

Aryan Music

The unity resulting from the opposites
is the harmony of both the lyre and the cosmos.
— Synesius¹

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AN additional interest and value is given to the present number of the THEOSOPHIST by the able essay upon Indian Music, contributed by the Gayan Samaj, or Musical Reform Society, of Poona, through their respected Secretary, Mr. Bulvant. Though much has, we believe, been done in Bengal by an eminent native musical amateur, to make the merits of Aryan music known to our generation, and he has been decorated by the kings of Portugal and Siam, we, being strangers here as yet, are not informed that his essays have had vogue in the English language. But, whether our present paper is or is not the first formal challenge from a Hindu to the West to recognize the claim of India to the maternity of musical science, the challenge is here made; and it will be our duty and pleasure, alike, to see that it comes to the notice of some of the best critics of Europe and America.

Last month, Mr. Dinanath Atmaram, M.A., LL.B., that great contemporary Hindu mathematical genius, who — according to no less an authority than Mr. J.B. Peile, Director of Public Instruction, Bombay Presidency — “proved his point that Sir Isaac Newton’s Rule for imaginary roots is not universally true, but that it is perfectly easy to form Equations having imaginary roots, the existence of which would not be made manifest by the application of Newton’s Rule” — showed us that an Aryan geometer, and not the Greek Hipparchus — as hitherto commonly believed — was the author of Trigonometry. And now we see the most conclusive evidence that Music, the “Heavenly Maid” was begotten neither by Greek² nor Roman, nor Egyptian inspiration, but sprang, a melodious infant, out of the Aryan cradle. The *fact* of the Aryans and Chinese having had a system of musical notation, is conceded by the Christians; but that it far antedated the epoch of the fabulous Jabal, “the father of all such as handle the harp and the organ,” of the Bible, is not admitted by them, or, at all events, has not been until recently, if such be the fact even now. The peculiar poetical character of the ancient Hindu showed itself in the question “What is the music?” as part

¹ Synesius: *De Insomniis* 2, 3 (tr. Fitzgerald)

² [Cf. “*À propos* of Orpheus,” asked the Thākur, “do you know that the lyre of this Greek hero and demi-god was far from being the first with the capacity to cast spells over people, animals and even rivers? *Kui*, a certain Chinese ‘musical artist’ who lived a thousand years before the era ascribed by the scholars to Orpheus, expressed himself in these words: ‘When I play my *King*, wild animals hasten to me, and range themselves into rows before me, spellbound by my melody . . .’” *Caves and Jungles of Hindostan*, p. 289 — ED. PHIL.]



of the question, "What is Nature?" remarks Mr. Rice, treating upon Hindu music.³ The THEOSOPHIST representing Eastern and not Western views and interests in all that concerns Oriental history, it is our ardent wish to be helped in bringing out all the truth about the Aryan priority in philosophy, science, and art, by every man who can give us the facts. We fear neither the frown of modern science, nor the wry faces and abuse of the theologians.



Mr. Herbert Spencer, true to his materialistic instincts, attributes the primitive development of music to a correlation of mental and muscular excitements; "the muscles that move the chest, larynx and vocal chords, contracting like other muscles in proportion to the intensity of the feelings," and song being but an exaggeration of the natural language of the emotions. (*Illustrations of Universal Progress*, chapter on "The Origin and Function of Music." But one of the best of our modern musical critics, the above mentioned Mr. Rice, shows narrowness of this conception. He properly says that "music is not a human invention, *it is a part and parcel of Nature*. The laws of vibration are . . . as immutable as those of

gravity. . . . There is the human throat with its remarkable arrangement for the purpose of *song* alone. A far inferior construction would have served the purposes of language, or for the production of sound incidental to muscular excitement." Our Hindu contributor shows us how the Aryans caught and classified the sounds of nature; and so, too, Mr. Rice sententiously asks, "Did not singing-birds exist before the time of men? Did they evolve their singing from speech; or did they develop it from muscular excitement: or did they sing because it was natural for them to sing? No, music is not a human invention. The *progress in music* is of the same nature as the progress in science, it is based on discovery. The other arts are imitative of things in nature, but music is a very part of Nature itself."

³ *What is Music?* a charming monograph by Isaac L. Rice, Author, of "Analysis and Practice of the Scales." (New York, D. Appleton & co., 549, Broadway.) "How differently the Chinese and Hindus accounted for the emotive power of music!" exclaims this author. "On the one hand, the gloomy mysteries of the numbers and the elements; on the other, the bright fantastic gorgeous heaven of sunshine, marriages and pleasures! And yet who knows but that the Hindu philosophers, who established such a flowery system, were thinkers fully as deep as the Chinese sages — *that their original conception and hidden meaning were not as spiritual as those of modern days?*" . . . It is our especial task to dispel such fatal errors about India as the above passage (underscored by us) contains. To underrate the spirituality of the old Hindu philosophers but proves that we do not know them. And if knowing them, we were to allow them no more than the *spirituality* existing in our "modern days" — that would be to insult them and truth. — ED. THEOS. [Full text of *What is Music?* in the same Series. — ED. PHIL.]



While but few Western composers can ever enjoy the opportunity of coming to India to study the beginnings of their ennobling art, yet they may at least avail of the patriotic assistance of the Poona Gayan Samaj, to procure proper musical instruments, and to explore the ancient Sanskrit literature, in which the germs of musical science have been preserved, like flies in amber, to surprise and instruct us. The sympathy of every lover of the truth and of India should be unstintingly given to Mr. Bulwant and his honorable colleagues.



Illustrations by Vladimir Kush

Music of the Woods (previous page); *African Sonata* (above).

