



Sahaja Yoga Thailand, news/feature series.

Music and inner growth

By Wanphen Sreshthaputra

Music and meditation are rarely seen to belong to the same continuum. However, there might be many reasons to challenge this dissociation. Music might have much more to do with meditation, self-development and spiritual growth than one may think, *a priori*.

Looking back at the way one relates intuitively to music in one's daily life to relax, uplift one's mood and spirit, and find solace should provide the first argument in that direction.



Rare are those who wouldn't be able to relate to some kind of magical, elevating and almost mystical experience when listening to – or playing – a particular piece of music.

Leaving aside heavy metal, hard rock and other violent secular music genres, “sacred” music, which exist in all cultures and can be traced through the ages, might more easily lend itself to such celestial,

albeit short-lived moments.

While in the West, sacred music broke free of the confines of the Church in the midst of the Renaissance period, various spiritual traditions, including some closer to Asia, have also made use of this particular art to appeal to devotees' inner self and connect them with a deeper source of existence. The Incas for example had sacred chants that were used in their temples. Tibetan monks sing sacred hymns with special singing techniques, while Buddhist priests in Japan have long been playing *Shakuhachi* or “blowing zen” during meditation to relax audiences' mind, spirit and body. Not to mention about ageless Indian *ragas* or Muslims mystics' *Sufis* music who spread their music far and wide...

From the medieval Gregorian chants to the organ music of Johann Sebastian Bach, the baroque music of Antonio Vivaldi, the classical symphonies and operas of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, to name but a very few, various genres and composers of music throughout history have been able to arouse sublime emotions among listeners. Composers from the romantic era and some contemporary, twenty-first century music pieces also are no strangers to this outcome, many having been able to break new grounds and put listeners under a mysterious spell.

Rather than venturing into the complex and controversial debate over the divine nature of the act of creation, some choose simply to speak about “vibrations” to explain the magical impact some pieces of work can have on audiences.





“Some works of art, throughout history -- may it be in music, poetry, literature, visual arts, etc.-- have fascinated crowds and arose deep and elevating emotions. These art pieces have been able to reach a certain level of perfection by which they emit positive energy... Those pieces are mostly of universal appeal and likely to be timeless”, explains Pascal Sethabutr, the principal coordinator of the Sahaja Yoga group Thailand and a senior executive in the automotive industry.

“With a bit of practice, yogis might be able to perceive the positive energy emanating from those particular pieces on their body and central nervous system. We can call these waves of energy ‘vibrations’”, he says.

The value proposition of Sahaja Yoga, a method of meditation founded by H.H. Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi in the early 1970s is precisely that, through the actualization of self-realization or the awakening of an innermost energy called *Kundalini*, one can access a subtler level of awareness which enables practitioners to feel and appreciate –on one’s central nervous system– the inner, intrinsic qualities of any work of art, productions, etc.



This new “vibratory awareness” could be developed within only a few weeks of practice, practitioners say and would manifest by the perception of cool, breeze-like “vibrations”, mostly when meditating or listening, watching or reading works of art that would meet certain criteria.

The state of “collective consciousness”, as described by prominent Swiss psychologist and psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung has much similarity with this awakened state of awareness, which opens new doors of perception for practitioners.

It so happens that the masterpieces of the various composers mentioned above would emit those “cool vibrations” and would thus have an intimate rapport with the innermost, spiritual being of listeners.

“Inside every human being, there is a spark of the divine, a genuine life force... Certain situations or stimulus can touch or awaken this divine life force”, Mr. Sethabutr explains. “This gives rise to very deep, joy-giving and blissful meditative experience”, he says.

“Some types of music might also particularly touch people in that it somehow rebalances, harmonizes or boosts their level of energy”.

The theory of Sahaja Yoga takes the explanation one step further by suggesting that the seven notes of music have some correspondence with the seven energy centers (plexuses or *chakras*, literally “wheels” in Sanskrit) placed along the spinal cord and which look after one’s physical, emotional, mental and spiritual well-being. Those energy centers (that also correspond with





various elements, stones, planets, etc.) would be responsive to music or sounds, made itself of air and energy.

According to this method of meditation, the subtle body is not only composed of seven energy centers but also of three main channels of energy; right, left and central. Those channels are associated with our emotions, our past (left channel), mental and physical self and future (right channel), and to our evolution and self-preservation nature (central channel).

Echoing ancient Eastern philosophies, the overall well-being of an individual is seen to be directly related to the existence of imbalances and disharmonies within this subtle system of *chakras* and channels. In a dynamic perspective, action at a subtle level on this subtle body could naturally correct the imbalances and improve physical and emotional problems.



Melody and rhythm – the basic building blocks of music- would also relate with our inner being in that it would correspond with the left channel and right channel, respectively.

Because of these connections or correspondences, music could have a therapeutic role, explored in particular by Indian contemporary musician and composer Arun Apte. A registered medical practitioner in music therapy with a diploma from the Indian Board of Alternative Medicines, Dr. Apte, also a Sahaja Yoga practitioner, developed an innovative technique he termed “Medicinal Indian Vocal Music Therapy”.

His innovative method, which is the culmination of ten years of research on the effects of Indian music based on a combination of multiple sciences, is taught in particular at Shri P.K. Salve Kala Pratishtan academy in Vaitarna, Maharashtra region of India.

“It [Indian vocal music] is not only therapeutic for physical, mental and emotional disorders but it also elevates the participant to a new spiritual dimension, effortlessly” explains Dr. Apte, who is also the Principal and CEO of the Shri PK Salve academy.

“One has to realize that there are subtle energy forces which are to be understood and activated, guided and directed towards the curing”, he says.

In a book entitled *Music and Sahaja Yoga*, Dr. Apte explains: “As Indian Classical Music and mind are inseparably interlinked, ‘music’ easily helps restore the lost mental balance which further leads to mental peace and mental equilibrium. Original knowledge of these things is found in Holy *Vedas* [Hindu sacred texts]. *Gandharva Veda*, which is a constituent of *Sama Veda* is regarded as a Veda on Music. The Holy book contains valuable musical information, on such topics as the relationship between sounds and notes and physio-mental states”.

He continues: “Notes activate the mind. Correspondingly, mind activates the body. The different sounds and notes influence different cells in human body in different proportions. And it is here that the Indian Classical Music is effective to restore the balance”.

The musician refers then to the most ancient knowledge of Ayurveda [Indian holistic system of healing], underscoring that it includes clear mention of the musical diagnostic system. He notes





that the famous book *Siddhi Sthan* by Charak Rishi also provided a detailed analysis of the effect of music on the body.

Says the coordinator of Sahaja Yoga Thailand: “In Thailand, music is rarely associated with meditation. However, meditative music is now attracting a burgeoning interest... In our classes, we have been experimenting this combination rather successfully”.

A departure from more austere methods of meditation, Sahaja Yoga might be a fun experience and who knows, might indeed unlock some of the well-kept mysteries as to why some works of art throughout history continue to mesmerize audiences, sometime many centuries after their creation. The Mozart-maniac congregating in Salzburg to mark the 250th birth anniversary of the Austrian musical genius might be interested!

Side-bar:

Music and inner growth:

Date and time: Sunday 26 February, 14.00 to 17.00

Venue: Novotel Lotus, Sukhumvit Road soi 33

Topics to be addressed include:

- What is Sahaja Yoga?
- What is vibratory awareness and how to develop it?
- Experience “enlightened” music pieces and their impact on your physical and emotional well-being

With musical performance [Indian classical music and devotional songs], guided meditation and self-realization process

Conference is both in Thai and the English language

Entrance is free.

For more information, please call 02 253 33 98, 04 159 44 03 (Thai) or 01 824 38 25 (English).

Note: The conference will be presented by Mr. Kaiwan Kulavadhanonthai, a prominent Thai musician, composer and music professor, graduated from Chulalongkorn’s Faculty of Science and Applied Arts. A former student of Bruce Gaston, Kaiwan performed for many years in the well-known Thai classical and contemporary music ensemble *Fong Nam*. Kaiwan is the author of award-winning compositions, including movie soundtracks, light and sounds shows (River of the King, year 3 to 5) and the music composer of the world class performance *Siam Niramit – Journey to the Enchanted Kingdom of Siam* showing currently at Siam Niramit theatre.

