# SONIC *liturgy*

## Ritual and Music in Hindu Tradition

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# Introduction

THE ONLINE DESCRIPTION OF THE GRADUATE program in liturgical studies at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California, contained the following statement in August 2010: "The goal of this program is to promote the study and understanding of Christian worship as it is lived and expressed through the churches' various traditions and cultures. It assumes that worship is at the heart of the theological enterprise, since it is both the primary context of the churches' encounter with the mystery of the Triune God and a primary actualization of the ecclesial body. Study in this area requires an interdisciplinary approach to liturgical studies that integrates the historical, theological, and social-scientific study of Christian ritual practice" (www.gtu.edu/academics/areas/liturgical-studies).

At first glance this statement suggests that "liturgical studies" is essentially a Christian concern. In fact this notion is found throughout the curricula of many theological schools and seminaries. But despite this seemingly closed perspective, there are multiple indications of the widening of the liturgical lens within Christianity, as is evident in the number of non-Christian entries found in *The New Westminster Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship* (2002), edited by Paul Bradshaw. There are entries regarding Jewish worship, Islamic worship, Hindu worship, Buddhist worship, Sikh worship, and Shinto worship. In each case the presence of music and chant is briefly woven into the description of the ritual and liturgical dimensions of each tradition. Outside the Christian fold scholars in the phenomenology of religion and music have also been struggling to break the ironclad hold of sectarianism on otherwise neutral terms and categories such as *liturgy*, *ritual*, and *sacred music*. These expressions, and others, are now increasingly employed by Christian as well as religious studies scholars as comparative categories, understood not to be the "possession" of certain religious groups. Hence despite some programmatic setbacks, the field of liturgical studies, along with ritual studies, has the potential of developing into a rewarding comparative discipline and one that also provides new elements of method and theory with regard to Hindu tradition.

Recent scholarship in musicology has broadened the scope of music and religious worship by explaining the various ways in which music and song play central

roles in all known religions: "In some religions sound itself is a cosmological starting point. As such, it represents the essence of the universe and to be in harmony with the universe means to hear accurately its sound. . . . Further, sound may be the medium of revelation by which the gods have chosen to make themselves known. Further still, sound may be the believer's means of communication to the gods and/or preparing oneself for such communication. The content of this preparation and communication is combined with the music to become songs, that is, music with an articulated goal. Music has been used cosmologically, liturgically, and devotionally in all the world's religions."[1]

One of the tasks in the study of religion and music is to recognize and document common denominators among varying forms of religious music. For example, a parallel feature shared by religious practitioners is the conservative attitude with which they approach their music as it relates to ritual and liturgy. In most religions throughout the world, there are strict rules regarding the performance of music and chant in ritual contexts. Traditional psalms, chants, hymns, and liturgical songs are generally predetermined and contain little scope for alteration beyond fixed parameters: Latin Gregorian chants, Calvinist psalmody, Lutheran chorales, gospel hymns, church litanies, and prayers in the Christian tradition; Qur'an recitation and Majlis in Islam; Chinese ceremonial songs and chants in Confucian or Taoist contexts; Buddhist chants throughout Asia; musical forms of ancient Egypt as described by Plato; Vedic invocations and hymns, Gandharva music, Sanskrit mantras and Stotras, scriptural recitations, Kirtana and Kriti in South India, Bhajans, Bhakti Sangit, Haveli Sangit, Samaj Gayan, and Padavali Kirtan in North India, and Shabad Kirtan in Sikhism. A widely held assumption is that these traditional musical forms are performed in connection with one God, specific deities, sacred ancestors, or spirits. They are handed down from the hoary past and effectively produce expected results only if performed precisely according to canonical standards.

Among the various forms of "conservative" music used in religious worship around the world, this book focuses on the exploration of ritual and music in the Hindu tradition. For this purpose the author has advanced the category of *sonic liturgy* as a flexible template with which to examine the co-appearance of ritual and music as they have evolved within the Hindu tradition. While sound and music are certainly present in most if not all religious rituals, the Hindu tradition provides perhaps the most consistent and enduring exemplification of the notion of sonic liturgy—the ritual order or pattern of specific events that include sound and music on a variety of levels. Moving beyond the mere description of ritual or musical practices, this book seeks formally to engage the issue of why music is so profoundly significant in Hindu ritual. This quest for the deeper meaning of ritual and music in Hindu tradition touches upon the Western field of liturgical

studies in several ways. Liturgist Edward Foley had already raised the central question—why is music so widely used in ritual?—that has partly led to the formulation of this study. Additional aspects of method and terminology are adopted from liturgical studies and ritual studies that articulate the subtleties and nuances of the Hindu ritual and musical experience.

In terms of format this book follows a chronological scheme that reveals the historical roots of the consistently close connection between ritual and music in Hindu tradition, from the ancient Vedic religion to modern times. Selected traditions of Hindu sonic liturgy throughout India's long legacy of ritual sacrifice, temple music, and devotional traditions are presented in sequence, with references from the appropriate Sanskrit and vernacular sources. After discussing the Vedic religion associated with Yajnas (fire sacrifices) and Sama-Gana, this book outlines the emergence of Gandharva Sangita as the principal music designed for Puja, a new form of worship that abandoned the use of fire in favor of offerings placed on an altar. Following this, it covers the medieval tradition of Hindu temple worship that became standardized in the Agama literatures and began to include vernacular poetical expressions of devotion set to regional music in the shape of Bhakti Sangit, variously known as Kirtan and Bhajan. As these traditions flourished, sonic liturgies became associated with sectarian branches of Hindu traditions, primarily those of Siva and Vishnu and, especially, Krishna. The book consequently examines selected cases of Vaishnava temple worship that have adopted the classical music styles of Dhrupad and Dhamar in the form of Haveli Sangit and Samaj Gayan. The purpose is to elaborate upon these genres of Hindu music and to reinforce the growing comparative nature of the field of liturgical studies by applying some of its approaches to the Hindu religious realm.

## RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Despite their obvious significance, sound and music as categories of special inquiry have been neglected in the academic field of religious studies since the pioneer work of Rudolf Otto (1920s) and Gerardus Van der Leeuw (1950s). Systematic studies of texts, communities, social issues, artifacts, tools, architecture, verbal testimony, clothing, utensils and other objects associated with a religion are routinely carried out, often at a distance from the actual practice of living religions, which is rarely silent and almost always sound-full, musical, and frequently noisy. The visual dimension of religion has received plentiful attention from art historians, iconographers, mythographers, and anthropologists. However, complementary studies in the audible or sonic realm of religion have not been forthcoming, leaving a lacuna. For instance, two recent examples of important authoritative works in the field do not contain references to music: Mark C. Taylor, ed., *Critical Terms for Religious Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago

Press, 1998), and Willi Braun and Russell T. McCutcheon, eds. *Guide to the Study of Religion* (London: Cassell, 2000). Moreover, many standard textbooks and dictionaries on religion are mute with regard to sound and music, as discussed in the introduction to my 2006 volume *Sacred Sound: Experiencing Music in World Religions* (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press). This book issued a clarion call for more serious attention to the roles of music and chant in comparative religious thought and practice and for increased emphasis on the actual experiences of believers in the embodied context of worship, experiences that invariably involve sonic or musical activity.

In the twentieth century two of the principal founders of the academic field of religious studies, Rudolf Otto and Gerardus Van der Leeuw, highlighted sacred music and sacred sound in their writings. While both were Protestant theologians, they were among the first to inaugurate a nonsectarian approach to the presence of music in religious experience across religious borders. Otto (1869–1937), a Lutheran theologian, in *The Idea of the Holy* (published in German in 1917 and in English in 1923), set the parameters for the phenomenological study of religion and music with a few well-chosen remarks on the feelings associated with music, which in his view were very similar to feelings associated with the holy itself, the numinous, the "wholly other": "Music, in short, arouses in us an experience and vibrations of mood that are quite specific in kind. . . . The resultant complex mood is, as it were, a fabric, in which the general human feelings and emotional states constitute the warp, and the non-rational music-feelings the woof. . . . The real content of music is not drawn from the ordinary human emotions at all, and . . . is in no way merely a second language, alongside the usual one, by which these emotions find expression. Musical feeling is rather (like numinous feeling) something 'wholly other.'"[2] Accordingly, the human response to music is composed of feelings and experiences similar to those evoked by the numinous, such as *mysterium tremendum* (mystery and awe) and *fascinans* (attraction).

Building upon the work of Otto, Van der Leeuw (1890–1950), in his now classic *Religion in Essence and Manifestation* (1938), broadened the scope by stating that "musical expression of the holy occupies an extensive domain in worship. There is hardly any worship without music."[3] In a subsequent work, *Sacred and Profane Beauty: The Holy in Art* (1963), an entire section entitled "Music and Religion" includes the subsections "Holy Sound," and "Theological Aesthetics of Music." In sum, he affirmed that "almost all worship uses music; . . . religion can no more do without singing than it can without the word. . . . Music represents the great struggle of reaching the wholly other, which it can never express."[4]

However, the fruits of the work of Otto and Van der Leeuw in this respect seem to have disappeared from mainstream trends in religious studies and the history of religions. Serious concern about this lack was voiced as early as 1970 by

S. G. F. Brandon in his *A Dictionary of Comparative Religion*: "The connection between music and religion is so generally recognized that it is surprising to find how little work has been done, particularly from the side of comparative religion, in relating the phenomenology of the two." Equally disconcerting was the work of anthropologists and musicologists: "musicologists, ethnomusicologists and anthropologists have assembled details of instruments, scales, rhythm, harmony (if any) and performance from many ethnic and religious areas. But, although so much is known about the practical function of music in various contexts, little attention has been paid to its significance as an aspect of religious action."[5]

Reasons for the gradual disappearance of sacred music and sacred sound as recurrent academic categories post-Otto lie partly in a misguided understanding in the West of religion as merely a set of beliefs and doctrines incorporated in scripture or sacred texts. Ritual studies scholar Catherine Bell, in her article "Performance," traces the neglect of the oral and performative aspects of religion much earlier, to the Enlightenment period: "Most theories of religion since the Enlightenment have tended to emphasize the more cognitive aspects of religion no matter how rooted these were thought to be in emotional, doctrinal, or communal experience."[6]

The emphasis on "silent textual study" and cognitive aspects in modern religious studies may also expose certain Protestant notions of scripture as primarily a written document to be read quietly in private. After the invention of the printing press, the radical shift from hearing scripture chanted or sung aloud by priests in churches to the reading of the printed word in churches and homes led the way to the modern academic attachment to written language as the primary carrier of religious meaning. The arena of a "silent religion" also does not faithfully represent other religious worldviews, least of all the traditions of Hindu devotional poetry that are the subject of this book. In fact, sacred texts in virtually all religious traditions are chanted or sung in a living context. For example, oral recitation of ritual texts is upheld as statutory in Judaism. The Qur'an in Islam is not considered authentic when it is studied in translation or read silently. Buddhist Sutras are almost always chanted, as are Sikh prayers and songs. For thousands of years Hindu dharma (law) forbade the writing down of scriptures, and the chanting and hearing of sacred verses and mantras, even without full comprehension, still constitutes the most common form of access to the sacred for the pious multitude of Hindus. Since music and chant are located at the core of religious life for most cultures, including ritual and liturgical action, it is just as improbable to understand a religious liturgy without the oral dimension as it is to penetrate a religious tradition without examining its musical dimension.

Historians of pagan and pre-Christian cultures have affirmed the important role of music in ancient religious ritual and ceremony. Johannes Quasten, in

*Music & Worship in Pagan & Christian Antiquity* (1983), writes: "The legends and myths of nearly all pagan peoples have sought to explain the elaborate use of music in their worship by indicating that the art of music was a gift of the gods to men."[7] He cites Censorius who explained how music was pleasing to the gods in the ancient world, and Horace, who stated that sacred music was a means of appeasement which, like the fragrance of incense and the blood of animals, disposed the gods to act favorably toward men. As such, music held an extremely importance place in all sacrificial ceremonies, such that flutes, cymbals, lyre, and tambourine were required in Greek sacrifices. Instruments and songs were also required in the mystery cults of Cybele and Isis. At a more profound level music as cultic action was understood to exercise a magical influence over the gods, so that it became a means by which men controlled the deities. For example, the worshippers of Isis made a din with their bells during the liturgy so as to keep the wicked Set away from the sacred action.[8] This kind of action has strong parallels with ancient Indian music and its control over the Devas.

Quasten summarizes the role of music in the ancient world by applying the classical terms *epiclesis* and *apotropaia*: "Inasmuch as all of antiquity was convinced that music had the power of epiclesis [calling down the gods], the step to its use as sacrifice was a short one, for both apotropaism [removing unwanted spirits] and epiclesis played a major role in sacrifice."[9] The term *epiclesis* was subsequently borrowed by the Christian tradition to refer to the drawing down of the Holy Spirit during the Eucharist, and is a useful category for understanding the general role of music as invitation to the deities as found, for example, in the Hindu tradition.

Celtic historian Karen Ralls-MacLeod, in her book *Music and the Celtic Otherworld: From Ireland to Iona* (2000), has affirmed the central role of music in all ancient Celtic traditions: "From the beautiful, enchanting music of the fairy harp to the sacred singing of the choirs of angels, Celtic literature has many references to a spiritual or supernatural dimension of music. This sacred dimension is called the Celtic Otherworld, in which music is often prominently featured."[10] Examples included fairy harpers, songs of mermaids, the power of the saint's bell, the singing of angels in heaven, musical trees, and so on. In Celtic literature "music is portrayed as one of the most potent forces of the Celtic imagination." In earlier times music was an integral part of culture that provided access to unseen realms: "The mysterious, sacred dimension of a people's culture and experience is most often described in terms of their religious beliefs and rituals, but various art forms can also be used to show this, including music. It seems as though many of these experiences are of a non-verbal nature, and that music can serve as an important communicative or expressive medium. . . . By a careful examination of the sources, it appears that the early Celts believed that music can give access to

reality in both every day, mundane and otherworldly contexts."[11] Music for the Celts was the definitive link from this world to the next: "Music is seen as a universal 'connector' to the Otherworld, and as an especially effective link between this world and the Otherworld."[12]

Musicologists and ethnomusicologists agree that music is a universal aspect of culture that is also central to religion in various ways. From the side of ethnomusicology, Bruno Nettl has strongly affirmed the ubiquitous connection between religion and music in his textbook *Excursions in World Music* (2001): "In all societies, music is found in religious ritual—it is almost everywhere a mainstay of sacred ceremonies—leading some scholars to suggest that perhaps music was actually invented for humans to have a special way of communicating with the supernatural."[13]

The complex interlacing of music and religion is articulated further by musicologist Robin Sylvan in *Traces of the Spirit: The Religious Dimensions of Popular Music* (2002): "Music is capable of functioning simultaneously at many different levels (physiological, psychological, socio-cultural, semiological, virtual, ritual, and spiritual) and integrating them into a coherent whole. So for a complex multidimensional phenomenon like religion, which also functions simultaneously at multiple levels, the fact that music is capable of conveying all these levels of complexity in a compelling and integrated package makes it a vehicle par excellence to carry the religious impulse."[14]

## RITUAL STUDIES

The quest to understand the seemingly intrinsic connection between religious ritual and music takes us to the discipline of ritual studies, where the arguments for the special significance of ritual are the most pronounced and a basis is provided for a broad definition of ritual that fills our expectations with regard to the presence of music. Ritual studies serves to underscore the central importance of ritual for religion and, in many cases, for all human existence. Anthropologist Mary Douglas has stated it succinctly: "As a social animal, man is a ritual animal. If ritual is suppressed in one form it crops up in others, more strongly and more intense the social interaction."[15] Anthropologist Victor Turner explains that ritual "holds the generating source of culture and structure."[16] Taking this notion further by tying ritual directly to religion, Nathan D. Mitchell, in his book *Liturgy and the Social Sciences* (1999), holds that "what is at stake in ritual behavior—as it develops in individuals and is ritually enacted by groups—is nothing less than the survival of the social order; . . . culture cannot be defined apart from cult."[17] In some areas of ritual studies the lens has become so wide that today in this field a scholar may use just about any term he or she likes for any concept.

Scholars in ritual studies have tended to hold an etic, or outsider, perspective on ritual. There are inherent values to this approach, as emphasized by ritual studies pioneer Ronald L. Grimes: "The value of etic theories lies in the uncovering of hidden meanings associated with otherwise obscure phenomena. . . . [For example] performance theories [of ritual] can be especially incisive when applied to events in religious settings, since religious leaders sometimes deny or even cover up performance aspects of their rites. Rites are enactments rendered special by virtue of their condensation, elevation, or stylization. They are not necessarily religious, but since religious rites often determine how practitioners and theorists alike conceptualize other kinds of ritual, it is crucial to study them."[18] Grimes then cautions against the uncritical application of terminologies with regard to ritual: "Any label—'ritual,' 'liturgy,' 'art,' 'dance,' 'music,' 'religion,' or 'drama,'—used without qualification to describe a traditional activity would likely be misleading, since the term would segregate a phenomenon that many intend to be deliberately integrative. So if we are to talk about religious activities as rites or performances, our definitions must be broad and provisional rather than restricted to what we in the West usually label 'religion' or 'theater.'"[19]

Accordingly, some of the most widely circulated theories are integrative in their approach. Anthropologist Roy A. Rappaport, in his monumental study *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity* (1999), argues that ritual is fundamental and indispensable to the human species.[20] And besides being the fundamental social act—in Mitchell's words, "the social act basic to humanity"—ritual is also transcendental or connected to transhuman dimensions, what Rappaport calls "Ultimate Sacred Postulates." For Rappaport, as Mitchell puts it, rituals' "deepest and most stable messages are canonical (consisting of messages concerned with ultimate realities not visibly present but conveyed through symbols). Canonical messages are never invented or encoded by participants; they are 'found' or 'discovered' as already given in and by the rite."[21] As stated elsewhere by Rappaport: "Ritual is not simply an alternative way to express certain things; . . . certain things can be expressed only by ritual."[22]

Adding weight to the etic perspective, Adam B. Seligman, Robert P. Weller, Michael J. Pruett, and Bennett Simon, in *Ritual and Its Consequences: An Essay on the Limits of Sincerity* (2008), discuss how rituals—like play—function to create "as if" worlds, rooted in the imaginative capacity of the human mind to create a subjunctive universe. Ritual, the authors claim, defines the boundaries of imagined worlds, including those of empathy and other realms of human creativity, such as music, architecture, and literature. Dismissing ritual as mere convention, the authors show how the conventions of ritual function to allow us to live together in a broken world. Ritual is work, endless work, but nonetheless highly important work. The Hindu sonic liturgy, seen from this etic perspective, is a

purely human construct of the imagination that functions as a remedy for the abject world of brokenness and pain. While there is some truth to this claim, the long history and persistence of the coexistence of ritual and music in India reveals more about the transhuman basis of creativity and adjustment than this scenario is willing to afford.

William Sax, Johannes Quack, and Jan Weinhold, in *The Problem of Ritual Efficacy* (2009), bring together nine scholars who address the issue of how rituals work, ranging across the fields of history, anthropology, medicine, and biblical studies. These essays place ritual in various contexts and address a set of debates between positivists, natural scientists, and religious skeptics on the one side and interpretive social scientists, phenomenologists, and religious believers on the other.

Tom F. Driver's *Liberating Rites: Understanding the Transformative Power of Ritual* (2006), offers valuable insights derived from his functional study of ritual in Haiti. This book illustrates ritual by presenting it as something raw, basic, and central to all living beings. Driver examines the many ways people use ritual to give order to their lives, to deepen feelings of communal belonging, and to transform the status quo. There are interesting points here, especially as he discusses creative performance as essential to religion and addresses the human longing for rituals that "work," combining meaning with power.

Fresh topics covered in ritual studies scholarship lend more credence to the present project, as ritual becomes increasingly identified with almost all religious behavior, even that which is normatively "anti-ritual." In Steven Heine and Dale S. Wright's edited volume, *Zen Ritual: Studies in Zen Buddhist Theory in Practice* (2007), ritual in Zen is presented very convincingly, shattering older conceptions of the anti-ritual nature of this branch of Buddhism. Although Beat poets had written about the demythologized, anti-ritualized spirit of Zen, this collection of essays discuss various Zen rituals, including those of zazen. As a more useful etic approach it uncovers aspects that are not affirmed within the tradition, setting aside what religion says about itself and focusing on what religion is actually about as discovered in historical records and sociological observation. Zen is revealed as inextricably associated with many varieties of ritual behavior.

Regarding the role of women in religious ritual, Stephanie W. Jamison, in *Sacrificed Wife / Sacrificer's Wife: Women, Ritual, and Hospitality in Ancient India* (1995), discusses the conceptual position of women in early India, specifically in the Vedic and early epic periods. By focusing on a single female role—the activities of the "Sacrificer's Wife" in solemn ritual, the book makes some valuable suggestions on how gender and social class may be important factors in the experiences of sonic liturgy.

While the field of ritual studies includes broad and integrative approaches, attempts to incorporate music in ritual theory have remained sporadic and

undeveloped within the discipline. The early work of Ronald L. Grimes, such as *Beginnings in Ritual Studies* (1982), while helpful in theoretical and reflective aspects of ritual in a generic sense, is not directly concerned with either liturgy or music. His more recent work, *Rite Out of Place: Ritual, Media, and the Arts* (2006), confesses to cover areas not within traditional religious parameters, such as film, theater, public discourse, and so on. Studies of related emic (insider) categories in other religious cultures serve to underscore the prevalence of the deliberate demarcation of ritual from other areas of normal life, especially those dealing with religious rites and ceremonies. What are needed are studies of religious rituals in context whereby the role of music and sound is brought out and examined.

In order to construct a working definition of ritual that best engages the phenomena of Hindu ritual and music, I draw on a recent volume of essays edited by Jens Kreinath, Jan Snoek, and Michael Stausberg entitled *Theorizing Rituals: Issues, Topics, Approaches, Concepts* (2008). Coeditor Jan Snoek, in his article "Defining Rituals," while not proclaiming a strict definition, offers a series of helpful parameters that help to focus attention on the special place of ritual in human society. After describing the problem of arriving at a satisfactory definition of ritual, he outlines, using superlative adjectives, a series of characteristics of ritual: "Ritual behavior is a particular mode of behavior, distinguished from common behavior. Its performers are (at least part of) its own audience. In general, all human actions can be part of ritual behavior, including speech acts. However, in each particular case the large majority of these will be traditionally sanctioned as proper ritual actions. Most ritual behavior takes place at specific places and/or specific times. Most ritual behavior is more formally stylized, structured, and standardized than most common behavior. Most ritual behavior is based on a script [written or oral]. Most ritual behavior is to some extent purposeful and symbolically meaningful for its participants. At least those playing an active part consider themselves to be participating in non-common behavior."[23] He indicates that there are polythetic or fuzzy areas and that much behavior in society may be ritual-like without being in effect ritual. Some additional clarification of terms is given in this article: *rite* should refer to the smallest unit of a larger complex of ritual behavior. It has also meant a regionally accepted version of a ritual, as in Roman Rite, Coptic Rite, and so forth. C*eremony* is the smallest configuration of rites into a meaningful whole, that is, a short sequence of rites. *Ceremonial* is the total configuration of ceremonies for any ritual occasion. The term *ritual* may also be understood as the actual script or playbook, oral or written, outlining each step of any ritual procedure.

The emic perspective lends primary credence to the insider definitions and perspectives on ritual. While the etic, or outsider, perspective has many critical

advantages, it does not suffice by itself and must be balanced with the insider views, especially in topics of religious practice and belief. The discipline of phenomenology of religion has always taken seriously the positions advanced by practitioners and believers. In the lengthy account of emic perspectives in the field of ritual studies edited by Michael Stausberg, "Ritual: A Lexicographic Survey of Some Related Terms from an Emic Perspective" (2008), categories of religious ritual are described by scholars from different cultures. They are unanimous in accepting the notion of sacred ritual as a separate endeavor or realm apart from other ordinary activities. Thus the etic concept of "anything can be considered ritual" is strongly called into question.

At odds with etic assumptions, the entry by Alex Michaels titled "Sanskrit" (2008) in Stausberg's survey clarifies the contours of Vedic and Hindu rituals and how they are construed as separated from other activities. He explains: "In Sanskrit, there is no one single word or term that could be considered equivalent to 'ritual' (whatever it might mean), but a number of terms that come close to it."[24] The terms *karma* or *kriya* (from *kr*— "to do") refer to religious rites or ceremonies in Vedic texts but in the Upanishads are expanded to include all actions within the world (*samsara*) leading to rebirth in the cycle of reincarnation. The term *samskara* ("to put something correctly together, to make something perfect") includes the life-cycle rites, including birth, tonsure, *upanayana*, marriage, cremation, and any purificatory rite. The word *Yajna* is understood to mean a Vedic sacrificial rite, a fire sacrifice, including domestic (*grihya*) and public (*srauta*). *Utsava* (*mela*, "fair") in Hindu parlance means a communal festival related to mythic events, harvest cycle, ancestors, or pilgrimages. Rituals or rites are subdivided into *nitya* (compulsory), *naimittika* (occasional), and *kamya* (optional). *Puja* (either from Skt. *puj-* , "to honor," or from Tamil *pucu*, "to anoint" somebody with something), means worship, adoration, respect, or homage. As elaborated by Michaels: "Puja basically denotes the worship of deities according to a ritual script that traditionally includes sixteen elements of service (*upacara*) that can be reduced to five essential parts (*pancopacara*): anointment of the deity (*gandha*, *anulepana*), flowers (*puspa*), incense (*dhupa*), lights or lamps (*dipa*), feeding of the deity (*naivedya*)."[25]

What is significant throughout the Hindu literature and testimony is that religious ritual is always separated from ordinary action by virtue of the results that are believed to occur for the practitioner. This insider perspective is crucial in understanding the nuances attached to the various terminologies. Michaels recalls the philosophical position as argued by the Mimamsakas and stressed in the *Bhagavad-Gita*: "The Mimamsaka classification of acts makes it clear that Indian scholars of ritual generally distinctively separated sacrificial acts from normal or worldly acts. Each ritual act begins with a declaration of what the ritual is

intended to do. . . . Rituals are seen as constructions of a world with which man ritually identifies himself. . . . Only by ritual, but not by 'normal' (karmic) action, can he be liberated. Thus, ritual action has to be separated from non-ritual action, as the Bhagavad-Gita (3.9) clearly says: 'this world is bound by the bonds of action (karma) except where that action is done sacrificially.'"[26]

In light of the Indian materials Michaels issues a word of caution to modern ritual theory that may be tempted to see all action as ritual: "Within the Vedic-Brahmanic worldview it is always clear and demarcated . . . when ritual (sacrificial) action begins and where it ends. Whatever is not construed by ritual (sacrificial) action is not seen as ritual. This could be regarded as a kind of warning for modern ritual theory when [in India] 'ritual' is seen as a construction of acts that are regarded as separated from 'normal' or 'natural' action."[27]

As examples of both approaches, one etic and one emic, two studies of Jain rituals and Jain music in India are of timely interest and relevance here. Caroline Humphrey and James Laidlaw, in *The Archetypal Actions of Ritual: A Theory of Ritual Illustrated by the Jain Rite of Worship* (1994), present a detailed ethnography of the ritual of daily worship before a temple idol (Puja) by Svetambara Jains in western India. In typical etic fashion they argue that ritual is not a logically separate type of activity but rather a quality that can be attributed to a wide range of everyday activities. They argue that Jain worship, while ostensibly similar to Hindu Puja, may be distinguished from it by examining the intent of the worshippers and the overall perspective on life of each community. Mary Whitney Kelting, in *Singing to the Jinas: Jain Laywomen, Mandal Singing, and the Negotiations of Jain Devotion* (2001), offers a thorough emic account of the practice of Stavan singing by laywomen and how Jain vernacular hymns are performed in ritual context. Jain women both accept and rewrite the idealized roles received from religious texts, practices, and social expectation, according to which female religiosity is a symbol of Jain perfection. This study is close in theme and spirit to the present book and stimulates comparative discussion with regard to both gender and the nature of music in Hindu and Jain experiences.

Attempts by contemporary musicians have strengthened the case for the serious study of sound and music by insiders. Canadian composer R. Murray Schafer coined the term *soundscape* in the 1970s to indicate "the sonic environment, the sum total of all sounds within any definitive area which surround us as a result of certain historical, technological, and demographic processes." Schafer's soundscape, comprising keynote sounds, sound signals, and soundmarks, has been used effectively to describe the "auditory environment" of religious communities, as in "The Auditory Environment of Emerging Christian Worship," chapter two of Edward Foley's *Ritual Music: Studies in Liturgical Musicology* (1995), and in Charles Hirschkind's *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic*

*Counterpublics* (2006), which describes the Islamic "pious soundscape." Steven Feld, in *Senses of Place* (1996), advanced the notion of "acoustemology" (acoustic epistemology), whereby the bodily experience of sound is a special way of knowing. As an examination of how subjects know the world in and through sound, acoustemology also has wide implications for the study of religion.

Instead of the domains of religious studies and ritual studies, however, the field placing the most attention on the oral or sonic dimensions of ritual, including music, is, not surprisingly, the place where an interest in Rudolf Otto's work has been consistently on the rise. The most visible and credible attempts to take up the themes and issues originally outlined by Otto and Van der Leeuw more than a half-century ago, including the gradual reconciliation of religion and music, have come from Christian theologians and historians working in the field of liturgical studies. Though emerging in renewed form out of conservative reactions to the delimiting of the sacred liturgy after Vatican II, this field, when expanded beyond the Christian base, is the most developed and useful discipline of discourse for the study of ritual and music in non-Western cultures such as the Hindu tradition.

## LITURGICAL STUDIES

Liturgical studies is a field that, while initially grounded in Catholic and Protestant Christian tradition as well as in Judaism, has been rapidly expanding to included non-Western traditions. When seen in cross-cultural perspective, the role of music often parallels the role of worship in religion. And when music is understood as sacred or "religious," then it generally functions within the ritual or liturgy in some kind of relationship to what is of absolute value to believers, such as the sacred or a transcendent reality. Thus almost all liturgical action in religion involves music and chant.

The term *liturgy* (from *laos*, "people," and *ergos*, "work" or "action") is understood within the field of liturgical studies to be a series of rites that combine word, music, action, symbol, and/or object that is performed on behalf of a group. This term most often refers to the public ritual or worship of a religious community that is performed by priests or other functionaries. The term *paraliturgical* denotes private or individual rituals that are nonetheless tied symbolically to larger public liturgies, such as rites of passage and other domestic ceremonies.

Liturgical studies, while normally a realm of specialized research, has been expanding its corpus of material beyond dealing with music and chant in Jewish and Christian liturgies. But while still theoretically rooted in Western religion, the methods and structures of analysis of liturgical studies apply equally well to Hindu traditions of worship. The obvious presence of "liturgy" in many other religious traditions expands the theoretical possibilities for the presence of "liturgical

music" worldwide, as current opinions in liturgical studies are moving toward endorsement of music as a central element in all religious action. Liturgical scholar Joseph Gelineau has affirmed the embedded nature of singing and music in all liturgies: "The liturgy is the shared activity of a people gathered together. No other sign brings out this communal dimension so well as singing."[28] In fact, his ecumenical perspective indicates profound restructuring of the categories of sound, music, and sacrifice, as he states his premise with examples from the Bible as well as Hinduism:

> Sound—voice or music—constitutes a sacred link with the transcendent being. The religious significance of the sacrifice of sound is global, at once evocation and adoration, invocation and praise, from the syllable "OM" which contains within it all the acoustic powers, to the vocal expression of a kyrie or an alleluia. The sacrifice of sound is at the root of all cults containing song and music. In the biblical revelation, it constitutes a force which carries us from blood sacrifices to the pure sacrifice of the lips, already present in the prophet Hosea (Hos 14:2) and taken up again by the Epistle to the Hebrews (Heb 13:15). It will culminate in the sacrifice of thanksgiving (*sacrificium laudis*) from Psalm 50, vv. 14 and 23, to the Christian Eucharist where it becomes the sacrament of spiritual sacrifice.[29]

The documents of the Second Vatican Council (1963–1965) on sacred music reveal the close and necessary connection between the divine word and musical expression as directives for all types of liturgical activity within Roman Catholicism, including the sacraments: "Liturgical worship is given a more noble form when it is celebrated in song. . . . The unity of hearts is more commonly achieved by the union of voices. . . . One cannot find anything more religious and more joyful in sacred celebrations than a whole congregation expressing its faith and devotion in song."[30] The effects of this pronouncement, while expressing traditional intentions of piety and surrender to Roman Catholic beliefs, was soon believed to have compromised the liturgy through the withdrawal of Latin as compulsory and the allowance of too much flexibility in the musical dimensions of the service.

As a conservative response to what appeared as the "deterioration of the Liturgy," theologian Aidan Kavanagh affirmed that the real meaning of the liturgy was "symbolic, enduring, invariable, and ultimately independent of human agents. It is neither produced by participants, nor defeated by their emotions, nor exhausted by repetition." By this he meant that the liturgy, once fixed, must not be tampered with, as it served to guarantee continuous religious meaning for the community. Kavanagh then warned that we should "adapt culture to the liturgy rather than liturgy to culture."[31] To make his case stronger he appealed to other religious traditions to make a universal proposition about liturgical activity in

religion: "The liturgy is an art constrained by rule. . . . Every liturgical system in existence, Christian or not, is based on this principle simply because so highly complex a social art as liturgy must maintain a defined order of regular expectations lest it fail to be a participated event."[32] In order to understand Kavanagh's concerns and methods fully, it is useful to note that already at the time of Vatican II some Roman Catholic theologians had begun to address the issue of ritual or liturgy in religion. They understood that in order to build a more solid case for authentic liturgical activity, the Church needed to situate its own liturgical tradition within the broader inherent sacrality of the universe. And to work this cause to its real fruition, the phenomenology of religion became an effective tool, as culled from the writings of Otto, Van der Leeuw, and its more recent exponent, Mircea Eliade (1907–1986).

Theologian Louis Bouyer, in his erudite study *Rite and Man: Natural Sacredness and Christian Liturgy* (1963), acknowledged the role of Mircea Eliade in effectively articulating the natural religious impulse of humanity: "More effectively than anyone else, Eliade has helped us to understand that the religious attitude is not merely a primitive attitude of man in the face of reality. It is a permanent attitude. For it is the relation of man to his whole experience. Through that relation man discovers the world as a totality which is also a unity, and a unity perceived as being at once both immanent and transcendent. . . . The history of comparative religions has had to recognize the fact that religion is a permanent, irreducible, and generally dominating element in all human experience."[33]

Bouyer then explained the primacy of ritual within the universal history of religion: "A rite is not simply one type of action among many others. It is the typical human action, inasmuch as it is connected with the word as the expression and realization of man in the world, and to the degree that this expression and realization are immediately and fundamentally religious. . . . A rite is a human action in which man apprehends himself as a religious being, . . . what a man does in the rite is a divine action, an action which God performs through and in man, as much as man himself performs it in and through God."[34] He then opined that rites are rites because of their natural sacredness, as bestowed by divine favor: "This is why at all times and in all places rites are considered to be the work of the gods. The men who celebrate these rites would not celebrate them as they do if they thought that they were themselves their authors. . . . Rites exist precisely as rites because it is believed that if they can be instituted at all, it is the gods who have instituted them and are the real agents of the rites, working through and beyond the action of the priests."[35] These ideas were soon to circulate among many theologians.

In the subsequent anthology *The Study of Liturgy* (1978), theologian J. D. Crichton discussed Otto's paradigm in relation to worship in his essay "A Theology

of Worship": "Worship is seen to have a value and significance of its own that cannot be explained or explained away as superstition or magic or the expression of fear. Worship is a religious phenomenon, a reaching out through the fear that always accompanies the sacred to the mysterium conceived as tremendum but also fascinans, because behind it and in it there is an intuition of the Transcendent. But if in this sense worship is profoundly religious it is also profoundly human."[36]

Theologian Richard Viladesau then broadened the scope of the issue to include all religions and the arts in *Theology and the Arts: Encountering God through Music, Art, and Rhetoric* (2000), in which he presented a case for the theological foundations of culture, including music, in all its forms of expression. Building upon the categories presented earlier by Otto, he stated:

> My proposal is based on the conviction that that there is an underlying implicit or transcendental dimension of religious experience. Its object—the mysterium tremendum et fascinans, the numinous—would then be ontologically identical with the ultimate object of aesthetic or moral or intellectual experience; it would never be experienced simply in itself as a categorical object but would always be "co-experienced" as the dimension of mystery implicit in all human knowing and loving; and it would ground the analogies that are in fact found in the human reaction to the beautiful, the good, the true, and the holy. In this perspective, the ultimate reason for music's ability to mediate the spiritual is not merely that it echoes emotions that are felt in religious experience, but also and more profoundly that its object is the beautiful, which itself is godly and thus leads toward God.[37]

Viladesau broke new ground by qualifying the distinction between the specific "Christian revelation" and a "universal revelation" that encompassed all experiences of sacred music: "There is a universal revelation of beauty, of which all music partakes. This is separate from the uniqueness of the Christian revelatory Word in Christ. This is why mere instrumental music may be a potent factor in the experience of the sacred."[38] He therefore opened the distinct probability of non-Western cultures participating in authentic experiences of the sacred through music. Taking this further in terms of natural theology, Anthony Monti, in *A Natural Theology of the Arts: Imprint of the Spirit* (2003), fully affirmed that the arts are theological by their very nature and not simply when they are explicitly religious and argued that art conveys the real presence of God, even when not labeled as such.

Liturgical studies scholars have routinely stressed the correlative association of myth (narrative words) and ritual. Kavanagh maintained this point by explaining that myth is the "conceiving" aspect, and ritual the "enacting" aspect: "Both myth

and ritual thus appear to me as strictly correlative and inseparable junctions: their reciprocal union is what I mean by cult. The outcome of cult, so understood, is what I understand as culture."[39] Frederick M. Denny and Rodney L. Taylor, in their introduction to the edited volume *The Holy Book in Comparative Perspective* (1985), distinguished the two closely related dimensions of scripture, the informative (myth) and performative (ritual).

Indeed, in order for religion to be natural and authentic, rites cannot stand alone but must always be tied with sacred words in a kind of balance. Bouyer emphasized the balance between myth and ritual such that an imbalance would jeopardize the status of religion itself: "Sacred words and sacred actions are as a matter of fact always found joined together. . . . If words and rites are distinct and are to a certain extent reciprocally opposed, their constant connection must mean a natural relationship. This is so true that a decisive dominance of one over the other effects a change in the dominant element itself which seems to foretell the downfall of religion and perhaps quite simply of the religious man himself."[40] Bouyer cited both extremes of imbalance as situations to be avoided, that is, meaningless rituals versus abstract meaning without ritual practice. For example, the Sabian priests in Roman cults had many rituals but forgot the meaning of the words, and modern Protestant services stress the spoken word without ritual and sacraments.

According to Bouyer, the true authenticity of language is in its natural connection to ritual. Words alone do not suffice, nor does a ritual without words. For there to be authentic or natural religion, both must inhere in each other in a kind of mystical bond. And while Bouyer recognized the imbalance within religion, we have underscored the similar problem in the study of religion. Thus while words have become devitalized in religious life, words have become stale and lifeless in the academy because of their divorce from living rituals.

We argue in this book that sound and music provide that necessary bond between myth (words) and ritual (action) in religion. And for ritual worship to sustain that necessary element of mystery within religious life, music must be acknowledged as the most important and vital balancing factor between word and action in religious rituals, public and private, preventing their decline into the extremes of either verbal pedagogy or mindless ritualistic actions.

## LITURGICAL MUSICOLOGY

A scholar of liturgy who has outlined some useful parameters for developing further insights into ritual and music and a liturgical professor, Edward Foley, has addressed many of the salient issues regarding the role of music in ritual behavior in *Ritual Music: Studies in Liturgical Musicology* (1995). At the beginning of chapter five entitled "Toward a Sound Theology," Foley raises the basic question

of why sound/music is integral to religious worship, noting that, "even if one accepts the premise that music is integral to worship, few have attempted to explore why this is so. As a result, most commentators on the subject—be they musicians or liturgists—find themselves addressing questions of how music is integral to worship rather than questions of whether or why music is integral to worship."[41] In this work Foley presents some resolution with careful insights into the meaning of sound and music in religious ritual and experience.

During the course of his analysis Foley defines ritual in line with Eliade's notion of *homo religiosus:* "Ritual is patterned, shared, public behavior, expressing a meaning and purpose that cannot be put into words alone, in the face of some reality larger than ourselves."[42] He then quickly brings music into the discussion with reference to the realm of symbols that inhabit a space beyond rational discourse: "Rituals achieve the inexpressible by means of symbols; and although all art is symbolic, opening up levels of reality which can be broached in no other way, the most highly developed type of such purely connotational semantic is music."[43]

Employing a phenomenological method he calls "liturgical musicology," or simply the ritual-music approach, Foley begins by stating that "sound, as such, does not really exist in the world around us. What does exist is vibration. . . . In other words, there is no sound until we hear it; . . . it is not only a physical phenomenon, but also the response to that phenomenon and to a lesser degree the intentionality behind the phenomenon that enables us to distinguish between noise and communication."[44]

Foley then argues that sound events "are not only active events in and of themselves, but dynamic to the extent that they engage the other and captivate the listener; . . . sound events like human song are fundamentally unitive: uniting singer with the song, listener with the song, singer with the listener, the listener with other listeners, and even in a new way the listener with her or himself."[45] He reflects on the uniqueness characteristic of religion in its encounter with a personal "other" rather than an abstract One or essence. Speaking of religious music as "sound events," he presents sound as an "experience of the personal," and sound-events are not simply "experiences of something other, but of another." Reminiscent of Martin Buber's "I and Thou" approach, Foley states that "sound encounters are keyed to personal encounters. They occur in the realm of acoustic space which is translated by the human imagination as an arena of personal presence. Thus the sound event by its very nature supports the revelation of God who is perceived as a person. Music, in particular, is an infallible indicator of human presence since music, properly speaking, is a human creation that does not otherwise occur in nature. Consequently music serves as a special sound metaphor for the unnamable God who chooses to reveal Self in personal terms."[46] The concept

of a personal deity is directly relevant to the Hindu materials discussed herein, as Hindu sonic liturgy entails a participatory experience of the listeners and the musicians in relationship with God or the numinous.

Foley then explains that since music is the most refined of all sound events, it reflects the characteristics of all sound phenomena to the highest degree. Music is thus the most suitable feature for ritual worship because "music's temporality, human genesis, dynamism and apparent insubstantial nature enable it to serve as a unique symbol of God [the sacred], suggesting presence without confinement, eliciting wonder without distance, and enabling union which is both personal and corporate. More critical than any other characteristic for liturgy is music's capacity to wed itself to word and share in its power, for music like word is both event and utterance. Music can, therefore, be understood as necessary or integral to liturgy because it has the capacity to reveal images of God and the community as well as to realize the implications of those images in a unique and irreplaceable way."[47]

In line with Otto, Foley affirms that music comes closest to expressing the meanings associated with the numinous or higher truths: "Music has symbolized the mysterious and wholly other since the dawn of creation. . . . This elusiveness in form and content is part of the reason why music is so often used for communicating with the spirit world. In the Judeo-Christian tradition music is an effective means for communicating with a God who is both present and hidden."[48] He continues: "Music creates that acoustic space which—as much as any other environment—enables ritual precisely to express meaning and purpose that cannot be put into words alone, in the face of some reality larger than ourselves. . . . Traditional societies have known that beautiful sounds convey feelings and thoughts more powerfully, more completely, and more exactly than does any word, and consequently is universally tied to their rituals. Thus, music's most important and frequent use is in religious rituals."[49] Foley even suggests a kind of "natural alliance between text and tune . . . [whereby] music has a special capacity to heighten and serve the word which occupies a central place in worship."[50]

The irreplaceable nature of music's contribution to religious worship is a function of its special acoustical properties, which enable music to engage the assembly, reveal the divine, and enable the communion between the assembly and God or the sacred in ways unique to this art form. Accordingly Foley enumerated four acoustic properties which allow music to accomplish these things: music is time-bound, music is the indicator of personal presence, music is dynamic, and music is intangible.

*Music is time-bound.* Music requires performance in historical time in order for it to exist: "Sound as one of the basic ingredients of music is considered more real or existential than any other sense object and situates us in the midst of actuality

and simultaneity (cf. Walter J. Ong 1967: 111, 128). Because of this existential quality, music is able to image a God who . . . intervened in time and reveals Self in human history. Furthermore, this time-bound art has the ability to engage the community in the present reality of worship."[51]

*Music is an indicator of personal presence.* Music is one of the universal symbols of human civilization and a symbol of human presence: "Since it is a human creation, music is itself a symbol of human presence. . . . God . . . is not only believed to be an abstract power intervening in history but a personal God who intervenes on behalf of a beloved. . . . This intervention . . . took an auditory form. . . . In view of this auditory bias in God's self revelation . . . music as the most sophisticated form of sound has the capacity to symbolize the personal nature of God's self will especially as it unites to the Word."[52]

*Music is dynamic.* Sound and music have the ability to announce presence and also engage another in dialogue: "Because of sound's ability to resonate inside two individuals at the same time it has the capacity to strike a common chord and elicit sympathetic vibrations from those who hear it. It, therefore, is dynamic in its ability to enter the world of the other and elicit a response."[53]

*Music is intangible.* In line with Otto, Foley states that "the paradox of all sound phenomena including music is that sound/music is perceivable but elusive, recognizable but uncontainable. The apparently insubstantial nature of music is one of the reasons why it has symbolized the mysterious and wholly other since the dawn of creation. Music as a non-discursive symbol is not only perceived as insubstantial but itself seems to have an ambivalence of content. . . . Furthermore, music offers itself as a powerful symbol for the Divine Self who is recognizable while remaining the unnamable. Music thus enables us to encounter and know God without presuming to capture or contain the divine Self."[54]

Instead of simply prioritizing songs according to the religious importance of texts, as previous scholarship had done, Foley's ritual-music approach affirms that there are four types of ritual music:[55]

Music Alone: Music without text or ritual action. Examples: drums before a Buddhist ritual, organ prelude before the Eucharist, *shehnai* music before Hindu ceremony, taps during a funeral, drums and hand cymbals between Puja activities.

Music and Ritual Action: Music without text but tied to ritual activity. Examples: organ mass during preparation of the Eucharist, dirge or slow march at a funeral, "Hail to the Chief" during arrival of the president, "Pomp and Circumstance" at graduation, "Wedding March" at a wedding.

Music and Text: Music tied to text without ritual action. Examples: Gregorian chant (for example, Vespers), Qur'an recitation, Torah cantillation, Christian hymns, Theravada Buddhist chanting, Vedic Stotras preceding the Yajna, national anthem at sports events.

Music and Text and Ritual Action: Music united with words and tied to ritual activity. Examples: Haveli Sangit and Samaj Gayan in Hindu worship, Latin chants performed during the Mass, Tibetan Buddhist chanting during rituals, Jazz funeral hymn "Just a Closer Walk with Thee" in procession.

A fifth category would be Text and Ritual Action without Music. This would still be a sound event including speaking or reading something during a ritual activity. Examples: Pledge of Allegiance, swearing of oaths on the Bible.

When these rubrics are expanded and amplified with examples from other religions, they provide useful frameworks for the more neutral work of "sonic liturgy." Although Foley outlined the four acoustical properties and the four types of ritual music described above in order to analyze sound and music as part of Christian ritual and liturgy, he indicated the need for more cross-cultural work to be undertaken in this field: "There is so little comparable work on the theology of music or liturgical music."[56] In answer to this call the present book seeks to contribute to the concerns raised by Foley by attempting to present a lucid understanding of why music plays a central role in Hindu worship.

Mary E. McGann, an American liturgical scholar and faculty member at the Graduate Theological Union, has endorsed Foley's call for more comparative studies in music and religion by orienting her academic approach to the need for wider understanding of the central role of music in a variety of world religious cultures. According to her, music and the arts "are a compendium of religious, social, and cultural realizations of relatedness. From the perspective of liturgical theory, they are not embellishments but constitutive of what takes place in liturgy, affecting how all other elements are experienced and participating in the creation of meaning that takes place."[57] Music and song are thus not used as mere decoration or background ambience but express key cultural factors within the worship communities themselves. She stresses that the holistic approach is more effective in understanding the role of music as it is inseparable from ritual: "Music making and ritualization must be interpreted as an integrated whole. Music unfolds not only in ritual but as ritual, as a mode of ritual performance. An assembly's musical performance inevitably influences the whole ritual process."[58]

In making a strong case for the importance of ritual for sacred music, Stephen A. Marini, in *Sacred Song in America: Religion, Music, and Public Culture* (2003), argues that merely the mythic content of a song, that is, the lyrics and their narrative dimension, is not sufficient to make it sacred or "religious"; it must contain the ritual element. He states: "For a song to be sacred, it must possess not only belief content but also ritual intention and form. Ritual is the defining performance condition for sacred song, as mythic content is its defining cognitive condition. . . . In order for song to be religious expression it must be presented with sacred intentionality as part of effective ritual action. . . . Sacred song is an

extraordinary vehicle for conducting believers into the ritual dimension. It may indeed be the single most powerful medium of the ritual process."[59]

For both McGann and Marini music and song are the key modes of ritual expressiveness. Music structures time in various ways, song inhabits the acoustical space, and the singing of songs permits specific words to take on the cultural resonances and style of a community. McGann is optimistic about the trends in liturgical studies toward increasing attention to performance traditions rather than the mere study of texts. Yet she is apprehensive about the current state of research into musical aspects of liturgies in different contexts. Despite advances in specialized fields, "little has been done to develop methods for studying music within a community's worship performance, and for assessing how a community's musical performance affects the entire continuum of liturgical action, shaping and expressing an embodied theology."[60]

Specific research methods for developing the field of comparative liturgy and music are revealed in *Exploring Music as Worship and Theology: Research in Liturgical Practice* (2002), in which McGann describes an interdisciplinary approach: "The method is necessarily interdisciplinary. Each of the three fields of Liturgical Studies, Ethnomusicology, and Ritual Studies offers us a different yet complementary view of what takes place when a liturgical assembly makes music. Taken together, the perspectives, theories, and methods of these three disciplines provide a basis for studying and interpreting music as an integral part of liturgical performance."[61] She offers a persuasive call for more interdisciplinary work in music and liturgy in various religious cultures: "It is my hope that other scholars will take up the work of studying worship music, using all or parts of this method, or developing comparable methods of their own. The approach I take can be used in a variety of cultural and denominational settings, and can be adapted to a range of musical idioms."[62]

Terry Muck, in his innovative essay "Psalm, Bhajan, and Kirtan: Songs of the Soul in Comparative Perspective" (2001), provides a good example of the type of comparative and interdisciplinary research into religion and music that both Foley and McGann are recommending. Muck discusses three varieties of sacred song—one Western and two Indian—and finds that they each reflect the "ineffable" or "sublime" realm in a unique way: "The difficulty in identifying defining characteristics of religious song is that these characteristics are precisely those that go beyond definition. Religious song refers one to the sublime dimensions of life, the ineffable, the beyond, the indefinable. Perhaps the best definition is one that acknowledges it is really no definition at all because it admits that its subject is indefinable. . . . Religious songs, then, are those that have the capacity to present the unpresentable, the sublime. . . . Clearly Psalms, Bhajan, and Kirtan have as

their subject matter, their evocative basis, and their performance this area called the sublime."[63] Psalms, Bhajans, and Kirtans each have their own religious context within a specific community of worship, whether in Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, or Sikhism, and exemplify the notion of what Otto described as a personal encounter with God or the ineffable:

> Psalm, Bhajan, and Kirtan speak truth and open one to God. Their singing represents one aspect of the quintessence of the religious act. But these religious, devotional songs are more than theology, worship, and liturgy. They are all of these together—and more. . . . Religious, devotional songs are directed from human beings toward the object of devotion. . . . Humans direct their religious songs to the transcendent object with awe and reverence in the face of sacred power; they are sung with confidence and trust that the transcendent is real; and they are sung with a single-minded concentration that befits the sincerity required of such an endeavor.[64]

Utilizing his own particular expertise, Muck establishes the basis for serious comparative discourse about music in religious worship: "Clearly the consensus in all three traditions is that religious, devotional songs may be used individually or in groups for purposes of worship, and/or petition with a wide variety of musical styles, as long as they are faithful to the religious traditions' understanding of the transcendent and effective in generating ways of connecting singers to that transcendent."[65]

Muck cites the present author's earlier work *Sonic Theology: Hinduism and Sacred Sound* (1993) in order to underscore his comparative viewpoint about the devotional object of sacred music: "The art of intoning sacred sound has been seen (in Hinduism) to both inaugurate and sustain the soteriological quest toward whichever Hindu god, goddess, or heaven is targeted."[66]

Those who engage in the study of other cultures, religion, and music, must be able to move beyond their own categories of interpretation, to see things from another point of view and to reach an empathetic awareness of how a community makes meaning musically and ritually. While this approach should contain some of the etic perspective, including the element of functionalism of the social sciences, the ideal case combines it with a deeper empathy and subtle awareness of the absolute value that ritual and music have for the believers and practitioners.

## TERMINOLOGY FOR SONIC LITURGY

In preparation for the study of ritual and music in Hindu tradition, it is useful to list some precise terms drawn from various disciplines that are helpful in examining sound or music events as they occur in various liturgies.

*Anamnesis*: Remembrance of a past historical or mythical event, as in music during Passover or Christ's Passion or in the remembrance of Rama's victory over Ravana in the Hindu epic Ramayana.

*Apotropaia*: Removal of unwanted spirits or demons, through the chanting of specific texts or the playing of loud and brash instruments. This effect is obtained in Hindu, Buddhist, Shinto, and tribal religions.

*Catharsis*: Purification from sin or defilement. This is found in mantra chanting in Hinduism and in Buddhist recitation of the Pali Canon.

*Cosmogony:* Reenactment of the creation myth. Examples of music in this function would include the music of New Year ceremonies in many religions as well as ritual combat. Several of the Vedic sacrifices reenact the cosmogony and involve complex styles of chant and the singing of hymns.

*Didactic:* Teaching doctrine, as found in Jewish lessons, Hindu Puranic recitation, and the chanting of the Buddhist Pali Canon.

*Doxology:* Praise or glorification of God or a deity. In response to receiving the gift of life from their creator, humans offer praise. As such, ethically speaking, humans are under a kind of obligation to make music for the glory of God and not for their own amusement. This function is termed doxological (doxa, "glory") because music is used to glorify or praise the divine. Music as "doxology" is also fully present in other theistic musical traditions: Kirtan and Bhajan in Hinduism, Qawwali in Islam, and Shabad in Sikhism, but not in Buddhism, which does not recognize a creator.

*Epiclesis:* Invitation of a god or divine being to a sacrifice or worship occasion. Borrowed from classical pagan vocabulary, this term is used to depict the priestly action of inviting the Holy Spirit into the sacramental bread and wine in Roman Catholicism. In a broader sense it may refer to the mantras in a Vedic Yajna, Hindu devotional music, and other forms of religious practice in the world. Music here serves a distinct purpose apart from mere praise or expiation.

*Eschatology:* Expressing the end times. Music that is eschatological represents or expresses a future state of being, such as those described in the biblical books of Isaiah (6:3) and Revelation (5:8–10). This type may also be found in Jewish messianic songs, Christian hymns, Hindu Bhajans, Buddhist prayers, or Sikh Shabads. The Hindu ritual music studied herein fits with this mode, as the units of ritual/musical time accumulate to provide rewards in the heavenly afterlife.

*Eucharistic:* Giving thanks, as also found in Sikhism, temple Hinduism, and Judaism.

Expiation: Asking forgiveness of sin or transgression from a deity or divine being.

*Exstasis:* Ecstasy, as in Sufism, Hasidism, Hindu Bhakti, and some Buddhist sects. Music is employed to achieve particular states of ecstasy and bliss, termed exstasis in the texts of ancient mystery religions.

*Katanyxis*: Contrition or remorse. Besides Christianity, this is found in some forms of Hindu Kirtan and Sikh Shabads.

*Koinonia:* Communion between the human and divine world. The notion of musical unity among human beings, martyrs, and saints is found in the Christianity and also in archaic and Asian religions where music celebrates a communal meal among humans and the gods, as practiced in ancient Vedic India or in temple Hinduism.

*Litaneia*: Petitionary prayer, as in the Roman Catholic Kyrie Eleison ("Lord Have Mercy"), in Judaism, temple Hinduism, or in many of the Sikh Shabads.

*Propitiation:* Seeking the favor or blessing from a deity or divine being.

### RITUAL AND MUSIC IN HINDU TRADITION

Many of the theoretical aspects of sacred sound in Hindu traditions have been discussed in the present author's earlier book, *Sonic Theology: Hinduism and Sacred Sound.* These may be summarized as follows. As a basis for approaching the study of sacred sound in Hinduism, the Vedas and Upanishads (4000–1000 B.C.E.) offer information about chant and vocal utterances in relation to cultic sacrifices to the gods. These ancient Indo-Aryan texts are said to be eternal, authorless, and the embodiment of the primeval sound that generated the universe. This sacred sound is variously known as the syllable *Om* and as Sabda-Brahman and is described as the Supreme Absolute in the Upanishads. The compact elemental sound of Om becomes manifest through the power of oral chant and music and is first discussed in terms of Nada-Brahman in the Agamas, Pancaratras, and Tantras. In the later theistic traditions, whether Vaishnavism (Vishnu or Krishna worship), Saivism (Siva worship), or Saktism (goddess worship), the term and concept of Nada-Brahman ("sacred sound") gained ascendancy while simultaneously being articulated in musicological texts as well those of the Tantra and Yoga traditions. Nada-Brahman encompassed, in addition to linguistic sounds and utterances, all musical and other nonlinguistic sounds. The term *Nada-Brahman* referred to the cosmic sound that may be either unmanifest (*anahata*, "unstruck") or manifest (*ahata*, "struck"). Since the Upanishadic Brahman pervaded the exterior cosmos as well as the interior human soul at its core, the notion of sacred sound as Nada-Brahman provided a veritable thread binding the human realm to the divine. Musical treatises discussed Nada-Brahman as the foundation of musical sound, and Yoga texts used the term *Nada-Brahman* to refer to the musical sounds heard during deep meditation. Nada-Brahman was thus essential to Indian views of the salvational dimension of music, for music, as a direct manifestation of Nada, was seen as a means of access to the highest spiritual realities. Music was viewed as both bhukti (entertainment) and as a vehicle toward Moksham (liberation). Combining the metaphysical notions of Nada-Brahman, the aesthetics of Rasa theory, and the structures of Raga (melody types) and Tala (rhythms), the various schools of Indian classical music have carried forth the formal traditions of music to the present day.

The present work, *Sonic Liturgy: Ritual and Music in Hindu Tradition*, builds upon these premises and is in many ways a sequel to the earlier work. Yet it is more than that, since it pursues a practical application and exploration of some of the important commonalities associated with sacred sound on the ground, so to speak, in ritual and liturgy, especially through the new category of sonic liturgy. This work may also be seen as describing sacred sound in practice as opposed to sacred sound in theory. The "practice" that is focused upon is primarily the musical dimension in the context of ritual worship, beginning with the Vedic Yajna, then the Hindu Puja, and lastly, the Vaishnava Seva.

If one were to ask casually about the role of music in Hindu worship, the question would undoubtedly elicit some common-sense responses: "Well, of course Hindu worship includes music" or "all the Hindus I know sing songs in the temple." But if one were to inquire seriously about why music is so prominent in ritual life, a moment of silence would probably follow. Moreover, if the question was raised about scholarly publications in this field, there would be some hesitation, even among academics. There are in fact many books and articles about Indian classical music and its history, yet most of these trace the history of Indian music as if it were a secular art divorced from ritual or liturgical life. Indeed, there are many competent studies of scale systems, the classification and evolution of musical instruments, musicological texts, and biographies of great musicians. There is even an abundance of literature on selected religious practices, but there are few works documenting the precise role of music and chant within the daily or seasonal worship routines of specific traditions and liturgical systems. What is needed at this juncture is a comprehensive survey of the role of music in Hindu ritual over the centuries, revealing the rationale for its importance across several traditions of worship. This book is an attempt to provide that overview.

The academic categories of ritual and liturgy are only beginning to be applied to Hindu traditions. For example, in the field of Vedic ritual the work of Frits Staal is foundational, including his *Ritual and Mantras: Rules without Meaning* (1989, 1993) and *Agni: The Vedic Ritual of the Fire Altar* (1983). Uma Marina Vesci, in *Heat and Sacrifice in the Vedas* (1985), has examined the details of Vedic ritual in terms of heat and fire symbolism. Musashi Tachikawa, Shrikant Bahulkar, and Madhavi Kolhatkar have documented in detail the rituals of Agnihotra and domestic sacrifices in *Indian Fire Rituals* (2001). Brian K. Smith, in *Reflections on Resemblance, Ritual, and Religion* (1989), has provided the most provocative and refreshing examination of the meaning of Vedic ritual in our time. G. U. Thite's *Music in the Vedas: Its Magico-Religious Significance* (1997) is the most important work on Vedic music.

Gudrun Buhnemann's groundbreaking study of Puja rituals, *Puja: A Study in Smarta Ritual* (1988), has opened the field for further research. Regarding Puja

in the ancient drama productions, Natalia Lidova, in *Drama and Ritual of Early Hinduism* (1994), makes a significant contribution. The field of Siva Puja and the Agamas is remarkably enhanced by the recent book of Richard H. Davis, *Worshipping Siva in Medieval India: Ritual in an Oscillating Universe* (2000).

There are also some excellent specialized studies of Puja. Hillary Peter Rodrigues, in *Ritual Worship of the Great Goddess: The Liturgy of the Durga Puja with Interpretations* (2003), has laid down the entire sequence and format of the liturgy associated with the worship of the goddess Durga. He also acknowledged that music played an important role: "It is traditionally prescribed that particular musical pieces, known as Ragas, be performed during the Great Bath on Saptami, Astami, and Navami. These may be sung or preferably played on the shehnai or the harmonium, although other instruments are not inappropriate. These performances may be accompanied by dancers and other musical accompaniment."[67] In addition, the complete Puja of the deity of Jagannatha in Puri has been documented by Gaya Charan Tripathi in his mammoth work *Communication with God: The Daily Puja Ceremony in the Jagannatha Temple* (2004). These Vaishnava rituals are rife with mostly Sanskrit mantras and incantations.

Focusing attention on music in ritual or liturgical context, it is incumbent on us first to acknowledge where modern scholarship has affirmed the importance of music and performance as vital to understanding the Hindu religion. Countering the traditional emphasis on textual analysis in Indian studies, Hinduism scholar Vasudha Narayanan broadly stated: "The performers of music and dance, the transmitters of the religious traditions, speak for Hinduism. We should listen to them."[68] Susan L. Schwartz has more recently stated that "so central has the religious context been to understanding and achieving the goals of performance that it is possible to study the religions of India through her performing arts. The forms performance takes and the ways it is studied, learned, and experienced reveal ways in which religion may be understood in India."[69] These views have found adept practical application in the works of Selina Thielemann, such as *Divine Service and the Performing Arts in India* (2002) and *Sounds of the Sacred: Religious Music in India* (1998). In terms of liturgical music, Meilu Ho (2006) has produced a full-length study of the Vallabha tradition.

*Sonic Liturgy: Ritual and Music in Hindu Tradition* seeks to draw upon the insights and information from the studies mentioned above in order to build a case for the overall significance of music within Hindu ritual and worship. This goal is achieved by tying together several diverse traditions into a near-seamless continuity over time and geographic area. The principal focus is on the portable category of sonic liturgy and how it serves as a flexible template with which to understand the constantly changing and developing process of human interaction with the divine in the context of ritual and music.

From the singing of the ancient Vedic hymns, known as Sama-Gana, to the earliest classical music called Gandharva Sangita, to the medieval forms of devotional temple music or Bhakti Sangit, Indian music is rooted both in the theological principles of sacred sound inscribed in Hindu scriptures and in the performance of ritualistic activity in relation to the divine. Many sages in ancient India were chanters of the Vedic texts, while founders of religious lineages were patrons of music or musically adept. Most teachers, in fact, of Indian musical styles were directly associated with religious lineages.

Considered divine in origin, music was closely identified with the Hindu gods and goddesses and formed an integral part of Indian mythology. The goddess Sarasvati, depicted with the Vina instrument in hand, is believed to be the divine patron of music and receives the veneration of all students and performers of Indian music. Brahma, the creator of the universe, fashioned Indian music out of the ingredients of the *Sama-Veda* and also plays the hand cymbals. Vishnu the Preserver sounds the conch shell and plays the flute as the avatara known as Krishna. Siva as Nataraja plays the Damaru drum during the dance of cosmic dissolution. Each of these instruments symbolizes Nada-Brahman, sacred cosmic sound. Divine manifestations of these deities on earth have stimulated the cultivation of music throughout India as an integral part of both religious and secular realms.

The Hindu rites of worship studied here are Yajna ("sacrifice"), Puja ("worship"), and Seva ("divine service"). Yajna involves offerings placed into a fire and is the mainstay of the Indo-Aryan or Vedic cult. Puja and Seva involve the worship of images and require offerings of flowers, food, incense, lamps, and the sounding of conches and bells. While the systems of Puja (and Seva) most probably originated outside of the Vedic or Indo-Aryan tradition, they were quickly adopted into it as part of ancient sacred dramas and temple traditions that worshipped a deity according to a strict liturgical calendar. The liturgical calendars of the Hindus as developed over the years are a combination of solar and lunar observation. Beside the solar calendar based on the sun, the lunar calendars are of two types, depending on the way in which the months are calculated. A lunar calendar that is marked by months beginning on the full moon is called Purnimanta, and one that begins each month with the new moon is called Amanta. The Purnimanta is followed in most of northern India, while Amanta calendars are found in South India and Bengal. Both also apply the solar calendar, depending on the observance.

Indian music that fills a liturgical function requires close attention to the text and to clear pronunciation, at the same time maintaining established patterns of performance throughout the year over many generations. Although melody and rhythm are important, improvisation and musical virtuosity for its own sake are

normally discouraged in Hindu temples or religious gatherings, in contrast with the developing classical traditions that laud improvisation and technical mastery. Most Hindu religious gatherings today include chant and music that frequently form part of congregational rites in which there is a sharing of Bhakti experiences. Modern scholarship has noted and confirmed that, despite differences in theology or philosophy in the Bhakti movements and sects, a common factor in most is devotional music, since religious leaders consider music essential for propagation of their faiths in order to make those faiths more attractive. While there may be differences in the content of their Padas (stanzas), there is little difference in principle in their style of singing or performance. Thus an understanding of music and its relation to liturgical activities is vital to a full comprehension of Hinduism.

To reiterate our premise with regard to Hindu tradition, the worship of God through or with music has remained at the center of most Puja and Seva activities, whether in the North or in the South: "Evoking the presence of God through song, dance, enactments and narrations represents the core task of the ritual service."[70] From this position we can demonstrate that from Vedic chant to Sama-Gana to Gandharva Sangita to Bhakti Sangit and from Yajna to Puja to Seva, there is a continuity of ritual and music within various forms of sonic liturgy in Hindu tradition.

The ancient ritual practices of the Indo-Aryans are discussed here in the context of Indo-Iranian mythology, the Avesta, Zoroastrianism, and Yajna (Yasna in Persian), the fire sacrifices that included the chanting and reciting of portions of the Veda. The ancient Vedic fire sacrifice always included chant and meditation on sound. The chanting of Sanskrit hymns from the Vedas was performed by priests during public and private fire sacrifices. Ritual chanting was viewed as a powerful means to interact with the cosmos and to obtain unseen spiritual merit toward a heavenly afterlife. Sound and speech also had a feminine connotation as the goddess Vac, said to inhere in the pronunciation and metrical structure of the mantras. Verses from the Rig-Veda were chanted in roughly three distinct musical tones or accents. These three were expanded to seven notes in the Sama-Gana, the singing of hymns from the *Sama-Veda* that were set to preexistent melodies for use during elaborate Soma sacrifices involving the offering of Soma juice. This juice, mixed with milk and honey, was particularly enjoyed by the god Indra and was imbibed by the priests as a sacrament after the ritual. The *Sama-Veda* was also connected with the worship of ancestors, whose abode was the moon, Soma.

The chanted Samans were believed to possess supernatural powers capable of petitioning and supporting the deities that controlled the forces of the universe. The Vedic gods even seem to have had a sense of music appreciation. The singing

of Sama-Gana with sustained musical notes was essential to the sacrifice and indicates that music was mysteriously linked to the divine at this early stage of Hindu ritual practice. The Sama-Gana, referring to the more musical rendering of *Sama-Veda* hymns by specialized priests during Soma sacrifices, is explained as one of the forerunners of Indian classical music. The earliest form of sonic liturgy emerges here in the scenario of the Yajna and the rendering of Sama-Gana. The Vedic sacrificial process of Apurva is described with reference to ritual sequence, whereby unseen "soteriological" merit is accrued in increments to the participants. This scheme recurs within the dynamics of language comprehension as well as in the rhythmic dimensions of Hindu devotional music.

The tradition of Sama-Gana was paralleled by the creation and development of Indian classical music, known first as Gandharva Sangita, which was heavily tied to drama, and then simply as Sangita. The three divisions of Sangita, vocal, instrumental, and dance, have always been intertwined, whether in religious observances or as courtly entertainment. Gandharva Sangita ("celestial music") was the counterpart to the sacrificial Sama-Gana and was considered to be a replica of the music performed and enjoyed in Lord Indra's court in heaven. This ancient religious music was primarily vocal but included instruments such as the Vina, flutes, drums, and cymbals. As part of the changeover from Yajna to Puja as the principal Hindu ritual, Gandharva Sangita played a significant role in the evolving devotional worship of the great gods Siva and Vishnu. Gandharva Sangita, as represented in the ancient texts of the *Natya-Sastra* and the *Dattilam*, is discussed with reference to Puja, the new form of non-Aryan worship that replaced fire with flowers and other offerings on an altar. There is a description here of the various elements of Puja with the insertion of chant and music as necessary components.

Indian mythology contains frequent narrations of the gods and their heavenly music. Images of the gods as musicians serve as prototypes or paradigms for the human musicians, who in many ways are oriented toward the divine realm in their performances. The roles of Brahma, Sarasvati, and Narada Rishi, the giver of music to the world, are discussed with regard to the genesis of music in human society. The oldest surviving texts of Gandharva Sangita are the *Natya-Sastra* by Bharata Muni and the *Dattilam* by Dattila (ca. 400–200 B.C.E.). These, as well as the *Naradiya-Siksa* (first century C.E.), provide glimpses of Gandharva Sangita and its evolution. Gandharva music was the music performed in sacred dramas, festivals, courtly ceremonies, and temple rituals in honor of the emerging great gods and goddesses, including Siva, Vishnu, Brahma, Ganesha, and Devi. Special songs used to propitiate the gods, called Dhruva, were rendered, not in Sanskrit but in Prakrit, a derivative language with less rigid grammatical construction. The Dhruva was the prototype of the medieval Prabandha which was the basis of the

later classical and devotional forms of Bhakti Sangit sung in vernacular, called Dhrupad (Dhruvapada), Haveli Sangit, Samaj Gayan, or Kirtan in the North and Kriti in the South.

Rhythm, or Tala, is fundamental to all Indian music. Mimamsa philosophy is useful in understanding why this is so. As explained by Mimamsa philosophers, Vedic chants and Sama-Gana were punctuated by metrical divisions that, through the principle of Apurva, generated distinct units of unseen merit called Adrishta that accrued to the priest or sacrificer leading to afterlife in heaven. In Gandharva music similar metrical units were marked by the playing of hand cymbals and drums. Since Vedic chant was metrical, religious music must have a distinct rhythm or division of musical time sequence for it to provide the benefits noted above to the listener or performer. The ancient theory of music held that the musicians and audience earned liberation through accumulation of unseen merit as exemplified in the marking of ritual (musical) time. However, the emerging sense of release (Moksha) within the Bhakti traditions was also dependent on the emotion or feelings of the practitioners with regard to the developing personal relationship with their deity, including the proper Rasa and Bhava states. The strong emphasis on cymbal playing in most forms of Bhakti Sangit, including Haveli Sangit and Samaj Gayan, supports the contention that the Mimamsa theory of merit accumulation has continued into the present time, though often unrecognized.

By the sixth century C.E. in the Tamil region of South India, Bhakti movements emerged as powerful forces favoring a devotion-centered Hinduism with song-texts composed primarily in regional vernacular languages, called Deshi Bhashas. Within the rising Bhakti movements, there were a number of new styles of Deshi Sangit, or regional devotional music. Bhakti Sangit was often formalized as music accompanying liturgies in the temple Hinduism of medieval times and followed a simple aesthetic that reflected the perspective of music as a means toward communion with a chosen deity. In theistic Vedanta, Brahman was conceived of as the supreme personal deity, whether in the form of Vishnu, Siva, or Sakti.

As the Vedic fire sacrifices and Sama-Gana were eclipsed by Gandharva Sangita and Puja rituals, classes of orthodox Brahmins called Smarta attempted to estrange Gandharva Sangita from mainstream Hindu tradition. Yet in response a new fusion developed between Gandharva Sangita, which was widened to include vernacular poetry and regional melodies, and sectarian orthodoxies derived from the thrust of the Bhakti movements. Temple Hinduism emerged in honor of the great gods Siva and Vishnu, with icons (Murti) of these gods installed with regular Puja services according to new scriptures called Agamas. In line with Bhakti devotion the new Hindu sonic liturgies were obliged to contain chant and

music and also to incorporate musical instruments. As such, various new forms of liturgical music, referred to as Bhakti Sangit, evolved that were both endorsed by Bhakti scriptures and chronicled in musicological texts. These new musical forms, also called Kirtan and Bhajan, appeared to diverge from earlier models but nonetheless carried forth the soteriological dimensions of unseen merit accumulation (Adrishta) as outlined in Mimamsa texts, which are here referenced to practical musical time in temple worship, providing a hitherto unrecognized continuity between India's religious past and the present Hindu practice of rendering devotional music.

The radical switch from Sanskrit to vernacular languages as found in the flood of medieval Bhakti poetry and temple music traditions was believed to have had scriptural sanction in the canonical text known as the *Bhagavata-Purana*, which speaks of "ancient," that is, Sanskrit, hymns, as well as of verses composed in local languages. Consequently the Bhakti movement has produced a tremendous amount of vernacular devotional poetry that is sung in temples all over India. The earliest examples of vernacular hymns being placed on an equal level with the Veda are the *Tevaram* hymns of the Saiva saints known as the Nayanars, and the *Divya Prabandham* hymns of the Vaishnava saints called Alvars. Both of these were compiled from the fifth to ninth centuries C.E. These traditions overlapped with the classical music of the South known as Carnatic. Sometime after the thirteenth century the classical music traditions separated into northern Hindustani and southern Carnatic. Hindustani music stemmed from the classical Dhrupad and Dhamar that had become a mainstay in the courts of Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Bengal, and Uttar Pradesh. Parallel to this were the classically influenced forms of Bhakti Sangit, sometimes referred to as Pada-Kirtan, that were composed in vernacular languages. The presence of Persian and Sufi culture also influenced the development of Hindustani classical music.

Music has always been closely associated with Vaishnavism, the rising theistic tradition that placed Vishnu, and most often, Krishna, at the center of religious practice. During the Late Middle Ages (1200–1600 C.E.), the deity of the youthful Krishna emerged as the principal object of Bhakti Sangit and inspired the creation of several new "Krishna sampradayas" in the region of Braj in North India. The Vallabha, Radhavallabha, Nimbarka, and Haridasi sampradayas are the most prominent Vaishnava traditions of northern India that have incorporated classical forms of Bhakti Sangit into their Seva or temple liturgies. Based on classical forms of Bhakti Sangit or Pada-Kirtan, this music comes under the name of Haveli Sangit, and Samaj Gayan.

In the North, Dhrupad and Dhamar were the principal classical vehicles for the vernacular Bhakti lyrics and provided a formal structure for several related genres of devotional music including Haveli Sangit and Samaj Gayan. These

various types of Dhrupad-influenced music became instrumental components of the Seva of several new Vaishnava traditions of Bhakti established in Braj by the sixteenth century. The Vallabha Sampradaya or Pushti Marg tradition, founded by Sri Vallabhacharya, was instrumental in developing and refining the notion of divine service or Seva. The deity of Krishna that was worshipped in this early sect was Sri Nathji, discovered in Braj. A group of eight poets called Ashtachap began to compose songs for the Seva at different times of the day. These poets included Sur Das and also Chaturbhuj Das, Chitaswami, and Govind Prabhu. This tradition is examined with reference to Seva, Kirtan, and Haveli Sangit, the later name of the temple music tradition associated with this group.

Haveli Sangit is believed to be one of the forerunners of Hindustani music and is composed of songs in Braj Bhasha that describe the pastimes of Krishna, including especially the festival associated with Holi in the spring season and the Rasa Dance in autumn. Haveli Sangit is now practiced in the Vallabha headquarters in Nathadvara in Rajasthan, as well as at temples and centers in Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Mumbai.

Besides the tradition of Haveli Sangit associated with the Vallabha Sampradaya, Samaj Gayan is the most significant form of classically based devotional music in northern India, figuring centrally in the worship of three new Krishna sampradayas: Radhavallabha, Nimbarka, and Haridasi. Samaj Gayan, though based on Dhrupad and Dhamar, reveals innovative methods of "interactive" choral music that require years of study and training to perform. Rendered in styles related to Hindustani classical music, Samaj Gayan is sung according to Ragas (scale formulas reflective of distinct emotional moods set within daily or seasonal formats) and Talas (rhythmic cycles). The compositions of Samaj Gayan are usually sung in call-and-response form with musical accompaniment of harmonium, Tanpura (lute), Pakhavaj (barrel drum), and Jhanjh (hand cymbals). The various festivals and observances throughout a liturgical year make up the solar-lunar calendar of these groups, which provides a framework for the inclusion of a vast assortment of songs and hymns. Although a compelling genre of Bhakti Sangit, Samaj Gayan is, unlike Haveli Sangit, largely unknown outside of the Braj area.

In the mid-sixteenth century Sri Hita Harivamsa founded the Radhavallabha Sampradaya in Vrindaban and was the first promulgator of the interactive vocal style known as Samaj Gayan. Samaj Gayan, as an integral part of Radhavallabha temple Seva, is believed to have been continuously practiced since the founding of this tradition. Samaj Gayan was adopted by the Nimbarka Sampradaya, founded by Sri Nimbarka (ca. twelfth century C.E.), shortly after the Radhavallabha Sampradaya. The Haridasi Sampradaya, founded by Swami Haridas (ca. 1500–1595 C.E.), also adopted Samaj Gayan but not until the eighteenth century.

As this book may serve as a companion to the author's earlier work *Sonic Theology: Hinduism and Sacred Sound*, which outlined the philosophical and theoretical dimensions of sacred sound in Hinduism, it also advances the premise that theory is not enough to understand fully the role of music or sound in religion. Such understanding requires the study of its practical application in ritual and liturgy.

Research in the Braj region of Uttar Pradesh in North India in 1992–93 has allowed the author to study the temple music as well as the liturgical use of devotional song-texts in four living traditions of Vaishnavism established in Braj between 1200 and 1600 C.E.: the Vallabha, Radhavallabha, Nimbarka, and Haridasi traditions.

A close study of the four types of Vaishnava Seva, or sonic liturgy, reveals a vast multileveled "auditory environment" illumined with poems describing divine pastimes sung to melodic formulas (Ragas), penetrated with rhythms (Talas) played on drums and cymbals, punctuated with conches and bells, and suffused with emotional moods associated with the times of the day and the colorful seasons of the year. The music employed in worship can be properly comprehended only when it is viewed as a contributive part of an interlocking network of liturgical meaning. As such, this study hopes to broaden knowledge and understanding of Hindu worship, where meaning surpasses mere musical or literary effect, and heighten awareness of sonic liturgy as a comparative category.