

Parallels Between Indian Art Music and Western Art Music: The Suppression of the Notion of the 'Melody'

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Abstract : Some parallels between Indian Art Music and Western Art Music, such as the identity of the basic heptatonic scale structure, are quite obvious and need no further discussion. Other parallels are far less obvious, and it is one of them that the author is interested in. Specifically, the author would like to make a serious claim that in both types of music, there is an unspoken dependence on melody. Yes, it is true that the techniques that the two systems use for elaboration are very, very different: Western music uses the techniques of harmony, counterpoint, orchestration and motivic variation, while the Indian systems, both the Hindustani and the Carnatic traditions use the technique of raagdaari. The reason that this point is barely spoken about is that both in the West as well as in India, artists tend to think of melody as something elementary or as something 'given'. The Indian musicians would much rather dwell upon this or that meend or taan or other technical device, while the West thinks that melody is passé and would rather discuss the merits and demerits of spectralism and perhaps serialism. The author would like to explore this theme further in his paper.

Keywords : Indian art music, Western art music, melody, raagdaari, motivic variation.

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