

A monumental Mahadev

The bats flew low and changed directions with a kind of arrogance, sporting giant smiles under their their flat, gaping noses. Apparently, during the Great Plague, rats had the same radiant look (Boccaccio, *Décameron*, chap. 1, 1353). I was doing nothing much on my screen while the neighbors buzzed away doing home-office work, and to sharpen my mind, I started taking the rust off a Japanese WWII saber, a blade purchased in Berkeley (California, internet province) that I polished with Chinese sandpaper from Longquan (Zhejiang, internet province), while keeping an eye on the volcano webcam in Fagradalsfjall (Iceland, internet province).

I thought: We have become cyborgs, half human, half machine, and our eyes now go to the depths of the cosmos to seek our origins ... and I was thinking of Mars: to unravel Mars, it would take quite a bit of phlogiston, in other words electrons, and rust would then become shiny, ringing metal, and Mars would be a beautiful, polished mirror. And I was rubbing the steel, thinking of old-time platinum records, elegant loft exhibits, and I was still rubbing, thinking of new media, their peanut-shaped royalties, great for happy-hour drinks; and it was during that moment of meditation, sheltered from unwanted and contaminating sputter, that the screen of the outside world alerted me to an incoming cyberattack!

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Cometo! I thought he was an MC of the Ghost festival, the phantomatic event that never took place, where Cometo had not sung the Sound of Silence in front of absent ears who had not come to the canceled abstraction party. And I had no cryptocurrency on me, poor little cyborg... and to help me out, Cometo left me this warning: "Just in case, don't think there is anything wrong with your stereo."

Mahadev himself! There was no point in trying to refuse by, for example, pleading the sanitary situation.

And so now, it's my turn to warn listeners: *Taj Mahal Mafia* contains material for cyborgs, especially for evolved and future cyborgs... unless we move ahead of ourselves, and reach this new planet (which is, in fact, our own, one hundred years from now), because Cometo is already there, thanks to his incomprehensibly-tuned and chorded vehicle; his arms, eyes, and ears are more numerous, longer, and bigger than ours ; he hears what we will hear in the future, he sees what we will see, he smokes what we will smoke. He has already reached his conclusions concerning the present, and I can subscribe to them. I make *Taj Mahal Mafia* echo off the walls of my batcave to encourage the neighborhood's teleworkers, and I paint my walls with a layer of sound waves so that they stay right there vibrating, ready to teleport me to pirate Cometo's acoustic island...

... where tablas play faster than Zakir Hussain, where sitars build machines according to plans designed by Tinguely's soul, downloaded from a celestial platform, where mantras are chanted by ten-headed wandering gurus, where ionic drones pour therapeutic spices on digital hippies playing lithium flutes ... where the gods have merged into one, and where Cometo, after welding together East and West with a sitar-come-sewing machine, is now

traveling in a shuttle like a carpet merchant, listening to Beethoven backwards and questioning the great music of past massacres, allowing us to hear what the Floyd did not, such as Hindu strings in the textures of their psychedelic, bluesy ragas. Mahadev has become the Brian Eno of industrial music, with the galaxy replacing both sides of the moon...

Then comes the night, and we party, and the next day we meet on the island ...

... where bearded Mughal huntresses pierce gazelles with teary, miniature eyes, where the Taj dome becomes a giant pearl of divine roe reflected in the ivory of a basin, a marble bubble at the end of the cane of a chthonian glassmaker, where artificial intelligence heals the wounds of saber polishers, where cobras twist into a wheel with a caressing sound to meditate on the immensity of the world, where sometimes the slowness that comes with no hurry holds on a leash the speed that agitates everything, where humor is a serious matter, and seriousness a joke, where Mahadev interprets the disturbing "Nothing will be able to prevent me from playing the sitar", where phlogiston becomes once again the spirit of fire which regenerates Metal, where melancholy is the sound of a locust near Kheria, behind the temple of Baba Lal Singh (Agra, internet province), which Mahadev really did visit, for a completely classic sitar happy-hour concert, a bit like in the suburbs of Givisiez or Castelo Branco, with lhasi and peanuts, in the middle of nowhere, which is everywhere, this has now become obvious, and the more I listen to it, the more I marvel.

While still sanding the saber to make it shine like a mirror, sanding it down to the micrometer, the idea comes to me of a thousand and second night when a genius appears, polishing a saber in a story, just like Mahadev appeared to me during that pandemic night, founding a record label, and raising up to the sky a brilliant, cometary disc, one of his reincarnated vinyls ... and if you've made it this far, a piece of advice: buy, and listen to, *Taj Mahal Mafia*, and make a wish.

Om Namah Shivaya
TG, Brig, June 2021

Translation by Jeremy Narby