

Modern Yoga and Pop music

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 Friday, 22 July 2016
 Last Updated Tuesday, 06 September 2016

Is the aesthetic of the 80's the precursor of the modern yoga fashions?

There are a lot of similarities between the old pop-music world and the modern, fashionable, yoga world. Many popular yoga teachers, especially in U.S. are often regarded as pop-stars, sometimes at the same level of how the music pop-stars used to be regarded in the '80s.

Similar worlds, made of aesthetic superficiality and fast fashion.

Just like in the case of many pop-stars of the '80s, the modern yoga teachers deliver performances where they repeat short sequences of poses at high speed (in the '80s it was a repetition of short melodies and simple rhythms), and rarely they go deep in the exploration of one subject.

It is difficult to understand why, but this fast and superficial pleasure seem to appeal always a large number of people. So just like in the '80s people like Rick Astley managed to become extremely popular singing cheap songs like "Never gonna give you up", in a similar way nowadays Kino McGregor is followed by thousand of people due to her sexy poses and her rather cheap pseudo-yoga philosophy.

However, in the '80s there was also a more alternative, underground musical dimension which was still pop to some degree, but artistically far more honest and meaningful than silly phenomena like The Bros and Samantha Fox. Comes to my mind the example of bands like The Smiths, The Cure, Japan, Nick Cave and a few others.

And, again similarly, also the modern yoga world offers some rare, underground, alternative gem. Yoga lovers that, for example, are not afraid to present to their students also the ethical side of yoga (Yama and Nyama) and to translate it with the vocabulary of the modern society, talking about ecology, animal rights, respect of different cultures and criticising the worshipping of money promoted by the ruling neoliberalism.

Or those yoga teachers that instead of focusing on the superficial ego-gratification given by the ability of performing some acrobatic exercise, try instead to communicate the pleasure that can be obtained from the meditative exploration of our sensations, emotions, potentialities….

The link between yoga and music goes also beyond these similarities between fashions of the '80s and the modern gym-fashions.

Music (when it is a honest, creative act) can also be a form of yoga itself. A moment of union (= yoga) between our awareness and our potentialities. There is even a sanskrit definition of that: Nada Yoga, the yoga of the sound.

Sounds can represent emotions, sensations, ideas, so the process of creating music can be a natural form of meditation to enter more deeply in contact with elements of the Self/Soul.

Should the music of somebody interested in yoga be necessary just kirtan, mantra music, and new-age harps? Obviously not, because if it was so then it would be excluded the exploration of all the emotions and the ideas that are not expressible with that kind of music, so our knowledge of the Self would be partial and somehow censored.

So, let's be brave (tantric, like some friend of mine would probably say ;-)), and let's explore all the colours of our soul through different forms of music (and art), from fluid, abstract, ambient synths to intricate free-jazz. Why not? Music can become in this way a great instrument for channeling our mental propensities (or "vrittis", like it is said in the sanskrit vocabulary of the yoga tradition), and to make them flow harmonically without repressing them.

Until the mind, absorbed in the Self, would simply witness calm all those mental colours and vibrations, just like Shiva observes ecstatic the dance of his Shakti.

