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INTERCULTURAL TRANSFORMATION OF SPIRITUAL CONSCIOUSNESS BY THE PRACTISE OF INDIAN CLASSICAL PERCUSSION MUSIC

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Since the 1970's western people began to focus more on Self-consciousness, Self-healing forces, consciousness about the secrets of the human body as well as spiritual possibilities and creation of new mental realities. Intercultural encounters formed pluralistic and individualistic societies, who deconstructed parts of their own culture to be filled by "imported" believes and habits from Outside, especially from the East. Artistic practices of other cultures are considered to expand the horizon of Self-experiences, and Scientists are increasingly concerned with various aspects of consciousness research as well as with the measurable perception of vibrations in the brain. Questions arise to what extent intercultural transformation of spiritual consciousness takes place by practicing Indian percussion instruments as an example for spiritual culture exchange. The establishment of divine relations so far relates to the divine origin of Indian music as well as to ancient teacher-pupil traditions including spiritual obligations and development opportunities.

Keywords: *Consciousness, Altered States, Music, Healing, Indian Classical Music, Percussion, Spirituality, Demystify, Individuality, Divine Music, Trance, EEG, Devotion, Guru, Kerala.*

My first encounter with a *Guru* of Indian classical percussion instruments took place in Kumily, located in the district of Kerala, South India. Since my first *Tabla* lesson with K. J. Thomas in 1991, special phenomena of perception and transformation of spiritual consciousness occurred to me in healing context as well as of confusion.

Since that incident, I have been searching for answers by questioning: Could the reason for an awakening transcultural spirituality be found in my search for a new meaning of life combined with a healing process for old wounds? Is it possible, that initiation rituals (*Dathina*) in the house of my *Tabla Guru* and later in the classroom of my *Mizhavu Guru* have been responsible for the openness of my spiritual transformation by binding me to the teachers as well as to the gods of the Hindu pantheon? Has our western society arrived at a point of demystified emptiness, so that encounters with

Eastern music, Performing Art and Meditation as well as with spiritual traditions of other Outside European cultures help to find lost abundance for mental and spiritual development? Does intercultural transformation of spiritual consciousness lead us into new states of happiness, health and inner harmony? Are students from the West able to build an intense bond to their teachers comparable to those between Indian students and their Gurus to feel guided on their ways of spiritual development? Is the play of Indian classical percussion instruments evoking Altered States of Consciousness?

According to Ariane Martin [14, p. 90] the longing for healing is the starting point of any spiritual search. Fulfilment and happiness were reduced to a new body worship and health euphoria for more and more people in the West after the period of the 1970's. Spirituality was not only meant for Self-knowledge but also for the aestheticizing of life and increasing its beauty. Self-responsibility and activation of Self-healing forces were important buzzwords of the new, spiritual and energetic views of healing. Healing through the mind became more and more a research area taken seriously by the traditional sciences since the 1990's. The interdisciplinary work of Ariane Martin [14] was inspired by trend researcher Matthias Horx, who diagnosed a "Megatrend religion" for the later mid-nineties. Here, fragments of old faith were deconstructed and individually recombined fitting for the present mobile, flexible, pluralistic and individual society. Changes and enrichment on the other side are always seen essential for modern spirituality and a life in balance [14, p. 14-15].

A. Martin defined spirituality in that way: "The interior perspectives of the individual who opens up a panorama characterized by pluralism are decisive: subjectivities form spiritualities. Among these, there are superficial, functionalist, purposeful spiritualities that have little in common with the traditional (substantial) understanding, but also deeper spiritualities that strive for meaning, fulfilment, inner freedom, love and self-indulgence ... In any case, these are the social, experiential and experience-oriented sides of spirituality, which are expressed phenomenologically." [14, p. 27, translated by Bindu 2017].

Gerhard Schulze (1992) described the German society as an "experience society" according to its needs of the 80's. In Germany, 2/3 of young people suffered from stress in making experiences. The human body and various forms of "cult" around it was focused, the believe in health replaced the believe in God. The (alternative) medical landscape in Europe became increasingly multicultural. Syncretistic tendencies can also be found in the healing process: Healing methods of different origins were combined

with each other and resulted in independent new ones. A. Martin [14, p. 74-75] also reported about the idea of a subtle body energy of cosmic origin played a central role, especially in the health directions coming from Asia.

The term “consciousness” functioned as a “key word” in scientific and psychological based (“esoteric”) publications. I. Barušs [3, p. 6] referred the term “consciousness” to the registration of information and acting on it in a goal-directed manner: “Behavioural *consciousness* refers to the explicit knowledge of one’s situation, mental states, and actions demonstrated behaviourally, subjective *consciousness* refers to the experimental stream of events that occurs subjectively for a person; and *consciousness* refers to the sense of existence of the subject of the experimental stream.” (I. Barušs) [3, p. 6]. According to him the word “consciousness” is also meant to describe a feeling of existence associated with being oneself that accompanies the contents of one’s experience.

“Altered States of Consciousness” were first described by Charles Tart in 1972. He said we know what it means to be conscious when we are in daily awareness (everyday consciousness). Neurophysiology and behaviour change during sleep, in hypnosis, through psychoactive drugs, meditation, near-death experience, etc. According to Tart (1972) “altered state of consciousness” means a qualitative alteration in the pattern of mental functioning. The man who makes this experience feels radically different and different from his other functioning. C. Tart designed 1975 ten experimental criteria to determine an ASC (altered state of consciousness) such as, for example, body perception, time perception, interaction with the environment [18].

Farthing proclaimed 14 dimensions of ASC in 1992,

“... included attention, perception, imagery, inner speech, memory, decision making, problem solving, emotions, arousal, self-control, suggestibility, body image, personal identity, experience of time, and meaning” (I. Barušs) [3, p. 8].

I. Barušs [3] and C. Tart [18] suggested that consciousness research should be done by persons who experienced ASC by themselves. An active participation of the researcher also was demanded by F. Merrell-Wolff [12].

The European scientific approach to the study of exceptional states of consciousness led from Wilhelm Wundt’s “experimental introspection” in the beginning of the 20th century to the concept of “psychosynthesis” from R. Assagioli, later to the REST therapy by John C. Lilly in 1970. REST means “restricted environmental stimulation technique” and “Restricted environmental stimulation therapy”. There was the possibility of the

“Flotation REST” and the “Chamber REST”. In the case of the latter, the person was lying on a bed in the dark room with a reduced sound experience for several hours. The “Flotation REST” lasted about 45 minutes, it was carried out in the water, enriched with Epsom salt. M. Aldrich [1] measured changes in electrical potential along the dendritic membrane, mainly changed a layer of major neuroma in the cortex. The measurement was carried out with EEG (I. Barušs) [3, p. 54-55]. Polysomnography was the simultaneous detection of various physiological measurements during sleep. These measurements by M. Aldrich led to the discovery of different sleep states: Beta activity, mixed with alpha and theta activities in the state of wakening. In relaxation phases and when eyes were closed Alpha activity was dominant. At sleep: Alpha activity was dominated of Theta activity. Felicitas Goodman [9] explored shamanic trance states of different cultures in terms of activities.

Alpha waves were considered by her as a threshold, while the theta waves, which swing somewhat slower than the alpha waves, indicate the state of the trance. In her opinion, a rhythm of 200-210 “beats per minute” produced theta waves, with the brain also ejecting beta-endorphin. This is an opiate that the body produces itself. It can trigger overwhelming emotions of joy and euphoria – religious, and mystical experiences thereby receive their happiness-enhancing intensity (F. Goodman) [16]. E. Bourguignon [5] devoted her research to the obsession trance, Manfred Kremser [10] dealt with the connections between trance, ritual and healing in Central Africa as well as in San Lucia. M. Eliade [7], several other researchers and M. Winkelmann [20] wrote interesting contributions about shamanism, but all this would be beyond the scope of this article, despite the fact, that these topics are related to my initial questions.

The intercultural transformation of consciousness through the practice of non-European music has not been explicitly raised as a subject of ethnomusicology, although various studies on the perception of music and rhythm have emerged in the Western context over the last 20 years.

In contrast to all measurable states of consciousness in the western way of research the tangible essence of Indian music and rhythm are rooted in its divine origin and can be literally found in the *Vedas* and in the *Natya Shastra* of Bharatamuni. According to that origin of Indian music two main theories could be distinguished: The first theory asserts that the music was developed by *Brahma*, the creator of the world, spread by *Mahadeva* (*Lord Shiva*) and *Narada* and performed by the great masters (*Naiks*). The second theory states that a strange bird called “the musician” or *Dipak-Lata*, who lived in the

Caucasus mountains, had a beak with seven openings through which he could whistle different sounds. At certain seasons this bird should have combined the sounds into specific harmonies, by that way producing the *Ragas* (melodies). He was a thousand years old, and when his death approached he fell into an ecstatic state. In this condition, he would have built a heap of combustible material, which he collected from the environment, and then fanatically danced to the sounds from his bill-holes. When he played the notes of the *Raga Dipak*, fire was created, the pile burned, and he became a *Sati* (Fyzee-Rahamir) [8, p. 28-29].

Alain Danielou argued that the psychological effect of the ragas was of a spiritual nature, whereas that of the rhythms was of a physical nature: “The rhythm acts directly on our motor centres and triggers physical reactions that can manifest themselves in body movements and in dance. Certain rhythms sometimes trigger violent reactions and can lead to trance states. Therefore, rhythms are used in ritual dances as well as in the formation of prophetic states and mystic drunkenness.” (A. Danielou) [6, p. 144-145, translated by Bindu 2017]. According to the myths, all percussion instruments origin in *Lord Shiva*. Figures show him with the trident in the left hand, on which a horn and a small hourglass-shaped drum called *Damaru* are hanging. They are closely connected with the creation of the world. Contemporary musicians still tell various stories about the first drums and their ways how to please the deities by their music. Each village had sacred music in the temples, as well as bards and poets who narrated and sung stories about the miraculous deeds of the *Devas*. The music has been traced by certain families, of which only a few are found in India today. These guard the timeless precious texts with religious attention (Fyzee-Rahamir) [8, p. 29-30]. Indian saints have recognized the importance of music and its value in spiritual education and self-discovery. The Holy Tyagaraja (1767 –1847), one of the most famous composers of South Indian carnatic classical music, made clear that a life without *Sangita Ghana* (musical consciousness) is without meaning. The music fulfils a person with love, devotion, good will, divine blessing, self-control, meditation and with distinction (L. Vasantha) [19, p. 8-9].

Since the Vedic times, the strictly regulated, spiritually eternal connection between *Acarya* and *Brahmacari*, or between *Guru* (teacher) and *Shishya* (pupil), has been responsible in all religious traditions of Hinduism for all ways of salvation. Traditionally, the following *Guru* types are distinguished: *Acarya*, the teacher of the *Vedas*, his pupil is the *Brahmacari*, *Purohita* -the priest of the house, and *Paṇḍita*, the traditional scholar.

Monasteries are in guidance of the *Mahant* and the wilderness of the *Samnyasi*. The *Guru* embodies the sacred and is praised like God. According to R. Steinmann [17, p. 25-31], the main task of a *Guru* is the holistic education and the religious, spiritual realization of the pupil. He compares the *Guru - Shishya* relationship with the relationship between mother and child and between father and son, whereby the trusting devotion to the *Guru*'s leadership plays an important role. *Gurus* accompany the life of every Hindu, which is under the influence of the Brahman-Hindu four life stages (*Ashramas*), the three life-ideals (*Purusha-Artha*) and the birth cycle (*Samsara*) conditioned by *Karma* (retribution causality). In general, a balance between social and individual goals as well as between inner-world and supernatural striving is the goal of Hindu life. The relationship between the inner – worldly life – affirming understanding of the world and the salvation of the family owner contrasted to the natural, connected life – fleeing culture of the *Samnyasi* is a special feature of Hinduism (R. Steinmann) [17, p. 14-15].

In today's Kerala Kalamandalam, Deemed University of Arts, where I passed several months by practicing *Mizhavu* drum during the process of my dissertation research, male *Gurus* of *Mizhavu* students are mentioned as “Accan” (father). In a modified form the old teaching system (*Gurukula Vasam*) – detached from the original matrilineal transmission of art within the *Cakyar* and *Nampyar* families performing *Kutiyattam* – has survived since the opening of the Sanskrit Drama Art Form for children of all castes in 1965.

The main percussion instrument *Mizhavu*, which is scarcely mentioned in general publications on Indian musical instruments, is an anthropomorphic *Deva Vadyam*, which in former times led the life of an ascetic (*Brahmachari*) in specific theatrical houses (*Kuttampalam*). Only initiated men of the *Nampyar* families have been allowed to play that drum to communicate between the other musicians, the movements of characters performing acts from the Indian national epics *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, as well as to invite the *Devas* to witness the performance and drive off the demons (K. Bindu) [4]. Meanwhile people from all casts can study that drum and play it in its context of *Kutiyattam* on profane stages. The sacred stages are still preserved for the *Nampyar* cast players.

P. K. Nambiar's first pupil from another caste – K. Eswaranunni – has been teaching *Mizhavu* at the Kerala Kalamandalam from 1983 up to the present time. Although he described his relationship with his *Guru* as “good” in my interview 2006, he still did not receive the same recognition as a

Nampyar because of that cast difference. This circumstance caused him some troubles, but despite all that he gained several awards as a master percussionist with great devotion, who raised most of the present *Mizhavu* percussionists in Kerala. My relation to him developed to be more superficial according to a lack of communication and trust, but still I feel very grateful having got accepted as the only female pupil among all boys.

My article ends with a detailed description of my initiation as a *Mizhavu* pupil of Eswaranunni. The text is based upon a field protocol, 07.11.2005, Cheruthuruthy. It shows the way how to get bound to an old tradition – in case of the *Mizhavu* play it goes back nearly 2000 years.

Before I could play the Mizhavu drum, I was inaugurated with an initiation ritual called "Dathina." The second teacher – Kalamandalam Achuthanandan - received money from me to buy betelnuts (Adaka) and betel leaves (Wetila). The students later prepared 14 leaves for the 14 Gurus from the traditions of the Mizhavu play as well as Sanskrit: One betel nut was placed on each sheet, together with a few money coins from my donation. I then knelt in front of the oil lamp (Velakku), which is used during festive occasions in Kerala. Achuthanandan passed one folded leaf after the other into my hands, meditating about the Gurus name spelled by my Guru Eswaranunni. Then I laid the leaf beside the lamp, and bowed to the ground. My hands formed a triangle in front of the head, the forehead touched the ground. During the last two sheets, the teachers finally laid my hands on my head. Then Eswaranunni sat down behind me facing the Abhyasakutty (exercise drum), which was covered with cow skin, and showed me the welcome greeting (Abivadiyam) of the drum: The hands are placed crosswise on the drum, right over left, and then led to the earlobes. Thumb and ring finger tips of each hand must touch them at the same time. This movement is carried out three times before and after each play of the drum. It serves both the greeting and the farewell of the drum and deities connected with it. Before the first lesson of a new student, five prayers are recited five times in addition to Abivadiyam: "Mahaa ganapatee nama (Great Ganapathi / Ganesh be greeted), Saraswatiyee nama (Sarasvati be greeted), Gurawee nama (Gurus be greeted), Dakshinaamuurttayee nama (to the east looking Shiva be greeted), Nandi keshwaraaya nama (Nandi Geshwara-Shiva's vehicle be greeted)." Then Eswaranunni took my hands, which I had to hold loose, playing certain rhythmic phrases on the Abhyasakutty. Then I did Abivadiyam again. This process was repeated, then I had to sit down on a wooden bench at the side of the classroom, and greet the wooden table in

the manner just mentioned. The table was now used as a drum set for the first lessons to harden the hands. Few days after that I finally got the permission to play the drum.

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МІЖКУЛЬТУРНА ТРАНСФОРМАЦІЯ ДУХОВНОЇ СВІДОМОСТІ ПРАКТИКОЮ ІНДІЙСЬКОЇ КЛАСИЧНОЇ УДАРНОЇ МУЗИКИ

Карін Бінду

Починаючи з 1970-х років, люди на Заході поступово стали зосереджувати увагу більшою мірою на дослідженні самосвідомості, самолікунні, дослідженні секретів людського організму, а також духовних можливостях і створенні нових психічних реальностей. Результатом міжкультурних зустрічей стало утворення плюралістичних і індивідуалістичних об'єднань, які намагалися заповнити пустоти, що утворилися після руйнації їх власної культури, «імпортованими» віруваннями та звичками зовні, особливо зі Сходу. Вважається, що художня практика інших культур розширює горизонти особистісного життєвого досвіду, тому так виріс інтерес вчених до дослідження різних аспектів свідомості, а також вимірною сприйняття коливань в мозку. Виникає питання, в якій мірі міжкультурна трансформація духовної свідомості відбувається шляхом практики індійських ударних інструментів як прикладу духовно-культурного обміну. Й досі вважається, що встановлення божественних відносин має відношення до божественного походження індійської музики, а також до стародавніх традицій спілкування між вчителем і учнем, включаючи духовні обов'язки і можливості розвитку.

Ключові слова: свідомість, змінені стани, музика, зцілення, індійська класична музика, ударні інструменти, духовність, прояснювати, особистість, божественна музика, транс, ЕЕГ, глибока прихильність, гуру, штат Керала в Індії.

МЕЖКУЛЬТУРНАЯ ТРАНСФОРМАЦИЯ ДУХОВНОГО СОЗНАНИЯ ПРАКТИКОЙ ИНДИЙСКОЙ КЛАССИЧЕСКОЙ УДАРНОЙ МУЗЫКИ

Карин Бинду

Начиная с 1970-х годов, люди на Западе постепенно стали сосредоточивать внимание в большей степени на исследовании самосознания,

самолечении, исследовании секретов человеческого организма, а также духовных возможностях и создании новых психических реальностей. Результатом межкультурных встреч стало создание плюралистических и индивидуалистических объединений, которые стремились заполнить пустоты, образовавшиеся после разрушения их собственной культуры, «импортированными» верованиями и привычками извне, особенно с Востока. Считается, что художественная практика других культур расширяет горизонты личностного жизненного опыта, поэтому так вырос интерес ученых к исследованию различных аспектов сознания, а также измеримого восприятия колебаний в мозге. Возникает вопрос, в какой степени межкультурная трансформация духовного сознания происходит за счет практики индийских ударных инструментов как примера духовно-культурного обмена. До сих пор считается, что установление божественных отношений имеет отношение к божественному происхождению индийской музыки, а также к древним традициям общения между учителем и учеником, включая духовные обязанности и возможности развития.

Ключевые слова: сознание, измененные состояния, музыка, исцеление, индийская классическая музыка, ударные инструменты, духовность, прояснять, личность, божественная музыка, транс, ЭЭГ, глубокая привязанность, гуру, штат Керала в Индии.

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