CHAPTER II

Râgavardhana, Hindu Rhythm

Before continuing, I pause to specify that in my music, and in all the examples of this treatise, the values are always notated very exactly; hence, whether it is a question of barred passages or not, the reader and the performer have only to read and execute *exactly the values marked.* In the passages not barred, which are the most numerous, I have saved the use of the bar-line to mark the periods and to give an end to the effect of the accidentals (sharps, flats, etc.). If you desire more ample information, refer to Chapter VII: "Rhythmic Notations".

1) Ametrical Music[1]

Maurice Emmanuel and Dom Mocquereau knew how to illuminate, the former, the variety of the rhythmic patterns of ancient Greece, the latter, that of the neumes of plainchant. That variety will instill in us already a marked predilection for the rhythms of prime numbers (five, seven, eleven, thirteen, etc.). Going further, we shall replace the notions of "measure" and "beat" by the feeling of a short value (the sixteenth-note, for example) and its free multiplications, which will lead us toward a music more or less "ametrical", necessitating precise rhythmic rules. Recalling that Igor Stravinsky, consciously or unconsciously, drew one of his most striking rhythmic procedures, the augmentation or diminution of one rhythm out of two:

1

Stravinsky
Sacre du Printemps
Danse sacrale

(diminution of A at the cross, B does not change)

from the Hindu rhythm *simhavikrIdita:*

2

simhavikrIdita

(A augments and diminishes progressively,
B does not change)

we shall in our turn address ourselves to Hindu rhythmics to infer from it our first rules.

2) Râgavardhana

Çârngadeva, Hindu theorist of the thirteenth century, has left us a table of a hundred and twenty *deçî-tâlas,* or Hindu rhythms[2]. We find in this table the rhythm *râgavardhana:*

3

râgavardhana

Let us reverse this rhythm:

4

1. *Translator's note.* – The phrase "ametrical music" is here used to mean music with free, but precise, rhythmic patterns, in opposition to "measured" (*i.e.* equally barred) music.
2. *Translator's note.* – The table may be found in the *Encyclopédie de la musique et dictionnaire du conservatoire,* eds. Albert Lavignac and Lionel de la Laurencie (Paris: Delagrave, 1913-1931), Part I, Vol. I, pp. 301 ff. *Râgavardhana* is number 93. *Simhavikrîdita* is number 24.