

An effect of Raga Therapy on our human body

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Abstract

Now a days, music assumes a vital part in each human life. Because of overwhelming work weight, people listen music to relax. Music increases the metabolic activities within the human body. It accelerates the respiration, influences the internal secretion, improves the muscular activities and as such affects the "Central Nervous System" and Circulatory System of the listener and the performer. A Raga is the sequence of selected notes (swaras) that lend appropriate 'mood' or emotion in a selective combination. It's a yoga system through the medium of sonorous sounds. Depending on its 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.

Keywords: Raga Therapy, human body

Introduction



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) ^[4]. Raga therapy works in conjunction with a music therapist. The music therapist assesses the emotional and physical health of the patient through musical responses and then designs music sessions based on the client's needs. There are different types of music therapy that are used according to a patient's needs. Each patient is different and is assessed on an individual basis. Music therapy can be loosely divided into the following categories:

- ▶ Music therapy to help develop communication, language and intellectual development
- ▶ Music therapy as support, for people who are grieving, going through a crisis time or who are in pain
- ▶ Music therapy to lower stress and tension
- ▶ Music therapy as a motivation for rehabilitation
- ▶ Music therapy to encourage movement

- ▶ Music therapy as a means to identify with cultural and spiritual identity
- ▶ Music therapy to assist memory and imagination. Etc

The goals of Raga therapy are dependent upon the purpose of music therapy for each individual case. Drug and alcohol centers and schools may use music therapy and behavior changing may be an important goal (Sairam, 2004a) ^[3]. Whereas, nursing homes may use music therapy in more of a support role or to relieve pain. Autism, a neurological disorder that affects normal brain functioning is usually noticed within 30 months of age. The worrisome syndrome had no treatment till now, when autism music therapy has emerged as a mode of treatment. Music therapy for autism is accepted as an intervention for autistic people since the 1950s. Music therapy facilitates communication, both verbal and non-verbal. It helps generate creative self-expression and promotes emotional satisfaction. It helps patients' families learn alternative ways to interact and socialize. Composers in India and abroad are writing music nowadays, specifically for healing. They borrow from the sounds of nature, which are the original music – birds' calls, the sound of the wind, rhythms, the lapping of water. Empirical studies have measured the effectiveness of Raga therapy in surgery, heart disease, pediatric oncology, elder care, and hospices. Physicians are increasingly recognizing it - there is calming music and energizing, happy music. Raga therapy, however, does not supplant medicine, but supports it. More than 20 million people worldwide suffer strokes each year. Many patients acquire brain injuries that affect their movement and language abilities, which results in significant loss of quality of life. Patients, who have suffered such disabilities, respond to music with movement, however small, and become emotionally better disposed. Dr Bhaskar Khandekar from Jabalpur (Madhya Pradesh) is the first modern music therapist in India. He started his practise in 1993. He uses selective music for selective diseases, helping patients improve their observable level of functioning and self-reported quality of life in various domains

like cognitive functioning, motor skills, social and behavior skills by using music experiences in singing, song writing, listening to and discussing music, moving to music to achieve definite treatment goals and objectives. Another famous music therapist from north India is Roop Verma. A professional sitarist, he uses the restorative power of music to maintain and improve emotional, physiological and psychological well-being in his patients. He uses pitch, tone and specific arrangement of 'swaras' (notes) in a particular raga that stimulates happiness, and alleviates and cures various ailments, inducing magnetic changes in the body. Dr. Balaji Tambe has proved through his scientific research that Raga Bhupali and Todi give tremendous relief to patients of high blood pressure. Clinical music therapy was started in 2005 at the Centre of Excellence in Delhi. Seven centres in and around Delhi treat people with the aid of music therapy. This has changed the lives of the clinically disadvantaged, especially those with autism or other mental and neurological behavioral disabilities. The Music Therapy Trust has successfully introduced clinical music therapy in India as a discipline.

Rhythmic auditory stimulation (RAS) Therapy

Music therapists use techniques that stimulate brain functions – a common one being rhythmic auditory stimulation (RAS). This relies on the connections between rhythm and movement, wherein, the patient is stimulated to relax or move through the use of music of a particular rhythm. Studies have shown that RAS therapy improves the walking speed of a patient by an average of 14 metres per minute, compared to standard movement therapy. It helps patients take longer steps. In one trial, RAS also improved arm movements, as measured by elbow extension angle. Other Raga therapy techniques, including listening to live and recorded music, are employed to try to improve speech, behaviour and pain in patients with brain injuries; outcomes were mostly positive. Depression Raga therapy has been the subject of study for reasonable period of time now. As one knows, music is a powerful form of expression that delivers messages by the combination of rhythmic sound and words. Raga therapy depression researchers are confident of the effectiveness of music in therapeutic applications.

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.



To be rendered effective, Ragas are used in a combination with Ayurveda, the ancient science of Vedic healing. A Raga must be played or sung to a patient keeping in mind his/her physical nature of *vata*, *pitta* or *kapha*. The time assigned to the Raga during the day or night is also important. Moreover, it is to be seen whether the time of the day or night is naturally suited to *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha*.

Let's take an example. Early morning is the natural *kapha* time for Ayurveda. A *kapha*-type person should be treated to an early morning Raga like Bhairav, to cure physical imbalances. The later part of the morning and afternoon is *pitta* time. Raga Bilawal can be used during these hours to treat patients. Late afternoon and evening is *vata* time, when Raga Pooriya Dhanashri and Marwa can be used as a cure. It is very important, however, that the Ayurvedic constitution of the patient be kept in mind – as to whether he or she is a *vata*, *pitta* or *kapha* person. The people at the core of this treatment would be the music therapist, the client, the clinical facility whether at home or in a hospital, and music providers. Music therapists interact with their clients and the use of music. They assess their clients and create a clinical plan for treatment in coordination with the team and client goals. This is what determines the course of clinical sessions. A music therapist works within a client-centered, goal-directed framework.

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 could be easily gauged on emotions and thereby on 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, which is previously conceived, memorized, practised and rendered and manodharma sangita or the music extemporised and performed. The latter can be equated to the honey-mooner'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.

Some Therapeutic Ragas

Some ragas like Darbari Kanhada, Kamaj 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 Punnagavarali, Sahana etc. do come handy. 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. The immense potential of the power of Shabda (cosmic flow of sound) hidden in music was well recognised by the ancient Indian sages and they had devised several musical patterns emanating from the "Om-kara" for chanting of the Vedic hymns and for distinct spiritual effects. The Shastric schools of music discovered musical octave (sa, re, ga, ma, pa, dha, ni, sa) indwelling in the subtle sounds of Nature and invented the basic classical ragas for activating specific streams of natural powers and effects; a wide variety of musical compositions were generated consequently. Ever since then music has been an integral part of human culture with varied applications and forms. Despite its degeneration into the noisy and destructive kinds of so-called 'modern music', the creative and soothing role of music has not lost its prominence. The last few decades have seen revival of classical Indian and western music in a big way through increasing interest of researchers in music therapy. The original ragas of the Indian classical music (Shastric Music) are created according to the deep knowledge of harmonious consonance between the seven swaras and chakras. This is why shastric musical compositions are found to have significant positive effect on the mind-body system and also have the potential to awaken the otherwise dormant faculties. There are several historical examples of the immense remedial power of the shastric ragas. For instance, in 1933, when the Italian dictator Mussolini was terribly suffering from insomnia, no medicine or therapeutic mode could help him get sleep. Pt. Omkarnath Thakur, a great shastric musician was visiting Europe around that time. When he heard of Mussolini's affliction, he agreed to perform remedial musical programme to allay the latter's sufferings. His performance of the raga puriya indeed worked magically and Mussolini went into deep sleep within half-an-hour. This and similar incidents attracted the attention of many contemporary musicians, scientists and physicians and triggered research in music therapy. The empirical studies on therapeutic evaluation of the classical ragas have shown interesting results. Singing or engrossed listening of Raga Bhairavi has been found to uproot the diseases of kapha dosha e.g. asthma, chronic cold, cough, tuberculosis, some of the sinus and chest related problems etc. Raga Asavari is effective in eliminating the impurities of blood and related diseases. Raga Malhar pacifies anger, excessive mental excitements and mental instability. Raga Saurat and raga Jaijaiwanti have also been found effective in curing mental disorders and calming the mind. Raga Hindola helps sharpening the memory and focussing mental concentration. It has been proved effective in curing liver ailments.

Music Therapy is especially effective in three key medical areas.

1. Pain, anxiety and depression,
2. Mental, emotional and physical handicaps,
3. Neurological disorders & mesothelioma.

It has also been found that listening to various appropriate music lowers Blood Pressure, stabilizes irregular heart rate, reduces pre-treatment anxiety, relieves depression and related

mental ailments, enhances concentration, reduces the need for sedatives and pain drugs (in an event of surgery), reduces vomiting tendency after chemotherapy and also improves stability of those with Parkinson's disease and mesothelioma. The Apollo hospital group, the largest of its kind in Asia is now having a Medical Music Therapy course and obviously, it is the first of its kind in Asia. The seven basic swaras (musical notes) of the musical octave have a one-to-one correspondence with these chakras (nuclei of subtle energy). The lower most (in the kava equina region along the erect endocrine column), viz., the Muladhara Chakra is associated with the swara "sa"; that means, the practice of chanting this particular musical note will have impact on awakening or activation of this particular chakra. Similarly, the chakras successively upwards in this direction namely, the Swadhisthana, Manipura, Anahata, Vishuddha, Agya and the top-most Sahastrara Chakra have correspondence respectively with the swaras "re", "ga" "ma", "pa", "dha" and "ni". Significantly, the order of the compositions of these swaras in the "aroha" (ascending) and "avaroha" (descending) patterns of the Shastric musical tunes also match with the top-down (from Sahastrara to Muladhara) and bottom-up (from Muladhara to Sahastrara) directions of the flow of energy.

Ancient Indian music has devised a special therapy based on the 72 ragas. It is appropriate to define Raga at this point. Raga is neither melody alone, not notes; neither scale nor mode. It's an ensemble of all these. According to an ancient Indian text, Swara Shashtra; the seventy-two melakarta ragas (parent ragas) control seventy-two important nerves in the body. It is believed that a person who sings/performs a raga bound to the raga specifications (lakshanas) and with purity in pitch (swara shuddi) will have complete control on the corresponding nerve. To quote a few, for those who suffer from hypertension, ragas such as Ahirbhairav and Todi are prescribed. To control anger and bring down violence within oneself, Carnatic ragas like Punnagavarali, Sahana and so on, come handy. Not only psychological, but the somatic or physiological impact of ragas have come to light in recent research. For instance, stomach-related disorders are said to be cured with some Hindustani raga such as Deepak (acidity) and Jaunpuri (constipation) and Malkauns or Hindolam (intestinal gas and fever).

Simple iterative musical rhythms with low pitched swaras, as in bhajans are capable of relaxation, as observed with the alpha-levels of the brain waves. They may also lead to favourable hormonal changes in the system.

Hypertension is another health ailment that responds positively to music. Ragas such as *Ahirbhairav* and *Todi* have been recommended for patients with high blood pressure. On the other hand, low blood pressure is healed with the feminine Raga *Malkauns*, believed to have supernatural energy.

- Asavari builds confidence to be heard in the Morning
- Bageshri cures insomnia to be heard in the Night
- Basant Bahar cures Gall Stones to be heard in the Morning
- Bhim palas cures Anxiety, Hypertension to be heard in the Afternoon
- Darbari is a Sedative to be heard in the Night
- Gurjari Todi cures Cough to be heard in the Morning
- Kedar cures Headache, Common Cold, Cough, Asthma to be heard in the Night
- Puriya cures Colitis, Anaemia, Hypertension to be heard in the Evening

- Yaman cures Rheumatic Arthritis to be heard in the Evening
- Bhairavi Raga cured T.B, Cancer, Severe Cold, Phlegm, etc
- Kharahara Priya strengthened the mind and relieved tension.
- Hindolam and Vasantha gave relief from Vatha Roga, B.P, Gastritis and purified blood.
- Saranga cures Pitha Roga.
- Kalyani, Sankarabharanam and Charukesi give relief from heart ailments.
- Asaveri cures headache and psychological disorders.
- By singing the 72 Melakarta ragas, stomach operation was avoided and ailment cured.
- Malkauns(Hindolam)-for Low Blood Pressure
- Bilahari-for Depression
- Durbari-Anti-stress Raga
- Shiva Ranjani---for intellectual excellence
- Darbari-Kanhara, Khamaj and Pooriya Ragas for defusing tension of the mind and hysteria
- Ahirbhairav, Todi ragas for high blood pressure.
- Punnagavali and Sahana ragas for Control over anger and inner violence
- Raga Deepak for acidity
- Gunakali and Jaunpuri ragas for constipation
- Mian ki Malhar and Darbari Kanada ragas for Chronic asthma,
- Bhairavi for Sinusitis,
- Todi and Poorvi for Headache and anxiety,
- Kafi and Khamaj ragas for Sleep disorders.
- Hindol and Marva ragas for High fevers like Malaria.
- Darbari- Kanhara, Jayjaywanti or Sohan for Headaches
- Bageshri and Darbari ragas for Insomnia.

Conclusion

The importance of raga therapy on human body are numerous. This paper presented the effect of music on our human body. Raga therapy contributions to psychological, psychosocial and academic improvement. It provides practical guidelines to use music to accommodate children with disabilities also high blood pressure patient, pregnancy women, diabetic patient etc. 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)^[2].

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