

GUIDED IMAGERY WITH MUSIC USING INDIAN CLASSICAL RAAGS: AN ADAPTATION OF THE TRADITIONAL BONNY METHOD

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Abstract

Raag is a unique set of selected musical notes. The term 'raag', refers to musical tunes or melodies that fill the mind with a particular emotion, feeling or passion. In India, the relationship between sound and emotion has been explored since centuries. The emotion associated with each raag affects the listener irrespective of the lyrics. Guided Imagery with music is a therapeutic technique, first introduced by Helen Bonny in the 1970s. It incorporates music listening in a deeply relaxed state, to stimulate imagery, which is formed in the mind of the listener as he/she listens to the music. This research paper describes the Guided Imagery with Music as a therapeutic intervention, and discusses its adaptation using Indian classical raags.

Keywords: Music therapy; imagery; Indian classical music; raags; therapy; intervention; guided imagery; ancient Indian music

INTRODUCTION

Music is a powerful sensory stimulus as multiple brain processes are involved in singing or playing musical instruments and can benefit individuals' mental and physical health. (Ueba, 2020)

Hermetic philosophy from ancient Egypt, propagated that imagery can influence both mental and physical health of individuals (Grocke, 2015). Music has always been associated with healing. When music and imagination combine, it amplifies the effect of healing, manifold times. Helen Bonny in the 1970s, introduced the Guided Imagery with Music (GIM) intervention.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research paper describes the Guided Imagery with Music as a therapeutic intervention, and discusses its adaptation using Indian Classical raags.

GUIDED IMAGERY WITH MUSIC

The Guided Imagery with Music intervention is a music therapy technique used worldwide at present which combines both music and imagery in order to provide a therapeutic intervention. Many extensions and variations of the technique have evolved in both individual and group forms. GIM has been used for children and adults with a wide range of psychological, emotional and physical difficulties.

(Bruscia, 2018). Any individual can be guided to create a certain image in their mind and their experience and ability to imagine can be enhanced with music (Grocke and Wigram, 2007).

As the listener listens to the music, the therapist verbally guides the listener to stimulate imagery in the mind of the listener while listening to the music (Bonny, 2002). The listener is then asked to draw whatever image is being formed in his mind or is asked to draw a mandala after listening to the music. The drawing can be a form of releasing emotional garbage being carried since years. It can be anything that comes naturally to the subject like scribbling, using particular colours of his/her choice, mandala drawing, doodling and painting. After a few sessions, the effectiveness of this process is observed. The music is selected by the therapist that is intended to help the client as per his individual needs (www.integrativegim.org).

Guided Imagery with Music is a method of music therapy that uses receptive music to explore the psyche of the listener. This therapeutic intervention works on various levels of the listener's psyche for growth and transformation (Jerling; Heyns, 2020).

An established process for the GIM sessions is followed (Bruschia and Grocke, 2002):

Pre- music discussion: The client shares his current concerns, on the basis of which the therapist decides the focus of the sessions.

Relaxation and focus: At this stage, the client is asked to relax and focus by giving a few verbal instructions before the actual session begins.

Music and Imagery in dialogue with the therapist: The therapist designs a music program for the client that best suits the emotional/psychological/physical needs of the client. The intervention session is then delivered to the client within a time period of 25- 45 minutes.

Processing (Integration): At this stage, the therapist instructs the client to integrate the music and imagery experience into a drawing or a mandala art.

This intervention can be given in a group or individually.

Music used in GIM interventions:

Guided Imagery with Music is a music-centred approach to therapy that uses selected sequences of classical music of Western origin that serves as a catalyst for creating imagery in the mind of the subject that help an individual to access both the height

and depth of human experience. (<https://music.appstate.edu/academics/special-programs/bonny-method>)

Apart from the traditional form of the Bonny method, therapists often adapt the sessions of GIM interventions according to the client's cultural and geographical background. Therefore, the present research paper aims to study the applicability of using Indian classical raags while giving this intervention, and its benefits.

INDIAN CLASSICAL RAAGS

In India, since ancient times, the relationship between sound and emotion has been explored. Indian classical music consists of twelve notes and a Raag is created by forming a unique set of selected notes, in such a manner that the musical tunes or melodies thus created fill the mind with a particular emotion, feeling or passion. For example, raags are sung at a certain time of the day or night, or even during a particular season, all of which is believed to affect the emotion associated with the tune (Sanivarapu, 2015).

Indian raags are considered beneficial for emotional healing. The emotion associated with each raag affects the listener irrespective of the lyrics, especially in conditions such as anxiety and stress. (Sairam, 2014)

Eight basic emotions or rasas that are evoked by the various Indian classical raags are love, fear, anger, laughter, pathos, enthusiasm, disgust and wonder (Nizamie, 2014).

The feelings or emotions depicted by several Indian Classical Raags can be stated as follows:

Raag Bilaval: This raag gives an overwhelming feeling of joy and fulfillment, that is felt after achieving a particular goal or aim.

Raag Malhar: This raag gives a sense of calmness to the mind which is always burning with desires. It gives a refreshing feeling to the listener/musician playing the raag.

Raag Nat: This raag creates a feeling of suspense.

Raag Nat Narayan: this raag creates a feeling of hastiness and impatience.

Raag Basant: This raag denotes the season of spring and encourages us to shed our selfishness and make a fresh new start in life. (https://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Feelings_Of_Ragas)

An overview of music therapy practiced in ancient India, and the clinical applications of Indian classical music in the modern era based on existing research literature indicates that listening to Indian classical music is scientifically proved to have many therapeutic benefits for the mind and body. It helps to reduce the negative symptoms of schizophrenia and related disorders. It helps improve executive functions in patients with traumatic brain injury and is also effective in relieving chronic pain. (Sanivarapu, 2015)

GUIDED IMAGERY WITH MUSIC USING INDIAN CLASSICAL RAAGS

Indian classical raags and its wide range of emotions can help in creating imagery by using the emotions as per the needs of the client.

Ragamala paintings were one of the earliest attempts in the medieval period to express the moods depicted by various Indian classical tunes or raags in the form of paintings. An attempt to explore a relationship between sound and emotion in the 5th Century text, Narada Shiksha, gave rise to the trend of ragamala paintings. For example, a raag in North Indian classical music called Hindol is sung when the sun rises and dawn breaks. The painting depicting the emotion of this raag shows the sun, a temple and its empty walls which indicate that it is so early that no one has woken up yet. Thus, a sense of calm that is depicted through the raag is also depicted through the painting that is expressing the emotion of the raag. The sense of calm that we feel early in the morning with no distractions of routine life is depicted both by singing/playing the raag or by the ragamala painting that represents this raag (Khetarpal, 2019).

Many artists, psychologists and musicologists believe that there is a relationship between music and painting. When we are asked to draw or paint while listening to music, it jointly affects our creative thinking, emotions and feelings. It can work as an effective mode of catharsis or emotional discharge through which, one can reach a state of liberation from anxiety or stress. Drawing while listening to music is often termed as 'synesthesia' or the effect on one sense when another is stimulated. The Russian abstract painter Wassily Kandinsky was a synesthete. It is believed that he saw colours when he heard music and heard music when he painted (Higgins, 2020)

Different combinations of musical notes create musical tunes known as raags. Indian classical raags are used therapeutically to heal multiple diseases. These raags are sung or played at a specific time during the day or night to get maximum therapeutic benefits. Each raag is associated with a certain emotion like sadness, anger, excitement, fear, disgust etc. and helps to release these emotions. The mental or

physical ailments healed by the therapeutic effects of various raags are tuberculosis, chronic headache, depression, diabetes, hypertension, acidity, insomnia, high blood pressure, asthma, memory disorders, cardiac issues, stress, anxiety and constipation. (Gandhe, 2020)

There are several psychological and physiological benefits of music therapy using the Guided Imagery with music intervention. Hence, the therapeutic benefits derived from guided imagery with music intervention can be amplified using Indian classical raags and go beyond its limited horizon. Using Indian classical raags during GIM therapy sessions can enhance the benefits of the therapy manifold times and can be applicable for clients with a varied range of psychological and physiological needs.

The following steps can be followed during a GIM session using Indian Classical raags:

1st Step. The therapist gives instructions to the subject that an audio instrumental music piece will be played and he/she has to listen to it carefully.

2nd Step. The therapist plays an instrumental music piece in Raag Malhar.

3rd Step. While the music is being played, the therapist provides a guided imagery in the form of a story or the description of a scene. The therapist will recite a story on rain which accompanied by Raag Malhar (which is associated with rain and the monsoon season) will create a beautiful and long-lasting imagery in the mind of the subject. This raag also gives a sense of calmness to the mind which is always burning with desires. It also gives a refreshing feeling to the listener while listening to the raag and relaxes the mind.

4th Step. After the music stops, the subject is asked to recall and draw whatever image was formed in their mind while listening to the music and the guided instructions given by the therapist. As the subject's mind gets relaxed, he may also be able to release certain emotions that are suppressed in his mind for a very long time.

5th Step. The therapist and the subject discuss the subject's experience and the subject is given necessary feedback.

CONCLUSION

Music therapy is a way of using different types of music by trained professionals in order to meet physical, emotional, cognitive and social needs of every individual. Different forms of music from various cultures have their own therapeutic value. Thus, well established musical interventions can be adapted according to local cultures and artistic traditions in order to maximise the benefits derived from these

interventions. There is a need to study the therapeutic value and unique methods of using Indian classical music, in order to make the best use of this rich cultural heritage.

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