

# Receptive Methods of Indian Music Therapy

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**Abstract:** Indian culture is basically governed by religion and philosophy and its impact can be felt on every aspect of it. Singing and music play an important role in our Indian culture.. Cosmic flow of sound hidden in music was well recognized by the ancient Indian sages so they devised various musical patterns for chanting vedic hymns and for distinct spiritual effects. By using these pleasing sound patterns our nervous system can be relaxed. Music is an essential part for attaining peaceful state of human consciousness, high spiritual functions. The beauty and melody of music can be felt with a sensitive heart only. There are multiple approaches especially when we talk about music therapy with Indian music and these approaches adhere to the rendering style of evolved Indian music that we are familiar with today. Hence, we will need to look at things from the perspectives of today's music for relevancy of the context and base that on the ancient traditional music structure and knowledge. Right from the Swaras to Raags, the music has evolved and we can say that we are using the modern version of our traditional art form based on Vedic knowledge and what has come to us from musicologists and scholars from generation to generation. Pattern undertake by the author gives general guidelines on the various approaches on Indian Classical Music therapy that could help in the assessment of musical preferences during the process of musical selections during treatment planning.

**Index Terms:** Hindustani Music, Music Therapy, Raag Chikitsa, Music Healing, Stress Management

## I. INTRODUCTION

Music therapy is a field of psychology and psychotherapy that exists under the broad field of study known as expressive arts therapy. This form of therapy is experiential in nature, and it gives participants vehicles through which they can tell their stories and share their emotions while actively exploring their thoughts. Music therapy has proven to be an effective treatment for a myriad of psychological disorders, including anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, PTSD, and schizophrenia. In order to grant a base level of understanding, research was conducted examining the methods and approaches used in music therapy, along with the psychological and physiological effects that it has on its participants. Introduction Studies and research reveal the fact that music has a healing power, and has deep effect on our mind and body. In recent years, we have noticed growing demand for an alternate field of health care known as Music Therapy, which uses music to heal. Those who practice music therapy are finding a benefit in using Indian classical music to help cancer patients, children with Autism, and others, and even hospitals are beginning to use Raga music as a tool of therapy to help pain management, ward off depression, promote movement, calm patients, ease muscle tension, and for many other benefits that music and music therapy can bring. This is not surprising to note that music affects body and mind in many powerful ways.

## II. HINDUSTANI MUSIC

Indian music, a predominantly voice-based music system, has the innovative and improvisational raga as its base. This unique repertoire-based system has been cultivated since the Vedic times and handed over through an oral tradition – the *guru-shishya parampara* (teacher-student tradition) for over centuries. It is still preserved, developed and elaborated by hereditary musicians. Indian music is not notational. The existence of various embellishment and microtones makes it difficult to write it down. Individuals need high levels of aural sensitivity, good memory and training to perceive and interpret Indian classical music and to develop improvisational techniques.

In *Hindustani* music, the seven *Sudhha Swaras* (straight notes) *Vikrit Swaras* (four *Komal* and one *Tivr*) are the basis *Raag*, melody and compositions along with *Taal* system. sounds of *Swaras* individually or from *Raags* have immense therapeutic potential to heal us inside out.

Each element of Indian music is therapeutic - *Swara* (including *Vadi Swara* and *Samvadi Swara*), *Alaap*, *Bandish*, *Vistar*, *Alankar*, *Taan*, *Shabdalaap*, *Taal*, *Lay* and more. Each one can be utilized in creative and scientific manner while designing music therapy. *Vadi* is considered to be the most powerful and prominent *Swara* of a *Raag* around which other notes are defined in a *Saptak*. *Samvadi* is the second most prominent *Swara* in the *Raag* that is either nine or thirteen *Shrutis* apart from the *Vadi*. Now, if we look from the music therapy perspective, these prominent *Swaras* in a *Raag* are melodically structured to come back repeatedly while rendering a *Raag*. Music therapists while designing the *Raag* therapy will be able to precisely use this knowledge so that the therapy is relevant to the condition.

This has to be in synchronized coordination with the classical music choice and other parameters of the patient that was noted during initial assessments. Thus, keeping a balance between the relevancy of musical sound from *Swaras* or *Raag*' and the patient's acceptance of the music' is very important. Sound and music in our *Vedas* were rendered to incorporate a rounded

## III. MUSIC THERAPY AND INDIAN CLASSICAL MUSIC

Music that evolved in Indian soil and imbibed the spirit and atmosphere of spiritual India is known as Indian Classical Music. It possesses a synthetic vision and special character of its own and so it differs from music of other countries in its structure, temperament and method of improvisation." Indian Classical Music employed as a tool of Music Therapy is unique in its pursuit. Research conducted in the field of Indian Classical Music have shown that it helps in treating psycho-somatic ailments, to achieve sound mental health, to cope with daily problems of life so that one can adjust in the society in a better way. Indian classical music is based on ragas, which is a melodious combination of musical notes which succeed one another. The effect of it depends upon the nature of the combination of notes. Every note in the octave conveys a definite feeling. The combination of notes expresses a definite emotion. 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. Various ragas have since been recognized to have definite impact on certain ailments, though they can be used as a holistic treatment only. Sometimes, the same raga can emit different emotions due to differences in the or passages of swaras. It is therefore difficult to a specific raga for a particular ailment. No such generalization is possible. However an attempt has been made here to identify the "over-all" impact of ragas on various problems in the following paragraph here. It is only through trial and error method an experienced music therapist can evolve a specific, tailor-made raga experience for individual client or patient.

#### IV. INDIAN WAY OF MUSIC HEALING

Music therapy is a scientific method of effective cures of disease through the power of music. It restores, maintains and improves emotional, physiological and psychological well-being. The articulation, pitch, tone and specific arrangement of swars (notes) in a particular raga stimulates, alleviates and cures various ailments inducing electro-magnetic change in the body.

Music therapy has a long history dating back to the ancient Orphic school in Greece. Pythagoras, Plato and Aristotle, among others, were well aware of the prophylactic and therapeutic powers of music. Even the Old Testament mentions music therapy where King David is said to have cured an illness by playing on the harp. Hippocrates, the father of modern medicine, used music to cure human diseases. In ancient Egypt music was used to lessen the pain of women during childbirth. Ibn Sina, a famous Arabic writer, has written in detail on this subject.

In India legend has it that Thyagaraja, the famous musician of South India, brought a dead person back to life singing the composition Nav Jeevan Dhara in Raga Bihari.

In 1729, a physician Richard Browne wrote the famous text *Medicina Musica*, which describes the use of music as medicine. And one Dr Burnell has mentioned a manuscript named *Raga Chikitsa in the* in the collections of Saraswati Mahal Library in Tanjore, which deals with the various ragas that can be used for curing numerous ailments.

So what exactly is music? "Music is a kind of inarticulate, unfathomable speech which leads us to the edge of the infinite and lets us for a moment gaze in that," observed Carlyle. Music is basically a sound or nada generating particular vibrations, which moves through the medium of ether present in the atmosphere and affects the human body Sarangdev mentions in his *Sangeet Ratnakar* that ahata nada or music is always produced by striking or aghata by a living being on an instrument of any kind. So music is a power or universal energy in the form of ragas.

Matanga (9-10th century AD) was the earliest writer to define raga. According to him, "raga is that kind of sound composition consisting of melodic movements, which has the effect of colouring the hearts of men".

"There are four sources of raga: folk songs, poetry, devotional songs of mystics and compositions of classical musicians. While harmony is the characteristic of Western music, Indian music is pure melody. The general term for melody in India is raga or ragini," says M.S. Randhawa in *Kangra Ragmala*.

Symphonies of raga have a definite soothing effect on the mind as well as the body. Repeated listening to the particular raga being chosen for a particular disease produces a network of sound vibration. The muscles, nerves and the chakras of the affected part are contracted when one impulse is given and relaxed during the interval between two impulses.

Thus, during contraction of the tissue, musical notes make the blood flow out from that particular area and in the interval there is relaxation and a state of reduced pressure is produced in these areas. Thus the blood from the adjacent area will flow there. This process is repeated again and again and the blood flow and energy flow in that part is enhanced. The makes quick, fast healing energy from UEF (universe energy field) to HEF (human energy field) transmitted by strokes of the different tones of raga which affects the (central nervous system) because the roots of the nerves are more widely distributed and have me connections than any other nerves in the body.

Music beats have a very close relationship with heartbeats: Music having 70-75 beats per minute equivalent to the normal heartbeat of 72 has a very soothing effect. Likewise rhythms that are slower than 72 beats per minute create a positive suspense on the mind and body since the mind-body complex anticipates that the music will speed up and this restored vital energy gives a deep relaxation to the body. Rhythms that are faster than the heart rate excite and rejuvenate the body.

Hindustani classical music considers ragas as depicting specific moods. An appropriate mood is to be evoked in the listener's mind before initiating the musical treatment. Kafi Raga evokes a humid, cool, soothing and deep mood, while Raga Pooriya Dhanasri evokes a sweet, deep, heavy, cloudy and stable state of mind. Raga Mishra Mand has a very pleasing, refreshing, light and sweet touch, while Bageshwari arouses a feeling of darkness, stability, depth and late-night raga calmness. Music is considered the best

tranquillizer in modern times of anxiety, tension and high blood pressure. Raga Darbari is considered very effective in easing tension. It is a late-night raga composed by Tansen for Akbar to relieve his tension after a hectic day in court. This raga belongs to Asawari Thaati and is a complete raga containing all the seven notes. The seven notes are taken from various natural sounds of birds and animals. Pandit Jasaraj's Ram Ko Sumiran Kar in Vilambil Ek Tal is one of the best available recordings of this majestic raga. Pandit Raghunath Seth's Raga Darbari (instrumental) in a music therapy cassette named Tanav is specially composed for easing tension.

Dr Balaji Tambe of Maharashtra has proved through his research that Raga Bhupali and Todi give tremendous relief to patients of high blood pressure. Raga Ahir Bhairav is supposed to sustain the chords, which automatically brings down blood pressure. This raga is a combination of Kafi and Bhairav. Pandit Jasaraj's Aaj to Anand Hi Anand in Druti-Ten Tal is one of the best vocal performances of this beautiful raga.

Raga Malkauns and Raga Asawari help cure low blood pressure. Malkauns is a very prominent raga of Bhairavi Thaati (composition of musical notes from which the raga originates) and is one of the oldest ragas of Indian classical music. Re and pa are absent in this raga; all the other notes used are komal (soft). The timeless performance by Pandit Onkarnath Thakur in Raga ghunghroo baandh Meera nache re is one of the best-known examples of this raga. For heart ailments Raga Chandrakans is considered very helpful. Certain other prominent ragas for relaxation and easing tension are Raga Tilak-kamod, Hansdhwani, Kalavati Durga etc. They evoke a very pleasing effect on the nerves. For patients suffering from insomnia who need peaceful sonorous sleep, Raga Bihag and Bahar have a wonderful effect.

Ragas are closely related to different parts of the day according to changes in nature and development of a particular emotion, mood or sentiment in the human mind. Bhairav is sung an hour before dawn, Ramkali at dawn, Vilavali at sunrise, Sarang at noon, Nata and Malava in the afternoons, Gaudi in the evenings, Kalyan at night, Kedara, Chandra and Bihag late in the night. Music therapy treatment is conducted either early morning, evening or night. One should avoid long music sessions on an empty stomach. Music sessions should be of one-hour duration with two or three short sessions with breaks.

## V. INDIAN MUSIC ON STRESS MANAGEMENT

We know that Indian classical music is based on "Time Theory", i.e., a particular Raga has to be performed in a particular time of the day or night. For example, Raga 'Bhairavi' is a morning raga and to be demonstrated in the morning time only or Raga 'Darbari', which has to be sung or played at night time. Hence, Raga Music can be used to bring a more positive state of mind, helping to keep depression and anxiety at bay. This can help prevent the stress response from wreaking havoc on the body, and can help keep creativity and optimism levels higher, bringing many other benefits.

One way to combat stress is using music therapy. A music therapist views the particular needs of their client. The client and the therapist both are involved in the therapy. Raga music heightens mental functioning, promotes healing and helps you feel calm and relaxed. It is considered to be a creative art therapy. Experts propose that it is the rhythm of the Indian classical music based on some specific talas which has a calming effect on us. A therapist encourages the use of different kinds of instruments also like Sitar, Sarode, Guitar, Flute, Violin etc. One way is listening to Raga that can manage the degree of your stress as it relaxes tense muscles. When you feel relaxed, your worries float into the background. Your energetic system is affected by the tones and microtones of raga music. This causes a physical reaction to certain sounds and frequencies. No one likes the same type of music. Whatever you choose to listen it should make you feel comfortable. Listen to your emotions. Make sure your nerves feel soothed. That way you'll know if it is a positive type of music for your individual taste. Fast paced beats can speed up your heart rate and cause difficulty in relaxing your mind. Slow beats or rhythms will slow down your thoughts and you will naturally relax.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Music therapy has immense benefits and we have discussed some of those in multiple sections above as relevant to the conditions, age groups, segments and others. Benefits of music therapy are not only experienced but also experimentally proven worldwide. The benefit of music therapy with Indian music was made quite obvious by our ancestors right from Vedic era when music, rhythm, movement of body parts were the essentials of their lives and for holistic health development. Appropriate mantra and music is being played right from the time when child is in its mother's womb. And then for every occasion we have suitable music, dance etc. that is relevant for the occasion and match with the emotions. The versatility of Indian music with different genres, rendition styles, different elements, diversity with local music along with multiple classical music forms, convergence of different practices in the same ecosystem of integrated living makes music therapy with Indian music extremely unique and flexible. At the same time, Indian music is complex and demands the knowledge of respective genres to use those as therapeutic measure.

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