

THE HEALING HARMONY: EXPLORING THE WONDERS OF MUSIC THERAPY

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Abstract

“Music Therapy is the clinical and evidence-based use of music interventions to accomplish individualized goals within a therapeutic relationship by a credentialed professional who has completed an approved music therapy program.”¹ This article delves into the multifaceted world of music therapy, examining its history, origin, uses, mechanisms, and benefits from different health perspectives. It also discusses various mental health disorders, and it explains how ragas have therapeutic power, which makes them effective in healing.

Keywords – Music therapy, Raag Chikitsa, Physical and Psychological health disorders

Introduction

Music holds an important place in our lives. A healthy mind is crucial for maintaining balance in life. It is said to be believed that “a healthy mind resides in a healthy body.” In today's busy and work-loaded life, we have so much work and stress; people are not living a natural life. As a result, we are loaded with diseases, both physical and mental. In such a condition, music acts as a musical herb. It has so much power that it takes us to the depths of joy. It holds a significant place in our lives. It removes the negative thoughts going on inside us in such a way that we feel less burdened. Living a stress-free life fills us with happiness, joy, and peace. Listening to music plays a vital role in keeping us motivated so that we can work stress-free. Music is not just for entertainment purposes; many ongoing research studies have proven that music has a crucial effect on the brain, and nowadays, it is used as a therapy.

Music and sound have a great impact on the mental health of humans. It has so much power that nowadays, music therapy is used in many hospitals, schools, and psychological institutes for treatment. Various research studies also suggest that there is so much power in music that it has many physical and mental health benefits. It keeps our blood pressure under control, we feel less pain, and our ability to work increases. It keeps our daily lives balanced. Music has different effects on our bodies. Unpleasant sounds increase stress and anxiety, leaving us annoyed. On the other hand, if a pleasant and melodious sound is played with tune and rhythm, then it provides many health benefits to the person suffering from mental distress. In musical terms, it is called Aahat and Anahat Naad.

Aahat Naad – The sound which is heard by the ears and which is produced by the conflict or rubbing of two objects is called Aahat Naad.

Anahat Naad – The sound that is known only through experience and does not have any specific reason for its origin, i.e., which comes spontaneously without conflict. The sound that is generated is called Anahat Naad.

Depression

Depression is a clinical mental health disorder in which a person suffers from emotional problems, pain, and suffering inside the mind, headaches, panic attacks, mood swings, irritability, and breathing difficulties. It is a phase in which negative thoughts and a pang of guilt become so heavy that people commit suicide. An estimated 3.6% of people suffer from depression, the adult rate is higher compared with others. The rate of depression in women compared to men is high 6% of women and 4% of men

reportedly facing depression worldwide. Nearly 280 million people suffer from depression across the world.

It is a situation in which a person loses interest and pleasure in life. It is very different from sadness and regular mood swings. Nearly 7 million people die of suicide from depression every year. Depression can happen to anyone at any stage of life. If a person goes through the harm or loss of someone, or someone who goes through a breakup or is involved in an abusive relationship, it can happen for any reason past guilt, broken friendships, ragging, or anything which at some point in life made them feel low about something they can't speak about to anyone and they suffer alone.

Depression is treatable. Many antidepressant medicines, such as Mirtazapine, Bupropion, and Venlafaxine, have shown positive effects on people suffering from depression. Depression can be healed in two ways: through drugs and therapy. In medical terms, the doctors who deal with such mentally ill patients are called psychologists and psychiatrists.

Psychiatrists are trained medical doctors who prescribe medicines. In contrast, psychologists are those who have a specialization in psychology. They study mental health, the mind, and behavior, and treat patients through therapy and counseling. Nowadays, there is a third way in which positive responses have been seen: music therapy or "Sangeet Chikitsa." In this special therapy session, people dealing with various mental health disorders are treated with specific Indian classical music.

Modern and Traditional Approaches to Mental Health Care

- **Acupuncture-** Acupuncture is a Chinese technique in which needles are inserted into the body. With its help, chemicals like serotonin, dopamine, and endorphins are released, which can provide relief from mood disorders, emotional pain, etc. It helps in deeper relaxation and healthy sleep, which helps in mental peace.
- **Ayurveda-** Ayurveda is an ancient method that can provide relief from mental health disorders. Herbs like Ashwagandha, Brahmi, Shankhpushpi, and Jatamansi help in healing depression and support better functioning of the brain.
- **Homeopathy-** Homeopathy is a natural form of treatment through which a person can get relief from both physical and mental illnesses. It is effective in treating various mental disorders such as depression, anxiety, OCD, bipolar disorder, and sleeping problems. Some of the commonly used homeopathic medicines include Ignatia Amara, Natrum Muriaticum, Aurum Metallicum, Sepia, Pulsatilla, Arsenicum Album, Cannabis Indica
- **Psychological Treatment** – Psychologists are mental health experts who are trained in psychology. They mainly try to heal patients by giving talk therapy, they don't prescribe medicines, they give sessions of an hour or two, in which they try to figure out the reasons behind the patient's mental health conditions. Psychologists listen, talk to patients, help them find solutions to their life problems, and try to remove their fears.



- **Psychiatrists' treatment** – Psychiatrists are those who have a doctorate in medical science and can prescribe medicines for the treatment they treat mental health disorders, such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, anxiety, and depression. They can also suggest therapy, but mainly focus on drugs. Some of the antidepressant drugs are: mirtazapine, hope, Panazep.
- **Music Therapy-** There are so many therapies, such as Ayurveda, homeopathy, allopathy, acupuncture, aroma, and yoga. In present times, there is an invention of a new therapy, which is music therapy. People dealing with various mental health disorders are prescribed by their therapists and psychiatrists to take medicines according to their mental health conditions. But medicine cannot improve a disease like depression, anxiety, insomnia, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, Alzheimer's, stress, or trauma. For that, listening to music can help as a therapy for improving people with many diseases and also uplifts mood to think positively.



According to Dешna Chatterjee in her research paper, “The Role of Music Therapy in Stress Reduction,” A potentially effective strategy is music therapy, a discipline that uses music's therapeutic qualities to address social, cognitive, and emotional needs. To accomplish therapeutic goals within a therapeutic relationship, skilled practitioners intentionally use musical interventions in music therapy. These therapies can be singing, playing an instrument, listening to music, or creating music that is specific to the needs and goals of each patient.”²

Music therapy is a therapeutic approach that uses music to heal various physical, mental, psychological, emotional, and social impacts on a human. 31% of music therapists use music to treat patients with different psychological and physical health disorders. The American Music Therapy Association (AMTA) has defined music therapy as “the clinical and evidence-informed use of music interventions to accomplish individualized goals within a therapeutic relationship to achieve physical, emotional, mental, social, and cognitive needs.”³

In this session, a professional music therapist uses music to heal patients suffering from severe physical or psychological health disorders. The best part about this therapy is that there are no side effects.

A music therapist gives a session according to the patient's requirements. It can be an hour or two in which therapists ask you to listen to music, play an instrument, or write a song or lyrics.

History and Origins

Music therapy has a vital role in our lives. According to professionals, music therapy has an ancient connection. It came into existence nearly 40,000 years ago during the Egyptian, Chinese, and Greek civilizations. It came into discussion after the 18th century, when World War I and World War II were going on. It is said to be believed that musicians used to cure soldiers' wounds by playing music in hospitals. Soldiers used to feel good, and their recovery rate happened to be improved.

Soon after watching music therapy's positive outcomes, many doctors wanted to hire therapists. The formal use of music therapy began after the 20th century with the establishment of AMTA (American Music Therapy Association) in 1950. Since then, it has been used as a therapy in various mental hospitals, research centers, rehab centers, schools, etc.

Story of Tansen

Tansen was the royal musician in the court of Mughal Emperor Akbar. During that time, there was a very famous incident when many singers, jealous of Tansen, wanted to get him killed. So, they asked him to sing Raag Deepak. As soon as he sang, Deepak, the temperature started rising, and fire began to spread. At that moment, Tansen's daughter, Saraswati, sang Raag Malhar and saved her father's life. This story demonstrates that music is a powerful tool beyond entertainment; it tells how music can affect the environment, the human mind, and body. This is exactly what music therapy is. Raag Deepak caused heat to spread all around, while Raag Malhar brought coolness and relief to the surroundings. These are often considered just stories or legends, but there is a deep meaning hidden behind them, something we were not even aware of.

Music Therapy helps in Improving Mental Health

Research shows that music therapy helps improve mental health by removing negative thoughts and stress. But how does it work in the brain? Listening to music triggers the release of specific chemicals that influence mood:

The chemicals responsible are as follows:

- Dopamine
- Cortisol
- Oxytocins
- Endorphins
- Amygdala, hippocampus, nucleus accumbens
- Serotonin
- Norepinephrine

DOPAMINE (Pleasure and reward) – When we listen to pleasurable music, a chemical pathway called the mesolimbic pathway is activated. It releases dopamine, a specific chemical that is responsible for making us feel pleasure, and hence we feel enjoyable and positive, keeping us motivated.

CORTISOL (Stress hormones) – When we listen to music, a hormone called cortisol is released, which helps to lower stress and anxiety. It helps in calming the mind and maintaining a positive environment.

OXYTOCINS (Social bonding) – When we listen to a band performing or engage ourselves in social activities such as making music or performing in a group with musicians, hormones called oxytocins are released, which help in uplifting social bonding or connections.

ENDORPHINS (Natural painkiller) – This specific hormone is the body's natural painkiller, which helps to lessen pain and stress. When pleasant music is played, endorphins are released, which help in inducing strong emotions.

SEROTONIN (Regulates moods) – This hormone helps to calm the mind and relax the body. It helps reduce anxiety and depression and is also helpful in insomnia. When we listen to pleasurable music, serotonin is released, which regulates our mood.

NOREPINEPHRINE (Boosting energy) – Fast-tempo music can release norepinephrine, which boosts our energy and makes us active and motivated. It is helpful when we need to regain energy. It is also referred to as active engagement therapy.

Diseases Where Music Therapy Helps

1. Depression
2. Anxiety
3. Insomnia
4. Bipolar Disorder
5. Schizophrenia
6. Alzheimer's
7. Stress, Trauma
8. Chronic Pain
9. PTSD
10. High/Low Blood Pressure
11. Diabetes
12. Stroke and Neurological Disorders
13. OCD
14. Impulsivity
15. Cardiac Conditions

Music Therapy and Indian Classical Music

Music therapy is a term that signifies a special form of music played with laya and dhun to treat people with various physical and psychological health disorders. In ancient Indian tradition, it is called Raag Chikitsa. Many Indian classical ragas have therapeutic effects. For example, Raag Madhuvanti can be helpful for people dealing with depression, Raag Puria is helpful in healing anxiety, and Raag Malhar is beneficial in the treatment of mental instability.

- Raga Bilahari – This raga is used to evoke joy and happiness.
- “Raga Bhairavi- This raga is often considered to have a calming and soothing effect. It is believed to help reduce stress, anxiety, and insomnia. Bhairavi is commonly performed in the early morning or late evening.
- Raga Malkauns- Malkauns is thought to have a deep meditative quality. Listening to this raga is believed to help with relaxation and focus. It is often performed at night.
- Raga Todi- Raga Todi is associated with cooling and refreshing qualities. It is believed to have a positive impact on mental well-being and can be used to alleviate mood swings.
- Raga Yaman-Yaman is considered a joyful and uplifting raga. It is believed to boost mood and promote a sense of well-being. Yaman is typically performed during the daytime.
- Raga Darbari- This raga is known for its slow, contemplative nature. It may be used to induce a state of deep relaxation and concentration.
- Raga Ahir Bhairav- Ahir Bhairav is believed to have a healing quality, particularly for ailments related to the respiratory system. It is also considered to promote mental clarity.

- Raga Madhyamavati-Madhyamavati is associated with tranquility and emotional balance, It may be used to reduce stress and anxiety.”⁴
- Raga Bhairavi – This raga is often considered to have a calming and soothing effect. It is believed to help reduce stress, anxiety, and insomnia. Bhairavi is commonly performed in the early morning or late evening.
- Raga Malkauns – Malkauns is thought to have a deep meditative quality. Listening to this raga is believed to help with relaxation and focus. It is often performed at night.
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Disease Name	Raga Name
Mental illness and depression	Raga Madhuwanti
Heart disease	Raga Darbari Kanada
Insomnia	Raga Bhairavi
Jaundice	Raga Khamaj
Weakness	Raga Jayjaywanti
Asthma	Raga Malkauns
Weak memory	Raga Shivranjani
Anemia	Raga Pilu
Nervous breakdown	Raga Ahir Bhairav, Madhuwanti
Leukoderma (Leukoma)	Raga Asavari, Ramkali
Asthma	Raga Shri, Kedar
Cancer	Raga Nayaki Kanada, Sindhu Bhairavi
High blood pressure	Raga Hindol, Puriya
Vision impairment	Raga Kaushik Kanada, Multani
Headache	Raga Sohini
Stomach pain	Anand Bhairav
Indigestion	Marwa, Nat Bhairav

Comprehensive Health Perception: Body, Mind, Spirit, and Society

Music therapy is a very effective way to deal with mental disorders. It is not only used as therapy for people suffering from emotional problems, but also has a greater impact on different aspects. We have seen this in various studies, research, and articles.

(1) Physical Health's Perception

(2) Mental Health's Perception

(3) Spiritual Health's Perception

(4) Social Health's Perception

1. Physical health perception – If we consider physical health perception, music therapy plays a vital role in maintaining a good and healthy lifestyle. Music therapy helps cure many physical health problems, such as balancing blood pressure, driving away pain and suffering. It helps to calm the mind, reduce anxiety, and address sleep-related problems. It is helpful in chronic pain, cardiovascular diseases such as hypertension, and heart disease. Heart rate also maintains its balance. It can also be beneficial for cancer patients going through chemotherapy by helping manage pain, anxiety, and depression. It can reduce migraines and headaches. It can be beneficial for diabetic patients as well.

2. Mental health perception – Music therapy helps drive away mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety, insomnia, bipolar disorder, and schizophrenia. As we listen to music, many chemicals start getting released and keep functioning, affecting our mood in different ways.

3. Spiritual health perception – Music therapy has a greater impact if seen from the spiritual health perspective. Music is devoted to sadhana, which is a form of meditation. As we start doing riyaaaz, firstly, we do Om riyaaaz, then we go on to other swaras, that is sa, re, ga, ma, pa, which directly or indirectly connect us to the divine and bring a sense of calm and meditation to the surroundings.

4. Social health perception – Music therapy is effective when we talk about social well-being. It creates a positive surrounding. It can help to communicate and helps in social interactions.

Conclusion

This research paper establishes that music therapy is effective in treating various physical and mental illnesses. Our Indian classical music holds immense healing power. The ragas we listen to and learn are like medicinal herbs. Many studies have already proven this. It affects our physical, mental, spiritual, and social health. Music therapy is effective in treating illnesses like depression, anxiety, insomnia, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and more.

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