

Indian Concept of Sound: The “Universal Myth” in India and the West*

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The Indian concept of sound became well-known in the West in the 1960s and was understood in a particular way. While many issues may be discussed regarding the Western interpretation of Indian sound, this study focuses on two specific elements: an assertion of the superiority of sound to vision and excessive emphasis on the “non-linguistic” nature of sound in Indian culture. In the West, emphasizing the aural dimension of Indian culture was linked with the opposition of sound to vision and, in some form, to language in its communicative and informative aspects. However, although sound is indeed an essential and exceptional part of Indian culture, it is opposed neither to sight nor to language within it. The difference between these two approaches led to the conclusion that the Western view of the Indian concept was a misinterpretation of indigenous ideas. Within this position, it was understood as an imperfect imitation of the original, with an unequivocally negative connotation. The authors attempt to go beyond such critique, overcoming the tendency to contrast things rather than to see their complicated interrelation. With this purpose, the question about the reasons for the difference between the two approaches is raised. The Indian concept of sound and its Western interpretation are treated as the two “universal myths,” each having a specific function in the corresponding culture. It becomes obvious that, in the social and cultural context of the counterculture era in the West, the Indian concept of sound was destined to fulfill the cultural demands of a host culture.

Keywords: Indian culture, Indian music, sound studies, aural culture, ocularcentrism, counterculture, sound and sight, music and language, *Nāda-Brahman*.

Introduction

In a modern world with blurred cultural boundaries, concepts can flow unhindered from one culture to another. After getting grounded in a new social and cultural environment, sometimes these ideas transform according to a host culture’s demands. An Indian concept of sound that became well-known in the West in the 1960s and was interpreted in a particular way provides an example of such a case. Many issues may be discussed regarding the Western interpretation of Indian sound, both as a concept and live cultural practice. This study focuses on the conceptual aspect of the issue, focusing on two particu-

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lar elements: an assertion of the superiority of sound to vision and excessive emphasis on the “non-linguistic” nature of sound in Indian culture.

These two points have a common root, merging two “opponents” of sound into one. In the age of counterculture, the criticism was aimed at the very grounds of present Western culture — rationalist (Descartes) and empiricist (Locke, Hobbes) thought that had provided a methodological base for scientific knowledge as the only kind of knowledge deemed credible. Thus, Locke’s formula of “the perception of the mind being most aptly explained by words relating to the sight” [1, p. 260], explaining the core principles of “the Western mode” of human mind operation, represented the targets for criticism, namely “words” and “sight”. In that context, sound became an alternative to both of them, a tool for overcoming their boundaries and an escape from the usual regime of “perception of the mind”.

In their work “Sound and Communication: An Aesthetic Cultural History of Sanskrit Hinduism,” Willke and Moebus [2] use the term “universal myth”. In their interpretation of *myth*, the authors follow the tradition of Cassirer, who treated it as a form of symbolic activity that is an essence of human consciousness [3]. This activity was later defined by Hübner as a “form of thought whose rationality differs from the analytical divisive ‘logos’ and categoric thought” [2, p. 307]. This term seems to be manifold and meaningful enough to be applied both to the Indian concept of sound and its Western transformed version. However, the functions of these “universal myths” are different in both cases. In India, it was produced at the time when its meanings as a traditional narration and a form of thought coincided: a thought was represented in the only known way, a mythological narrative. In the West, the myth about Indian sound appeared a long time after “primitive” mythological thinking was replaced by “more advanced”, as it was declared, scientific form of knowledge. In the middle of the twentieth century, it represented a revolt against “analytical divisive ‘logos’” and “standard” mode of perception.

This study explores the transformation of the Indian concept of sound in the West in the second half of the twentieth century. After an in-depth investigation of the indigenous concept of sound found in Indian scriptures and its comparison with the Western treatment of the concept, the authors provide, through the prism of the concept of a universal myth, a position in relation to unequivocally negative assessment (in the sense of misinterpretation) of the latter.

Indian Concept of Sound in the West

Sound and Sight

The first case, the opposition of sound and vision, is less surprising if one considers the cultural climate at the time of the popularization of Indian music and the Indian concept of sound in the West. In the context of the counterculture of the 1960s, the treatment of sight as “the noblest of the senses” (Aristotle) has been considered the root of diverse problems of modern Western culture, from psychological disorders to atomic bomb attacks. Thus, the concept of Indian sound in the form of *Nāda-Brahman* (the highest reality), and sound practices as a tool for reaching it, arrived in the West at the time when the “remedy” of all “diseases” was most awaited.

Fulfilling the cultural demands of a host culture, the tendency to overemphasize the value of sound has appeared, at the same time neglecting vision. The first wave of en-

thusiasm about self-sufficient, free from visual form “sound worlds”, a place for escape from denounced reality, was well documented by Joachim-Ernst Berendt in his books *The World is Sound: Nāda-Brahma* [4] and *The Third Ear* [5]. Although lacking a depth of investigation, his works may be treated as a good illustration of the ideas popular among the general public of his time.

Joachim-Ernst Berendt was a representative of a generation that rebelled against all traditional cultural elements. The source of all “diseases” of the modern West he found in its eye-orientedness, associated with “analytical dissection” [2, p. 819]. “Living *only* through the head made our lives poorer”, he states, connecting this quality with “losing capability to hear” [4, p. 130]. He declares sound a path for salvation, stating that “The New Man will be a Listening Man — or will never be at all” [4, p. 7].

Berendt’s position illustrates that since the 1960s, interest in Indian music was inspired mostly by its religious and philosophical ideas that were at the peak of their popularity in the West. The interest towards Indian musicians and spiritual gurus was equal; in the same manner, their teachings and music were perceived as the complementary elements of a “New Consciousness”. These ideas gave birth to the “universal myth” not only of *Nāda-Brahman*, as argued by Willke and Moebus, but to accompanying concepts of “sound world” detached from visual reality, and the myth of immediate salvation if entering this world.

Another prominent study within this field was *Sonic Theology* by Guy L. Beck [6], a result of his musical training and fieldwork in India since 1976. This work about Hindu tradition develops the idea about sound as a “central mystery” of Hinduism¹. Explaining this view, Beck refers to Otto’s explanation of a *mysterium* as a concept that “denotes... that which is hidden and esoteric” [7, p. 13] and Bolle’s [8] *mysterium magnum*, regarded the essence of any religion that has “a kind of centripetal force which attracts and empowers other aspects of religion” [6, p. 4]. Thus, according to Beck, sound is situated at the heart of the Hindu tradition. However, it is not enough for him to *emphasize* the role of the sonic dimension, for he tends to *overemphasize* it at least in two ways. First, the importance of sound causes the author’s necessity to criticize the vision — this idea was, as already discussed, not new at the time of writing the book. It may be assumed that the very definition of “sonic theology” appeared intending to raise attention toward the sounding dimension of Hinduism, the importance of which seemed to be underestimated in light of excessive concern about its visual aspect.

Sound and Language

Another problem that concurrently came into focus is the correlation of sound and word, the second determinant of “perception of the mind,” according to Locke’s formula. This matter was discussed in detail in the works by Frits Staal [9–11], and André Padoux [12].

Staal’s subject of the investigation was Veda recitation in the context of ritual in the Nambudiri tradition (South Indian). Contemplating it, the author concludes that mantras differ from language in their function: although Vedic mantras are mostly represented in

¹ He clearly mentions that his scope is the Hindu tradition, excluding Buddhism and Jainism from the discussion. Thus, the Indian concept of sound narrowed here to the *Hindu* concept of sound, which seems to be appropriate to avoid generalizations that may not be justified.

the form of a verse, “in its ritual it is not treated like a verse at all” [11, p. 224]. Moreover, to strengthen his argument, he pays special attention to *stobhas*, non-semantic syllables that appear in Sāmaveda as the elaboration of Rigvedic mantras.

Explaining his position, he refers to Lévi-Strauss and his concepts taken from linguistics and communication theory. According to it, such a difference is rooted in the absence in mantras, in addition to phonological and syntactic components, “a third component which is semantic and which enables language to convey meaning or ‘transmit messages’” [11, p. 188]. Therefore, mantras in a ritual context “violate the communication function”, which is supposed to be the main function of language [11, p. 229].

Furthermore, Staal makes another important significant proposition, stating that “mantras are predecessor of language in the process of human evolution” [11, p. 265]. In that case, he proceeds, “the origin of language marks an entirely new use of mantras, unrelated to their original function — just as the many functions... of a large brain mark new uses that are unrelated to their original uses” [11, p. 265]. In this view, he seems to be different from the evolutionist point of view that treats the historical predecessor of a phenomenon as its primitive form, destined to further development. Instead, he considers its essence and “the source of creation itself,” being in solidarity with other scholars [13; 14].

While Staal’s focus was on cultural practices, particularly Vedic ritual with mantras as its central element, André Padoux turned to the conceptual field, exploring the concept of *vāc*, which represents in equal degree sound and speech/language but identical to neither of them, in their common meaning. A noun based on the Sanskrit root that carries the idea of speaking or saying, it may be translated as voice, speech, word, utterance, and language — however, with “no translation ever being totally satisfactory” [12, p. XIII]. Language, as he argues, “would have been a totally inadequate translation, if only because *vāc*, at the stage described in the following pages, as prior to any language, and in its most obvious Tantric use, that of mantras — chiefly *bījamantra*² — has no connection whatever with language” [12, p. XIII]. Thus, he explores forms of embodiment of the concept within the continuum from the Vedic to the Tantric era; neither of them he found compatible with language in its established meaning.

At the same time, he states that mantras are “phonic aspects of the universal language” [12, p. 50]. Explaining this idea, he turns to the associated with *vāc* concept of *nāda*, which contains the meaning of sound. *Nāda* is defined as an “extremely subtle form of pure phonic energy, which through a series of transformations and condensations will become less subtle... from which... language will come forth” [12, p. 51]. The unfolding of initial primordial sound-energy is described in scriptures as “the gradual emergence of fifty phonemes (*varṇa*)”, of which the Sanskrit alphabet consists.

One of the most referred by Padoux sources is *Tantrāloka* of Abhinavagupta (presumably 960–1016 AD), which represents philosophical aspects of the Trika tradition of Śaiva-Śakta Tantra. There, while discussing noteworthy for this tradition *bīja*-mantras, it is stated that “phonic seeds concentrated [in a mantra]... have nothing to do with the conventions [of language]... do not convey any [empirical] meaning... [consist of] a vibration of consciousness turning away from [the external] world” [12, p. 377].

² Sanskrit *bīja* — seed; such mantras are short and consist of one syllable (Om, Hrim, Klim, etc.) without particular meaning.

Padoux situates all manifestations of the concept of *vāc*, from the Vedic to the Tantric era, close to the purely sonic realm, while denying its identification with language. Primordial sound-energy represents a metaphysical cause of language, its *ontological predecessor*; however, it is not *identical* to language *in its usual form*. In Padoux's interpretation, such usual form does not refer to the modern stage of language's development, but rather to a usual (worldly) *state of mind*. At this point, a question arises whether the described interpretation of the role of sound in culture and its relation to vision and language corresponded to indigenous concepts of India, which will be explored in the next section.

Indigenous Concept of Sound in India

Sound and Sight

It may be supposed that Beck, in the title of his *Sonic Theology*, implied a counter-argument to Diana L. Eck, whose book *Darśan* with the argument that "images are... visual theologies" [15, p. 41] was familiar to him. Eck, like other scholars involved in the study of the visual culture of India [16; 17], and of a concept of sight [18; 19], regarded vision as the element of the utmost importance in Indian culture. Eck defines Indian culture as "visually oriented" and argues that "seeing the divine image... is the single most common and significant element of Hindu worship" [15, p. 1]. Therefore, vision in this case is assumed to be a "central mystery", if referring to Beck's term.

As Eck justifiably points out, the central act of Hindu worship is standing in front of a visually represented (in the form of an image or sculpture) deity, which is called *darśan*. When Hindus go to a temple, she argues, they would not commonly say that they are going to worship, but rather that they are going for *darśan*. Sanskrit root *drś-* contains the idea of seeing; it also carries the meaning of perceiving, knowing, understanding [18, p. 24], significantly linking an eye's activity to the mental processes.

According to Eck, two principal attitudes may be found toward religious images: the image as a focus for concentration and the image treated as a real embodiment of the god. In the first case, the image is treated as a *yantra* (literally a device for restraining, a tie) used for training of one-pointedness of thought in meditation. In this regard, it may be noted that the very term *dhyāna* (meditation) is derived from the root *dhī-*, its initial meaning being "to see, to look (at)", often in connection with "extraordinary supranormal vision" [18, p. 202]. Gonda [18; 19] provides evidence of the important role of visual metaphors, both in the sense of the physical act of perception, as well as the obtaining of non-material knowledge. Overall, the amount of studies dedicated to the visual realm of Indian culture is considerable. An "apology for vision" could appear, as in this paper, only in the context of anti-visualism, whose adepts, while struggling against "ocularcentric bias", themselves seem to start following an alternative bias.

Sound and Language

Perhaps, the essential point, in regard to this question, is the interrelation of the concepts of *śabda* and *nāda* (and also associated with it idea of *dhvani*). In classical Sanskrit, *śabda* is a general term for audible phenomena; simultaneously, it also means "word." In turn, *dhvani* and *nāda* may be translated respectively as "phonetic sound" and "physical

sound”, “sound waves” or “resonance”. As Willke and Moebus comment, the terms *dhvani* and *nāda* “accentuate the non-semantic, acoustic aspect of sound”, while *śabda* “emphasizes the characteristic noise that is linked with an object or process... through which an object or process may be identified” [2, p. 527]. In the same manner, Beck provides a translation of *śabda* as a “linguistic sound” mostly connoting vocal sound to which meaning is attached” [6, p. 8].

It is significant that these terms are often closely interconnected, sometimes even interchangeable, and also initially have appeared in different fields. The concept of *śabda* was developed as a grammatical term. It appeared as early as in *Mahābhāṣya* by Patañjali (presumably the second century BCE), who called his study of Sanskrit grammar *śabdā-nuśāsanam*. In the fifth century CE, Bhartṛhari, a Sanskrit poet and philosopher, developed the concept of *Śabda-brahman* (*śabda-tattva* as the ultimate reality that has the nature of word).

At the same time, the concept of *nāda* may be found in yogic and tantric literature (primarily Śivaicāgamas), both in its metaphysical aspect and practical use (*nāda-upāsanā*, a practice of loud or silent uttering). These cosmogonic speculations on mantra as the manifestation of primordial sound-energy came to musicological works, applying it to music. In *Bṛhaddeśi* by Mataṅga (sixth to eighth centuries CE), the whole universe is said to have a form of sound (*nādarūpaḥ*) (Śl. 19) [20]. This idea was developed in later musicological treatises, including *Aumāpatam* (twelfth to fourteenth centuries) and especially *Sanḡitaratnākara* of Śārṅgadeva (thirteenth century) [21], who coined the very term *Nāda-brahman*.

Therefore, the concepts of *śabda* and *nādaseem* to be developed in different contexts, parallel to each other; in this regard, the question arises about their interrelation. Searching for answers, one may turn, among the other sources, to the philosophy of language of Bhartṛhari, who explores, in his theory of *sphoṭa*³, the process of deriving the meaning from the word by the human mind. In *Vākyapadīya* [22], the terms of *dhvani* and *nāda* usually appear as synonyms, although some verses make to suggest that the latter is the product (*vaikṛta*) of the former (*prākṛta*). A word (*śabda*), according to this theory, is “the *sphoṭa*, an indivisible entity over and above the sounds (*dhvani*-s) which are uttered by the speaker and heard by listener and which convey the meaning according to convention... this *sphoṭa* is manifested by the sounds produced by the articulatory organs” [23, p. 52]. Here, *nāda* is understood as a sensory experience, at the same time being a prerequisite for the existence of *śabda*; sound is an aspect of the word and its prerequisite.

At this point, one may argue that this meaning of *nāda* is different from the metaphysical one discussed earlier. However, if considering that, as Willke and Moebus [2] point out, for Bhartṛhari, cognition, idea (*pratyaya*) is intertwined with the word, it indicates that traditionally *nāda*, while representing a metaphysical category, at the same time was always perceived as something specifically sensory. Mostly, speculations of this concept reflect, in one or another way, the concept of *vāc* as the most comprehensive one, which seems to be a cultural paradigm, the essence of the “universal myth” of sound in India.

In summary, although sound has been a crucial element of Indian cosmogony from the Vedic era, representing an aspect of the ultimate reality, it has never been opposed to vision. The visual realm always played an equally important role in Indian culture,

³ Translated as “bursting,” “opening,” “disclosure.”

both in sensory data forms and metaphors of extrasensory experience [15–19]. Concerning language, the situation is even more apparent: sound was never compared or opposed to the word but represented a very essence of it; an interchangeable character of concepts *Śabda-Brahman* and *Nāda-Brahman*⁴ demonstrates it well. Therefore, the two mentioned oppositions were a product of the Western culture tailored to its needs.

The Difference

Indian Sound as an Awaited “Other” in the West

For understanding the reason for a certain interpretation of the Indian idea of sound, the cultural climate of the time when it achieved popularity in the West has to be considered. In this case, it would become evident that this interpretation was a product of its time and place. Moreover, the Indian concept could fill a gap in Western culture, the presence of which was recognized a long time before, thus becoming awaited “Other” for Western culture.

Disenchantment in traditional social, cultural, and religious values culminated in the 1960–1970s. However, it had the roots in Romanticism, being expressed in an especially distinct way by Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. Such titles of the philosophical works as *Twilight of the Idols*⁵ or *The Decline of the West*⁶ were significant for their time; a hostile position towards established norms became all-pervading. Within it, all the “idols,” including those related to mind operation, started to be humiliated. Among them, there were already mentioned elements of Locke’s formula — word, sight, and, ultimately, mind perception.

Regarding language, the characteristic feature of the twentieth century’s philosophy was its increased focus on the analysis of language, defined as “linguistic turn”⁷. Within this stream, the main matters of concern were the use of language and its communicative abilities, the interrelation of signified and significant, which were the main subject of the emerged science of semiology. Focus on these features indicated the necessity of deeper knowledge of the language in relation to mind perception and the *usual* process of meaning construction. That process was previously taken for granted as the only possible way. However, in the mid-twentieth century, its credibility was put under question, in the same way as it happened with its “agents”, vision and language.

The main reason for the critique of the established epistemological paradigm was frustration and discontent, which became a general mood among people in the 1960–1970s. At that stage, Indian philosophical concepts came to appear at the right time and place, and were captured with readiness, as they corresponded to a long-awaited alternative. The Indian concept of sound appeared in the West as an aspect of its spirituality. One stimulated another; the peak of the popularity of Indian spiritual ideas coincided with the peak of interest in its music. “New Consciousness” was seen as an ultimate goal; sound was a vehicle for reaching it.

⁴ *Śabda-Brahman* and *Nāda-Brahman* are the concepts treating respectively word (semantic element) and sound (non-semantic element) as aspects of ultimate reality (Brahman).

⁵ Nietzsche [24].

⁶ Spengler [25].

⁷ The term of Richard Rorty, whose book with the same name was published in 1967 [26].

Sound as a Path to New Consciousness

When the Indian concept of sound reached the West, it was already prepared for it by the ideas of music as a direct way to a transcendent reality that emerged in nineteenth-century Romanticism [27, p. 15]. At that time, the reason for such an exclusive role of music among other arts was attributable to its abstract and symbolic nature, characterized, as semiotics would argue in the next century, by the absence of fixed and unambiguous relation between signifier and signified. The idea survived and was further developed in the twentieth century; moreover, it extended its influence over the boundaries of art studies and aesthetics.

In 1955, a French composer Pierre Schaffer introduced the term “acousmatics”. That name was given to the method of listening through the speakers instead of a live performance, which he used for the introduction of his music. In this way, he aimed to isolate sound from its visible source (musicians and musical instruments) and extract hearing from other sensory modalities⁸. Moreover, increased interest in aural aspect of the world and human perception of it was manifested by the emergence of other phenomena, such as the concept of *acoustemology* and the *The World Soundscape Project*⁹. Therefore, the idea of the power of sound, its ability to alter consciousness, and its potential to give salvation was already existent in the Western culture at the time of encountering the Indian concept. It was a Western “universal myth” intended to explain the world alternative to “visual”, and the role of a human, a “Man of Listening”, in that world.

Imperfect Imitation or a Phenomenon of Inherent Value?

Determined by Aristotle’s paradigm “each affirmation is either true or false” (*Categories*, 4.2a5) [32], the above conclusion seems to become the final point of this study. Indeed, its relevancy is obvious if considering cultural authenticity a criterion of truth, for it determines the *original* that other versions must be compared with. However, the situation may change if taking into consideration that the original, as previously discussed, is a “universal myth” — and, in turn, its imperfect Western copy becomes a *myth of the myth*.

This assertion may lead to two possible conclusions, depending on the position toward myth as a form of thought organization and expression; these two positions are discussed by Cassirer in *Language and Myth*. First, one may consider myth an illusion, pure “phantasmagoria of the spirit”, which “does not rest upon a positive *power* of formulation and creation, but rather upon a mental *defect*” [3, p. 8]. This opinion refers back to Max Müller’s view of mythology as a “power exercised by language on thought” that leads to self-deception, considering language’s inability to express *reality* [33, p. 355]. This attitude, Cassirer proceeds, turns to be the “logical result of that naïve realism which regards the reality of objects as something directly and unequivocally given” [3, p. 6]. In this case, any attempt at its expression would appear a mere fraud, misconception and falsification. However, Cassirer regards this approach as a “self-dissolution of the spirit”, turning to the view that Kant calls his “Copernican revolution” in philosophy: “Instead of measuring the

⁸ This approach was not unique, for the term, as well as the method itself, could be found in Ancient Greece. The followers of Pythagoras are said to practice listening to his teacher’s speech hiding beyond the curtain, which, as it was argued, was providing a deeper level of understating of the teachings [28].

⁹ See: [29–31].

content, meaning, and truth of intellectual forms by something extraneous which is supposed to be reproduced in them, we must find in these forms themselves the measure and criterion for their truth and intrinsic meaning” [3, p. 8].

If agreeing with this approach, the Indian sound myth and the Western myth about it would be interpreted as two cases of symbolic creativity, both having their own truth and inherent value. The former’s value is indisputable due to its ability to be preserved in the culture for millennia; at the same time, the value of the second is being disputed. However, its power becomes evident if acknowledging, as many writers have done, that a new “ethos of consciousness” of the 1960–1970s, was indeed a “cultural revolution”, a significant turning point in the history of the West [34]. In turn, *mysterium magnum* of the “new consciousness” and the instrument for its nurturing was sound — in the form that has been discussed, often purged from vision and dissociated from “linguistic” meaning. Thus, given the magnitude of changes, it may be argued that the sonic myth, in this particular form, fulfilled its purpose at least to some degree.

Thus, the Indian myth of sound and its Western version, either being an *imitation* of reality or its *organs* of inherent value — both carried the same functions in their cultures. They were symbols that need interpretation; they were the keys, whose difference was reasoned by the difference of the doors.

Conclusion

The Indian concept of sound became popular in the West in the 1960–1970s, inspiring the Western “cultural revolution.” In Western interpretation, however, the concept acquired new elements — the opposition of sound and vision, and the emphasis on its “non-linguistic” character. The first feature, as has been demonstrated, cannot be found in the Indian sound concept. The second point may be partly justified by corresponding ideas in Indian scriptures (mainly in Śaivaāgamas); however, in the West, a tendency of overemphasizing the power of sound has appeared. Such a disparity leads to the conclusion that the Western version of the Indian view on sound was an incomplete imitation that distorted the original.

Throughout the paper, that conclusion was prepared; however, raising at the end the question about the criteria for truth would initiate a reconsideration of the outcome. If the cultural phenomenon, whatever it may be, could become one of the main catalysts of the “cultural revolution” and the ideas of an entire restructuring of the mode of mind operation, its power cannot be underestimated. In the discussed case, there was a vacuum in culture, when traditional values were rejected while their alternative was not found yet. Foreign ideas became the core element for building up such an alternative. Considering this, a claim that the value of the migrated concept overshadows the fact that it distorts the authentic one seems not entirely unreasonable.

In this regard, the concept of myth as a form of thought organization and expression appears applicable to the matter of discussion. As commonly acclaimed, the first and foremost function of myth is preserving cultural values — however, by means other than rational. The myth’s source is initial experiential knowledge embodied in the symbolic form; providing access to this knowledge is the first and foremost function of the myth. As different cultures represent unequal symbolic systems, it may be assumed that similar meanings may be obtained by decoding non-similar symbols. To exclude the possibility

of it, defending the idea of cultural authenticity as the only criterion for judgment, means the refusal of recognition of the possibility for the Western mind to obtain true knowledge encoded in sound, although being beyond sound. This, ultimately, prevents the recognition of universal truth laying beyond its embodiments, varying from culture to culture.

It must be emphasized that such a statement does not eliminate the utmost importance of the scrupulous study of the indigenous cultural phenomenon, attempting to immerse into it as deeply as possible — otherwise, it may result in a superficial and consumerist approach. Berendt's Nāda-Brahman was an example of excess freedom of interpretation without an adequate knowledge basis. However, such freedom implies exceeding attention to one's predisposition — thus, everything beyond the open *doors of perception*¹⁰ appears as mere “reflecting surfaces”¹¹, depicting solely one's own face.

The ultimate goal of this study was an exercise in *accepting both of the opposites*. Discovering the Indian concept of sound teaches the Western mind to synthesize sound and vision, pure sound and “linguaging”. In turn, discovering the cultural context in which the Western version of sound myth appeared allows accepting such rivalry and separation as a possible tool for a certain purpose. The mind can proceed to search for the answer whether, in general, the creation of these oppositions has its grounds. Perhaps, further research would be able to shed light on this problem. Until that, the Western interpretation of the Indian sound, as well as sound-centered approach in general, would remain a matter of discussion — whether it is yet not justified truth or the proof of the reality of the placebo effect.

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¹⁰ The title of the book by A. Huxley, which became one of the symbols of the counterculture era of the 1960s [35].

¹¹ The title of the article by Gerry Farrell [36], dedicated to the problem of the use of Indian music elements by Western rock musicians.

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Индийская концепция звука: «Универсальный миф» в Индии и на Западе*

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Индийская концепция звука приобрела популярность на Западе в 1960-х годах и была понята своеобразным образом. На Западе акцентирование аудиального модуса в культуре Индии было сопряжено с противопоставлением его визуальному аспекту, а также в той или иной степени языку, а именно его семантической (в противовес фонической) составляющей, делающей возможными информативную и коммуникативную функции речи. Однако, несмотря на небезосновательность наделения звукового начала особым значением в культуре Индии, упомянутые оппозиции не имеют места в ее рамках. В первом случае визуальная модальность имеет равную степень значимости с аудиальной, в целом же они взаимодополняемы и взаимозаменяемы. Во втором случае преувеличение внеязыковой природы звукового аспекта культуры не видится в числе основополагающих парадигм индийской культуры, где в большинстве случаев звук рассматривается как один из аспектов речи и ее предпосылка. Указанные различия в подходах послужили причиной укрепления мнения о том, что западное прочтение индийской концепции звука является искажением «аутентичных» идей — несовершенная имитация оригинала, заслуживающая исключительно негативной оценки. В данном исследовании делается попытка выхода за пределы этой позиции посредством преодоления тенденции к противопоставлению феноменов, а не поиска их сложной взаимосвязи. Ключом к пониманию западного прочтения концепции является рассмотрение социокультурного контекста Запада эпохи контркультуры, когда заимствованные идеи оказались способными соответствовать культурным запросам принимающей культуры более, чем ее собственные. Концепция звука в Индии и ее западная трансформация трактуются как два самостоятельных «универсальных мифа», каждый из которых играет определенную роль в своей культуре.

Ключевые слова: культура Индии, музыка Индии, sound studies, звуковая культура, окулярцентризм, контркультура, звук и зрение, язык и музыка, *Нада-Брахман*.

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