

Dear Parrikar,

I had a dream not so long ago in which one musical tone or sound seemed to fill me, as well as the world around me, which came alive in a magical or intense way. I've been listening to Raga Shuddha Todi this morning (by Zia Mohiuddin Dagar) and a chill of recognition went through me as the first note of the drone (tambura?) sounded. The sound in my dream was similarly deep and resonating, although I do not know exactly what note, key, scale etc.

I am wondering if it is common in India for people to have similar dreams, or perhaps something like my dream in meditations? Do musicians incorporate such sounds into their music?

Also, how is the note or sound which the drone plays determined in a raga?

Yours,

Mike ****,
Tucson AZ

Response:

Yes, Indian musical thought deeply acknowledges the transformative and meditative nature of sound (*nāda*), and the *tambura's* drone - rich in harmonics - can evoke a sense of vastness or even a recognition that transcends conscious understanding.

In India, dreams involving sound or music are not uncommon among those immersed in musical or spiritual practice. Meditation traditions such as *nāda yoga* explore inner auditory experiences, including what is known as *anāhata nāda*, the "unstruck sound" - a subtle, internal resonance perceived not through external instruments but within, often in states of deep meditation or heightened awareness. Your description of a singular tone filling both you and the world around you suggests something akin to this phenomenon.

Hindu tradition holds that *Om* is the primordial sound, the seed vibration from which all others arise. Some traditions describe it as the cosmic drone underlying existence, resonating with the very structure of reality. The deep, resonating tone in your dream bears a resemblance to these ideas,

where sound is not merely an auditory event but an expression of something more fundamental.

Sleep itself is regarded as a manifestation of the *Devi* (Goddess), and certain dream experiences may carry an imprint of deeper, unmanifest dimensions of sound.

As for your question about the *tambura*: its drone is set according to the tonic chosen by the musician and serves as the foundational reference for the *raga*'s elaboration. One of its strings is typically tuned to the fourth or fifth, depending on the specific *raga*.

Listening to *dhrupad* music may bring you closer to this experience.

Rajan Parrikar
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