

Toward the One, the Perfection of Love, Harmony, and Beauty,
the Only Being, United with All the Illuminated Souls
Who Form the Embodiment of the Master, the Spirit of Guidance.

Rhythm and Music

Man's voice expresses his personality. According to his stage of evolution, he can produce sounds of demon, animal or raksha, asura and those of his own, the manasic or mental stage; sometimes he also can simulate the sounds of "higher" beings. Rhythm, born of **prakriti**, arises from the earth and can establish a pace which may promote health and bodily vigor. Melody, born of **purusha**, is a mental product and influences the mind. Composers of melodies and symphonic themes are quite well endowed mentally, while writers of popular songs and dances largely depend upon rhythm, which may be emotional or instinctive. Yet in the twentieth century, there have been reactions against the great fundamentals of rhythm, melody and harmony, and in them we can perceive signs of disintegration, both personal and social.

When character is developed through self-control, we can look for finer qualities and better melodies. This is **mythologically** true of the music of gandharvas, beings who are said to be a stage higher in evolution than the human or manasic level. This corresponds, to some extent, to the genius state in man, which Aurobindo refers to as the stage of "overmind." Those in this stage seem capable of teaching and demonstration of all arts.

The music of the spheres is not dependent upon the rhythm of artificial instruments or the cadences of any emotion. It draws its form and movement—if we can call them such—from the universe itself. It can be said, from a certain point of view, that rhythm arises from the lower or negative aspect of "creation," and melody from the higher and positive aspect: harmony belongs to the universe itself. The Sanskrit phrase Nada Brahma, "God is Sound," applies to this.

The music of the gandharvas draws upon this universal harmony. All the disciplines and methods of training in the esoteric schools of music tend to bring out the harmonies latent in personality and reflect this in the music of devotees. Mantra Yoga has possibilities which have been regarded too much with awe, and not realistically enough. Yet those who find the spirits of the cosmos within themselves surely reflect this in their singing and instrumental playing.

There is still another stage beyond that of the gandharva. The very basis of personality, it seems, has arisen from a "tuning" in the cosmos, whereby "notes of unstruck music" are focused together in the essence of personality. All the feeling of the spirit can be concentrated in a single note of the heart and this can be dedicated to the universe itself. The music of songbirds and especially of doves comes closer to this, perhaps, than any other sounds of this plane. Therefore one finds considerable commentary in books of Jewish mysticism on the phrase: "The voice of the turtle was heard in the land." References to this cosmic sound are found more and more in recent books without sufficient enlightenment being given the reader to obtain a full appreciation of it.

The music of the angel or deva, it is said, is in full praise to God. These beings represent the stage of "supermind," to use Aurobindo's language. But they are still contained, and they are still within the cosmos, although in a certain sense, reflect its higher potentialities. Beyond this is that all-pervading "silence" about which one can hardly speak.