metaphysical training, young people express body, mind, heart and soul in their dance; their whole being goes into its movements, they reveal their inspirations.

We read in the Scriptures that David danced for joy before the ark of the Lord. The ancient Greeks also considered the dance as a most important element in religion. Sufis have also recognized the dance as a legitimate method for devotion, holding that the body is the temple of God; and in the sacred lilts, the whole being is surrendered to God in rhythm and harmony.

When we consider the nature and meaning of life that life is movement, then that movement is best which best expresses rhythm. But there must be a purpose in life also, an object without which all would seem monotonous and useless. This purpose of life may even be called the melody of life, and for each person there may be a different melody; indeed everyone may have several melodies, all of which may be different from the melodies of others in some respects. The concordance of these various melodies produces harmony.

And how is this harmony attained? By all persons involved having a common ideal, a general concentration, the same leader, just as the musicians in the orchestra follow a particular person. So in the highest sense, every activity of life might become a dance, and the dance fulfills life's purpose in revealing those laws by which the universe was made and has been preserved through the aeons.

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Number 11

Expressed speech has three aspects: music, voice and language. By music is meant that which is sung, by voice is meant that which is uttered, and by language is meant the particularized music or voice used commonly by masses of people to express their thoughts.

Music is the speech of the angelic world and its center is feeling. Through tone and time angels express all that is necessary in their lives either in their communications to God or to each other or to themselves. It may seem peculiar that in the angelic world there is not any strong sense of discrete selfhood which is so characteristic of what we call lower planes. To say that there is self-identity without individuality seems a contradiction in terms. Yet, in a tree we have many branches from the trunk, many leaves from each branch—one life and manifest parts of that one—and identity without individuality.

Something of this trait is seen in small children who often sing to themselves. They reflect the angels in this world. And the angelic plane itself has two aspects, the aspect of considering life in union or communion with the universal life around one, and the aspect of apparent self-identity. In the state of union where individuality is not clear, the etheric element takes its rise, while every aspect of individuality or separateness is expressed through fire, air, water and earth, or gives rise to the qualities associated with these elements, which manifest in and as name and form.

This self-identified and crystallized expression is the **nufs** on the angelic plane, and it gives rise to the good and evil of the lower planes, although we may find in Djabrut the Edenic condition. In the highest aspect man exists only as Adam, the universal kingdom of man, and then as Aish, collective man. Both Adam and Aish are recognized in Paradise.

The highest aspect of sound is maintained on the angelic plane through listening, whether one is in the state of union or in the state of seeming separation. Sound, rightly expressed, tends toward union with the One. This listening can also be performed on this plane by listening in the silence for the Universal Sound. The next aspect is to repeat the praise of God and listen also thereunto. These constitute the Fikr and Zikr of the angels, whose expression always tends toward praise.

It is the Zikr of the angels which moves the hub of the universe, so to speak, of which other planes form the outer part of the wheel. In this movement is the mystery of the Merkabah or Chariot, which is a veil over the arcane teachings about sound and breath.

All the life of the angels is expressed through musical notes. All expression of tone which colors thought or feeling or emotion comes from the angelic plane and therefore from heart. Music, it is true, plays an important part also in the life of man, a still greater part in the life of the genius, but the whole life of the angels seems to be music itself. Therefore, Sufis call music **Ghiza-i-Ruh**, the food of the soul, the very essence of its outer life and inner force.

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The activity of sound on the angelic plane is one of the greatest mysteries and is best understood by mystics, while it can be appreciated by all who make progress in Zikr from the contemplative side.

Zikr has two aspects: the musical and the contemplative. The musical Zikr advances one toward activity, ecstasy, vitality and magnetism; the contemplative to spiritual union, inner power and expansion of point to view. While these two results seem very different, they are by no means incompatible or mutually exclusive. As a general rule, mureeds who are younger in years are given the musical Zikr while older persons are restricted more to the contemplative Zikr, especially if the life and power has gone from the voice.

Contemplative Zikr is that which is used as an individual esoteric practice and is for the purpose of purification of body mostly. Training in Fikr is different because while not a breathing exercise properly speaking, it depends upon rhythm and tends to purify the inner aspects of personality more although it is most valuable in advancement in concentration and mental effort generally. It is an excellent practice for ascetics and those performing Khilvat. But the contemplative Zikr can be practiced at all times.

Musical Zikr is the Zikr of angels while the vocal or contemplative Zikr is the Zikr of jinns. In Djabrut, properly speaking, words are not used, only the intonations. In Malakut and on earth, words are used and they help to produce **hal**. In some respects, therefore, the jinn has certain advantages over the angel, and the man over both jinn and angel. Although the consciousness of the angel is higher, its range is limited; while consciousness on the plane of the genius is not so high as in the angelic world, the range is greater; and on the earth plane, the consciousness is generally much lower but the range is greater still. Earth-born man has the most complete range of possibility in the extension of consciousness; thus he is said to be in God's image, in which, potentially he is without limitation.

This same principle can be illustrated by the music of the various spheres. Music which is employed for spiritual evolution can also be very intoxicating in an unwholesome way, so as to produce bondage instead of liberation. This is because all music entices through a kind of spiritual memory, drawing one toward what is felt, so to speak, to be the Edenic condition. Therefore, it can even be regarded as the forbidden fruit, and was subjected to regulations by the Prophet.

Strictly speaking, music should not be over-praised as a means of spiritual evolution, for although it is the highest of the arts, it can also be the lowest. Music and dancing are the arts of Djabrut, and music and dancing are also found in the lower kingdom. Other arts such as poetry, architecture, sculpture and painting attain to full development in Djabrut, and even in their worst forms they have not always been so harmful. Music and dancing are not based upon conceptions of beauty; they are not founded on conceptions at all, but arise from the fundamentals of the Universe; and when misused or debased, they detract from life itself.

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The sound which is music on the angelic plane becomes speech on the plane of the jinn. This does not mean that the jinn do not sing. The gandharvas of ancient India were musical beings, whose counterparts in Greece were the centaurs, who are supposed to have been the instructors of mankind in music. The meaning of this is that human music was originally based upon inspiration, inspiration received mostly when man was in the state of consciousness similar to that of the beings of Malakut.

We can see something of this in the intellectual music, and many of the classical compositions of the West have been intellectual and mental in this sense. Such music can arise from **nur** or light and be elevating, or it can be afflicted with **nar** or passion and be harmful. Intellectual music generally does not unite all people. It may inspire certain individuals or classes, and it may rouse the masses, but this agitation is not always inspiration, and its effect is fleeting, especially when unwholesome; otherwise it would bring destruction.

The great blessing of Malakut is speech and its great art is poetry. Thus, Qur'an was revealed by an angel or malak from Malakut, but it came on the night of power, Djibir, and its instrument was the angel Djibriel, who brought with him all the inspiration and faculties of Djabrut, the sphere of universal sound or music. Therefore, Qur'an really means a heralding, a sounding forth, a calling out, or **The Call** or **Cry**, being the call or cry of the heart of purified, awakened man.

In Malakut, the Word becomes words; speech begins without it being necessarily any human speech. First came universal speech, which no doubt was derived from cosmic sound which became pregnant with meaning in the Mind-world. The vowels provided the life to words and the various consonants became the body of words, so to speak. Thus, the letter **M** throughout the Universe signifies all that is associated with the feminine principle and with motherhood, while often the sounds of **B** or **P**, associated with the force of breath, have come to stand for masculinity and fatherhood.

There are some effects of the heart-world upon speech, which is seen in the modulations and tone qualities which were long preserved as sacred chants, but which were once part of spoken language. Chanting and cadence produce deep effects upon the personality, and that is why poetry has often made such a deep impression upon humankind.

The basis of speech in Malakut is rhythmic breathing, the sound arising from the breath. There sound, breath and thought form a unity. This unity becomes lost as the soul proceeds toward manifestation, and then we say that the Word is lost, and God is lost. On the outer plane sound, breath and thought are no longer so closely interwoven, and thus there comes about the great confusion of languages which was supposed to have taken place in the erection of the Tower of Babel.

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As music arose originally in the heart, or sphere of spiritual light, so speech arose from the intellectual light from whence also arose all colors and different sounds and meanings and forms. In order to interpret cosmic principles, the ancient initiates adopted symbolical or hieroglyphic alphabets which were long used for holy or occult purposes but later became the common property of the multitudes. Many of the most ancient alphabets have a strange relationship one to another, no doubt because of their common transcendental origin. This is something hard for the scientists to realize. From their standpoint, they cannot accept the doctrine of correspondences and they hesitate before attempting to harmonize Egyptian, Sanskrit, Chinese and Mayan. Between these various groups, even though the root languages may be very dissimilar, there are strange symbolical resemblances and parallels.

It is true that Court de Gebelin sought a universal language and came very close to discovering some of the most important principles hidden within language, although his insight did not reach the heart of unity. All the artificial languages, which are products of some particular man's brain, fall because they do not recognize that love is the purest universal language, that minds and tongues are not everywhere alike. Esperanto might bring the Russian and Frenchman and German together, but it ignores the Arab and Chinese and dark-skinned peoples who are certainly children of God.

While the attempts to produce an artificial language of universal acceptance has helped to bridge certain gaps, it nevertheless has also tended toward a racial **nufs**. The God who is God of all does not proclaim certain languages. Moses is said to have received revelation in Hebrew and Mohammed in Arabic, but other prophets have spoken, proclaiming their Message through other vehicles, and no one can claim that any one language is peculiarly divine.

Perhaps there are just two things which unite all people: they can all sing together and they can all make the same movements at prayer. The Japanese people will find it impossible to pronounce the Arabic name of God, but they could intone the right notes in Zikr and make suitable movements in Nimaz. So while the Sufis have maintained Arabic as an international language, it is not because it is particularly spiritual, it is because it is convenient as a norm.

In regard to prayer and music, one might say that Zikr is part of the dharma of angels, and the repetition of sacred phrases, such as Wazifas, is part of the dharma of jinns. A sacred phrase is best preserved without being translated because of the effects of the sound-vibration thereof. The constant repetition of the same sounds in the universe seems to increase the suggestive and psychic values of the sound-vibrations.

Nimaz has one advantage over Wazifa in that it can be universal, especially when there are movements. Ritual has often sufficed where language has failed to draw people together. The Sufi differs from the orthodox in regarding ritual as a means rather than as the goal, but he does not falter in his reverence thereby; only he sees in all prayers and all rituals paths to the same Goal.

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Expressed sound is dependent upon breath, and quality of sound is determined by quality and quantity of breath. If one knew all about breath, one would know all about sound; and if one knew all about sound, one would know much about breath and life in general.

All forms emit sound. The striking of any object is the striking of two objects together, even in explosive sounds where the molecules of gases strike against each other. Sound is life, no matter how it manifests. Many have supposed that rocks and minerals do not breathe and are not living. Yes, from a certain view they are not, although the late Sir Jagadis Bose proved otherwise. Drawing upon the ancient traditions of his people, he verified many of their teachings by modern scientific methods, and so confounded the otherwise orthodox. Now many experiments have been made showing that even the so-called inanimate objects pass through psychological moods and states.

All matter is really porous. The fact that material substances have such properties as a result of the processes of occlusion, solution, mixture, adsorption, absorption, etc., prove this porosity even in the case of the densest matter. While we say that breathing is the absorption of a gas, we find that many solids hold gases in suspension and many liquids seem to dissolve various gases, so there is an intermingling of different particles and kinds of matter; and in these interminglings, very often other processes are connected which are not so well known.

In what we ordinarily call breathing, we find that the animals and man take in oxygen and expel carbon dioxide gas. This is true even in plants, although it happens that plants consume carbon dioxide as a food, and expel much more oxygen than the amount of oxygen they breathe. The breathing of rocks and minerals is still different, but goes on often without much chemical change; the rocks do draw energies from the atmosphere, however.

The process of breathing is not limited to the physical plane, but the particular chemical activities are necessarily confined to the earth-plane. At the same time, there are the mystical elements around us which help to form the breath-body, the etheric body or aura. The action and interaction of these elements can be studied to advantage, and sooner or later man will be able to make more direct observations upon them and use this knowledge constructively.

There are two ways of obtaining this observance of the elements. One comes with inner growth and practice, and the other from keen sight. Whichever be the path of this knowledge, either enables the seer to help the generality. Of course, the self-development is best; but even the clairvoyants can do great good when their faculty is adapted to intellectual and therapeutic usage.

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The sound that every animal emits tells something of it, although much more can be gained by a study of man than from the study of animals. In the cosmic evolution which preceded the manifestation of man, there were many forms created in the inner and outer worlds. It was, so to speak, as if God experimented. It was necessary to bring forth a suitable body; and it seems that in very ancient times, there were monsters upon the earth. In them we see the perfection of the physical form, but the connection between mind and body was weak. And we can note that these monsters were both weak in their mentality and in their vocal expression. In other words, they had insufficient breath in them; this is proven by their lack of resistance to disease and changing conditions. If they had been able to breathe well, they would have had a better protection than all the size of their bodies and claws and armor-scaled protection.

The fur-bearing animals show that there is a development of breath, and particularly of the fire-element of breath which enables the animals to withstand the exigencies of climate. Perhaps this is also associated with the glandular structure, and mostly the activity of the pineal gland. These fur-bearing animals all have their sounds and calls, and when we find animals which have soft voices, we find that they are not so protected against their enemies or against the forces of nature.

Lions, tigers, bears, bulls and all strong animals have strong voices; and rabbits, giraffes and deer which have weak voices have not the same strength. The greater the range of notes that a being can give, the greater its potentialities. It is, so to speak, as if everything in the world had a sound or chord of its own. One who can call out many sounds, many chords, will have more characteristics and, in another sense, will have more faculties and abilities.

We see in the spectrum of certain metals very few lines, and other metals have many lines in their spectrum; these show their sensitivity to various vibrations of light. In a rough way, we find that the metals which have the most complex spectra have the most complex natures, and those which have simpler spectra have simpler natures. So the person who has the ability to express all manners of sounds has greater potentiality.

We can observe this in actors who are able to take on many roles and to express themselves in many tones. Only, in not having mastery, they are subject to emotional reaction, which is called temperament, and thus they are not always able to maintain equilibrium. If actors were trained in right breathing—which to begin with is nothing but the practice of rhythmical exercises, and to end with is nothing but the recognition of the divine breath—they could overcome many of their weaknesses and even do better in their profession than beforehand. But all persons, whether actors or not, can benefit by a study of breath and an application of the principles of mysticism.