

# *László Hortobágyi*

## *Acid-Hindusthan*

*(The origin of the Transrational (Trancerational) Music)*

**(1985 )**

His Highness *MádhawRao Scindia, Mahárája of Gwálíor*, during his first journey to the Western World, on 22nd October, 1883, on the solicitation of his high-born friends, went to the Metropolitan Opera House to see the first performance of Gounod's Faust. The mahárája was a well-known classical vocalist, connoisseur of music and patronizer in his homeland.

There used to have lived in his court, in Gwálíor, a lot of legends, among others *Ustád Háfíz Ali Khán*. In his box, the potentate was sitting through the first act of Gounod's opera wooden-faced, then during the intermission the white friends, knowing the mahárája's extraordinary love for music, began to ask spiritedly the potentate about his first impressions about the western music. „Well, well” answered the *rája*, the very beginning exerted irresistible influence on him, the many musicians, the many unfamiliar instruments, the tones and the volume, but later there was a man, who came in and began to flourish a stick, and from that very moment - though he was very sorry to say - the whole performance was becoming unenjoyable for him.

This story is very illustrative of the continents' mutual strangeness of each other, that could be experienced at the turn of the century, but later rapidly dwindled to nothing, with the rolling by of decades.

The industrial societies of today, having an overwhelming technical superiority and expansionist dynamism, are tending to reorganize the whole globe, and at the same time they are directing all the traditional civilizations, being outsiders for these technologically “homogeneous” societies, towards extinction.

The classical Hindu-Moslem music is a form of the Asian musicological peculiarities, that has been crystallized differently from the European way, but still on a common Hellenic-music basis, in which you can find both the marks of military conquest of India by the neighboring cultures as from the turn of the millennium (in the north) and a more ancient and authentic *Dravida* music culture (in the south), otherwise, the latter having a significant influence on Indonesia's music, as well.

As from the end of the 1200ies, a melodically polyphonic, but considering the whole of the world's musical culture, a definitely unique European music life began to

evolve in Europe, similarly almost the same years in India, there became part of the musical practice a way of thinking that was polyphonic in time (i.e. rhythmically) and the roots of which had dated back to the age of Vedantic prosody and *mnemo-technics*.

In the North Indian music, there have been existing from about the 1200ies till our days a multitude of unchangeable compositional forms, where the daily practice of music is controlled by rules of music theory, having been very carefully considered and systematically thought through, the accurate acquisition of which actually might require decades. We can mention the example of its tonal system, where the dividing of the octave into 12 equal, i.e. tempered intervals is unknown, but there is an overtone-interval (*shruti*) system instead, where the octave can be divided into 22 intervals, consequently the intervals will be neither identical nor symmetrical, that means they are not suitable for constructing polyphonic structures in sense of harmony. On the other hand, each note is an overtone system level derivative of all the other notes, and in respect of each scales the relation between those notes always represents a consciously developed ratio.

One of the proper compositional forms of a system like this is *rāga* (“melody” or “color of the mind”), that is the Indian equivalent of Asian basic-melody cultures (*maqam, nomos* etc.). *Rāga* consists of a certain set of scales (*jati*), and the traditional melodic turns and constructions (*gat*), which are based on this set of scales, would mean orders of sequences sanctified by melodic figures (*tāna*), tradition and living musical practice (*riyaz*), i.e. repetition. In terms of possibilities they are limitless. *Rāga* is an independent key and interval ratio, and that foundation, in the Hindu music culture, should be understood as written musical themes, melodies and compositions named independently. In this way, the 1/22th octave division tonal system consists of 64,753 scale combinations, each of them can be considered as a *rāga*, however, there are altogether approx. 250-300 used in musical practice in North and South.

Thus, this kind of linear thinking and building music is monodic-modal, simultaneously its perception of time (rhythm) is fundamentally different from the perception of music, time and rhythm being indigenous in other parts of the world. In the same way, as numbers and tonal system of *rāgas* are fixed, the rhythmical periods (*tāla*) also undergo a complicated way of classification. According to the classical theory, there are 108 independent rhythmical periods of music, but in the practice no periods are used with that high time measures. (*Ustād Amir Khán of Indore*, who was run over by a car in Bombay, 1973, was one of the last singers in India, who was able to sing a *tāla* in 56/4.)

In Indian music, the way of musical thinking is essentially periodic. In this respect it is absolutely different from western music, where there is a key and rhythm change in each and every bar, and besides that Indian music also applies, according its hard-and-fast rules, special asymmetrical period of time like *Sikharini tāla* in 17/4 or the

interesting *Ardha Jai* tála in 6,5/4.

The interest shown by the Western World in the Hindu culture can be considered specifically periodic. As from the 19th century this kind of periodicity was observable in more waves and it always proved to be parallel with the diagram of problems that had been actually oppressing the Western World intellectually or even economically. Prior to that, keen interest had been shown in the exact translations of *Káma-sútra*, then owing to the works of some engrossed German or sometimes English philologists it extended to the interpretation of Vedantic texts, but concerning Hindu music a kind of obscurity was perceivable dominated by complete lack of comprehension.

After some periods of that nature, in the 50ies, the performances of the first Hindu-Moslem musicians, who happened to have concerts in the west, gave the "white world" the opportunity to get acquainted with the ancient music of the continent. But, as concerns a culture, only that part of it is able to live on, the "white man" could understand of it.

As after the World War II, a new prosperity was observable in the history of western societies, and the multinational megacompanies turned out to be present or appear quietly in the deepest recesses of the world, even the "products" of the traditional cultures got step by step into an enormous melting pot, of which anybody would be able, in proportion to her/his mood, inclination and estrangement, to peck out the soul-saving "truths" of ancient cultures, beginning with the wisdom of the Vedas.

Well, that was the very moment when *Pandit Ravi Shankar* appeared, who was, and I dare say that, one of the biggest talents of the 20th century's music history. His story is a gem of our culture and of the false consciousness of human collectivities, one of the possible millions. *Ravindra Shankar* was born in Benares, 1920, in a *brahman* family, thus, in a high position and having great chances. In the 30ies, as a dancer being member in his brother *Uday Shankar*'s troupe, he regularly managed to visit Europe. This meeting took place in the spirit of romantic ethos of the "art", that wouldn't even show a sign of change in our days, the Schubert-like pathos and the false romantic of the suffering artist, that completely prevented him, the extra-European man coming from the cretin and indifferent world of the English colonial culture of that time, from finding the only possible linkage between the European and Indian music in respect of the Gregorian vocal practice, the instrumental styles of the Middle Ages and the standard language of Baroque improvisation.

(Thus, it becomes understandable the unmusical and boresome character of *Pt. Ravi Shankar*'s subsequent so-called orchestral compositions, that was recorded featuring Y. Menuhin, P. Rampal, then Ph. Glass.)

From the middle of the 1930ies, in *Maihar* (U.P.), as a disciple of Ustád *Alláuddin Khán*, he became initiated into a musical style (*Bínkári Báj*) being very special in

India of that time, which represented within the ocean of the originally vocal music of India a kind of abstract instrumental style, that was very tiny and not characteristic at all of the ancient music of Hindusthan, although its origin had been the Mogul court music of the 1400ies (*Senia Gharáná*).

Among the characteristic features of the style we can find the code system of sets originating from the age-old standardizing of rhythmical-mathematical constructions, more suitable for being imitated by "white man", the melodic variations, and the scantiness of their modal polyrhythmics and their chilly and, as rendered by the followers, sometimes dreary distance from the human-ecstatic factor of singableness. It dates back to the golden age of Mogul court music, when the first instrumental compositions would try to reproduce multitude of vocal pieces of that time, on their instruments (*Rúdra-been, Surshringár, Sarod, Rebáb*, etc.).

Accordingly, the classical music, being chanted like an instrument, appeared as an unsingable abstract instrumental style in the ocean of medieval Hindustani vocal music. And, it was the "white man's" last meeting with the North Indian music, when from the second part of the 50ies the historical and existing Indian music, in view of its entirety and origin, was identified by among others from John Cage to Yehudi Menuhin and The Beatles with a minority but, considering the performer, ingenious slice of it. Though the extinction of the traditional Indian schools (*gharana*) had already commenced in parallel with the disappearance of the mahárája courts, around the turn of the century, this kind of misunderstanding of classical music by "white man's" consumption could also lead to the development of a consumable Indian music that was comparable with the global "conform-idiomatism" of the awful pop industry.

Later, similarly to the example shown by the traditional black or *Hawaiian* music, the music of other "enigmatic" Asian high-cultures has also taken its turn, where the consumption of the aforementioned music, as from the 60ies with a mandatory nature, is continuing to take place even in our days in form of a concert, whereas it appears not more than an appetizing inclusion in the concert menus of large cities or on the lists of Internet servers, now and then.

However, this borderless nature of information provides considerable possibility of knowledge, namely: What does the natural history of those disappearing high-cultures, formed by the history in an unrepeatable way, actually hide? Since the appeal and "mystery" of the great "enigmatic" Asian cultures should be searched after in their obscurity, i.e. the lack of exact information concerning them.

Europe's mobile society, with its city-states, colonies, cathedrals, grinding mills and division of labor had stepped on a way of human coexistence-relation, that was completely different from India's world blended with village communities (*grama*), where retreat from the community and as a hermit, sometimes connected to a certain age (*sadhu, yoga*), was regarded as the greatest intellectual virtue, and where the

intellectual cream of the society would drift to the periphery of collective human actions. In Europe, the property is nothing else, than sphere of decisions, and the sphere of decisions is nothing else, than the building up the personality, *-ecce homo-*, namely possession: that is personal God, polyphony, knight in armour, heraldry, cathedral, nuclear submarine. On the other hand, in India, i.e. in the pantheistic and personal propertyless world of thousand faceless *Buddhas*, Hindu gods and goddesses and *bodhisattvas*, there is only one kind of freedom for the individuals, the fictional inner freedom. One of the techniques to attain the freedom is *yoga*, i.e. when the man, namely the social being with a moebius-mind performs a complete somersault. The ceremonies and beliefs, like symbol-creating ectoplasm of human brain and imagination, are existing in place of a world livable by intellect: the legacy of all of the dead generations weighs heavily on the mind of the living, like a daily-historical practice of individuum tucked underneath the social mass of the greatest common human-social evil, the cocooned Me.

And so, for the Indian intelligentsia of that age, living in one of the most infernal manner of human coexistence, yoga was a fantastic instrument to overcome the sequence of horrible rebirths (*samsára*), and to attain and deserve never to be obliged to rebirth on this world, due to the “proper” manners meaning victory over the subjection and the body.

This is the very essence of the Indian music and nothing else. A fantastically sophisticated, ancient and ecstatic human scream, that is in itself the mathematical purity and the heaven, and it is nothing else but a millennial distillation of human misery, where the realized thousand years old art-technique of escaping connects the apparently unknown-known, inhabited hell-worlds, like the thread of Ariadne. Everywhere and always.

Thus, it is obvious, if the Hell exists, there is Indian music playing there, for sure, of which every component is rational and measurable, like in case of a Gothic cathedral, but the whole superstructure appears to be somehow from beyond the grave and absolutely irrational.

And since the North-Indian music “isn’t free” (it is restricted by the musical colloquial language), but in its artistic praxis, its improvisational performance will provide an infinite space for the individual self-fulfilment of Asian people with no (mistakenly alleged) personality – (instead of unfolding in the real world) –, so it has realised the World’s most sophisticated *trans-rational* (or *trance-rational*) system of conquering the reality, and based on it, of spiritual-artistic exodus. That’s why there may be Hindustani music playing in the Hells. (Just in parentheses, the Dravidian Carnatic music system, with a real “colloquial language structure” - that is less destructible, but still strongly restricting the personality - has developed an even more universal musical-mythological high-culture-path for that. At the same time, under the influence of the Invincible West, the global stereotypes of operetta and rock music performed on *Saraswati-vinas* have already appeared here, as well.)

In this world, the music seems to be the sweet poison of mankind, and at the same time, it can be considered as a litmus paper that is more sensitive to awareness of life of the society, than any other art or science. The indeed good music doesn't ever deal with health, affirmation or progress, but it is always born from a sort of essence of sufferings instead. The music is a kind of drug, that can't be replaced by anything else. You can get ratios through your ears, schemes, timbres and dynamic structures are penetrating into your brain, that are going to map the biorhythmic voltage of your brain, and won't sneak into you through any other organ of sense. It is a source of feelings, that also includes the extrasensory borderland of human perception, stimulating them at the same time. And so, we have come to Acid, Techno and psychedelic Dub musics of our days.

And while the Indian music is an intellectual exode, with a thousand years old development, from this uninhabitable world, now the similar attitude of Acid music will guide us to a musicology fact: while earlier music, with its above-mentioned inextricable acoustic-emotional-mathematical ratios and millennial cultural "Mememes", has been the pleasure and "ecstasy" of intellect, now the commercialized version of worldly Acid, with its 60 Hz kick drums and the monotonous acoustic massage, affecting kidneys and stimulating adrenaline production, would become consumers' praxis of weekend liberation and alienation of body and soul, incited from outside, i.e. it would realize a more up-to-date technology of defeating the reality. And so happened, that the modern technology and extra-European musical elements emerged together in the musical practice of the world of these days and on the digital carriers of alienation and of artificial false consciousness.

The future way of consumption of Mogul court music and relics of traditional cultures, rich in pigment, in general: Indivirtual satellite channels (**Indivision**), with encoded (**VirtualCrypt Card**) intravenous (in)fusion for the purpose of longer submersion, personal tubs (**Personal (g)Rave**), common salt, respiratory mask, heterodyne radiation, "**sleg**", hot water.

Programs: **Life-Takes**, **MacLife**, **Paraclete-Games**, **Virtual-Walk**, **MacRave**, **Compaq de Sade**, **Nihi-Liason**, **Cocalia**, **Acider**, **Nirvanam-Bull**, **Lysergames**, **Somnipotensor**, **Induality**, **Hybernaculum**, **Virtualiser**, **Cyborgia'sm**, etc.

The ordinary western citizen of our days is jovial, having free time, proper digestion and a fine set of teeth, snacking hamburger, skateboarding, wearing a peaked plastic cap that provides a wide intellectual horizon, is crisp-fleshed, dressed in clean clothes, his hair is creamed gently, but he is a bit unshaved, uses **Unix** network software and mobile telephone, but he is slender as far as possible, and his brain is covered with slate green, ciliated mould fungus. But a jovial "individuum" of this nature is very distant from the potential colorful personality, that may be a creative contributor to a real culture.

This person would rather live over in a drying hood like helmet - the coming

*Consociator* - the digitally recorded (*bio-scanner*) gauzy poems of the currently fashionable musician-actor, but never the life of a Mogul court musician, for example, because the series of masterpieces, entitled “Sexual Life of Squirrels-Dolphins-Centipedes”, “The Corpse Eating Germ”, “I, Himmler”, “Chermophag Games” and “Alien’s G-point”, that can be continuously replayed using a flash, sliding into the slot behind the ears, will always be much more interesting for him. If he wants, he is flying with the most beautiful actress to the Andes, and it is not improbably, that he also takes a look at an other, possibly blond and blue-eyed, crispy beaut, who - accompanied by a great organ - happens to stare in an excitement at a wad of anise scented, recycled toilet paper, and certainly after that very moment everybody can hear a soft, mysterious *gamelan* music. This “personality” of our age is going to buy a real life along with samples of scent stored on videotape like, compact flash memory, and by means of this helmet he lives that other life, that might be better than the real life, though in the meanwhile is throughout among us.

*VHS* future. In the not to far future, billions of people, sunk in the illusion offered by helmets and chemicals, are leaving this world, made uninhabitable by themselves, in a ratio that threatens the normal functioning of societies, and will live their other, but possible life sampled by big companies and ordered via Internet by credit card. Thus, in our culture it becomes to possible, that an Aztec lady-siren riding on the Cretan Minotaur, clad in Burgundian steel, with a Johnson & Johnson vagina spray on a golden necklace, smiles at the Japanese crusader of a blue-golden flying saucer, and while soft medieval Indian music is playing, satisfies him that the best solution against obesity is the *Anubis* type peristaltic tapeworm implanted in the small intestine.

Made by *Exsonibm Inc.*, we require 28 days for teleportation.

(László Hortobágyi 1985)