

Rediscovering the Sacred through Sound

Essay by Liza Hella

“Beneath the cacophony of life, there exists a sound of unsurpassed sweetness.”

-Swami Chetanananda

Recovering the sacred is essentially about remembering or rediscovering something we have forgotten, or something we have temporarily hidden from ourselves. It is through this process that we can develop the capacity to uncover the innate wholeness in ourselves, in others, and in the world. Suddenly, we are blessed with a vision to see the profound truth that lies behind the illusion of everyday life.

Music and sound in the ancient world were mysterious and powerful tools used for the attunement of the psyche and body, and can be understood as a means for connecting with the sacred. Great seers from mystical traditions tell us that what we experience on a daily basis is really only a projected reality in which events and things only appear to be separate in space and time. When we exist within this state of projected reality, we tend to get bound in a tangle of thought that keeps our attention bound to the physical world.

What happens to us when we become tangled in our projected realities? We can end up in a “cage” of ideas and self expectations that close around us and distort our reality, ultimately creating a loss of connection, meaning, purpose, and essence. If we are living without meaning, or a meaning that is too small, trivial, or material for the real needs of a human being, we begin to experience an emptiness and a separation from the sacred or divine. A Cartesian mind/body dualism occurs, resulting in a split between the sacred and the secular. This can also be described as soul loss which leads to an experience of “dis-ease”. Disease, in the physical sense, can then become manifested by this loss of soul. Rachel Naomi Remen MD, in her essay Recovery of the Sacred, (In Context Magazine, 1994), says “The real task of the medical system is to heal soul loss, to aid in the retrieval of the soul. The entire culture is ill with soul loss.”

Think of the bronze statue of the god Shiva dancing inside a ring of flame. He has one foot in the air, and the other foot resting on the back of a little man who is crouched down in the dust. In his crouching posture, he is giving all of his attention to an object he is holding between his hands. Joseph Campbell, when asked about the significance of the little man said, “He is so caught up in the study of the material world that he does not notice that the living god is dancing on his back.”

In our modern day world, we are so bombarded with sounds that alter our minds and bodies, we have lost our capacity to really listen. As Don Campbell, author of the Mozart Effect states, “Our sonic environment, mentally and physically, is so loud that we would not recognize the powerful healing and harmonic powers of Orpheus if he were among us!” Our bodies need to resume their natural response to pure sound so we may recover their instinctive powers.

As Swami Chetanananda explains, there is a sweet vibration available to us that can transport us to our natural and healthy state of being. In fact, all the great esoteric and spiritual traditions have studied the phenomenon of this subtle vibration for thousands of years. This has been most evident in India, where the investigation of sound was perhaps the most important aspect of study for the ancient sages. Two of the most important discoveries regarding the nature of sound made by these ancient sages, in particular, the Kashmir Shaivites, are that sound is the very essence of the universe, and that understanding sound or vibration is the means to liberation or self realization.

Although these insights are not exclusive to the Shaivites, what is extraordinary about them is the extent to which they delved into the nature of sound. They discovered that the universe originates from one completely subtle sound that gives rise to all other, more gross vibrations. There is a hierarchy, in a sense, of sounds from the subtlest and most impalpable to the densest and most palpable, but there is no separation between the levels. This discovery that matter comes from vibration is supported in the findings of the world’s great scientists and quantum physicists as well.

Sound is a prime organizing force pervading all acts of creation. This hidden nature of sound vibration lies at the root of all manifested form.

If we understand sound as causal in the creation process, we can begin to grasp its tremendous power. We can take this level of awareness regarding sound to the realization that it encapsulates divine energy. Sound can then deliver us to our natural state of synchronicity and access to the divine. Tones and primordial sounds are important to our vibrational frequencies. They can help change energetic patterns or thought forms that we have been holding onto throughout our lives. These tones, acting like waves, help release the structure of negative thought forms held in the cellular memories of our bodies.

Sound Therapy, in its various modalities, can allow us access to this boundless field of intelligence or consciousness that is everywhere. It gives us a portal to create a healthy mind and body where synchronicity is perfectly regulated. When our cells are caught or entrained in the same field of resonance, they are all dancing to the same music. When our cells are in this state of resonance, we are more creative, more peaceful, and more loving. These states of emotion generate a very coherent electromagnetic field.

Sound can also emancipate us from the fragmented mind, transporting us to a place of willingness to recognize the interrelatedness and inseparability of all things. Learning to live from this soul level allows us to see the best, most luminous part of ourselves that is connected to all the rhythms of the universe. In this state we can lose fear, longing, hatred, anxiety, and hesitation. We can regain the soaring joy of pure potential. We will know and feel the living god dancing on our back.

**“Each of us is a note in the sound, singing our own song;
Sometimes in unison with others, sometimes, solo.
Joy, anger, fear, hurt, forgiveness, love, passion and compassion,
expressing all the colors that we are.
Let’s not deny the god that we are.
And within this symphony, cacophony of sound,
There is harmony, and one song emerges between us all,
And the song is Love.”**

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