

Fostering Mental Wellbeing by Healing Chakras through Music Therapy

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Abstract

Music in its completeness is more than just a group of notes. In the Indian Classical Music, the role of 7 ‘*shuddhaswara*’ and 5 ‘*vikritswara*’ in its various combinations play very dynamic role. These combinations of 12 ‘*swaras*’ make numerous Ragas each having its own taste and touch with the capacity to modulate as well as moderate the body chakras, mood as well as psychological and physical health. The association of these ‘*swaras*’ with the 7 major ‘*chakras*’ of human body along with their expression has been discussed in this paper. Synchronicity between body ‘*chakras*’ and ‘*swaras*’ greatly bestows well-being as positive chakra yields positive results while negative chakra yields negative results. Methods like Toning and Chakra Sound are well researched and significantly show the effects of 7 ‘*swaras*’ on the body ‘*chakras*’. This paper reviews that ragas when applied therapeutically has high probability to yield positive expression in their associated chakras which in turn enhances mental as well as physical well-being. The data and reviews were collected through books by consulting libraries, online books, journals articles as well as discussion. As per the need, the exposure towards different Ragas in any form like hearing, singing or playing (instrumental) impacts our mind, body and emotions providing us more balanced and healed state.

Keywords – *Music Therapy, Ragas, Body Chakras, Psychological Wellbeing*

Music in its completeness is more than just a group of notes. In the words of music scholar Randall McClellan (1988) *“Music is a dynamic multi-layered matrix of constantly shifting tonal relationships unfolding within time.”*^[1]. It is this dynamic matrix that induces a profound sense of relaxation. As music is eternal, it works as a league of development and betterment for not only human but all organisms ^[2]. The interest of mankind towards sound and rhythm is not novel in the form of curiosity and emotions like fear for lightening sound, peace towards chirping of birds etc. These eternal sounds have always modified the mood states and still do.

Historically the ancient Greeks, Egyptians, Babylonians as well as Indians have signified music ^[2]. Be it in the form of beats, ringing, chanting, humming, clapping or even singing. Philosophers like Plato has even explained Music as ‘the moral law’ which possess an intuitive understanding of the healing powers. According to him music has the capacity to restore harmony and contentment in one soul. While advocating music with special healing qualities, Pythagoras said that *“all things are constructed of harmonic patterns. It is only when we are out of step with the natural harmonic that disharmony arises.”* ^[2].

The medieval monarchs used music, dance and singing as a prominent way of entertainment. The best example would be the great 16th century musician ‘Tansen’, student of great ‘Haridas Swami’, and one of the “*nine gems*” of Emperor Akbar. His musical skill was singular of the kind which had their spectacular effects on the listener’s moods as well as environment like - ‘Darbari Kanada’, ‘Miyaki Malhar’, ‘Miyaki Todi’ ^[3]. By late 19th and 20th centuries, music therapy started attracting appreciation as a therapy in Europe for treating mental disorders^[2].

Essence of Indian Classical Music

In Indian Classical Music, the basic unit of tune or composition is called ‘Swar’. According to K.V. Shastri, ‘Swar’ is *“a resonating sound that is performed of shrutis without intervals that has the property by itself affording pleasure to the mind of the hearer.”*^[4]. These ‘swars’ when stimulated in a systematic sequence and tempo produces unique rhythms called ‘Raag’. As World Music Maestro Shri Pandit Ravi Shankar Explains Raga as –

“Ragas should not be mistaken as modes that one hears in the music of the Middle and Far Eastern countries, nor be understood to be a scale, melody per se, a composition, or a key. A raga is a scientific, precise, subtle and aesthetic melodic form with its own peculiar ascending and descending movement consisting of either a full seven note octave, or a series of six or five notes (or a combination of any of these) in a rising or falling structure called the

Arohana and Avarohana. It is the subtle difference in the order of notes, an omission of a dissonant note, an emphasis on a particular note, the slide from one note to another, and the use of microtones together with other subtleties, that demarcate one raga from the other."^[13]

All the 'Raag' are derived from 10 'Thaats' namely *Bilawal, Kalyan, Khamaj, Bhairav, Poorvi, Maarva, Kaafi, Asavari, Bhairavi and Todi*. 'Thaats' work as basic parent notation^[3]. Each 'Thaat' has differences in its grouping of octaves out of 12 'swaras' and work as basic blocks for ragas to form ^[4]. These combinations of various frequencies has the eternal ability to enable us relax and feel one with the creation by modifying our mood and emotions^[5]. The ability of modifying and managing moods and emotions in raag comes from the concept of 'Nava Rasa' or "nine sentiments" meaning that each raag has its own predominance on one rasa and has a texture of arousing or relaxing a particular emotions or sentiment^[4]. These 'rasa' are as follows –

1. Shringara Rasa - Romantic and Erotic
2. Hasya Rasa – Humorous
3. Karuna Rasa – Pathetic
4. RaudraRas – Anger
5. VeeraRas - Heroic
6. BhayanakaRas – Fearful
7. VibhatsaRas – Disgustful
8. AdbhutaRas – Amazement
9. ShantaRas – Peaceful

Table 1 - Twelve Indian Classical 'swar' in sequence to Western Notes.

Sr. No	Swar	Hindi Name	Shudh/Vikrit	Notation id	Western Equivalent	Western Note
1	Sa	Shadaj	Shudh	S	Unison	C
2	Re	Rishabh	Komal (Vikrit)	R	Minor Second	C#, Db
3	Re	Rishabh	Shudh	R	Major Second	D
4	Ga	Gandhar	Komal (Vikrit)	G	Minor Third	D#, Eb
5	Ga	Gandhar	Shudh	G	Major Third	E
6	Ma	Madhyam	Shudh	M	Perfect Fourth	F
7	Ma	Madhyam	Tivra (Vikrit)	M	Augmented Fourth	F#
8	Pa	Pancham	Shudh	P	Perfect Fifth	G
9	Dha	Dhaiwat	Komal (Vikrit)	D	Minor Sixth	G#, Ab
10	Dha	Dhaiwat	Shudh	D	Major Sixth	A
11	Ni	Nishad	Komal (Vikrit)	N	Minor Seventh	A, Bb
12	Ni	Nishad	Shudh	N	Major Seventh	B

Source – Deva, 1990

Music, Mind and Body

Music therapy can be applied in two ways. One way is by playing an instrument for others where the therapist intends to bring desired changes in the emotional and physical health of

the listener. The second way is to listen music oneself to achieve relaxation where the effect of music depends on the ability of the listener to experience an altered state of physical arousal and mood. These changes occur due to the changes in musical notes which vary in tempo and rhythm [2].

According to Merit (1990), music not only influences neurons of the body, but also has the potential to raise one's energy levels^[6]. This appraisal of energy always occurs in accordance with the need of body. Tang et al. (1994) argue that music therapy does not have side effects and is relatively more economical^[7]. According to the ancient Indian text named SwarShastra, the 72,000 nerves (nadis) of our body are controlled by the 72 parent ragas known as 'MelakartaRaag'^[8]. It is additionally believed that if one sings or performs a raga according to its particularly defined minute specifications, like lakshanas, prakriti (nature) pahar (timing), tempo and purity appropriately, that raga will have complete control over its corresponding nerve^[8].

Out of 12 Notes in Western Music and 12 'ShudhSwar' in Indian Music, the major 7 'swar' are considered to be in association with the major 7 chakras. It has been verified that Musicworks in synchronicity with the 7beta physical energy sources of the body called 'Chakra'^[9]. It is not surprising to note that the number of major chakras in body is 7, so is the number of 'shudhswara' and so is the number of colours of rainbow. As the name suggests, 'Chakra' means circulating or circulation insisting that the body chakras always circulates in a direction, it is never still^[9]. This is on us to make it rotate positive at all times. The 'swar' notations when sung in the ascending (aaroah) and descending (avroah) orders in the correct manner, they synchronize with the Chakra toning from Root to Crown and Crown to Root Chakra respectively^[5]. When the frequencies of the chakra and the tone matches, the chakra rhythm and vibration gets back to normal giving way to demolition of physical as well as mental problems^[5]. Chakra Sound Meditation is the greatest example.

Table 2: Association of Swar with Chakras.

	Swar	Hindi Name	Octave Note	Chakra	Location	Sanskrit Name	Sound	Color (Rainbow)
1	Ni	Nishad	B	Crown	Top of Head	Sahastrara	Om	Violet
2	Dha	Dhaiwat	A	3 rd Eye	Brow centre	Aagya	Om	Indigo
3	Pa	Pancham	G	Throat	Base of Neck	Vishuddha	Ham	Blue
4	Ma	Madhyam	F	Heart	Chest	Hriday	Yam	Green
5	Ga	Gandhar	E	Solar Plexus	2 inch above navel	Manipur	Ram	Yellow
6	Re	Rishabh	D	Sacral	2 inch below navel	Swadhishtana	Vam	Orange
7	Sa	Shadaj	C	Root	Base of Spine	Moolaadhara	Lam	Red

Source - Margarita, A. (2019), Deva (1990)

Table 3: Association of positive and Negative Expressions of Glands.

Chakra	Gland Associated	Denotes	Positive Expression	Negative Expression
Crown	Pineal	Spirituality	Inspired, Eternal Connection	Disconnectedness, Loneliness
3 rd Eye	Pituitary, Hypothalamus	Awareness	Intuition, Clarity, attention	Lost, Confusion, Stress
Throat	Thyroid	Communication	Expression of Thoughts, Essential Truth, encouragement	Apparent Truth, complaint, criticize, timidity
Heart	Thymus	Love, Healing	Kindness, care, compassion	Needy/Creepy, jealousy, closed
Solar Plexus	Pancreas	Wisdom, Power	Confidence, service in action	Lack of undertaking, self – conscious
Sacral	Reproductive Organs	Sexuality, Creativity	Innate Self Worth, Forgiveness, Acceptance	Guilt, Shame, self – destructive, withdrawn
Root	Adrenals	Basic Trust	Innate Security, neediness, money fear	Insecurity

Source - Margarita, A. (2019).

Table 4 – Association of Psychological Disorders with Chakras.

Sr.n	Name of Chakra	Name of Disorder
1	Crown	Depression
2	3 rd Eye	Neuropathy
3	Throat	Addiction, Conflict, Sexual Abuse
4	Heart	Co-dependency, Depression, Grief, Loneliness, Panic Attack, Self Hate
5	Solar Plexus	Eating Disorders, Codependency, Conflict, Fear, Guilt, Infertility, Panic Attack, Self Hate, Sexual Abuse, Shame
6	Sacral	Co-dependency, Conflict, Guilt, Infertility, Sexual Abuse, Shame
7	Root	Anger, Co-dependency, Fear, Infertility, Panic Attack, Self Hate, Sexual Abuse, Stress

Source – Margarita.A, (2019).

Note: 1. In Anxiety and Stress, all chakras are effected.

2. This table does not cover association of physical disorders with chakras.

How association of chakras with ‘swar’ interferes with wellbeing?

The ‘vaadiswar’ of every raga is though associated with the chakras. The management of thoughts and behaviors get influenced when the chakra gets negative or positive and also the effect is vice versa. When the ragas associated with the imbalanced chakra is played, the rotation of that chakra gets positive which holds the capacity to heal the physical as well as mental health issues.

Table 5: Interrelation of VaadiSwar with Body Chakras and their Associated Disorders.

Sr. No.	Raga	VaadiSwar	Associated Chakra	Work of Chakra	Associated Disorders
1	Asavari	Dhaiwat	Brow Chakra	Awareness	Build Confidence,
2	Bhairavi	Madhyam	Heart Chakra	Love, Healing	Encourages Detachment, Insomnia
3	Kaafi	Pancham	Throat Chakra	Communication	Sleep Disorders

4	Bhoopali	Gamdhar	Solar Plexus	Wisdom, Power	Memory, Concentration
5	Todi	Dhaiwat	Brow Chakra	Awareness	Anxiety
6	Bihag	Gandhar	Solar Plexus	Wisdom, Power	Sonorous Sleep
7	Madhuvanti	Pancham	Throat Chakra	Communication	Depression
8	Chandrakauns	Madhyam	Heart Chakra	Love, Healing	Anorexia Nervosa
9	Tilak Kamod , Hansdhvani	Shadaj	Root Chakra	Basic Trust	Relaxation, Ease Tension, Pleasing effect on Nerves

Table 5 shows the interrelation of 'vaadi' swar with the associated body chakras and their disorders with examples of few ragas.

Like Raag Asavari with Vaadi Swar 'Dhaiwat' associated with Brow chakra whose main function revolves around Awareness. As discussed above if the Brow chakra revolves negative, it yields disconnectedness and loneliness while if the brow chakra revolves positive, it yields inspiration as well as internal connection. Now the findings show that different ragas heal different disorders of which one is that Raag Asavari builds confidence. Hence, music therapy involving Raag Asavari will generate a balanced or positive state of brow chakra which enhances positive physical and mental outcomes related to Awareness like building Confidence. All the other ragas when therapeutically applied has high probability to yield similar results as per their associate chakras. More researches need to be performed for application and generalizability.

Not only Indian Ragas but other western music styles are also equally successful in providing therapeutic effects. Researches have proven that music therapy helps develop communication, language, intellectual development^[11]. It supports people who grieve through crisis, lowers stress, motivation, assists memory and increases imagination among listeners^[5]. Tang et al. (1994) say that music therapy significantly lowered client's negative symptoms and also increased their conversing ability^[7]. It also lowered their feeling of being socially isolated and increased the level of interest in external things around them^[12]. Apollo Hospital Group has also accounted for music therapy by developing a special medical music therapy course^[5].

Table 6: Ragas that promote psychological well-being.

Sr. No	Name of Raga	Specific Effect on Psychological State
1	Asavari	Build Confidence
2	Bageshri	Insomnia
3	Bhairavi	Encourages Detachment, Insomnia
4	Bhimpalasi	Anxiety
5	Bilahari	Depression

6	Bihag	Sonorous Sleep
7	Bhoopali	Memory , Concentration
8	Chandrakauns	Anorexia Nervosa
9	Darbari (Sedative)	Ease Tension (Anti Stress)
10	Deepak	Anorexia
11	Kaafi	Sleep Disorders
12	Khamaj	Sleep Disorders, ease tension
13	Madhuvati	Depression
14	Poorvi	Anxiety
15	Pooriya	Ease Tension
16	Punnagavarali	Control over anger as well as inner violence/ conflict
17	Sahana	
18	Shree	Anorexia
19	ShudhSarang	Anorexia
20	Shivaranjani	Intellectual Excellence, Enhance Memory
21	TilakKamod	Relaxation, Ease Tension, Pleasing effect on Nerves
22	Hansdhwani	
23	Kalawati	
24	Durga	
25	Todi	Anxiety

Source - Sarkar, J., & Biswas, U. (2015b).^[10]

Conclusion

Music is a blessing to mankind & benefits of music are multidimensional. Music not only heals the physical health but also strengthens and normalizes our mental health. This paper conceptualizes how the ‘swar’ in Indian Classical Music has association with the 7 major chakras which influence the well-being of the whole body. Each of the 7 chakras has its own expression which can get negatively or positively influenced according to the different external or internal conditions. This paper reviews and suggests that Ragas when applied therapeutically has high probability to yield positive expression in their associated chakras which in turn enhances mental as well as physical well-being. More researches need to be performed for application and generalizability of such influences of Music therapy as it has tremendous capacity to heal problems of humans and infuses positivity.

Methods used

The data and reviews were collected through books by consulting libraries, online books, journals articles as well as discussion.

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