

**TRADITION: A MUSEUM OBJECT?
MUSIC'S ROLE IN EDUCATION
AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**

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Abstract

This article is a reflection on my experiences in learning profoundly musical traditions in four cultures: Latin America, Japan, India and Europe. By describing what I learned through these different approaches to music, I suggest that music is an effective educational tool to develop one's whole personality.

Key Words: education, music, spirituality, tradition, personality.



Resumen

Este artículo es una reflexión sobre mis experiencias en el aprendizaje de tradiciones profundamente musicales en cuatro culturas: América Latina, Japón, India y Europa. Al describir lo que aprendí a través de estos diferentes enfoques de la música, sugiero que la música es una herramienta educativa efectiva para desarrollar toda la personalidad.

Palabras clave: educación, musica, espiritualidad, tradición, personalidad.

I was born in Peru in a family of practicing Catholics. I was strictly educated in a primary and secondary school run by Canadian Catholic priests. At the age of five, by observing, listening, and imitating (oral tradition), I began to play Latin folk music on both the *quena* (Andean end-blown flute) and the *siku* (Andean pan flute). During my ten years of studies, I was taught that the original character of the *quena*, which is five thousand years old (Baumann, 1996), is “an opening where the soul gives the best of oneself; if the player doesn’t have a cultivated spirit, the result will be poor” (Pariona, 2006, p. 28).

Because I was focusing every day, from my early childhood to teenage life, on having a mind that has been thirsty for growth (self-realization) by following the teachings of Jesus Christ, I always offered to him with devotion each sound I produced on the *quena* and *siku*, both during rehearsals (four hours daily) and at concerts (in prestigious auditoriums and theaters in Lima and on TV and radio shows). At age fourteen, I won first prize in the national music performance competition in Latin American music and classical music in Peru (professional level) organized by the Ministry of Education and the Germany Embassy in Lima.

Doing research on these instruments, I found several more interesting connections between the gradual development of self-realization and Andean music performance. The original character of the *quena* has long been expressed, even up to the present, through the dance of the *quena-queñas* of Patacamaya, a place in La Paz, Bolivia. Engraved stones depicting an dance of the pre-Inca culture of Tiahuanaco, in Bolivia, feature millenary teachings (as explained by Gisbert, 1988): (1) The feather art of the Aymara people from Altiplano, which is shaped like a rainbow on top of the dancer’s head, represents the set of colors emanating from the activated chakras. (2) The dancers’ breastplates, the skins of pumas (the *chacapuma* of Tiahuanaco) represent the inner warrior who eliminates psychological vices and defects. (3) The *queñas* that solemnly blow the dancers represent the spine, whose secret centers of power can be activated by the *quena*’s sounds, the Andean scales.

I was eager for self-realization.

JAPAN

When I was fifteen, a Japanese actress heard my solo concert in Lima and proposed that I further my career in Japan. I became a disciple of the *Noh* theater master Hideo Kanze, one of the most talented descendant-masters of the *Kanze* School, which was founded in the fourteenth century. As the director of my con-

certs, he taught me the inner strength to master the instruments (the *quena* and Japanese flutes). This took more than simply perfecting a technique to provide entertainment. He taught me about the teachings of Zen Buddhism that were incorporated into the ritualization of Japanese music. These form a meditation on the unity of the mind, the instrument, and the body. Such meditation is an essential element in the mastery of every Japanese art. I was taught that it was through the practice of the arts (practical training) and not through rules or theory that morality, ethics, and human and spiritual values are learned.



The dance of the quena-quenas of Patacamaya in La Paz, Bolivia.

Training the mind as well as the body results in important insights, habits, values, attitudes, and behavior, which lead to enlightenment (Davey, 2003). I focused on daily self-realization, and thus calmness and simplicity influenced my performance and the sound of my *quena*. The power of my concentration became stronger while performing. The mind remained in the present moment, aware of the temporary, illusory nature of material life.

Because of my integrating both traditions (the Andean and the *Noh*), and because I released solo albums (on Victor, JVC World Sounds and on Sony Music, also with the collaboration with the composer Isao Tomita and the Japanese percussion group KODO) and played hundreds of concerts throughout Japan (sponsored by the Japanese Government), and on TV and radio shows, the Ministry of Culture in Japan considered me the world's most talented performer on the *quena* and the *siku*. After I was in Japan for five years, my master, Hideo Kanze, presented two future options: continuing a successful artistic career in Japan and soon in Europe, or doing research in India on the Vedic cultural origins of the Zen Buddhism philosophy used in *Noh*.

INDIA

At the age of nineteen, I chose the second option. For seven years, I studied Vedic philosophy and Vaishnava music (the latter is an influential culture in the Indian musical tradition) by being spiritual and philosophical trained by Srila Jayapataka Maharaj, and musically by Shashank Subramanyam, two of the most outstanding masters in the mentioned fields in India. According to my research, musicologists state that the North and South Indian music traditions have roots in the *Sama Veda*, a vast collection of verses (*sama*) and by traditional accounts extending back well over five thousand years (Raghavan, 1962). Through Vedic literature, musical sound and its profound theological significance lead to *nada brahman*, or sacred sound as the linguistic word and the nonlinguistic sound, or music (Beck, 1993).

Regarding the nonlinguistic aspect of *nada brahman*, Shashank Subramanyam, the world's most outstanding Carnatic flute masters and my Carnatic flute teacher, said, "When the voice or the performance of any instrument is perfectly trained with all the notes of the Indian classical music—sa, re, ga, ma, pa, dha, ni (do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, si in the Western version)—we will discover that these notes are variations of one note, which is *nada brahman*, or *om*."¹

Nada brahman, in its highest, personal manifestation, is known as the form of Janardana (Vishnu)—*nada-rupah smrto brahma nada rupo janardana* (Sharma, 1970). This notion of *nada brahman* was passed on in later Vaishnava works, such as the *Vaishnava padavali*. In these works, I discovered an important contribution from the Vaishnava music culture to Western musical education: a system of rhythms (*talas*) and romantic melodic formats (*ragas*), with scientific forms

1 Interview with Shashank Subramanyam in Chennai on June 11, 2007.

between the notes and rhythms, which when sung along with mantras have deep transcendental effects on the human emotional intelligence. The effects of these sounds and their precise repetition at exact intervals awaken a person's higher levels of consciousness by acting on the internal personality and transforming its sensibility, way of thinking, and the state of the soul—even one's moral character (Beck, 1993).

Scholarly, enlightened, devotional artists and poets wrote Vaishnava songs, and thus the songs possess great literary value, which made them widely popular. Consequently, in Brussels, Belgium, I was awarded with the European Excellence Award in the category of Scientific Presentation of Vedic Knowledge of India and its traditional music.

In this way, I had the opportunity to learn very close the ancient musical cultures from Japan and India, and discovered the same thing as in Peru: there were traditions in these cultures. Hence my interest in the observations of the different forms of transmission.

DENMARK

After my Indian life experiences, I was drawn by curiosity to study the European transverse flute at the music conservatory in Copenhagen, Denmark, where only one flute student per year is accepted after a rigorous entrance examination. Three years of classical European music and jazz music at this conservatory radically changed me. I discovered fidelity to writing and reading scores, or normative knowledge. The experiences that I had there carried into the current work I do while performing the Western repertoire as principal flutist in a Swiss symphony orchestra in Geneva.

Desiring to integrate the contributions of the four music traditions (Latin American, Japanese, Indian, and European cultures), I invented and patented a flute: the De La Calle Quena Flute TM: The *quena's* headjoint (the ancient Andean end-blown flute, which is the same headjoint as in ancient flutes, like *Shakuhachi* from Japan, *xiao* from China, and other world ancient flutes) is connected to the European transverse flute's body in order to:

1. - Perform all kinds of music styles of the world with the notes of the twelve tonalities from western European music.
2. - Transmit a sound expression based on, aesthetics and emotions of ancient eastern and western cultures.



Dr. Luis De La Calle on his The De La Calle Quena Flute TM

SWEDEN

Based on the De La Calle Quena Flute, I obtained a Bachelor's degree of soloist and two Master's degrees (one in education and the other in the Educational Sciences) at Lund University in Sweden, where I studied for eight years with Professor Anders Ljungar-Chapelon, the most outstanding music educator in the French Flute Tradition. This was the first time in history (recognized by Lund University) that a musician earned a university degree based on a musical invention by the inventor, while the inventor was still alive.

Flute associations in Sweden, America, the UK, and Australia have recognized me as one of the world's most talented flutists, for performing with this invented instrument in their gala concerts and in prestigious auditoriums and theaters worldwide. Multinational music companies such as Sony Music and Columbia Records from Japan released six of my solo albums (with my own compositions) featuring the De La Calle Quena Flute as the soloist's instrument. For these ac-

complishments, the President of the Parliament of the Republic of Peru, the Mayor of the Municipality of Lima and others mayors from different districts of this capital recognized and awarded my achievements.

SWITZERLAND

After all these experiences, I asked myself, What is a tradition? To answer this question, I approached the University of Geneva in Switzerland and did a Ph.D. in the Educational Sciences (with a specialization in didactics: teaching and learning processes with their contents) over the next five years under the direction of Professor Isabelle Mili, the world leading brain in music didactics. This university and other prestigious international universities recognized my Ph.D. dissertation as the first doctoral research in the history of education investigating the music didactics of an ancient, ancestral culture within a western context. Due to this achievement, I received an Honorary Doctorate from Peru's National University of Education "Enrique Guzmán y Valle" at the Parliament of Peru.

UNIVERSITY-SPAIN.

While writing my dissertation, I realized that in the oral traditions from the three ancestral cultures I studied (Andean, Japanese and Vaishnava), there are two different forms of transmission practices, because of two approaches: the ethno-musicological approach and the popular or folk music approach. The ethno-musicologist seeks to transmit a traditional way of performing (sonority) in a certain culture through scientific discourse. The popular or folk music approach is a practice that combines elements of the traditional music with an aesthetic taste coming from elements of Western European music. This is characterized by a national and political identity, with the "show" as a dimension.

These differences led me to conclude that a tradition is a historical construct. It is not pure nor is it a museum object, because all cultures are, to some degree, pervaded by cultural elements from other cultures (Girault, 1998). Tradition is a living reality in a constant transformation. Then what do we learn from the two approaches? We learn that the oral tradition of these ancestral cultures (Andean, Japanese and Vaishnava) manifests something alive precisely because of certain characteristics of its transmission practices.

I compared these characteristics with the practices I did as a student at Sweden's music conservatory:

- (1) The ongoing practice and performance of scales (*ragas*), rhythms (*talas*), and the singing of *mantras* in Vaishnava culture as melodic and rhythmical scientific-aesthetic forms, together with a scientific discourse and systematic training by the teacher, enhance the performer's musical expression by elevating the consciousness. In the music conservatories I frequented, the scales, rhythmical patterns, and lyrical messages normally lacked scientific spiritual principles therefore did not uplift the consciousness. Training for self-realization does not exist.
- (2) The use of dance, wherein the instrumentalist's steps are synchronized with the rhythm of the melody, is a simultaneous double function by the agent, who is the dancer and the instrumentalist. In the music conservatories, instrumentalists and singers do not dance.
- (3) "Learn to speak before reading": first make music and only then understand how it is made. In the conservatories I frequented, the teacher begins with the systematic work of playing: position of the instrument, breathing, fingering, vibrato, etc. This is called the elementarization of knowledge.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Every musician and music teacher should observe other ways of "doing" because the mentioned practices can be useful for the training of musicians and singers. In this context, the didactic tools contribute to discover, rescue and disseminate those aspects that, being part of the routines installed in teaching situations, are evident for the actors of these disciplines.

According to my research, the music of the mentioned three oral traditions from South America, Japan and India was not used to simply perfecting a technique to provide entertainment neither to transmit messages of national identity or politics. But the original artistic expression manifested in these oral traditions transcends their historical challenges and portrays an essential evolution of human consciousness from the gross to the subtle, from the material to the spiritual, and from the temporal to the eternal. Through this integrative approach, these cultures illustrates that art is a force that drives this evolution and is thus an expression of the individual's deep hankering for happiness, whose fundamental quality is aesthetics (Gupta, 2018). Therefore, the aesthetics in these oral traditions is in the heart itself of human existence and is the nature of the ultimate reality (the Absolute Truth) as referred to by these ancient traditions.

The ancient Greek philosophers considered that the understanding of the Absolute Truth is the goal of human life and the goal of education (Guthrie, 1994). As a step to understand the Absolute Truth, in one of Plato's dialogues as *Timaeus* (Broadie, 2012), is described that our real self is neither the physical body nor the mind but is the spiritual soul: which is full of joy, knowledge and is eternal. Socrates also passionately exhorts everyone to give attention and care to this inner divine part, analogies described in the *Upanisads* of the Vedic scriptures from ancient India.

According to the Vedic scriptures (Srimad-Bhagavatam, 1972), there are three Vedic paths in the understanding of the Absolute Truth. These paths are described in relation with the four mentioned music cultures:

- 1.- The *Karma kanda*, the path of ceremonial acts and rites of sacrifice to achieve a fruitful result, as the musicians of the Andean tradition: a dialogue between the Andean musicians and the administrators of nature (the sun, the mother earth) to get for example rain for their harvest.
- 2.- The *jñāna kanda*, the path of understanding of the soul presented by: 1.- Ancient Greek philosophers (linked to the roots of western European music): one could attain the knowledge of the soul (ātman) through meditation (our identity) through the famous "know yourself". 2. - *Noh* plays are extremely intense and reflect the artful use of emptiness and silence through a meditation on the oneness of the mind, the instrument, and the body. This oneness is based on two aspects on the conception of the spiritual soul: a. - emptiness and b. - formless.
- 3.- The *Kevalananda kanda*, the path of the science of the spiritual soul through music to awake love towards the Absolute Truth as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This path has been expressed in Vaishnava music from India by singing *mantras* and by performing the *ragas* (melodic scales) and *tals* (system of rhythms) as scientific-aesthetic forms between the lyrics, notes and rhythms.

In summary, while reflecting on the practices of transmission in oral traditions, I argued that the activities of a person, including one's musical activity, should be oriented to attain the goal of life and the goal of education (self-realization): to revive our eternal relationship with God, as previously mentioned in the *kevalananda kanda* as the highest path to understand the Absolute Truth (Srimad Bhagavatam, 1972). The music of these ancient cultures could be a model for society today, wherein the formation of an individual's character takes priority while doing activities. In this case, the sound of music specifically could be a

wonderful tool to educate a person about human values and spiritual principles.

According to the Vedic cosmic calendar, this *kali yuga*, or Iron Age, when the physical and mental condition of people declines, nullifies many of the available spiritual practices (*sadhanas*), such as the rigid *hatha-yoga*, which are difficult to perform. Therefore, from the Vedic and catholic perspectives, the chanting of the holy names of God (individually and congregationally), is one of the easiest and the most powerful ways to attain the mentioned goal of life.

Life is an art to live, and a work of art is like a window to the spiritual world through which we can express our personality, our sensibility, and our ability.

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