

## SOUND, VOICE, POETRY AND MUSIC

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I PROPOSE to call your attention to the subject of Sound, and to show that all its power and effects are related to Vibration, a mode of force which is found to exist everywhere around us. Vibration affects alike the invisible Ether, the Air we breathe, the Waters of our globe, and the dense matter we call Earth, of which our mortal bodies are formed.

I shall refer to the Voice of God and to that of Man, to the Word, to Poetry, Music, and to the Mantras or Words of Power of olden Religions which are still revered, especially in India, and I note that in minor forms and more commonplace modes our salutations seem to have been derived from Mantras, which were at first deeply religious in character, but they owed all their effect to the power and influence of Sound. Our English Poet Dryden wrote :—

“ From heavenly harmony, from harmony  
This universal frame began.  
From harmony to harmony  
Through all the compass of the notes it ran  
The *heavenly music ending* full in man.”

These lines reveal a great Mystic as well as Cosmic truth, that Sound may be well considered as a primal force of manifestation, coming to us first as the “ Music of the Spheres,” which the great Greek Philosopher, Pythagoras, was the first to reveal. Descending from such high origin, Sound is heard at every stage of evolution, and in our own humanity it tells of the birth of a new being ; it is heard in the first cry of an infant ; and as the voice of the mind, expressive of sorrow and pain, or of joy, it will be evidence of life until the coming of the inevitable end of each one of us. The human personality commences with the first Inspiration, the first breath of Air. According to the Hebrew account of Creation God breathed into the material form of the first man the breath of life, this was called the *Nephesh*, and the same word is used later to express the Soul or Self of man. The Greek expressed the same ideal by the word—*Psyche*, and the Theosophist calls it the *Kamic* force dwelling in its Astral form or vehicle. Three of our vowel sounds are said to be related to life ; e as eh, of Inspiration ; o as ho, as the virile sound of manhood ; and a as ah, the sound of the dying in his last Expiration. The English have two other vowels,

making five, an odd number, the Greeks had seven vowels, also an odd number, and a number having very numerous analogies and examples in Natural forces and objects. Pythagoras based his explanation of musical notes and his Music of the Spheres upon this ideal of an odd number. Note also that the poet Virgil wrote:— "*Numero Deus impari gaudet,*" meaning God the Creator rejoices in odd numbers.

To take a wider view, the sacred Scriptures of our Race began the story of Creation by saying after the Spirit of God had moved upon the face of the waters, the Divine Sound as "The Word" goes forth, God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. Vibration began to act, in two forms, those of Light and Sound.

"By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth." Thus is revealed the mystic truth by the sweet singer of Israel, in the 33rd Psalm.

And again the first words of St. John, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"; not the written, but the spoken word: he spoke the Word, and it was done. The Word is able to destroy as well as to create. The works of Nature are due to the Voice of God.

But surely when we seriously meditate in a solemn manner, then the Voice of the Silence is the Voice of God; then comes the still, small voice of the primal Conscience of God in humanity, leading to the Voice of man, but only while he be still unsoiled and pure. With you and me it is the Voice of the Ego; when we are in the sphere of the Higher Self it is the voice of the Spirit of God, which is called the Atma-Buddhi. When the Ego, the higher self, hears that Voice, it is that of the Logos, the Divine word has been spoken. It is only by Spiritual Culture and refinement and by serious meditation and abstraction from the affairs of the world, that one may hope to be enabled to catch an echo from the Divine World; such a Voice Divine as accompanies the Vision of that Light which Lighteth everyone that cometh into the world—if he will but ask it of God by devotion to his own highest conceptions.

Sound is the token of Life in all the forms of animated Nature, whether of the elements, or of birds, insects, animals or of man. For winds and waters utter forth their own sounds; the earthquake and the cataract speak as well as the thunder, while animals utter voices of love and also the growls of wrath. How beautiful are the songs of birds, those songsters of the heavens, when they call to each other in accents of love.

Much may be learned from the voices of men and women, for they show the tendencies of character: yet experience is necessary, for a voice may be deceptive. Study the voices of passion and emotion, for while the tone and words of man and woman can truly express the holiest feelings of the soul, yet words of love may issue from the false lips of the charmer, be it of man or woman.

The Poet, Edgar Allan Poe, has told us of the murmur that springs from the growing grass, and that the soul of music slumbers in the shell from ocean's depths, and again after a drought how delightful is the sound of rain.

Sound is one of the greatest of mysteries ; it is due to the vibrations of the air around us, it is the keynote of existence, and it has a certain relation with Number as to rate of vibration ; and so also to the vibrating waves of Ether which carry Light and which are separable into Colours, for white light is a synthesis of all colours, as nature shows us in the Rainbow, and as Science exhibits in the spectrum produced by the prism.

There is in Nature so definite a relation between Sound and Colour that some ordinary persons, who are not advanced mystics or even clairvoyant, experience the sight of Colour when a definite note of musical tone is struck or sounded. Some letters suggest colours, and so do some words. Science tells us that both Sound and Colour are due to vibrations, the one of air and the other in ether. We are often taught that the thoughts build forms, and so do sounds on the astral plane. Students of Science have been long ago shown that sounds may create forms, as in fine sand lying on a vibrating plate. True music, properly played, certainly affects the personality, and it is well recognised that certain tunes tend to Religious thoughts, others to Martial ideas, and so on.

The Mediæval Mystics made much of Sound, Name and Form, and the system of references set up by Analogy was carried away widely. These characters were allotted not only by sight and sound, but by Intuition. Each Planet, for instance, was allotted a Sound, a number and a musical note, also a Colour, and a quality ; as, for instance, Jupiter was dignity, supremacy, the colour violet, the number four.

These were called Kosmic correspondencies. It has been remarked that Sound is the stroke of the hammer of force upon the anvil of manifestation. Rhythm is the soul of Nature and of Man. Order is heaven's first law. There is no self-conscious life without its sound on this plane of manifestation, from the hum of the mosquito to the mystic chord ever sounding in the heart of Nature, the ceaseless sounds that build, perfect and yet shatter again its works, only again to reform them.

The Philosopher Schelling and Madame de Stael both recorded the conception that Architecture is but sound at rest and is frozen music.

These things are a Mystery ; but true mystery is parent neither of superstition nor of the sceptic ; it is rather the source of the higher reason and of faith. Faith and Reason should be as Sister and Brother—teachers of spiritual wisdom. Wisdom is enshrined in Mystery, as Love is enshrouded by Faith.

It has been said that : " To pronounce a word is to evoke a

thought and make it present ; the magnetic potency of human speech is the beginning of every manifestation in the occult world. To utter a name is not only to define a being (an entity) but to place it under, and condemn it through the emission of the word (*verbum*) to the influence of one or more occult potencies. Things are, for every one of us, that which it (the word) makes them while naming them. The word (*Verbum*) or the speech of every man is, quite unconsciously to himself, a blessing or a curse ; this is why our present ignorance about the properties and attributes of the idea, as well as about those of matter, is often fatal to us. . . . Names (and words) are either, in a certain sense, venomous or health-giving, according to the hidden influences attached by Supreme Wisdom to their elements, that is to say, to the *letters* which compose them, and the *numbers* correlative to these letters."

This quotation suggests to our minds the infinite power of Sound, and we may well pause amazed at the possibilities for good and evil which lie around us. What great responsibility environs us ! We are building Thought forms by our words which may delude and injure others as well as ourselves. There are passages in books of ancient wisdom showing that this is no new notion. Was it not written that the Christ Himself said : " For every idle *word* that is spoken (that is sounded) an account shall be given at the day of Judgment " ? or as Theosophy puts it, Karma will exact the due result for words as well as for deeds, also Thought forms ever float around us, and the very air we breathe is full of mysteries.

We may suggest that the Trinity which is above passes by reflection to our plane of being as the lower trine of Sound, Measure and Number.

Sounds are all due to vibration and each definite Sound is found by measure to be due to a certain rate of vibration, and so each word has its own complex of numbers, and as the Hindoos say each letter, vowel and consonant has its own *tanmatra*, or modification of consciousness. To be heard as Sound by the human ear, the vibrations must be more than 30 per second and less than 30,000 ; our ears vary very much in power, and many animals have ears more sensitive than ours.

I am no Musician, but let me now refer to Music, human music, the product of thought, system and order applied to our powers of the use of Sound, whether for culture, devotion or inspiration or whether for joy or sorrow. Surely our best Symphonies are but worldly copies of heavenly tones, or as the Theosophists would say of the Music of Devachan, there is surely not an eternal silence even in the eternal peace of that sphere or plane of heaven to which we are tending.

The simplest Music often makes a sincere appeal to a man, there must be a great effect in the combination of notes produced by the many varied tones of a choir of voices or of an orchestra. Per-

haps they only create in an Artificial manner a complex and imitation of the sounds of Nature, were our ears only tuned to hear them.

Music can stimulate to war, can suggest affection, can beguile to the loves of the senses, can lead the mind to religious ecstasy and may calm the tempest of wrath. How glorious are many parts of Handel's "Messiah," how stimulating the "Soldiers' Chorus" of Faust. How many people have been affected by "The Voice that breathed o'er Eden," and what entire comfort is felt when "Annie Laurie" or "Home, Sweet Home" is well sung by one with a sweet voice.

Human Music may be yet only in its infancy, and in the coming time man may gain more and more of the essence of the Music of the Spheres, or of Songs of the Angelic Host; or it may be that Sound, the source of Music, is on a higher plane replaced by the wave of an ether which has different but more exalted potencies yet undreamt of by man.

The Ancients, many of them, revered the effects of Sound when collected into Musical forms. I may mention the legendary power of Orpheus with his lute in Ancient Greece; he taught Religion by musical verses; Brahma is said in Hindoo lore to play upon the lyre of World forces. Then we read of Circe, with her spells of song by which men and animals were affected by strange longings and forced to carry out her behests. The pipes of the demi-god Pan had strange coercive powers, and then in India the great Divine Messenger Krishna has been famed for the music of his flute, by which men and animals were soothed and inclined to be loving and were healed of their woes and evil passions. In the Hebrew Old Testament we may read not only the wondrous music of the Psalms, and several songs of joy and exaltation, but the instance of David healing by his harp the ravaged soul of Saul. The Israelitish author knew the potency of Sound when he spoke of the story of the fall of the walls of Jericho at the sound of a trumpet, as you may read in the Book of Joshua vi. v. 20, and this is quoted in the Epistle to the Hebrews xi. v. 30.

In the Christian New Testament also, we read of Jesus telling His hearers that God will send His angels with a great Sound of the trumpet to gather together the elect, Matthew xxiv. 31, and in the second Chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, there came to the Apostles from heaven a great Sound as of a rushing wind. In the Book of Revelation we hear also of power associated with Sound and compared with the sounds of earth as of the millstone, of chariots, and of the rushing of many waters.

Let me refer to Poetry—often called a Divine creation. The Ancient Roman said, "Poeta nascitur non fit," the poetry is born, not made. Coleridge tells us that Poetry is the blossom and fragrance of all human thoughts, emotions and language.

Although the genius of Poetry is often shown by verses of

fantastic ideas, by words of love and affection ; and we know of poems devoted to heroism and devotion ; yet poetry is more nearly related to Mystic and prophetic ideals and has oft-times expressed those visions of the soul which have been prompted by Spiritual influences inspiring great thoughts worthy of human record. In Poetry these ideas are expressed with Rhythm and often also in rhyme, both more attractive to the ear than speech in prose.

Poetry existed long ages before writing, and so the earliest verses were *recited*, and it was the *Sound* of thoughts in verse which made the greatest impression on our ancestors ; and songs also, verses sung with musical tones, were even more impressive and also more easily remembered, so it has been found that the earliest portions of our Bible are Songs, martial such as that of Deborah and Barak, and Songs of Thanksgiving. The mere eye-reading of even the highest poetry in silence, makes very much less mental effect than does its vocal expression. Sound vibrations are to many persons as impressive as those of sight ; at any rate Sound is only second to light and vision in their importance to humanity.

Allow me to please the ear and appeal to the mind by reading a few lines from the Poets. Cowper says :—“ There is in souls a sympathy with sounds, and as the mind is set, the ear is pleased ; with melting airs, or martial, brisk or grave. Some chord in unison with what we hear is touched within us, and the soul replies.”

Some of us who were bred in a country village near by the ivied church tower, yet remember when we have grown old and town-wearied, the chimes which told of peaceful services and the voices of the village choir with its simple hymns ; they remind us of days long past, when our souls had not been so much soiled by worldly cares ; “ heaven lies about us in our infancy.”

Human music is but formed of wild sounds civilised into time and tune. Written music is the crystallisation of sound, said Thoreau. Music can wash from the soul the dust of everyday life ; Auerbach. Music hath charms to soothe the savage breast ; Congreve. Music is an invisible dance, as the dance is visible music ; Jean Paul. Music soothes us in melancholy, stimulates us in times of joy ; J. Usher. Music is a form of inarticulate speech which can lead one to the edge of the Infinite, and permits us for a moment to gaze into its heights ; W. W. W. It is Cowper again who speaks of :—“ How soft the Music of those village bells, falling at intervals upon the ear in cadence sweet.” Alexander Pope said :—“ He remembered the church of his boyhood, not for the doctrine, but for the Music there.” A Latin author said :—“ Music is often medicine for the troubled mind,” and note the “ Music when soft voices die vibrates in the memory ” ; Shelley.

How beautiful are the four lines of Tennyson, in his “ May Queen.” Speaking of the coming release by death of his girl heroine :—

“ All in the wild March morning, I heard the Angels call ;  
It was when the moon was setting, and the dark was over all ;  
The trees began to whisper, and the wind began to roll,  
And in that wild March morning, I heard them call my soul.”

or again :—

“ By the firelight’s fitful gleaming  
I am dreaming, I am dreaming,  
And the rain is softly falling all around ;  
The voices that are nearest  
Of the friends the best and dearest  
Appear to have a strange and distant sound.  
Now the weary wind is sighing  
And the murky day is dying,  
And the withered leaves lie scattered round my door,  
But that voice whose gentle greeting  
Set this heart so wildly beating  
At each fond and frequent greeting—comes no more.”  
By “ Lonely ” in “ All the Year Round.”

It is right to refer to the Hindoo views upon Sound and Voice as related to Religion. Not only verbal prayers and holy Vedic songs were in early use, but there was recognised the immense powers of specially pronounced words and phrases when recited for the purpose of Invocation of the gods.

Of these the most notable is the Indian Mystic and Divine word we write as *A U M*, it is of three letters ; then we find the phrase of meditation and the utterance of “ Tab tuan asi,” “ I am that,” meaning “ God is within me ” or “ I am a part of God.”

There is again perhaps the older appeal of the Turanian Adepts—*Aüm mani padme hum*,” which may be translated “ Oh, the jewel in the lotus,” “ Oh, the Divine within me.”

Then there is the universal prayer the “ Gayatri,” which in Sanscrit reads :—“ Tat savitur varenyam Bhargo devasya dhimayi, Dhirjo yo nah prachodayat,” which is translated “ We meditate upon the great Light of the Divine Sun, may he illuminate our minds.” Mr. Jinarajadasa expands this into :—“ The face of truth is hidden by a disc of gold. Unveil, oh Thou who nourisheth the world, so that the keepers of the Law of Truth may see Thy face,” which is certainly a very free translation.

The sacred syllable *AUM* comes from the old Vedas. I had rather not utter the name, I have experienced its power, and its effect varies with the pronunciation and the accents used. The daily prayer of the Brahmin commences and ends with it, and Hindoo lore tells that even the Deities, the Devas, address the Supreme in this word and with its specialised Sounds. Every wrong pronunciation produces mischief and the true sound is made a mystery, even as the Hebrew Priest made a secret of the sound of

IHVH, which for centuries the people of Europe have spoken as Jehovah, but modern critics write Yahveh and so speak it.

The three letters A U M may be referred to Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, and to the three Vedas, to three principles in Man and to the three planes of Nature—Bhur, Bhuva and Svar. Indeed, it implies the universe controlled by the Supreme Spirit.

Hindu words of power and phrases of devotion are called Mantras, i.e. Incantations by the Power of Sound, and there are many in use, and among the Buddhists, verses from the Bhagavat Gita are recited and also many from the Vedas. They form parts of Hindu sacramental Rituals and they start very powerful vibrations not only in the air, but in the akasa—ether, and so affect the higher human principles and aid in aspiration to the powers of the Divine Triad. Adepts have said that Sound is the most potent Magical agent, and is the first of the keys which opens the door of communication between mortals and the immortals.

These Mantras are associated with Signs of Power, and we Christians know that in our Sacrament of Baptism and the Eucharist *Words* are of vital import, and to them we add manual signs and the use of the material elements, Water, Bread, and Wine.

The Hindu youth of high caste is taught by the Guru the correct mode of Brahmanic worship. He wears the sacred cord of three threads, strung from left shoulder to right hip. The recitation of the most sacred prayer, the Gayatri, is preceded by taking three suspirations of the breath, the vibration of the holy letters A U M, and the three mystic words: BHUR, BHUVA and SVAR, which mean body, soul and spirit, and earth, purgatory and heaven.

In the Old Testament and in later Hebrew writings we may often read of the "Voice from Heaven," the Rabbis, the Priests called it Bath-kol, the "Daughter Voice" of Jehovah. It was a Divine means of Revelation, and was said to issue from the mouth of God during the existence of the Tabernacle in the wilderness, and in the Temple of Solomon, and was heard also by the Prophets of Israel. A Hebrew tract states that at the death of Moses was heard a voice saying, "Fear not, Moses, I myself will care for thy burial." We find the Voice from Heaven is mentioned in the Old Testament in 1 Samuel iii. when the Lord called up Samuel, who was sleeping in the house of Eli, and in our New Testament as heard at the Baptism, at the Transfiguration and before the Passion of Jesus. The Divine Voice was also heard by St. Peter, see Acts x., "Rise, Peter, kill and eat," and by St. Paul on his way to Damascus, see Acts ix., "Saul, why persecutest thou me?"

In the first Chapter of Genesis, God is called "Elohim," a feminine plural word, not revered in any special manner, but the Ancient Hebrew Ineffable or Incommunicable name of God, formed of the four Hebrew letters Yod-heh-vau-heh was a Mystery. Its true sound was only known to the High Priest, who spoke or vibrated



it only upon special occasion, as on the Day of Atonement. It is a Freemasons' legend that it was only spoken once a year, but Jews have told me this is an error; but it is based upon the 7th verse of the 9th Chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. The true pronunciation was almost certainly lost during the Captivity of the Jews in Babylon. Anyhow the Jews have never spoken the Holy Name since, but when the Name occurred in the Roll of the Law read in their Synagogues, they always spoke the word ADNI, Adonai, which the English Bible calls "Lord" and the Masoretes of the sixth century later put the vowels of Adonai to the letters IHVH. It was the sound, not the spelling, which was secret and sacred. After the Exile, the superstition arose that the name of Jehovah produced magical effects when duly pronounced.

After these references to Hebrew names and Hindoo Mantras as used in worship and as righteous ejaculations in moments of excitement, I may point out that in our own country the habit was and is sometimes still in use, having perhaps come to us from the Hebrew Old Testament, and then from early Christian usage. I mean the ideal value of spoken phrases such as:—"God bless you"; "Please God"; "Hallelujah," which is "Praise God," and "Amen," which means "So be it" from the Hebrew AMN, meaning faithful or verily.

The Greeks said, "Chaire," hail; and the Romans, "Salve," or "Deo faventē." Our English Good-bye comes from "God be with ye." Germans used the Latin—"prosit"—may it be favourable.

The Hebrews salute with the words Lechayim, to be, they say, "I wish you good life." The Mahomedan of Arabia salutes with the words, "Salaam Aleikam" (Salaam ali kum—peace be with you), to which his brother replies, "Aleikam Salaam." The recent phrase of Monsieur Coué is nearly related to the same ideal, only it is personal; I mean, "Every day and in every way I feel I am getting better."

How sonorous, holy and impressive is the Blessing given by the Lord for Aaron to recite to the children of Israel. It is found in the sixth Chapter of Numbers. "The Lord bless thee; the Lord make His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee and give thee peace." This is a Mantra indeed, and might be more often spoken with devotion than it is, by Christians as well as by Jews.

We have now found the power of Sound to be shown in all directions, in all forms and for all purposes, both natural and artificial, and as regards human sounds to be effective both in religion and in the common life of mingled pleasure and pain.

These conclusions show that the attitude of Materialism leans to the unreal and temporary, but the Spirit is universal and lies near to us, and is to be attained by Devotion. The unseen may be

heard and is not material, for the unseen is not temporal but eternal.

The Power of Sound is exhibited in two great forms in Nature and in Man ; they are Harmony and Discord, and in every one of each occasion, one is master. Harmony the greater power, must transmute its evil opponent. Why does discord appear ? It is to show the beauty of Harmony by contrast. From chaos did Kosmos spring, at the creative fiat. This great paradox cannot be taught, it can only be realised by Meditation, in silence, aided by Divine abstract thought, emerging from the Eternal Father. From evil subdued can arise the fruit of correct action, from well ordered desire comes the realisation of duty done, from the instinct of individuality comes one white flower of pure union ; from across the desert of continued exertion so mingled with misfortune and suffering, we may arrive at the Holy Land, where alone are Light and Love.

Last night, as I lay alone in the darkness and silence, I heard the voices of the eternal melody : I closed my eyes, ere I went to sleep, with this last thought in the mind—that while I should lie unconscious the music of life and the harmony of the forces of Nature would continue in the hushed sleep of the body, keeping ever in tune with the Infinite. My heart would still beat, the blood would still hurry through the veins, and the millions of living cells of my material envelope would continue to vibrate in unison with the pulse of the Eternal Father. How blessed it is that Night can mend the ravelled sleeve of care, and I felt with Longfellow, the poet, that sleep soothes our sorrows ; he wrote :—

“ The night shall be filled with music,  
And the cares that infest the day  
Shall fold up their tents like the Arabs,  
And so silently steal away.”

Longfellow, “ The Day is Done.”

All around us we may hear in devout meditation a Symphony sounding in waves of Kosmic harmony, arising from a multitude of voices “ which no man can number,” a tribute to the vast powers of Sound, and when this world has taught us its lesson, and we shall have learned it, then shall sound the Last Trump, and the peace and silence of Eternity shall reign, and God shall be all in all.

NOTE.—There are above some quotations from L. Nightingale and R. Tagore not indicated as such.