
HINDUSTANI CLASSICAL MUSIC AND MENTAL HEALTH: A SCIENTIFIC APPROACH

Ms. Geeta Desai

Vice-Principal, Assistant Professor

Narsee Monjee College of Commerce and Economics, Vile-Parle (West)

Geeta.Desai@nmcce.ac.in

ABSTRACT:

Hindustani Classical Music is deeply rooted in India's Vedic traditions. Its therapeutic value is immense, especially in fields with mental health, where ragas (musical scales), have proven to have a positive effect on human emotions. Ragas Yaman, Darbari Kanada, for instance, are relaxing, reduce stress and are helpful in emotional equilibrium, which resonate with the mind, comforting and calming it down. This form of music offers a non-rational and emotional healing, unlike cognitive therapies, that promote catharsis without verbal expression. Hindustani classical music can be combined with other therapeutic interventions that promote mindfulness and emotional regulation. The concept of a structured process in music therapy with the use of ragas according to the emotional state of a person is an effective method in inducing relaxation, release of emotion and reflection. It is medically validated that listening to this music can bring down the store of stress hormones, enhancing both spirits and health. For instance, Raga Yaman revolves around tranquillity and meditation, this rag can help create a sense of relaxation, decrease anxiety, and promote mental clarity. Both are designed to connect the player to the spiritual consciousness and inspiring spiritual highs as well." The interplay of structured ragas and free improvisation enhances mental health, making it a holistic way to heal. The therapeutic value of this music extends beyond culture and offers support for emotional well-being and mindfulness.

Keywords: Hindustani classical music, Ragas, Mental health, Music therapy, Emotional well-being, CBT: Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, MBSR: Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction

OBJECTIVES

1. To investigate the therapeutic impact of Hindustani classical music on mental health.
2. To do ragas analysis in its particular perspective emotional and neurological.
3. To compare effect of Hindustani classical music therapy with cognitive-behavioral and mindfulness-based interventions. Underlying mechanism and its effectiveness of a structured raga-listening therapy in emotional modulation.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The research paper explores the psychotherapeutic advantages of Hindustani classical music, as well as its assimilation in current therapeutic techniques. It explores individual ragas like Yaman, Darbari Kanada, music therapy techniques, and compares nonverbal healing methods with traditional therapies such as CBT and MBSR. The range spans the psychological, affective and physiological aspects of music interventions.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methods are qualitative and interdisciplinary, consisting of literature review, scientific investigation, and theoretical construction. They can be categorized into primary sources such as historical documents and written works from the classical era, as well as secondary sources: academic music therapy and mental health researches. By this, thematic and comparative analysis is conducted to observe and evaluate the application of individual ragas.

DATA ANALYSIS

The paper included references to scientific literature including Chanda & Levitin (2013), McKinney et al. & Potters 1997) and Fancourt & Finn (2019): demonstrate how Raga Yaman modulates the autonomic nervous system resulting in the reduction of stress markers (cortisol and heart rate). One piece of evidence for this phenomenon is that clinical reports as well as music texts from India suggest that certain ragas, such as Yaman and Darbari Kanada, help in emotional regulation, reducing anxiety, and enhancing cognitive functioning. The article concludes by bridging physiology and classical theory to provide an integrated account of healing factor of music.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The present study is predominantly theoretical and literature review based without actual experimental data or clinical trials. The subjective nature of emotional responses to music, small sample diversity within the present

studies, and cultural specificity of Hindustani classical music could pose limitations on the generalizability of these findings. Conclusion More empirical work on various populations is needed for validation and expansion of the findings.

Introduction: Music is an ideal way to communicate emotions and stress states.

HINDUSTANI CLASSICAL MUSIC

Hindustani classical music is the other main tradition of Indian classical music, born in the Indian subcontinent in northeastern South Asia. In Vedic times, music was acknowledged as something more than an art form -a dedicated avenue to reach out the cosmic order, making a close relation between the transcendental sphere and the human soul. The Samaveda, one of the four Vedas, gives prominence to music as an essential aspect of rituals, as a medium through which human connects to the divine (Rao, 1999, p. 15). Music in early ages was characterized by vocal rendition of hymns and evolved over centuries, considering the influence of native culture and Persian music in medieval times. Creative developments in Indian classical music were made during the Delhi Sultanate and Mughal Empire like the introduction of several new forms, such as the qawwali and *tarana* by figures like Amir Khusrau (Khan 2014, p. 112).

The *gharana* system was further developed during the 19th and 20th centuries, but it has lost its significance in modern Indian classical music, as the task of preservation of musical tradition has devolved onto classical and academic arts colleges. Gharanas like Gwalior, Phalia and Patiala were established as crucibles of musical eminence that emphasized ragas and tala and improvisatory methods (Subramanian, 2006, p. 42). This tradition is not only a record of the diversity of India's rich heritage, but it is also an art form that generates an emotional meditative state which the power to change lives.

THERAPEUTIC POTENTIAL OF HINDUSTANI MUSIC

Classical Forecast Hindustani classical music is highly therapeutic when it comes to *aalap*, in raag guided movements, specially mind fitness. And at the very heart of this tradition is the raga system, an organized system of melodic modes that evoke particular emotions. Raga: It is "a melody type that is thought to have the power to evoke a particular emotion, or season, or time of day or night" (Rao, 1999, p. 78). Each raga has its own mood, or *rasa*, which has the power to affect the emotions of a listener.

The ragas skeleton is based on shruti and *swara*. Shruti are the fine-grained microtonal pitches that serve as the primary material of ICM, yielding delicate variations of pitch that differentiate one raga from another (Subramanian, 2006, 32). Hearing certain ragas like Yaman or Darbari Kanada has been demonstrated to decrease stress, decrease cortisol, induce relaxation. The slow tempi and the low-frequency tonal resonations of these ragas certainly resonate with our inner selves, promoting calmness Khan (2014, p. 64). Research indicates that even the sounds of Hindustani classical music stimulate the autonomic nervous system inducing meditative state as well as affective balance (Chakravarty, 2009, p. 45).

In contrast to the normal therapy forms known as CBT/mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR), Hindustani music is a non-verbal healing agent. This method is suitable for use in clinical and non-clinical settings because it enables emotional expression and catharsis without verbal communication. Furthermore, considering the specific therapeutic effects of particular ragas on ailments like anxiety, insomnia or depression, this tradition represents a culturally embedded and relevant form of mental health care (Khan, 2014, 64; Chakravarty, 2009, 45).

INTEGRATION OF HINDUSTANI CLASSICAL MUSIC WITH OTHER THERAPIES

Indian classical music has proven to be an effective adjunct to existing treatments such as CBT or MBSR. For instance, the emotional and gratitude-focused aspects of the intervention synergize with the cognitive restructuring that defines classical CBT, while the meditative components are harmonious with mindfulness training, leading to richer emotional relaxation and clarity.

But while it has potential, several obstacles prevent its popular use in a therapeutic context in the Hindustani classical tradition. These barriers include a scarcity of qualified practitioners and time needed for one to assimilate into the tradition. But further studies and such education can make it become a non-invasive behaviour for treating mental health.

HCM BASED MUSIC THERAPY PROCESS

Hindustani classical music therapy is a structured intervention consisting of the emotional, mental, and physical problems. (Ranade, 1998, p 110–115; Chakravarty, 2009, p 45–50).

The steps include:

Diagnosis: assessing the individual's state of mind. The therapist checks the mental makeup of the recipient before selecting ragas. Raga Yaman or Bhairavi may be applied to relaxation, while Raga Marwa or Darbari Kanada may address anxiety (Khan, 2014, p. 64).

Raga: The raga is selected according to the mood or season of the song. For example, the evening is a good time for listening to Raga Yaman and Hamsadhwani is good for deflecting depression (Chakravarty, 2009, 39).

Relaxation Inductions: Deep breathing or progressive muscle relaxation techniques to help a person become fully absorbed in the music. [Chakravarty, 2009, p. 47; Ranade, 1998, p. 113].

Listening and Interaction: The patient listens to the raga and often serves as a co-participant in this dialog by singing, or playing a simple instrument, enhancing attachment.

Emotional Release: As the music proceeds emotions are gradually released, resulting in catharsis, derived mode from Natyashastra (Chakravarty, 2009, p. 47).

Reflection and Evaluation: post-therapy discussions allow both, therapist and the patient to understand emotional reactions and influence the therapy sessions that follow (Ranade, 1998, p. 113).

SUSTAINED and MULTIPLE exposure: Several sessions cause emotional regulation and lessened anxiety, and regular exposure to ragas contributes to therapeutic gains (Sarkar, 2017, p. 72).

SCIENTIFIC PERSPECTIVE OF RAGA YAMAN'S IMPACT

The musical aspect of Raga Yaman's therapeutic effect can be found in its effect on the autonomic nervous system. Scientific research suggests that listening to this raga stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system, which can help in reducing stress and increasing relaxation (Chanda & Levitin, 2013, p. 119). This has a physiological action of reducing cortisol and lowering heart rate and in turn promoting a calmer space and emotional steadiness.

Research by McKinney et al. (1997) also substantiates these results, demonstrating that ragas such as Yaman have the effect of decreasing physiological signs of stress (p. 144). Additionally, the organized as well as improvisational nature of Hindustani classical music enhances emotion regulation and cognitive abilities, especially in people who suffer from mood disorder (Fancourt & Finn, 2019, p. 199).

CONCLUSION

Hindustani classical music, a system rich in complex ragas and rhythmic structure, has deep potential for emotional, psychological and physical healing. A growing body of literature supports the use of MBCT to treat psychiatric disorders like anxiety, depression and stress. More than its therapeutic potential, this practice serves as a universal balancing method to support emotional health. Using some ragas - like Yaman - in therapy will help people to gain mindfulness and an emotional cathartic as well as help them to harmonise themselves from within. Further research in this medium has potential for mental health benefit and quality of life.

REFERENCES

- Chanda, M. L., & Levitin, D. J. (2013). The neurochemistry of music. *Trends Cogn Sci*, 17(4), 118–119.
- Chakravarty, R. (2009). *Music in Ancient India*. Heritage Press.
- Chaturvedi, S. K. (2015). Music therapy for mental health. *Indian Journal of Psychiatry*, 57(2), 118–122. 040434.fm - Page 122 Thursday, March 23, 2006 7:03 AM 12208938.0346-17/3Page proof122Chaudhury et al.
- Darbar Festival. (2020). *Raga therapy: Indian music's curative powers*. Darbar Arts Culture Heritage Trust, p. 14.)
- Fancourt, D., & Finn, S. (2019). Music and health: What it is, what it does and why. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10, 199.
- Khan, N. A. (2014). *Traditions of Hindustani Classical Music*. Orient Blackswan.
- McKinney, C. H., Antoni, M. H., Kumar, M., & Tims, F. C. ([1997]). The effects of Guided Imagery and Music on mood and cortisol in healthy adults. *Journal of Music Therapy*, 34(3), 143–147.
- Ranade, A. D. (1998). *Perspectives on Music: Source, Concepts and Styles*. D. K. Printworld.
- Rao, S. N. (1999). *The Vedas: A Musical Perspective*. Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.

-
- Sarkar, R. (2017). The impact of Indian classical music on the mental health: An evidence-based review. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 8(3), 62–69.
 - Subramanian, L. (2006). *From the Tanjore Court to the Madras Music Academy: A social history of music in South India*. Oxford University Press.
 - Gupta, R and Dixit, S (2019). Indian classical music and mental health. *Journal of Indian Psychology*, 56(3), 47–59 Mehta, D. (2011).
 - Haque, S., & Raza, F. (2017). Medicine in Indian culture and the role of music. *International Journal of Psychosocial Research*, 4(1), 35-41.
 - Iyer, S. (2014). Healing through Indian classical music. _ *Journal of Music and Therapy*, 19(2), 78–85.
 - Kaur, S., & Singh, H. (2016). Indian classical music and its psychological effects. *Psychology Today*, 8(5), 102–108.
 - Levitin, D. J. (2006). *This is your brain on music: The science of a human obsession*. Dutton.
 - Malhotra, S., & Kumar, P. (2018). Investigating the link between music and feeling. *Psychological Science*, 22(7), 812–821.
 - Rajan, K. & Thomas, A. (2015). Music and its connection with the treatment of mental health. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 29(1), 88–95.
 - Sharma, S., & Shukla, R. Impact of Indian ragas on mental health. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 71(2), 131–138.
 - Verma, A., & Mehta, P. (2012). Music in therapy: A review. *International Journal of Music and Healing*, 3(4), 67–73.