

EFFECT OF INDIAN CLASSICAL RAAGS AS BACKGROUND MUSIC IN ENHANCING EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION OF STORIES FOR CHILDREN: AN EXPERIMENTAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Indian Classical Raags refer to a unique set of musical notes that create a particular emotion in the listener. The nine emotions that we experience in everyday life as mentioned in Natyashastra by Bharat Muni are wonder, humour, love, calmness, compassion, courage, anger, fear, and disgust. The English and Hindi textbooks for grade 5 in the government schools in Chandigarh, India, have many stories in their curriculum that evoke certain emotions in the children of that age- group. These emotions include affection, joy, altruism, selfless-love, etc. This study analysed the effect of reciting stories with the help of Indian Classical raags being played as background music, for 30 children in three different government schools of Chandigarh. 15 children listened to the stories along with Indian classical raags as background music and the other 15 children listened to the same stories without any background music. The children were asked to recite the stories later and observations on the recitations were made. The results indicated that children who were given the intervention were able to recite the stories with greater details to the imagery and content and could better define the emotion that the characters of the story experienced. Thus, by reciting stories along with certain Indian Classical raags being played as background music, the children can pay more attention during the story recitation and better understand the emotion of the stories.

Keywords: Story-telling, Indian Classical music, Raags, Indian Music, Background music

INTRODUCTION

Children are by nature so imaginative that we often find them daydreaming and creating images in their mind. Learning involves multiple brain processes including attention to task, acquisition, application, fluency, maintenance, generalisation, and adaptation. (Mastropieri and Scruggs, 2002). It is common to human experience that the background music played in movies help us in understanding the story and emotions of the various characters in a better manner. Background music can be both a distraction as well as a boon for children while reciting stories, it all depends on how we use the music and the genre of music we use.

INDIAN CLASSICAL RAAGS

Raags is a concept so unique to the Indian music tradition that there is no equivalent concept in the Western music practice to help explain this term.

Indian Classical Raags refer to a unique set of musical notes, that create a particular emotion in the listener. (Wilke, 2011) According to the Indian Classical music tradition, while performing a raag, the musician moves from one note to another, so that a rasa is created that is unique to that raag (Bruno, 2010). Rasa refers to a mood, emotion, essence, or inner feeling. For example, raag Bhairavi predominantly showcases the shringaar rasa or the feeling of love and devotion. So, raag Bhairavi is a certain set of notes which create a tune that gives the feeling of devotion to the listener.

In Indian Classical music, there are nine emotions, popularly known as the Navras which are love, joy, wonder, courage, calmness, anger, sadness, fear, and disgust (Marchand, 2006).

Since every raag is associated with a particular emotion, these raags are considered beneficial for emotional healing (Sairam, 2014).

Natyashastra, an ancient Indian scripture on music, dance and drama clearly defines the nine different emotions and how they can be used on stage (Ghosh, 1951).

The term 'raag' literally means colouring, thus, raags colour or fill the mind with a rasa or emotion. Indian music explores the relationship between sound and emotion since centuries. Since our feelings vary from early in the morning till late at night, and during different seasons, accordingly raags have been created to suit each emotion (Sanivarapu, 2015). For example, raag Bhairav is sung early in the morning before the sun rises and is associated with the emotion of calmness, as during early morning hours, we tend to feel calm and relaxed and there is no sound around us (Khetarpal, 2019).

The nine emotions in Indian Classical Music are (Marchand, 2006):

Sanskrit Term	Meaning in English language	Description/Related emotions
Adbhuta	Wonder	Curiosity, Mystery, Awe
Shringaar	Love	Devotion, Romance, Beauty, Aesthetics
Hasya	Humour	Laughter, Joy, Sarcasm
Shant	Calmness	Tranquillity, Relaxation, Rest
Karuna	Compassion	Sympathy, Empathy, Sadness
Veerya	Courage	Heroism, Patriotism, Confidence
Raudra	Anger	Violence, Impulse, Irritation
Bhayanak	Fear	Anxiety, Nervousness
Vibhatsa	Disgust	Aversion, Disapproval

Various studies have shown the therapeutic effects of Indian classical raags. Research also claims that listening to Indian Classical music helps in increasing focus and memory by relaxing the mind. Certain raags in the Indian Classical music have been used therapeutically to heal multiple diseases like insomnia, memory disorders, anxiety, hypertension, chronic headache, and depression (Gandhi, 2020)

Some research studies have also shown improvement in memory and attention through listening to music. One such study was conducted on 46 children studying in the sixth standard. In this study, memory and attention were taken as independent variables and academic marks obtained were taken as dependent variables. The children were made to listen to instrumental Carnatic music for three months. The results of the study showed that exposure to Carnatic Classical music significantly improved memory, attention, and academic achievement of the sample (Sivakumar, 2013).

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The National Education Policy, 2020 states that school teachers should discourage rote learning and efforts should be made to pursue imaginative activities to ensure learning in the best possible manner so that mere bookish knowledge is not imparted.

The NCERT curriculum for languages, Hindi, and English in particular, has been created in such a manner that various emotions in children are nurtured to ensure overall development of the child and not just language development. There are stories on bravery, empathy, bonding, sacrifice, compassion, kindness etc. All these emotions are included in the nine rasas, each of which form the basis of many Indian Classical raags. Thus, this study uses instrumental versions of each of these raags while teaching a particular story which matches with the emotion of the raag, and its effect on Childrens' ability to recite the story, in the best possible manner, is assessed. Thus, this study experiments with a creative and therapeutic intervention with the aim of enhancing children's learning ability.

OBJECTIVES

- To analyse the effect of Indian Classical Raags as background music on children's ability to understand the emotions of the stories being recited

- To analyse the effect of story-telling along with Indian Classical raags as background music on children's ability to create imagery in their minds as they listen to the raags alongwith the stories being reciting and
- To analyse the effect of story- telling along with Indian Classical raags as background music on the children's ability to understand the emotions felt by the various characters of the story being recited.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

Story-telling:

The art of story- telling is a practice going on since ages to share experiences, lessons or for entertainment purposes specially to young children.

Indian Classical raags:

Indian classical raags are certain set of notes which form tunes that create a particular emotion or feeling in the minds of the listeners. In the present study, Indian classical raags have been used as background music in instrumental form so that story-telling is enhanced and not hampered with verbal music.

Imagery:

Imagery is the act of using language that is words or phrases in such a manner to create images in the reader's mind. In this study, imagery refers to the words/ phrases used by the researcher while story-telling that are retained and recalled by the subject while reciting the story.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study is an experimental study on the effect of story- telling using Indian Classical raags as background music in enhancing emotional expression of stories for children. In this study, a sample of 30 children studying in Class 5, was taken from 3 different government schools of Chandigarh. These children were divided into two experimental groups, Experimental group 1, and Experimental group 2.

The first group of 15 children were given the intervention. The researcher used Indian classical raags as background music, to recite various stories in the Hindi textbook 'Rimjhim' of Class 5. For example, the story '*Eidgah*' which gives the message of altruism and selfless love was recited along with Raag Bhairavi being played in the background, which depicts the emotion of love. Another story titled '*Jahan chah wahan raah*', was recited along with raag Bhupali being played in the background, which depicts the emotion of courage, patriotism, etc. The story '*Nanha Fankar*', was recited along with raag Darbari Kanhada in the background, which depicts the emotion of heroism and confidence.

The second group, heard the stories using the conventional story- telling method.

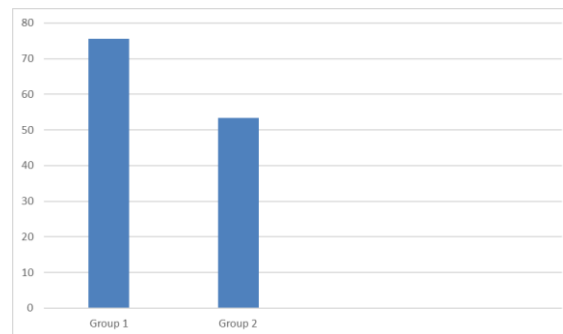
This intervention was given in 15 sessions and at the end of each session, children from both the groups were asked to recite the stories and observations were made on the basis of their story recitation.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The present study was conducted to experimentally analyse the effect of Indian classical raags as background music. A total sample of 30 children was taken from three different government schools of Chandigarh. The sample was divided into two groups: Group-1 and Group-2. The first experimental group was given the musical intervention and the second group, heard the stories using conventional story- telling method. 15 story-telling sessions were given to both the groups in total.

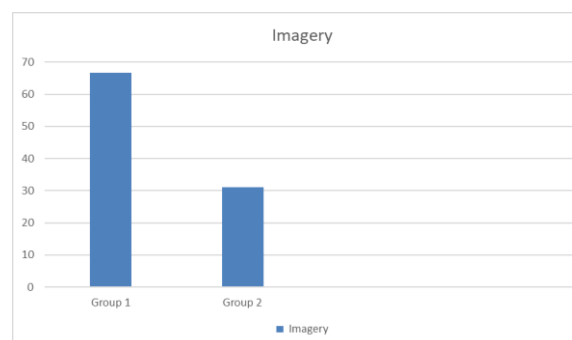
The following observations were made after the sessions:

Effect of Indian Classical Raags as background music on children's ability to understand the emotions of the stories being recited



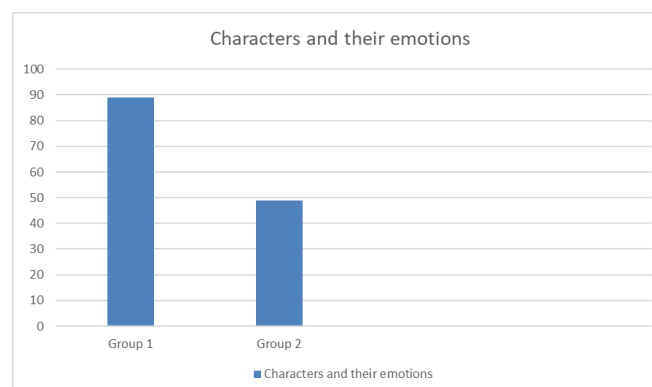
By observing this chart, it can be clearly seen that, after calculating the average of all 15 sessions, 75.55% children in experimental group 1 could understand the emotion being depicted in the story as they listened to it along with a raag as the background music. Whereas, only 53.33% children in experimental group 2 could understand the emotion being depicted in the story as listened to it without any raag being played in the background.

Effect of story-telling with background music on imagery



By observing this chart, it can be clearly seen that 66.66% children in experimental group 1 recited the stories along with the imagery that was created in their mind, as it was told by the story-teller. Whereas, only 31.11% children in experimental group 2 could recite the stories along with the imagery that was created in their mind.

Effect of story-telling with background music on understanding emotions felt by characters of the story



By observing this chart, it can be clearly seen that 88.88% children in experimental group 1 could correctly understand the emotions that the main characters of those stories felt. Whereas, only 48.88% children in experimental group 2 could correctly understand the emotions that the main characters of those stories felt.

CONCLUSION

The National Council for Educational Research and Training has made various efforts to ensure that the language textbooks help in the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development of all children. If we watch a movie without any background sound, we will not be able to pay as much attention and understand the story as much as we can with the background sound.

In this study, the researcher used Indian Classical raags as background sounds to teach stories to children studying in class fifth. The raags were selected in such a manner, that the emotion being depicted in those raags matched with the theme of the story. The results of the study indicate that those children who were taught the stories along with Indian Classical raags were better able to recite the stories and understand the emotional lesson of the stories alongwith imagery, and could also understand the emotions that the characters of those stories felt. The imagery thus created, after listening to the stories with background music, made it easier for them to pay attention to the story, listen keenly, understand it better and helps them memorize the minute details in the story, which can be recalled and recited later. Using Indian Classical music along with it, as a background music, means that the researcher chose a raag that corresponds with the emotion/lesson/theme of the story being recited and that further enhances the effect of the intervention.

SUGGESTIONS

Incorporating Indian Classical raags in academics for children regularly for a certain period, may enhance learning and attention. Also, in this intervention, participants are actively involved in the intervention by making them imagine a story which matches with the emotion of the raag, instead of passive music listening, like most other music therapy interventions. For children, passive music listening may not prove to be a successful musical intervention, as they tend to be very active and fidgety. Thus, this intervention can also be used as a therapy for certain psychological issues that children may face in school. Further research on the same is suggested to authenticate this intervention's therapeutic use.

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