

Orientalism and the Natural Theology of Indian Music

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Introduction

Orientalism and natural theology are not obviously related when it comes to studies in the history of Hindu music, but in fact they have very much in common, as this essay attempts to prove. Both have origins in Enlightenment thought, and together they would bequeath Indian nationalists a reflexive, cross-cultural discourse verifying the certitudes and similarities of Western science and Eastern theology. This essay explores how the evolution of that discourse led to the rise of nationalism in Indian music. It begins with an overview and comparative study of Orientalism and natural theology, and then proceeds to an examination of three key figures in the history of Indian music: the late eighteenth-century Orientalist William Jones, the late nineteenth-century Indian musicologist Sourindro Mohun Tagore and the early twentieth-century Indian music psychologist and educator H. P. Krishna Rao. Jones is essential not only for having written the first Western treatise on Hindu music, but for being the first to triangulate in his extensive poetic and philosophical writings the influences of Orientalism, natural theology and Hinduism. Tagore is a seminal figure in the highly nationalistic, yet Western-orientated world of late nineteenth-century Hindu musicology. Widely contested for his beliefs, he was, nonetheless, significant for cultivating and influencing the course of dialogue between Eastern and Western musical figures. Rao is important for being amongst the first Indians to harness the nascent field of music psychology to systematize and explain the philosophical and religious ideologies underlying Indian music. Like his Western counterparts, Rao gives musicology the essential prerequisite of scientific credibility, and thus Indian music its increasingly nationalistic rationale. A conclusion brings my findings together under the nationalistic concept of 'primordialism'.

Orientalism and Natural Theology

As post-colonial literature has taught us, the history of Orientalism is strewn with discreditable ideological positions. Perhaps foremost amongst these is developmentalism, which presupposes a universal form of human development in which all people evolve from savagery to barbarism, and barbarism to civilization. From the eighteenth century onwards the fixity of this position was supported by advances in the science of embryology, most notably by the German scientist Ernst Haeckel, who in 1866 portrayed man as the summation of all nature. Commanding a vantage point at the top of a majestic oak tree, man is seen to recapitulate all nature, from the most primordially undeveloped forms to the very apex of evolution itself.

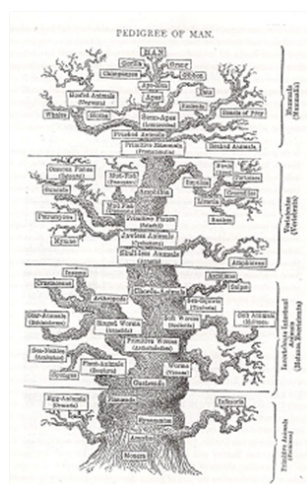


Figure 1. Haeckel's tree, from *The Evolution of Man*, 1879, between pp. 188 and 189, originally published in *Anthropogenie*, 1874, between pp. 496 and 497)

For Haeckel, ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny; the evolution of the individual recapitulates the evolution of the species. Simply put, this meant that the individual embryo actually recapitulated in gestation each successive evolutionary development of nature, from protozoa to invertebrate and vertebrates to mammals and man. Accordingly, man is not only an individual but a representation of everything created in the organic world.

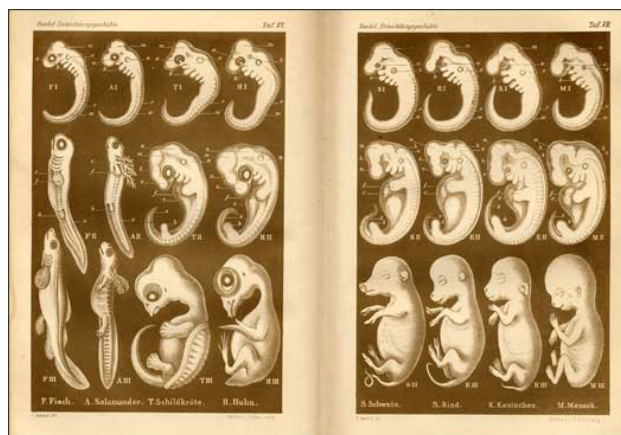


Figure 2. Lithograph by J. G. Bach of Leipzig after drawings by Ernst Haeckel, *Anthropogenie oder Entwicklungsgeschichte des Menschen. Gemeinverständliche wissenschaftliche Vorträge über die Grundzüge der menschlichen Keimes- und Stammes-Geschichte*, Leipzig: Engelmann, 1874, plates IV–V.

As this suggests, at the heart of Orientalism is a well-known philosophical – even theological – argument, born of German idealism, in which man’s relationship to the organic world is both transcendent and immanent. He is an intrinsic part of the natural world, yet removed from it – integral yet autonomous. In popular Orientalism this dichotomy acquires a sociological dimension in which transcendence becomes a self-congratulatory cipher for civilization, and immanence its pathetic antithesis in savagery. Savages, for example, were thought to exist at the level of extreme simplicity, dominated by ‘violent passions’ and/or ‘inhuman excess’.¹ These are amongst the time’s ‘crude set of mental representations of the world’.² Within Orientalism, transcendence and immanence have a psychological analogue as well, in the intellect and the emotions. While the intellect (and advanced mental activity) correlates to civilization, the emotional (and instinctive physical activity) relates to the savage. In the truly balanced, civilized human being these oppositional forces are reconciled, but in the savage they disproportionately favour the physical, with all its itinerant consequences for development. There is a cautionary tale in all this: if lacking

¹ Bennett Zon, ‘Violent Passions’ and ‘Inhuman Excess’: Simplicity and the Representation of Non-Western Music in Nineteenth-Century British Travel Literature’, in Bennett Zon and Martin Clayton (eds), *Music and Orientalism in the British Empire, 1780s-1940s: Portrayal of the East*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007, 212-213.

² Robert Wokler, ‘Anthropology and Conjectural History in the Enlightenment’, in Christopher Fox, Roy Porter and Robert Wokler (eds), *Inventing Human Science*, Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1995), 45.

vigilance even civilized people can succumb to their emotions, and degenerate. In this respect Rousseau's much vaunted 'noble savage' is actually misunderstood. Far from being the revered, natural image of the proto-Romantic imagination, he is the Wild Man within us all – the savage *within* the civilized.³ He is the Other within; the immanent frighteningly present within the transcendent.

Even if, according to Orientalism, all humans are not equally positioned in society, they are, nevertheless, indisputably created organic forms, and as such – whether savage or civilized – share as an individual and species in the evolutionary legacy of their lineage. In tandem with Orientalism, late eighteenth-century artistic culture expressed, interpreted and promoted that legacy through Romantic natural philosophy. Edward Young, for example, supposes that best – original – creations spring directly from nature without human intervention: 'An Original may be said to be of a *vegetable* nature; it rises spontaneously from the vital root of Genius; it *grows*, it is not *made*.'⁴ Schelling puts it more prosaically, suggesting that art suppresses 'within a finite product an infinite opposition'.⁵ Like man, art embodies nature, finite in content, yet infinite in form. In natural philosophy these combine to form a paradigm of civilization in which the best men of the best species – the geniuses – came to represent the fullest possible expression of the organic world. Drawing upon Young and Schelling, Coleridge codifies this view: 'The organic form . . . is innate; it shapes as it develops itself from within, and the fullness of its development is one and the same with the perfection of its outward form. Such is the life, such the form. Nature, the prime genial artist, inexhaustible in diverse powers, is equally inexhaustible in forms.'⁶ The genius, the best of the best, is the most perfect because he is closest to nature, the greatest artist of all.

³ Geoffrey Symcox, 'The Wild man's Return: The Enclosed Vision of Rousseau's Discourses', in Edward Dudley and Maximilian E. Novak (eds), *The Wild Man Within*, London: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1972, 228.

⁴ Edward Young, *Conjectures on Original Composition*, London: A. Millar and R. and J. Dodesley, 1759, 12.

⁵ Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800), cited in Jacques Taminiaux and Michael Gendre (trans.), *Poetics, Speculation, and Judgment: The Shadow of the Work of Art from Kant to Phenomenology*, Albany NY: State University of New York, 1993, 29.

⁶ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Complete Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, 7 vols., Volume 4, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1853, 55.

Taking all this into account, Haeckel's tree now seems rather incomplete as an image of human evolution. Indeed, there ought to be another tree surmounting it, portraying the sociological implications of Orientalist developmentalism. This would overlap at man, illustrating the evolution of man from primitive savagery to barbarism and civilization, and culminating in the incontestable superiority of the individual human genius. This depicts, perhaps more accurately, the evolution of man from the lowest to highest creation in the natural world, and from the immanent to the transcendent and the emotional to the intellectual.

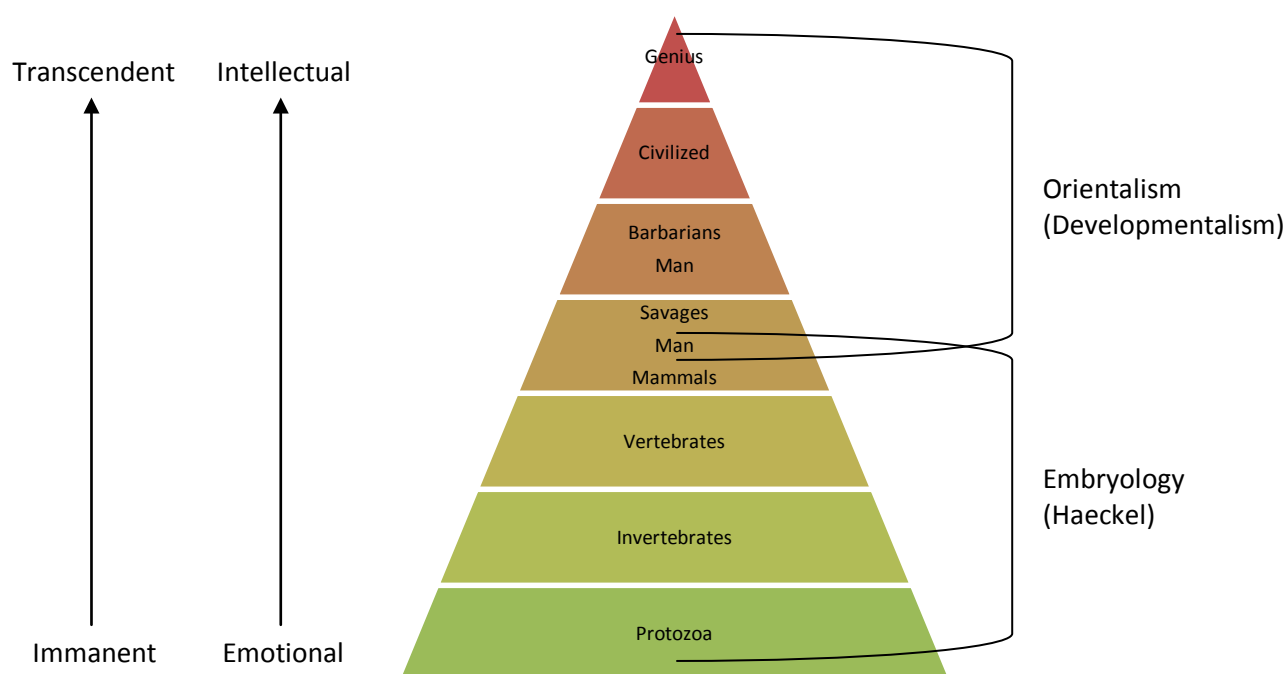


Figure 3. The double tree of life.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the theologically loaded nature of terms like immanent and transcendent, natural philosophy bore distinct similarities to natural theology. Natural theology of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century was rooted in the work of William Paley (1743–1805),⁷ author of several influential books, including *Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy*, *Evidences of Christianity* (1794) and *Natural Theology; or Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity, Collected from the Appearances of Nature* (1802). Paley, like many of his contemporaries,

⁷ Nick Spencer, *Darwin and God*, London: SPCK, 2009, 3.

viewed the natural world, of which man is the apex, as designed by God – as proceeding ‘from the wisdom of an intelligent and designing Creator’⁸ – and from that view emerged one of the century’s most formative influences. Darwin read Paley as part of his undergraduate degree at Cambridge, for example, and was at first ‘charmed and convinced by the long line of argumentation’.⁹

For Paley the world is like a watch found accidentally on a beach. How the watch came to be there cannot be known, but how it came into being presumes the existence of a watch-maker, a creator ‘who formed it for the purpose which we find it actually to answer, who comprehended its construction and designed its use’.¹⁰ As this suggests, God’s design is at the hub of Palean theology, even down to the presence, but ultimately not the inclusion, of chance: ‘Natural Theology has ever been pressed with this question; Why, under the regency of a supreme and benevolent Will, should there be, in the world, so much as there is the appearance of *chance*? . . . There must be chance in the midst of design.’¹¹ Alister McGrath identifies two elements to Paley’s argument from design. Firstly there is *contrivance*, ‘a system of parts arranged to work together for a purpose, manifesting both design and utility’,¹² and secondly, *complexity*, a hallmark and essential component of contrivance: ‘We deduce design from relation, aptitude and correspondence of parts. Some degree therefore of *complexity* is necessary to render a subject fit for the species of argument.’¹³

As concepts, both complexity and contrivance were also part of the lexicon of early nineteenth-century embryology, and as such used to elaborate anthropological models. Drawing upon the earlier work of German scientist Ernst Von Baer, the philosopher Herbert Spencer determines that all organic life proceeds from the simple to the complex, as it were from contrivance to complexity. Spencer synthesizes this idea with Haeckelian recapitulation to form a

⁸ William Paley, ‘Chapter XII: Comparative Anatomy’, section V, *Natural Theology; or Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity, Collected from the Appearances of Nature*, Edinburgh: William and Robert Chambers, 1802/1837, no page number.

⁹ Charles Darwin, in Francis Darwin (ed.), *The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin, including an Autobiographical Chapter*, Vol. 1, London: John Murray, 1887, 47.

¹⁰ Paley, *Natural Theology*, Oxford: J Vincent, 1802/1826, vol. 1, 3.

¹¹ Paley, ‘Chapter XXVI: The Goodness of the Deity’, *Natural Theology*, no page number.

¹² Alister McGrath, *Darwinism and the Divine: Evolutionary Thought and Natural Theology, The 2009 Hulsean Lectures, University of Cambridge*, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011, 92.

¹³ Paley, *Natural Theology*, 2nd ed, London: R. Faulder, 1802, 410.

notion of development broadly conforming to Victorian teleological expectation: all individuals recapitulate the species, and all species evolve from the simple to the complex. Simultaneously, all peoples progress cyclically from the Known to the mystically Unknown, or differently put, from the immanent to the transcendent or the emotional to the intellectual. Popular nineteenth-century Orientalism was buoyed by these developmental ideas, giving Victorian anthropology an organic, theologically-infused template for interpreting the imperial relationship of East and West. The East was contrivance, the West, complexity; the East was immanent, the West transcendent; the East, emotional, the West, intellectual; the East savage, the West, civilized. The West was the genius of the natural world. The West was the crowning glory in God's Kingdom on earth.

William Jones and natural theology

Amongst scholars there was no such easy consensus. In the enlightened work of William Jones, for example, there was only appreciation of the diversity, integrity and significance of foreign cultures. A philologist, poet, administrator, a polymath, Jones was also keenly interested in music, and used his well-known time in India to inaugurate amongst other things the discipline of ethnomusicology. Deeply immersed in, and consequently sympathetic to, Hindu philosophy, Jones 's ideas contrasted markedly from contemporary prejudicial thought towards non-Western music, especially that of music historians like Charles Burney and John Hawkins. Despite his experience in India, Burney considered non-Western music to be 'noise and jargon'.¹⁴ Hawkins likened it to 'hideous and astonishing sounds'.¹⁵ Jones was more receptive, not least because he imbibed both Hindu and contemporary Western philosophy and theology equally. This is apparent in a comparison of his seminal interpretation of Somanātha's early seventeenth-century music treatise *Rāgavibodha*, a short essay called 'On the Musical Modes of the Hindoos', published in Calcutta in 1792 but written originally in a shorter version in 1784, and his earlier 'An Essay on the Arts, Commonly Called

¹⁴ Charles Burney, *A General History of Music from the Earliest Ages to the Present Period. To Which is Prefixed, a Dissertation on the Music of the Ancients*, 4 vols., London: Printed for the Author, vol. 1, 2nd ed., 1789, 703.

¹⁵ John Hawkins, preface, *A General History of the Science and Practice of Music*, London: T. Payne and Son, 1776.

Imitative' (1772). Echoing the work of music philosophers James Harrison and John Brown, Jones registers concern over music's expressive independence from poetry. In 'An Essay on the Arts' music 'is *poetry*, dressed to advantage';¹⁶ in 'the Musical Modes' it is 'allied nearly to verse, painting, and rhetoric; but subordinate in its functions to pathetic poetry, and inferior in its power to genuine eloquence.'¹⁷

Together, however, music and poetry can imitate nature and rise to great heights of emotional expression. According to French aesthete Charles Batteux, an artist should 'make a choice among the fairest parts of Nature and build up from these an exquisite whole which shall be more perfect than Nature herself, without, however, ceasing to be natural.'¹⁸ Jones develops this by suggesting that music united to poetry can become not merely an imitation of nature, but an expression of nature itself: if the Sapphic ode 'with all its natural accents, were expressed in a *musical voice* (that is, in sounds accompanied with their *Harmonicks*), if it were sung in due time and measure, in a simple and pleasing tune, that added force to the words without stifling them, it would then be *pure and original musick* . . . not an *imitation* of nature but the voice of nature herself.'¹⁹

The theological implications of this relationship are realized in Jones's Hindu hymnology, a set of nine hymns to Hindu deities written between 1784 and 1789. Here Jones gives the content of Vedantic philosophy a Christian form relying heavily upon the language of natural theology. According to Jones Vedantic philosophy argues that the existence of matter 'has no essence independent of mental perception, that external appearances and sensations are illusory, and would vanish into nothing, if that divine energy, which alone sustains them, were suspended for a

¹⁶ William Jones, 'An Essay on the Arts, Commonly Called Imitative' (1772), in Michael J. Franklin (ed.), *Sir William Jones: Selected Poetical and Prose Works*, Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1995, 344.

¹⁷ William Jones, 'On the Musical Modes of the Hindoos', in Sourindro Mohun Tagore, *Hindu Music*, Delhi: Low Price Publications, 1882/1994, 125.

¹⁸ Charles Batteux, *Les Beaux Arts Reduits à un Même Principe* (1746), cited in Enrico Fubini, *A History of Music Aesthetics*, trans. Michael Hatwell, Basingstoke and London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1964/1990, 186. (Fubini cites the work incorrectly as having first been published in 1747.)

¹⁹ Jones, 'An Essay on the Arts, Commonly Called Imitative', in Franklin, *Sir William Jones: Selected Poetical and Prose Works*, 341.

moment'.²⁰ *Vedantism* 'postulates that everything is attributable to a singular Divine source (Brahman) which is the one true reality'.²¹ Yet despite the illusory nature of existence, matter is created, and its Creator is a single God worshipped by all. The Hindus, moreover, contend 'that [the Gospel] is perfectly consistent with their *Sástras*: the deity, they say, has appeared innumerable times, in many parts of the world and of all worlds, for the salvation of his creatures; and though we adore him in one appearance, and they in others, yet we adore, they say, the same God'.²²

Speaking the language of natural theology, Jones translates that God into a God of Creation and a God of Nature, in 'A Hymn to Náráyena': 'As mortal eyes (thus finite we compare with infinite) in smoothest mirrors gaze . . . / Primeval Maya was the Goddess nam'd, / Who to her sire, with Love inflam'd, / A casket gave with rich Ideas fill'd, / From which this gorgeous Universe he fram'd; / For, when th'Almighty will'd, / Unnumber'd worlds to build, / From Unity to diversified he sprang, / While gay Creation laugh'd, and procreant Nature rang.'²³ The same parallelisms are found in 'A Hymn to Sereswaty' (1785), a poem which allegorizes the character of Sereswaty, wife of Brehma the Creator and Hindu Goddess of music and rhetoric. In this hymn music erupts out of the very stuff of the natural universe: 'Sweet grace of BREHMA's bed! / Thou, when thy glorious lord / Bade airy nothing breathe and bless his pow'r, / Satst with illumin'd head, / And, in sublime accord, / Sev'n sprightly notes, to hail th'auspicious hour, / Ledst from their secret bow'r: / They drank the air; they came / With many a sparkling glance, / And knit the mazy dance, / Like yon bright orbs, that gird the solar flame, / Now parted, now combin'd, / Clear as thy speech and various as thy mind.'²⁴

According to Kurt Johnson, Jones thinks of the hymn as 'an expression to the "creator" of humanity's first exalted emotions of conscious being'. It recreates humanity's first emotions, substituting 'for

²⁰ William Jones, and John Shore (ed.), 'On the Philosophy of the Asiaticks', *The Works of Sir William Jones, with The Life of the Author, by Lord Teignmouth*, 13 vols., Vol. 3, London: John Stockdale and John Walker, 1807, 239.

²¹ Kurt Andrew Johnson, 'Sir William Jones and Representations of Hinduism in British Poetry', York University (UK), PhD diss., 2010, 29.

²² Jones, 'On the Gods', *Works* Vol. 3, 396.

²³ Jones, 'A Hymn to Náráyena', *Works* Vol. 13, 306.

²⁴ Jones 'The Hymn', *Works* Vol. 13, 315.

that original moment of conscious being'.²⁵ United with music, moreover, the hymn becomes a portal to the divine, not simply an imitation of the created world, but the voice of nature herself – the voice of the Creator God, the God of Natural Theology and Hinduism alike. From the finiteness of man to the infinitude of God, music expresses the nexus of God's creation. For Jones it is both immanent and transcendent, emotional and intellectual, and all men, be they savage or civilized, Eastern or Western, can feel God's purpose in the emotional expression of music, and in particular in the music of the Hindus. That is a music which speaks the language of spiritual development, in its various forms recapitulating in the human experience the creative process of the divine.

Tagore and the natural theology of Hindu nationalism

As an object created by God and rooted in the human experience, music exhibits the same traits of design William Paley recognizes in his watch. It is both contrived, i.e. designed, and complex, i.e., designed in interrelated parts. But in many respects Hindu music, for Jones and many later enthusiastic ethnomusicologists, reflects this better than Western music. For all its perceived cultural disadvantage, it is actually Indian music which represents nature's developmental apogee, not the music of the West, because Indian music is nature's true artistic genius. This is a particularly prominent view amongst Hindu scholars eager to mimic their colonizers' values, such as Sourindro Mohun Tagore (1840–1914). Tagore was an eminent Indian musicologist at the hub of nineteenth and early twentieth-century Indian musical culture. Descended from an aristocratic family with equally incontestable European and Hindu national sympathies, he was educated at the English-style Hindu College, Calcutta,²⁶ and became a central – and often polarizing – figure in the ideologically riven world of *fin-de-siècle* Indian musical politics. From the 1870s, he founded numerous music schools reflecting his own educational upbringing, and complemented these with the publication of some of the first general music treatises and instruction books written in Bengali.

²⁵ Johnson, 'Sir William Jones and Representations of Hinduism in British Poetry', 44.

²⁶ David Trasoff, 'Tagore, Sir Sourindro Mohun', *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/27381> (accessed 7 July 2011).

Amongst Tagore's most important works is his *Universal History of Music, Compiled from Diverse Sources Together with Various Original Notes on Hindu Music* (1896). This begins with a resounding affirmation of natural theology: 'Music pervades all nature. It is co-eval with the creation. There is nothing in nature that arouses our attention or affects our feelings so quickly as sound. The murmuring of water, the sighs of the zephyrs, the whispers of the evening breeze, the roar of the storms, the chirpings of the birds, the cries of the animals, the hum of distant multitudes, and the concussion of sonorous bodies, excite in our minds feelings of pleasure, pain, or fear, and contain in them the germs of music.'²⁷ While music pervades nature, and is thus its most poignant expression, it is the human voice which is purest because the human being represents the evolutionary apogee of nature: 'In those countries where man may be said, like a plant, to grow and flourish, the voice expands, ripens, and attains to perfection.'²⁸ Hence only in Southern climates, where the mouth can remain unrestricted by climate, does music flourish. India, for Tagore, is a prime example. Time is also an essential ingredient. Like music itself, 'it is born in nature'; harmony, too, 'is an effect inherent in nature'; and a musical scale, which is 'formed from an observation of the effects of every sound in nature, may be called the *prism* of the art whereby all combinations of sound are divisible into their component parts'.²⁹ The scale is particularly representative, as it embodies contrivance and complexity more manifestly than harmony or time alone.

But it is not just climate, time, harmony or the scale which helps nature elevate Indian music to the status of natural philosophical paradigm. For Tagore Hindu music represents a theological apogee as well because Hindus consider their music to be sacred by birth. Writing of Hindu music, he claims that 'With the Hindus, music is of divine origin. In fact, it is considered as divinity itself.'³⁰ As divine, Hindu music enshrines the natural expression of the deepest human emotions. The very structure of Hindu music personifies this. There are, accordingly, eight Rasas, or affections of the

²⁷ Sourindro Mohun Tagore, *Universal History of Music, Compiled from Diverse Sources Together with Various Original Notes on Hindu Music*, Delhi: Low Price Publications, 1896/1999, 1.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 50.

mind, and for each of these has a Ragíní (melody type) or number of Ragínís capable of giving them expression. The eight Rasas include Sringára (love); Háśya (mirth); Karuná (tenderness); Raudra (anger); Vira (heroism); Bhayánaka (terror); Vibhatsa (disgust); and Adbhuta (surprise). The human body is divided into six chakras (depressions, rings, or circles), and of these Visuddhi, the hollow between the frontal sinuses, is the seat of music and home of Sarasvati, the goddess of music. Visuddhi is divided into 16 folded petals, and location of the vital spirit determines the success or failure of musical expression.³¹ The eight Rasas are significant not only for their natural, yet divine, origin in the emotions, but for their relationship to Western evolutionary thought. Indeed, Tagore identifies a developmental pattern broadly reflecting that of the Haeckelian tree of life. Sringa (love) is ‘a feeling common to all sentient beings, and lies at the root of the law of procreation’; Vira (heroism) ‘is observed in the next higher stages of created beings, such as mice and snakes’; Karuná (tenderness) ‘is non-existent in the lower creatures, such as fish, frogs, mice, snakes, &c.’; Raudra (anger) ‘is found in the next higher grades of living beings, such as dogs, tigers, &c’; Hasya (mirth) ‘is confined to the highest creation, man’; Bhayanaka (terror) ‘is that of man in a state of barbarism’; Bibhatsa (disgust) ‘is the feeling of man when he has made strides in the path of civilization’; and Adbhuta (surprise) ‘is realized by man only when he has reached the summit of civilization.’ A ninth Rasa, Santi (quiescence), is the highest development of human feeling and often conflated with Karuná (tenderness). It is excluded from the domain of music because ‘it is not capable of being reflected by the art’.³² Thus we now have the makings of a Haeckelian (Orientalist) tree of life translated into Hindu music, from the lowest to the highest species of both music and man.

³¹ Ibid., Appendix, iii-iv.

³² Ibid., Addenda, iii-iv.

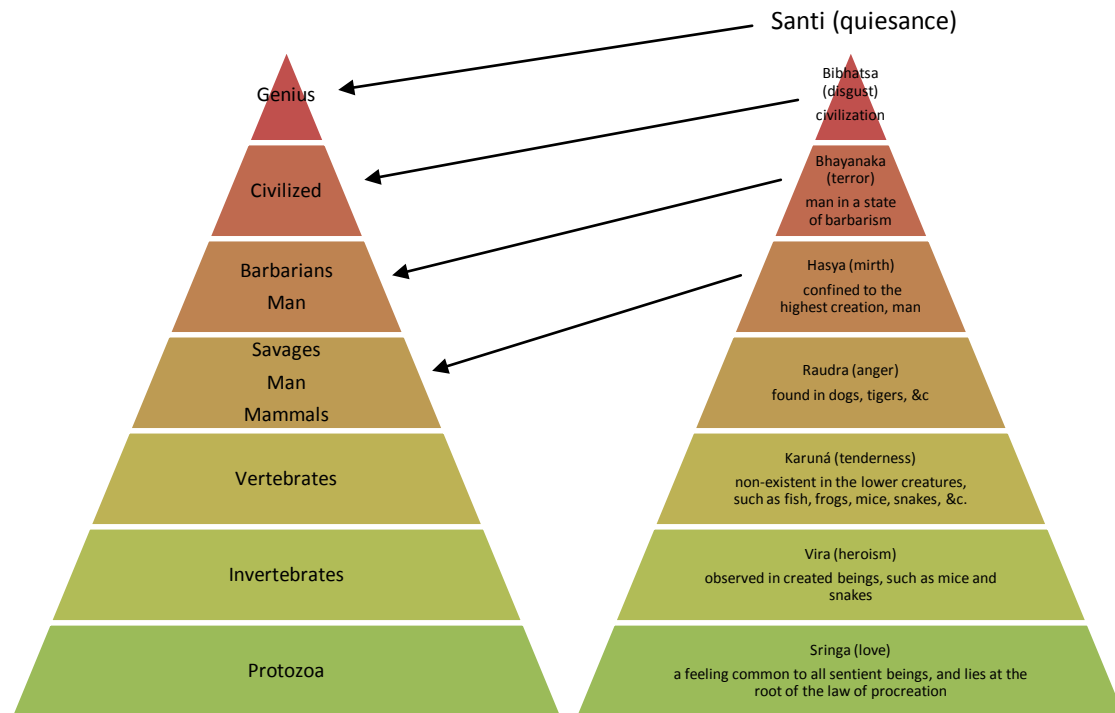


Figure 4. Tagore, Haeckelian tree translated into Hindu music

The systematization of Hindu music into a developmental paradigm occurs elsewhere in Tagore's work. In *Hindu Music* the music of India is staged into Hindu, Mahomedan and British periods, Hindu following Comte's theological, metaphysical and scientific periods, and likewise scales themselves conform to a developmental template. Expressing their origins in the earliest forms of nature, the six original ragas omit the seventh degree from their scales. Whereas a Western scales include seven pitches, C, D, E, F, G, A and B, Indian music eschews the B, using it only selectively. Tagore likens this developmental position to children, quoting the well-known German/British expatriate, Carl Engel: 'Children, in their first attempts to repeat the diatonic scale after it has been sung to them are apt to omit the *fourth* and *seventh*.'³³

Roa and the natural theology of music psychology

Tagore comes perhaps closer than any other Hindu scholar of Indian music in mimicking the language of Western natural theology. He is in so many respects a late nineteenth-century

³³ Ibid., Appendix, iii.

reincarnation of William Jones, synthesizing Eastern and Western thought in a manner conducive to Western and Western-orientated Indian reception. Where Jones tapped the genre of the Christian hymn to access Hindu belief, Tagore used Western developmentalism to facilitate Hindu music's ingress into Western cultural mindsets. Amongst the most important theological and philosophical similarities he drew out of his comparative research is the role of emotion. Emotion is significant to natural theology for many reasons, most notably because it is considered to be a portal to the divine. In musical terms emotion has a long pedigree in Western aesthetics, burgeoning under the auspices of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century German idealist philosophy. For Hegel music does not separate its external form from its inner spiritual content,³⁴ and for Wackenroder music is 'the primal language of the emotions . . . there is a secret, elective affinity between sound, even in its roughest and most basic manifestations, and feeling. Feeling in this context is not so much emotion understood on a personal level, but rather the faculty, superior to the intellect, which has access to the world's most intimate secrets, to the essence of things, to God himself. Indeed music is probably man's most direct contact with the Deity: 'No other art form has as its raw material anything so full of the spirit of heaven.'³⁵ According to Wackenroder, 'Music is the breath of the spiritual in its highest form, its finest manifestation, the invisible stream, as it were from which the soul draws sustenance for its deepest dreams. Music engulfs the human spirit. It means both everything and nothing.'³⁶ These ideas become especially acute in the writings of Schopenhauer, for whom 'Music is as *direct* an objectification and copy of the whole *will* as the world itself, nay, even as the Ideas, whose multiplied manifestation constitutes the world of individual things. Music is thus by no means like the other arts, the copy of the Ideas, but the *copy of the will itself*, whose objectivity the Ideas are. This is why the effect of music is so much more powerful and penetrating than that of the other

³⁴ Enrico Fubini, *The History of Music Aesthetics*, trans. Michael Hatwell, Houndsmill: Macmillan, 1964/1990, 278.

³⁵ Fubini, *History of Music Aesthetics*, 268.

³⁶ Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder, *Phantasien über die Kunst für Freunde der Kunst*, Hamburg, 1799, in Curt Grützmacher and Sybille Claus (eds.), *Sämtliche Schriften*, Munich, 1968, 146–47, cited in Peter le Huray and James Day (eds.), *Music and Aesthetics in the Eighteenth and Early-Nineteenth Centuries*, Cambridge et al.: Cambridge University Press, 1981, 250.

arts, for they speak only of shadows, but it speaks of the thing itself.’³⁷ This same interpretation is voiced by Joseph Goddard, Victorian Britain’s most prolific music philosopher: ‘whereas all other branches of fine art express and convey the sentiment of its conceiver by reproducing, in aesthetic medium, the influence of that sentiment in its natural form, (thus establishing in the case of the contemplator a similar relationship to the original influence as existed in that of the conceiver), as in painting, poetry, and the drama, Music does not; but imparts *the sentiment direct*. That it does not copy the natural features of form, but only the spirit, of any influence. That music is itself *emotion’s natural form*.’³⁸

With emotion ranking so highly amongst idealist philosophers it is hardly surprising that it permeates the work of the early music psychologist H. P. Krishna Rao. Like Tagore’s *Hindu Music*, Rao’s *Psychology of Music* (1916) is testimony to the increasingly reciprocal nature of Eastern and Western musical cultures. Rao’s influences are stated in the preface to the enlarged 1923 edition: William James, Hoffding, Titchener, Huxley, Sully, as well as Babu Bhagavan Das, Saranga Deva, Chinnasamy Moodaliar, Pingle, Fox Strangways and Margaret Glyn. Psychology offers Rao an especially up-to-date scientific paradigm which configures emotions within frameworks of consciousness. So for Rao ‘emotions are but the compounds of the elements of consciousness.’³⁹ The psychologist William James writes similarly: ‘If we fancy some strong emotion, and then try to abstract from our consciousness of it all the feelings of its bodily symptoms, we find we have nothing left behind, no “mind-stuff” out of which the emotion can be constituted.’⁴⁰ Like most good developmentalists James supposes emotion to rise seamlessly from instinct, and from it to the plane of intellectual cognition. Thus the emotions and intellect remain in roughly the same Enlightenment schema embraced by Orientalists and codified by Haeckel in his recapitulatory concepts of ontogeny and phylogeny. The contemporary psychologist and avowed developmentalist George

³⁷ Arthur Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille unter Vorstellung*, Darmstadt, 1968, published as *The World as Will and Idea*, translated from the German by R. B. Haldane and J. Kemp, 3 vols, London: Kegan Paul, 1883, Vol. 1, 333, cited in Fubini, *History of Music Aesthetics*, 281.

³⁸ Goddard, *Philosophy of Music*, 9.

³⁹ H. P. Krishna Rao, *The Psychology of Music*, Guruvilas Printing Works: Bangalore, 1923, ii.

⁴⁰ William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, 2 vols., New York: Henry Hold and Co., 1890/1918, Vol. 2, 451.

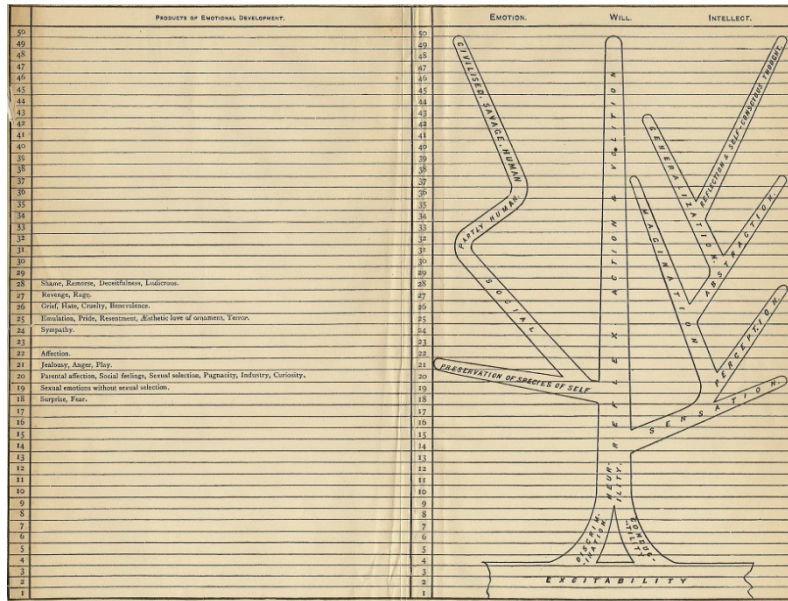


Figure 6. George John Romanes, *Mental Evolution in Man* (1889), tree of life alongside 'Products of Emotional Development'

Rao translates this same view into a musical diagram like Romanes's tree but substituting emotion for the central pillar of the will. Through music, emotion has become the will.

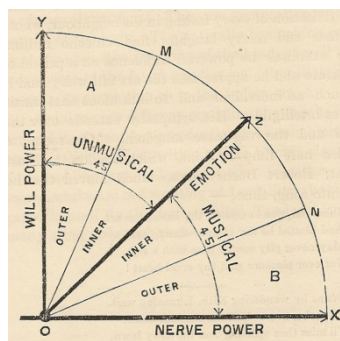


Figure 7. H. P. Krishna Rao, the struggle between will power and nerve power

This substitution is significant because it empowers music with the natural characteristics of divinity. Rao claims that 'the more a system of music approaches Nature, that is to say, the more its elements, namely,– words and phrases, expressions and combinations of notes are borrowed from the material in Nature, the greater is its power to affect the heart through the nerves.'⁴¹ And if, as Figure 7 implies, it affects the heart it also displays 'the design of the Creator which like the

⁴¹ Rao, *Psychology of Music*, 32.

dissimilarity of the fingers on the hand is yet inscrutable to man'.⁴² At the apex of this design is the voice, the organ of emotion and 'the highest gift of God'.⁴³ It is, in the language of natural theology, the voice of nature herself; the watch on the beach; the genius of music, emotion's natural form, the copy of the will itself, the transcendent to the body's other, immanent components. To Rao it is also the voice of Indian music, the East, not the West; the civilized, not the savage; the intellectual *and* the emotional harmonized in perfect concord: 'The excellence of Indian music consists in the fact that its melody portrays Nature and that it reveals truth, which is synonymous with beauty, while that of Western music lies in its power of combining several melodies and of expressing the outer world as well as the simultaneous outbursts of inner emotions.'⁴⁴

Conclusion

With so many similarities deduced between Eastern and Western ideas about music, there are certain questions which remain unanswered: why did natural theology form such a strong lynchpin in the cross-cultural discourse of Indian music; what purpose did the comparisons actually serve; and did they make any difference to East/West relations. The first question is perhaps the easiest to answer: nationalism. In an increasingly scientific age, increasingly uncertain about its physical origins, natural theology provided religious certainty through science. That science, highly universalized rather than localized, helped feed what Chetan Bhatt calls 'primordialism'; that is, 'an ideologically derived grid of intelligibility within which nationalism was understood, rather than to the linear development of an essential and extant ethnic unity among pre-given populations in India'.⁴⁵ As Bhatt points out, a key aspect of primordialism was linear temporality, often linked to evolutionism. This was the first step towards imagining a fully integrated national future. Natural theology, with its strong evolutionary roots, illuminated 'a congruence between imperial and Hindu nationalist civilizing

⁴² Ibid., 59.

⁴³ Ibid., 38.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 139.

⁴⁵ Chetan Bhatt, *Hindu Nationalism: Origins, Ideologies and Modern Myths*, Oxford and New York: Berg: 2001, 10.

discourses.⁴⁶ Largely through Orientalist scholarship, imperial discourse connects with primordialism over the invention of Vedic Aryanism as an ideological basis for Hindu or Indian national identity. Natural theology aided this process by relocating human origins in nature, rather than in more ideologically delimited places of ethnicity, scriptural authority and religion. This in turn fostered unity in which religious and non-religious nationalist tendencies were able to share epistemic space.⁴⁷ To answer the second question: in some respects this served the same purpose for late nineteenth-century Hindu nationalism as it is for late eighteenth-century Orientalism. Jones, Tagore and Rao share not only epistemic space, but ontological space as well, because the nature of their fundamentally Orientalist argument from nature remained largely unchanged by advances in evolutionary science. Their use may have changed but the ideas themselves remained largely the same. Whether this made a difference – to answer the final question – is something history finds hard to judge. In 1907 Aurobindo Ghose said that ‘Nationalism is not a mere political programme; Nationalism is a religion that has come from God . . . You must remember that you are the instruments of God.’⁴⁸ In this context, *nature* comes very close to being *national*, and being an instrument very close to being Paley’s watch. Of course there are substantial differences too. Paley’s watch suggests a rather careless creator, indifferently abandoning his watch to its own devices. There can be no such indifference in the process of forging a nation and national identity. Natural and national are, in some many respects, opposite sides of the same coin, irrespective of country. They are the combined forces of the immanent and transcendent, the emotional and intellectual, and the fullest possible expression of an Orientalist mindset transformed by natural theology into a paradigm of manifest national freedom.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 10.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 39.

⁴⁸ Aurobindo Ghose, cited in A. Appadorai, *Documents on Political Thought in Modern India*, 2 vols., London: Oxford University Press, 1973, vol. 2, 483.