

The Metaphysics of Sound

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.

Series I

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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.