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Musical Ritual and Ritual Music: Music as a Spiritual Tool and Religious Ritual Accompaniment

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ABSTRACT

This article explores music as a religious ritual accompaniment within the realm of Balinese Hinduism in Bali, Indonesia, and the spiritual dimensions of music as a “tool” and a “ritual” in itself, within the Hindu-based Siddha Yoga practices and philosophies of sacred sound and the devotional worship of *arati*.

Keywords: musical ritual, spiritual tool, sacred sound practices, *arati*, *gender wayang*

IZVLEČEK

Članek proučuje glasbo kot spremljavo verskega obreda v okviru balijskega hinduizma na Baliju v Indoneziji. V okviru na hinduizmu utemeljenih Siddha joga praks ter filozofij svetega zvoka in obrednega čaščenja v pesmih zvrsti *arati* raziskuje duhovne dimenzije glasbe, ki je sama po sebi »orodje« in »obred.«

Ključne besede: glasbeni obred, duhovno orodje, študije svetega zvoka, *arati*, *gender wayang*

Introduction

Guy Beck (1993, 2006, 2013) has provided years of serious scholarship on sacred sound and ritual music practices in India and within Indian traditions generally. While building on the foundational work of Beck, Lewis Rowell (1992), and Joyce Irwin (1983), this article applies Indian concepts of sacred sound and ritual music practices to new locations and new areas of research. This study explores music as a religious ritual accompaniment within the realm of Balinese Hinduism in Bali, Indonesia, and the spiritual dimensions of music as a “tool” and a “ritual” in itself, within the Hindu-based Siddha Yoga practices and philosophies of sacred sound and the devotional worship of *arati*.

In this article I distinguish between ritual music generally (music that accompanies a ritual or ceremony) and a distinctly *musical ritual* to denote sacred text and sacred music that functions as a fundamental aspect of the ritual itself. To this end I investigate the sounds of *arati*¹ – often used to honor a teacher within a Hindu, Buddhist, or yogic lineage – as a case study of music that functions as a ritual, or in other words, a *musical ritual*. In fact, this delineation of terms – between ritual music and a musical ritual – provides a key incentive for comparing these two case studies.

Arati has an inner dimension facilitated by musical devotion (in both the music and the text it supports), whereas the more ritualistic culture of Bali may cause practitioners to focus directly on the ritual elements and ceremonial requirements needed to complete a given religious, human, or spiritual obligation, rather than concentrating on the inner transformation it affords. Of course, there are exceptions. When the spirit or soul of a deceased person in Bali is accompanied by *gender wayang* music² during a cremation procession, then transition and transformation from one place and one state to another is paramount. In addition, certain theatrical performers in Bali such as *dalang* (shadow play puppeteers) may engage in spiritual practices in order to develop *taksu*, a kind of divine charm that enables them to keep their audiences enrapt from the beginning to the end of a performance. However, these spiritual practices by individual performers may not involve instrumental music but rather prayer, meditation, or mantra repetition. By contrast, the widespread use and expectation of the instrumental *gender wayang* ensemble to facilitate or accompany rites of passage ceremonies in Bali is a factor that assists in and enhances the performance of such ritual ceremonies. The association of the ensemble

1 *Arati* is a devotional hymn with a refrain and multiple stanzas that honor one's teacher. The performance of *arati* provides a “means for the enactment of devotion” and may be “evocative of the inner experience that the gurus extend to devotees” (Brooks et al. 1997, 298).

2 *Gender wayang* refers to both the ensemble and the shadow play music in Bali, Indonesia, where *gender* is a ten-keyed metallophone performed in pairs of two or four instruments, and *wayang* refers to both the shadow play theater in Indonesia, and the shadow play puppets. *Wayang kulit* indicates carved leather puppets typically used in Balinese shadow play performances.

and its repertoire with religious culture of a ceremonial nature accords it a sacred connotation that differs from its usual association with shadow puppet theatre, even though *wayang* (the shadow play) is also performed predominantly for temple festivals so the sacred context is not lost even when *wayang* is performed at Odalan (temple anniversary festivals) as a form of evening entertainment (Heimarck 2003, 71).³

In this article, I discuss the concept of music as a “tool” in religious or spiritual contexts. For those on a spiritual path, music can function as a “spiritual tool,” a religious tool, a ceremonial tool, a ritual tool, or a tool of emancipation, transformation, or consciousness-raising. In addition to focusing on music as a spiritual tool, and music as an accompaniment to religious ceremonies, I will define the potential for music – including the recitation of sacred text – to serve as a ritual in itself, as a *musical ritual*. I will discuss the musical ritual that embodies devotion known as *arati* within Hindu, Buddhist, and yogic traditions in South Asia, East Asia, and diasporic or transplanted traditions in new locations. I will also investigate music that accompanies rites of passage in Bali, Indonesia, namely the *gender wayang* accompaniment to tooth-filing ceremonies, weddings, and cremation ceremonies.⁴ Music or mantra repetition in the context of meditation, or group chanting in the context of *satsang* (a program within a Hindu-based tradition) will complete this exploration of music as a religious, ceremonial, and spiritual tool embodying inner and outer devotion, transition, and transformation.⁵

Changing Geographies of Religion

In “Global Shifts, Theoretical Shifts: Changing Geographies of Religion,” geographer Lily Kong (2010, 756) makes note of new approaches to the study of religion such as “different sites of religious practice beyond the ‘officially sacred,’ different sensuous sacred geographies.” These are just some of the post-secular developments that call for our attention as scholars. The current article investigates *arati* practices that may occur in a yoga center located in an urban building reconstructed to serve as a music and meditation hall. These new iterations of yogic practices occurring in the United States over the past forty to

3 See individual performers’ accounts in *Balinese Discourses on Music and Modernization: Village Voices and Urban Views* (Heimarck 2003).

4 These social ceremonies and rites of passage occur within the broader context of Balinese religion, known as *Agama Tirtha* (the Religion of Holy Water), which is a unique form of Hinduism practiced in Bali.

5 Roy Rappaport (1999, 25) notes that just as “all ritual is not religious, not all religious acts are ritual.” The same holds true for ceremonies. While all religions have ceremonies and rituals, not every religious act constitutes a ceremony or ritual, and not all ceremonies or rituals are religious. There are secular ceremonies, such as political inaugurations; there are social ceremonies such as birthdays and anniversary celebrations; there are economic rituals or ceremonies such as a certain number of years acknowledged at a job, and so on; these are not religious.

fifty years represent “different sites of religious practice [...] different historical and place-specific contexts [...] and different constituents of population” (Kong 2010, 756), and assist in our understanding of postsecular strategies in the U.S.

Theory and Practice

One fundamental trait that ritual practices and yogic traditions have in common is the intention to put theory into practice. Within these practices, the outer physical ritual act also includes an inner experience. Thus, there is a three-part cycle of theory, practice, and experience.⁶ Yogic theories and philosophies concerning inner sounds and sacred resonances can be found in the Hatha Yoga *Pradīpikā* of the fifteenth century, and earlier treatises of South Asia, where “bells, drums, thunder, the conch, and the primordial sound AUM” describe “the divine sounds [known as Nada] that arise from within during meditation” (Siddhananda 2014, 2). While these inner sounds clearly derive from an inner source, it is notable that several of the instruments mentioned may be sounded during the outer ritual worship known as *arati*, and their vibrations are believed to have a “purifying effect on the mind and body” (SYDA Foundation 1996, 1).⁷

Putting yogic theories and philosophies into practice, enabling a direct experience of and union with God or the inner Self is the goal of yoga⁸ and connects closely with Tantric aims and practices as well. According to S. K. Ramachandra Rao (1979, 21) in *Tantra Mantra Yantra: The Tantra Psychology*, *Tantra* can be seen as the “translation of theory into practice.” Shankara⁹ is considered the great unifier who brought Vedic wisdom and theories of the cosmos together with Tantric traditions and practices that were contemplative and focused on the individual. Consequently, most monistic tantras believed that Reality is simultaneously transcendent and immanent (Rastogi 1979, 38). Further to this merging of Vedic influence with Tantric tradition, in Shankara’s

6 This cycle then returns as experience informs theories, which may change or adapt and be integrated into the practices of ritual.

7 For example, bells, conches, and drums may precede or accompany the sung prayer (SYDA Foundation 1996, 1). Thus, certain instruments are performed as part of the outer ritual, while also evoking the inner sounds known as Nada or sacred sound that may arise “from within during meditation” (Siddhananda 2014, 2).

8 Aubrey Menen (1974, 101) translates the term ‘yoga’ as ‘a bridge,’ “with the understanding that it is a bridge to learning about the true self.” He notes that “The sages of the Upanishads did not set up a religion. They had no God. ‘Brahman’ was not the name of deity: it was the name of something you discovered in your self” (Menen 1974, 113).

9 Another transliteration from Sanskrit into English for Shankara is Samkara, as used by Rao. For consistency, I have relied on the common English usage of the name Shankara for this renowned figure, now believed to have lived between 788 and 820 C.E., though there is still some debate concerning his dates.

interpretation of the philosophical school of Advaita-vedanta,¹⁰ “Advaita was not meant to be a mere intellectual discipline; it was not only an approach to Reality (a *darsana*) but a means to reach it (an *upasana*)”¹¹ (Rao 1979, 21). There are deep intersecting and overlapping threads connecting Tantric Saivism, Sakta Tantra (Goddess/es), and Vaisnavite Tantric thought and practices with yogic practices of sacred sound.¹² For example, in India and the West today, Siddha Yoga ashrams incorporate many Hindu ceremonies, hymns, and ritual worship such as *arati* into their daily schedule, as well as meditation and contemplation. In yogic sacred sound practices, Hindu, Buddhist, and tantric traditions, recitation of sacred mantras is a means to assist the practitioner in reaching the goal of liberation.¹³ Within tantric and yogic concepts of sacred sound, mantra represents a sonic threshold into a deeper form of body awareness, and a pathway to enlightened states of consciousness.¹⁴

- 10 According to the Introduction by Debabrata Sinha (1983, xvi) to *The Metaphysic of Experience in Advaita Vedanta: A Phenomenological Approach* “the Advaita school of Vedanta, founded by ‘Sankara, and followed up, developed, and ramified by post-‘Sankara authors through the centuries (from ninth century A.D. onward), is generally represented as a full-fledged metaphysics of Being. Its uncompromising monistic doctrine is singularly focused on the concept of Absolute, that is Brahman, the all-engulfing ultimate.” “The very equivalence of the highest Reality with the essence of consciousness – *Sat* that is *Cit* – promotes a unique dimension to the Advaitic ontology” (Sinha 1983, xviii); where *sat* refers to existence or Being, and *cit* indicates Consciousness or pure Consciousness (Sinha 1983, xvii).
- 11 Shankara also recognized that Sankhya was styled as a ‘tantra’ (Rao 1979, 16–17). Broadly speaking, Tantrism is present in Sankhya-Yoga, Ayurveda and the early Upanishadic texts (Rao 1979, 14–15).
- 12 In *A Concise Dictionary of Indian Philosophy: Sanskrit Terms Defined in English* John Grimes (1996, 314) provides several definitions for ‘Tantra’: “rule; ritual, scripture; religious treatise; loom; warp (from the root “*tan*” = “do in detail” + “*tra*” = “to protect”).” I will cite three of the five definitions for ‘Tantra’ provided by Grimes (1996, 314–315), as they relate to some of the texts and topics under discussion: “1. As religious treatises, they are usually in the form of a dialogue between ‘Siva and ‘Sakti. Sometimes they are referred to as the ‘fifth Veda.’ They posit an esoteric spiritual discipline which worships ‘Sakti, the creative power of the Absolute, as the Divine Mother through the practice of rituals, *mantras*, and *yantras*. The goal of *tantra* is attaining Self-realization through *Kundalini* awakening and through uniting the two principles, ‘Siva and ‘Sakti. *Tantras* are divinely revealed scriptures revealing the secrets of knowledge, meditation, and devotion to the *guru*, and practices for the attainment of Self-realization. [...] 4. They are practical treatises on religion. By means of worship of images (*arca*), diagrams (*yantra*), repetition of mystic syllables (*mantra*), and meditation (*upasana*), they provide courses for developing the hidden, latent power in individuals leading to realization. They may also be used for attaining worldly desires. 5. An initial characterization of tantric texts is a text which presents itself as revealed without attaching itself in any way to the Veda. A second aspect of *tantra* is that it has a strong reaction against Upanishadic renunciation. It strives for both liberation (*mukti*) and enjoyment (*bhukti*). Third, *tantra* establishes a series of correlations between human beings, the universe, the gods, and rituals. Finally, *tantra* stresses the centrality of the goddess or divine power (‘Sakti) in all its forms.”
- 13 In *From the Finite to the Infinite*, vol. 1, Swami Muktananda (1989, s.v. “mantra”) defines “mantra” as “sacred words or sounds invested with the power to protect and transform the one who repeats them; the sound body of God.” It is important to recognize here that mantra may refer to both sacred words and sacred syllables.
- 14 Whether through chanting or meditating on or with these mantras, these sacred sounds – inner or outer – are believed to be efficacious. For example, Siddha Yoga meditation intensives frequently

Music as a Spiritual Tool

Most religious ceremonies, especially lengthy ones, require some form of musical accompaniment; but beyond this primary religious role, music also acts as a spiritual tool in many traditions. Let us consider what is meant by the term “tool.” Certainly, musical instruments may serve as ritual tools in certain contexts; for example, percussion instruments such as conches and idiophones (rattles, shakers) enliven particular South Asian *arati* chants and may be seen to function as ritual tools in this setting, since I am defining *arati* as a ritual, and these percussive sounds are required accompaniments to this ritual in particular cases of *arati* chants. In these instances, the percussion enhances the effectiveness of the chant.

But let me return to my use of the term “tool” in this investigation. What do I mean by a “spiritual tool”? A tool may be defined as a device or implement, thing, or even person used to carry out a purpose. For example, tools of one’s trade would be things used in an occupation or pursuit. In a religious or spiritual context, we might find tools used to further spiritual goals, for example incense, sounds or silence for meditation, and so on. I suggest that music and mantra are tools – things used to carry out a spiritual purpose – that further the goals of ceremonial events and spiritual illumination within the Hindu-based traditions of Bali, Indonesia and South Asian tantric and yogic traditions practiced in diverse locations.¹⁵

Music as Ritual Action or Ritual Performance

Beyond ritual or spiritual tools, I would also like to consider ways in which music may constitute a ritual action or ritual performance. In “The Many Dimensions of Ritual,” Marc Verhoeven examines different definitions for ritual, noting the ideas of archaeologists Colin Renfrew and Evangelos Kyriakidis who defined ritual as “practices that are time-structured and involve performance, with the repetition of words and actions in formalized ways” (Renfrew 2007, 109–110; quoted in Verhoeven 2011, 116); “an etic category that refers to set activities with a special (not-normal) intention-in-action, and which are specific to a group of people” (Kyriakidis 2007, 294; quoted in Verhoeven 2011, 116).

After noting certain key attributes of ritual, Verhoeven (2011, 118) offers his own definition with regard to the *form* of rituals:

engage in chanting the Names of God through short-text chants known as *namasankirtana*, and may also chant the core mantra of this lineage to lead into meditation.

15 For a history of tantric thought and influences as well as aesthetics in medieval Java (eighth through sixteenth centuries C.E.), in addition to the influx of Sufi Islam and later more orthodox ideologies see Becker (1993).

I define ritual as performances which are distinguished in both space and time, marked by explicit material and immaterial symbolism, often (but not always) related to the supernatural, in which behaviour is guided and restricted by tradition, rules and repetition [...]. With regard to function and meaning I propose that rituals are practices in which symbolic communication serves to establish relationships between humans and/or supernatural beings.

Within practice-based approaches to ritual, Verhoeven (2011, 122) notes that “ritual is social action.” Humphrey and Laidlaw (1994; quoted in Verhoeven 2011, 123) further clarify that “ritual is a quality that actions can come to have.” Most importantly, it is “through ritual action that religious beliefs are communicated, negotiated, and transmitted” (Verhoeven 2011, 126).

In *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, Catherine Bell ([1992] 2009, xv) notes the tendency to cast ritual “as action in opposition to thought and theory,” with a concentration on ritual performances. She later clarifies that action and thought are integrated in ritual; you cannot have action divorced from thought in human activity (Bell [1992] 2009, 23). Therefore, ritual action involves both action and thought; clearly this enables an interdependence between the practices of ritual and the meanings attributed to the text, music, and ritual actions.

If we combine the key contributions of Renfrew and Kyriakidis above, we could define ritual as “practices that are time-structured and involve performance, with the repetition of words and actions in formalized ways” (Renfrew 2007, 109–110), often meant to foster a special intention that is “specific to a group of people” (Kyriakidis 2007, 294).

Clearly *arati* as a musical form of worship involves practices that are time-structured and involve performance, with the repetition of words and actions in formalized ways; and it is meant to foster a special intention that is specific to a group of people, that of honoring their teacher and connecting to the divine in some form through this ritual act. Therefore, the performance of *arati* by the musicians, chanters, and *devi* – the ritual practitioner who is waving the tray, often seen as an embodiment of the goddess – would appear to be a ritual performance, and thus a ritual act.

While rules and regulations or specifications are often noted in diverse forms of rituals, there is no question that the performance of *arati* follows some formal constraints. There are specific melodies played for a set period of time; there are certain instruments involved as well as chanters that may be divided into lead and response; or in the case of “Sadguru Ki Arati” following recitation of the Guru Gita in Siddha Yoga, each verse begins with the women chanting the first two lines, followed by the men chanting the same two lines of text, then the remainder of the verse and the refrain are chanted all together. In addition, symbolic objects are held and waved by the ritual practitioner. In this and other ritual performances, the music creates a sense of time and space through the enactment of sound over a select period of time; it also allows for the presence

of sound within distinct spatial boundaries.¹⁶ At the same time, in many musical rituals and in the case of *arati*, texts expressing spiritual beliefs are chanted along with the musical accompaniment, adding to the complex symbolism of this ritual event.¹⁷

Beyond these formal considerations, in their Introduction to *Music and Ritual: Bridging Material and Living Cultures*, Raquel Jimenez Pasalodos, Rupert Till, and Mark Howell (2013, 19) define “ritual as a human action linked with religious beliefs or spiritual needs.” Music performed as a fundamental component of a sacred ritual may be interpreted as a human action tied to the realms of religion and spirituality. By this definition, the music for *arati* fulfills the role of a ritual and might be further defined as a *musical ritual*, especially when the instrumental accompaniment and sung text provide the primary means of expressing a set of religious beliefs or realizing particular spiritual needs.

Ritual performances might include additional human actions beyond the musical and/or textual performance, including gestures, as well as material objects required for certain ritual acts; nonetheless, the music and sung or recited text plays a significant part. In some instances, such as *arati*, the other ritual acts – such as waving of the tray – could not take place without the music.

I will give two case studies from my own fieldwork. One represents ritual music in Bali, Indonesia, where the music accompanies a religious ceremony but is not absolutely required – the cremation procession, wedding, or tooth-filing will occur regardless of the music, though the *gender wayang* accompaniment is the preferred musical accompaniment for these ceremonies in Bali.¹⁸ The second case study concerns the devotional hymn known as *arati*, which I refer to as a *musical ritual* because of the central importance of the music and chanted text to the meaning and experience of the ritual itself.¹⁹

Case Example I: Balinese Cremation Ceremony

Rites of passage are one category of ritual action noted by Bell ([1997] 2009), also known as life-cycle rituals: birth, puberty rituals, marriage, and death

16 When you close the doors to a music hall for example, the sounds may be contained within those spatial boundaries, but if you open the doors or windows to that space, the sounds may travel beyond those borders.

17 Once again, action and thought – music and text – are combined in this musical ritual. For *puja* (worship) certain elements may be placed on a tray that is waved during *arati*. For example, flowers, a small lamp, candle, or tea light, yellow turmeric, rice, and red Kumkum or red turmeric powder. These are symbolic offerings to the deity, image, or guru, and to the inner Self. In addition, offering water and food may be part of a *puja* ritual worship (see Beck 2012, s.vv. ‘Arati,’ ‘Puja’).

18 The author has conducted more than three years of fieldwork in Bali over multiple visits of varying lengths (1985–1987, 1988, 1990, 1994, 1996, 2006), studying the complex, sacred ceremonial music of *gender wayang* with the virtuoso musician Bapak I Wayan Loceng in the village of Sukawati.

19 The author has participated in and researched Siddha Yoga music and conducted interviews on peuples’ experiences since 1989.



Figure 1: Author's video footage of a cremation tower in Sukawati with *gender wayang* accompaniment.²⁰

(Verhoeven 2011, 118). My first example concerns Balinese ritual music, focusing on the musical accompaniment to a high-status cremation ceremony in Bali where musicians may be asked to perform by sitting on a platform carried by dozens of men as part of an elaborate cremation tower. Two *gender wayang*²¹ musicians may perform this sweet and haunting music while the procession carries the deceased from the family compound to the cremation grounds. In part, this depends on the availability of *gender wayang* musicians,

20 In the author's video footage (Heimarck 2006) of a cremation tower in Sukawati with *gender wayang* accompaniment you may notice the presence of marching gamelan music *beleganjur* playing at the same time. *Beleganjur* is a common accompaniment for Balinese cremation processions to the cemetery, and when performing alongside *gender wayang* on the cremation tower this helps to create the preferred aesthetic known as *ramai*, which means "busy, crowded, or hectic" referring to the crowds of people and often noisy or loud overlapping of different types of music playing simultaneously. The video is available on the following link: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1qasrQ-p7T8jxB--V5uCuiMgNO6XQSOEA/view?usp=sharing>.

21 *Gender wayang* is a quartet of ten-keyed metallophones used in Bali, Indonesia to accompany the evening shadow play theater and many different ceremonies: weddings, cremations, tooth-filing ceremonies. There are two pairs of instruments tuned slightly apart to create a shimmering effect: two larger *gender*, and two smaller *gender* that sound an octave higher. Each pair has one person playing the *polos* or basic melody part, and one person playing the *sangsib* or counterpart. Each person plays with hard, wooden, round disc-tipped mallets one in each hand, and they dampen the keys as they play with the side of the palm. The metal keys are suspended over bamboo resonators that help to amplify this delicate sounding and intricate music. In the case of the cremation tower above, clearly only two *gender* players can fit on the cremation tower as a special setting for this music. In addition, in certain villages in North Bali and elsewhere they may perform this music with just two *gender*.

because of the extreme difficulty of this particular genre of Balinese music; the width and size of the cremation tower, in order to provide room for the musicians; and the status of the deceased based on either social class or renown. For the cremation of my *gender wayang* teacher, the internationally respected performer Bapak I Wayan Loceng, in the village best known for the shadow play tradition, with family lineages representing more than six generations of *gender wayang* performers and *dalang* (puppeteers), clearly there were *gender wayang* players on the cremation tower. “The *polos* player sits on the left side of the tower, and the *sangsib* player sits on the right. In this way, *gender wayang* music is believed to accompany the soul of the dead person as it departs for the heavens” (Heimarck 2015, 16). The *polos* part represents the basic melody part with both hands interacting in various musical textures, and the *sangsib* part represents the counterpart, often enhancing the *polos* melodies and rhythmic patterns with contrary motion, interlocking parts, and syncopation.

Case Example II: *Arati*

The second example I will consider is the chanting of a devotional text known as *Arati Karun*,²² that relates to the wider practice of this devotional ritual in many parts of India, other parts of Asia, and recontextualized traditions within the diaspora. *Arati* combines sacred devotional text that is chanted, with a gestural ritual in which a dedicated *devi* (goddess) or ritual practitioner waves a tray or ritual object with one or more lit flames and often additional ritual components. This combination of music and ritual in *arati* represents a unique form of *musical devotion*. The tray or ritual object is waved in front of the Guru, image,²³ or deity, up and around in a circular motion. This ritual worship honors the Guru or deity while asking them to awaken the fire of knowledge within.²⁴ This musical ritual combines gesture in a circular motion, light, and sacred text with musical accompaniment:

22 In Siddha Yoga the text for Arati Karun – listed in *The Nectar of Chanting* book as “Sadguru Ki Arati” – was written by a devotee of Baba Muktananda and this honorific hymn is practiced regularly within the Ashram schedule and is often a part of regular programs. The Arati Karun text is published in a book entitled *The Nectar of Chanting* along with the Guru Gita long-text chant, and many others. Some background to the scriptural and non-scriptural texts that inform Siddha Yoga has been provided in *Meditation Revolution* (Brooks et al. 1997, 298–299) as follows: “*The Nectar of Chanting*, first published by Shree Gurudev Ashram in 1972, is a compilation of texts that is the primary example of Siddha Yoga scriptural canon-making. Its sources are drawn from across the spectrum of the exoteric and esoteric canon of Hindu-based spirituality. Sometimes works are taken in their entirety, like the Visnu Sahasranama, or in part, like the so-called ‘Introductory Mantras,’ the ‘Arati,’ and the ‘Upanishad Mantras,’ which come from a variety of sources and oral lore.”

23 For example, the Vedanta Society meeting hall located close to Boston University has been known to place the Sanskrit letters for AUM on the altar or *puja*.

24 Verse 23 of Sri Guru Gita notes that the Guru carries the disciple from the darkness (*gu*) of ignorance, into the light (*ru*) of supreme knowledge and consciousness (Muktananda 1983, 13).

often harmonium (pump organ) accompanying the melody, and the North Indian *tabla* drums or the South Indian double-headed, barrel-shaped *mridangam* drum, as well as hand cymbals, and at times a conch and additional percussion punctuating the rhythmic cycle. Each verse returns to the refrain for the *arati* being sung.²⁵

Whereas there is only one – or occasionally several – ritual practitioners waving the tray in an *arati* worship practice, everyone else present will participate in singing the hymn honoring the teacher, deity, or guru, therefore the vast majority of participants in this musical ritual join in the musical portion, chanting the sacred text, but do not participate in the gestural choreography of waving the tray or dressing as a *devi* (goddess) or devotee in a given tradition, as seen in the representative video of BAPS Swaminarayan new aarti. In fact, the ritual practitioner or *arati devi* will generally not sing at all; rather, they are focused on the inner dimensions of offering the chant to their teacher or mentor.²⁶

Different Hindu, Buddhist, or yogic communities may all have their own versions of *arati* performance or dress, and select musicians may accompany the chant in each given case, yet I have noticed that certain musical melodies that accompany *arati* may be used in more than one tradition, even when the text has been adapted or changed. There are also different versions of *arati* within individual communities, such as a morning *arati*, noon-time *arati*, or afternoon-evening *arati* that have different text, music, and percussive accompaniments. However, an in-depth explanation of all these different chants is beyond the scope of this article that is more focused on *arati* as a spiritual tool and musical ritual.

A large part of the power behind a musical ritual is the intention behind it, known in Sanskrit as *sankalpa*. If a person sets an intention – mental prayer, aim, or purpose – before they start to chant, they may have an even more powerful experience.²⁷ Traditionally, *sankalpa* refers to the intentionality of the guru (to make a certain scripture canonical (Brooks et al. 1997, 298, 300), to give a certain experience to a devotee, and so on). This is different from the intention of the devotee while engaging in spiritual practices; nonetheless intentionality is a key factor in creating an impactful experience. A distinction may also be made between group actions and intentions and “the internal feelings

25 For the text and translation into English of one version of *arati* see “Sadguru Ki Arati” (Muktananda 1983, 69–72).

26 To view an example of an *arati* performed by devotees of Swami Narayan see the BAPS Swaminarayan new *arati* video (Patel 2018), available on the following link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M0oH_EG7Jpc.

27 “A sacred chant is *śabda brahman*, God in the tangible form of sound. When we chant sincerely, it is like two mighty rivers – deity and disciple – coming together and creating a tremendous surge of spiritual energy and blessing. To further strengthen one’s participation in a sacred chant, one can make a *sankalpa*, an intention, before beginning” (“Chanting with Intention [...]” 1997, 56).

and imaginative concepts of the individual actor” (Munn 1973, 583; quoted in Bell [1992] 2009, 23–24).

Yogic Traditions of Meditation and Inner Reflection

On the more contemplative side, while sitting silently for meditation, some yogic practitioners may repeat mantras to themselves inwardly. This represents yet another dimension of sacred sound and the spiritual use of mantra or sacred syllables within the South Asian yogic tradition of meditation and inner reflection. Sacred sound that is unvoiced outwardly, still circulates powerfully within the inner realms of contemplation and meditation. *Ajapa Mantra*²⁸ or silent repetition of mantras may occur within the inner spaces of the mind, representing the ancient spiritual discipline of unvoiced sacred sound in the Indian tradition.²⁹

Uses and Functions of Music

John Kaemmer distinguishes between the uses and functions of music in different settings, and it might be worth considering these distinctions for a moment. Kaemmer (1993, 149–150) defines “uses” of music as the purpose or goal of including music in a particular event. By contrast, he defines “function” as the “consequences or results” of music in a given occasion. If I apply these definitions to the two case studies noted above, I could say that in the case of *arati*, the goal may be to honor one’s teacher or guru, but the function or consequence could be an inner experience of devotion through the actions of this musical ritual.

In the case of Balinese *gender wayang* ritual music accompanying rites of passage ceremonies, the goal may be to accompany the individual, couple, or spirit through a transitional time from one phase of life to another, but the function or consequence of the *gender wayang* music may also be emotional support, aesthetic layering, and musical beauty and poignancy during an emotionally significant time, such as tooth-filing ceremonies (which metaphorically tame one’s animal nature by filing down the canine teeth, preferably before one gets married), weddings (which benefit from the delicate and often interlocking sounds of *gender wayang*), and cremation processions for a high caste or renowned person. All of these significant rites of passage in Bali rely on the beautiful and contrapuntally complex sounds of *gender wayang* ceremonial music.³⁰

28 Whereas *ajapa mantra* is unuttered, *japa mantra* refers to the repetition of mantras, or the recitation of the name of God. *Japa mantra* “may be practiced orally, whispered, or mentally” (Grimes 1996, 145).

29 The thirteenth-century treatise *Sangitaratnakara of Sarngadeva* (Raja 1945, 10) notes the presence of both *Abata* and *Anabata Nada*, that is audible and inaudible sounds.

30 Kaemmer’s argument may be further illuminated by the following comparison: the intention of music in a religious ceremony or ritual may be to entertain the participants or audience and therefore encourage them to attend the ritual or ceremony, but the actual consequence or function could be to move the participants on an inner, spiritual level and provide an inner experience of

In conclusion, what is clear from these investigations of the Hindu-based traditions of South Asia and the sacred music associated with rites of passage ceremonies in Bali, Indonesia is that these sacred sound practices are required or preferred for the South Asian devotional ritual known as *arati*, and as a religious ritual accompaniment for high-status cremation processions in Bali to accompany the soul to its ultimate destination. Furthermore, in tantric and yogic traditions, it is believed that sacred sound practices, including mantra repetition, and the inner or outer experience of sacred sounds can lead to Self-realization. Music is one of the most powerful tools we know of in both religious and spiritual traditions to support, accompany, and enact the goals of spiritual realization, transition through rites of passage or states of consciousness, and inner transformation. Musical devotion plays a significant role in these emancipatory practices, and musical rituals are perhaps the most fundamental practice for devotional worship and to facilitate transformation, as sacred sound permeates the inner worlds and connects the practitioner and all those listening to the experiential embodiment of divinity through sound. In the case of *arati*, this divinity might be interpreted as the guru or renowned teacher of a tradition; knowledge, insights or experiences imparted by the Guru; a deity or protection of a deity; the inner Self; or sacred sound. In the case of the ritual accompaniment of *gender wayang* for a high-status Balinese cremation ceremony and procession, this sacred ceremonial music is believed to accompany and facilitate spiritual transformation for the deceased.

While scholars have noted the loss of ritual in a “secular age” (Taylor 2007), or the “return of ritual” in popular music customs (Till 2013), this article seeks to address the role of music as a “spiritual tool” within certain ritual contexts that emphasize mystical union with God or the inner Self.

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the ritual. Or it could be the reverse! The intention could be to move the audience to have a profound experience of the religion through music, but the actual function or consequence could be entertainment, or social value in the form of community.

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POVZETEK

Glasbeni obred in obredna glasba: glasba kot duhovno orodje in spremljava verskega obreda

Guy Beck (1993, 2006, 2013) se je vrsto let posvečal znanstvenim raziskavam svetega zvoka in obredne glasbene prakse v Indiji in znotraj indijskih tradicij. Pričujoči članek izhaja iz njegovega temeljnega dela ter iz del Lewisa Rowella (1992) in Joyce Irwin (1983), obenem pa indijske koncepte svetega zvoka in obrednih glasbenih praks aplicira na nove kraje in nova raziskovalna področja. Ta študija tako proučuje glasbo kot spremljavo verskega obreda v balijskem hinduizmu na Baliju v Indoneziji. Pri tem raziskuje duhovne dimenzije glasbe, ki je sama po sebi »orodje« in »obred«, v okviru na hinduizmu utemeljenih Siddha joga praks ter filozofij svetega zvoka in obrednega čaščenja v pesmih zvrsti *arati*. *Arati* je nabožna himna na čast izbranemu učitelju z refrenom in več kiticami. Brooks in drugi (1997, 298) poudarjajo, da izvedba *aratija* omogoča »način za udejanjenje pobožnosti« (*means for the enactment of devotion*) in lahko »prikliče notranjo izkušnjo« (*may be evocative of the inner experience*), ki jo gurujji razširijo na vernike.

Obredni fokus balijskega hinduizma uporablja sveto glasbo, kot je *gender wayang* (glasba senčnega gledališča) za spremljavo verskih obredov ali ceremonij obredov prehoda. Siddha joga kot jogijska disciplina pa sveti zvok – vključno z glasbo, notranjim ali zunanjim ponavljanjem manter, speve oz. petje dolgih besedil, himne in speve *namasankirtana* s kratkimi besedili, ki povečujejo božja imena – uporablja ob zavestno izpeljani poti in samouresničenju.

V članku zavestno razlikujem med obredno glasbo na splošno (tj. glasbo, ki spremlja obred ali ceremonijo) in natančno določenim *glasbenim ritualom* oz. *glasbenim obredom*, s čimer označujem péta sveta besedila in sveto glasbo, ki so bistveni del samega obreda. Na podlagi dveh v članku opisanih študij primera je predstavljena razlika med tema dvema izrazoma in obrednimi konteksti. S tem namenom najprej proučujem zvoke *aratijev*, ki so pogosto poklon učiteljem v hinduističnih, budističnih ali jogijskih tradicijah oz. linijah in so študija primera glasbe, ki sama deluje kot obred oz. *glasbeni obred*. Prvi primer glasbo pojmuje tudi kot duhovno orodje, ki udejanja notranjo in zunanjo pobožnost oz. vernost. Druga študija primera se nanaša na balijsko ceremonialno glasbo za obrede prehoda in osvetljuje glasbo *gender wayang* kot sveto ceremonialno tradicijo, ki spodbuja prehod in zaključitev obreda. Medtem ko raziskovalci govorijo o izgubi obrednega v »posvetni« oz. »sekularni dobi« (*secular age*) (Taylor 2007) ali »vračanju ritualnega« (*return of ritual*) v običajih popularne glasbe (Till 2013), ta članek naslavlja vlogo glasbe kot »duhovnega orodja« znotraj določenih obrednih kontekstov, ki poudarjajo mistično zvezo z Bogom in notranjim jazom.

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