

THE HEALING TOUCH OF MUSIC

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ABSTRACT

Aim/Objective : To popularize and create awareness on Music Therapy, its effects, its benefits and its curative methods.

Abstract: This paper discusses the integration of traditional Indian healing systems like Nadopasan, Ayurveda, Yoga, Raga Chikitsa and Nada Yoga into modern music therapy as a non medical modifier and protector of the impact of disease and its treatment in clinical settings, and the modified approaches and procedures that one can practice with reference to the Indian context. This paper also talks about various genres of music that are helpful in healing various disorders and stress of life. While defining Music Therapy, it also discusses various emotional quotients that are related to day to day life and how with different modes and styles of music, it has the curing capacity and capability.

Raga Chikitsa, as is said, is one of the emerging therapies of the world and this research paper includes Raga Chikitsa, its definition, historical references and varieties. Also, it includes the emergence of Raga Chikitsa in India and how it is becoming popular and useful in India as well. While discussing about music therapy, various Ragas have also been discussed and how they have healing therapeutic effects. Different ragas have different healing patterns and this paper includes such ragas while describing different moods – psychological and physiological impacts of therapeutic ragas. Different types of music therapies and methods have also been discussed in this paper which includes some Indian and some western methods. In this research paper, historical references and experiments have been used extensively.

Conclusion : In the entire research work, it was strongly found that undoubtedly, music is one of the most beneficial therapies to cure many diseases and disorders in human beings. Experimental and practical method was included in this research work.

Key words: Healing, Therapy, Ragas, Chikitsa.

INTRODUCTION

Music, as has been very well said, has no barrier or language. Since ages, or ever since the evolution of life on Earth, music has been a part and parcel of life for everyone. Be it humans, animals, plants and even for this instance God and deities, music has had its full impact and effect on everyone.

In today's scenario, a fast track life full of competition, stress, monetary desires and what not, our life has become nothing but a machine which is never ending and probably unstoppable. A persuasion to become a successful person has left us in a no man's land subsequently leading to stress, frustration, bitterness, physical and mental disorders.

Music Therapy is an emerging discipline in India that warrants more research to make it evidence based. The existence of Music Therapy as a belief system and integrated approach in treatment of diseases advocated by Medical Professionals in the clinical arena has made them turn favourably towards Music as a promising therapy. The potentials of the ancient healing roots of Indian Music like Nadayoga, Vedic Chanting and Raga Chikitsa have been recognized by various medical professionals, psychologists and musicologists and music therapists, making them engage in more experimental studies which might strengthen and vouch for the efficacy of Indian Music and to make music therapy an evidence based practice.

Music, in this case, is a stress buster and a pure relaxant. Music is what frees from the soul. It is a food for the mind. Just as our body demands or craves for food, similarly music satisfies our body and mind and acts as a refresher to satisfy our mental pressures.

Music of all genres is good to listen and enjoy. For instance, some may find contentment in Bollywood music or some may relish the softness and depth of ghazals. Some may derive pleasure while listening to classical music and some from devotional music. It is rightly said that where words fail to make an impact, music does the job. Sometimes a silence in the room with soft music in the background does wonders to make us feel stress free and mentally relaxed. Nobody knows when one goes off to bed and forgets the fatigue and exhaustion of the entire bugging day.

It has been found that sometimes the stress is so unbearable and intolerable that it may lead to melancholy, hopelessness, depression and sometimes to an extent of suicidal attempts and mental disorders. To deal with such difficulties, Music therapy has become evident and prominent as a boon in today's life.

MUSIC THERAPY

In simple language, Music therapy, as the word implies, is a treatment or a remedy to cure a particular ailment through music. Clinically, it is an evidence based use of music interventions to accomplish individualized goals within a therapeutic relationship by a credentialised professional who has completed an approved music therapy program.

Music therapy is one of the most expressive therapies consisting of a process in which a music therapist uses music and all its facets – physical, mental, social, emotional, aesthetic and spiritual to improve the health of the patient or client. It is widely accepted medically also that just listening to good music has a positive impact on the human mind and physical well being. As per evidence, it has been proven that music has its great impact in pain relief, reduction of blood pressure, boosting immunity etc. A lot of scientific researches have even established that music has a great positive effect on intelligence, mental development and IQ level as well.

Music has the potential to uplift the mood in the spur of a moment. Studies have proven that people suffering from depression have actually stopped medication after listening music and are recovering at a fast pace.

Music has always been a part of life. It mirrors what we are and what we are experiencing in the present. The rhythm, melody, harmony, timber, tempo, nuance and intensity bring images to mind and provoke movement. Music is also a language that we possess without ever having studied it. This language is accessible to all and helps us express ourselves and communicate. This research paper is intended to make parents, educators and care-givers aware of how music and music therapy can benefit children. It deals with sound and musical awareness, while focusing on the place of music in the overall development of the human being, as well as music therapy, a creative approach that is accessible to children, regardless of their age, physical and intellectual condition, and cultural heritage. It draws heavily on research that describe the effect of music, from the point of view of psychology, neuro-psychology, education, neuro-pedagogy and medicine. This research helps provide an understanding of the potential of the alliance between music and children.

MUSIC THERAPY THROUGH INDIAN RAGAS

The use of specific ragas for ailments has been in practice in ancient India as Raga Chikitsa, which is being revived today by various music therapy practitioners. Indian music has a special characteristic feature of improvisation and oral tradition and is independent of a written score. Also, the Raga System based Indian Music is more voice based. The vast repertoire of kirtans, kritis and bhajans with a devotional touch, the psychological value of the tonal configuration of different ragas and the voice when presented exclusively than casually in a concert atmosphere to the clients delivered by voice exudes a kind of

naturalness and magnificence, which reaches the soul more effectively than the touch, glance or even movement.

RAGA CHIKITSA

Long before acoustics came to be understood in Europe as a subject of study, the ancient Arab, Greek and Indian civilizations were already familiar with the therapeutic role of sounds and vibrations and the later day concepts pertaining to them. While music as a whole is well recognized for its entertainment value, the Indian civilization had gone a step forward to attribute the curative aspect to music.

The ancient system of Nada Yoga, which dates back to the time of Tantras, has fully acknowledged the impact of music on body and mind and put into practice the vibrations emanating from sounds to uplift one's level of consciousness. It is the Indian genius that recognized that ragas are not just mere commodities of entertainment but the vibrations in their resonance could synchronize with one's moods and health. By stimulating the moods and controlling the brain wave patterns, ragas could work as a complementary medicine (Sairam, 2004 a & b).

WHAT IS A RAGA?

Raga, we all know is the sequence of selected notes (swaras) that lend appropriate 'mood' or emotion in a selective combination. Depending on their nature, a raga could induce or intensify joy or sorrow, violence or peace and it is this quality which forms the basis for musical application. Thus, a whole range of emotions and their nuances could be captured and communicated within certain rhythms and melodies. Playing, performing and even listening to appropriate ragas can work as a medicine. (Bagchi, 2003) Various ragas have since been recognized to have definite impact on certain ailments. (Sairam, 2004b)

HISTORIC REFERENCES ON RAGA CHIKITSA

The ancient Hindus had relied on music for its curative role: the chanting and toning involved in Veda mantras in praise of God have been used from time immemorial as a cure for several disharmonies in the individual as well as his environment. Several sects of 'bhakti' such as Chaitanya sampradaya, Vallabha sampradaya have all accorded priority to music. Historical records too indicate that one Haridas Swami who was the guru of the famous musician in Akbar's time, Tan Sen is credited with the recovery of one of the queens of the Emperor with a selected raga.

The great composers of classical music in India called the 'Musical Trinity', - who were curiously the contemporaries of the 'Trinity of Western Classical Music, Bach, Beethoven and Mozart- were quite sensitive to the acoustical energies. Legend has it that Saint Thyagaraja brought a dead person back to life with his Bilahari composition Naa Jiva Dhaara. Muthuswamy Dikshitar's Navagriha kriti is believed to cure stomach ache. Shyama Sastry's composition Duru Sugu uses music to pray for good health.

Raga Chikitsa was an ancient manuscript, which dealt with the therapeutic effects of raga. The library at Thanjavur is reported to contain such a treasure on ragas, that spells out the application and use of various ragas in fighting common ailments.

RAGA CHIKITSA: RAGA THERAPY IN INDIA

Living systems show sensitivity to specific radiant energies - be it acoustical, magnetic or electro-magnetic. As the impact of music can be easily gauged on emotions and thereby on the mind, it can be used as a tool to control the physiological, psychological and even social activities of the patients

Indian classical music can be classified into two forms: *kalpita sangita* or composition, that which is previously conceived, memorized, practised and rendered; and *manodharma sangita* or the music extemporised and performed. The latter can be equated to the honeymooner's first night as it conceives both spontaneity and improvisation. It is fresh and natural as it is created almost on the spot and rendered instantly on the spur of the moment.

According to the ancient Indian text, Swara Sastra, the seventy-two melakarta ragas (parent ragas) control the 72 important nerves in the body. It is believed that if one sings with due devotion, adhering to the raga lakshana (norms) and sruti shuddhi, (pitch purity) the raga could affect the particular nerve in the body in a favourable manner.

While the descending notes in a raga (avarohana) do create inward-oriented feelings, the ascending notes (arohana) represent an upward mobility. Thus music played for the soldiers or for the dancers have to be more lively and up lifting with frequent use of arohana content. In the same way, melancholic songs should go for 'depressing' avarohanas. Although it is not a rule, most of the Western tunes based on major keys play joyful notes, while those composed in minor keys tend to be melancholic or serious. Certain ragas do have a tendency to move the listeners, both emotionally as well as physically. An involuntary nod of the head, limbs or body could synchronize with lilting tunes when played.

SOME THERAPEUTIC RAGAS

Some ragas like Darbari Kanada, Khamaj and Pooriya are found to help in defusing mental tension, particularly in the case of hysterics. For those who suffer from hypertension, ragas such as Ahirbhairav, Pooriya and Todi are prescribed. To control anger and bring down the violence within, Carnatic ragas like Punnagavali, Sahana etc. do come handy.

This author, experimenting on the impact of raga on mentally-retarded (MR) children has noticed that it is the right combination of rhythms and tempo, which also affect the quality of a raga. Not only psychological impact, but also somatic or physiological impact of ragas has come to light in some recent works. (Sairam, 2004b). For instance, stomach-related disorders are said to be cured with some Hindustani Ragas such as Deepak (acidity) , Gunkali and Jaunpuri (constipation) and Malkauns or Hindolam (intestinal gas and for controlling fevers). Fevers like malaria are also said to be controlled by the ragas like Marva. For headaches, relaxing with the ragas like Durbari Kanada, Jayjaywanti and Sohni is said to be beneficial.

TYPES OF MUSIC THERAPIES

In general, musical therapy utilizes the power of music to interact with human emotions and affect well-being, although there are several different types recognized in the world today. There are various different psychological theories for musical therapy, which define the different types as we know them.

Bonny Method of Guided Imagery and Music

Helen Lindquist Bonny developed an approach to music therapy. It involves guided imagery with music. In this approach, the patient is asked to focus on an image and expected to think and share related problems. Basically, this implied that the patient was expected to think of an image that is closely related to his or her problem. To enable the patients to take their minds away from their problems and use the relaxing impact of music to think of a solution. Music was expected to cause positive thoughts in the mind of the patient. Music basically acted as a soothing co-therapist. It was important to choose music that would be appropriate to the patient's problem.

Dalcroze Eurhythmics

Developed by Émile Jaques-Dalcroze, this therapy is also known as the Dalcroze Method. Again, the aim is to increase physical awareness. Music is meant to assist the patient in helping the patient develop an increased and smooth motor ability as the rhythm plays out.

Kodaly

This philosophy, developed by Zoltán Kodály, uses a base of rhythm, notation, sequence and movement to aid in the learning and healing of the patient. The patterns that the patient is exposed to helps improve perceptual functions, motor functions and other aspects.

Neurologic Music Therapy (NMT)

Proponents of this therapy claim that music causes certain changes in the human brain that help in enhancing its functionality. The use of rhythmic patterns prompts the brain to initiate changes that help enhance its motor skills.

Nordoff-Robbins

Paul Nordoff and Clive Robbins worked together for nearly two decades to investigate the impact of music in therapy, with a particular interest for disabled children.

Originally developed to help children affected by mental disorders like autism, emotional disturbances and similar afflictions, it expanded to accommodate patients of all experience and ability levels.

Orff-Schulwerk

Following up on the concept that medicine alone is not enough to help children with development issues, this approach combines using music with formal education (or schoolwork). Music as a therapy in this approach helps improve interaction between the patient and other people. Gertrude Orff, who developed this therapy, believed that music would calm the mind and initiate positive thoughts that would encourage the patient to set up associations with people.

CONCLUSION

There is a growing awareness that ragas could be a safe alternative for many medical interventions.

Simple iterative musical rhythms with low pitched swaras, as in bhajans and kirtans are the time-tested sedatives, which can even substitute the synthetic analgesics, which show many a side-effect. They are capable of leading to relaxation, as observed with the alpha-levels of the brain waves. They may also lead to favorable hormonal changes in the system. (Crandall, 1986).

It is therefore felt that there is an urgent need for further detailed enquiry to be based on scientific parameters, which will go a long way in unearthing the gold mine on which the Indian musical system is resting now.

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