



# Therapeutic Effects of Indian Classical Music

Dr. Ramesh Sharma

Assistant Professor in English

Government Sanskrit College Phagli, Dist.-Shimla (H.P.)

**Abstract:** Music is a universal language. It is a medium for communication, which can be both pleasant and healing. Modern science and medicine are now discovering the healing powers of music. Music therapy is used in treating persons with special needs in mental and physical health. In the west it is now an accepted form of treatment even within orthodox medical practice. Music is an age old part of ayurveda, the holistic Indian science that promotes a happy and healthy lifestyle. Music therapy is an efficacious and valid treatment for persons who have psychological, affective, cognitive and communicative needs. Music therapist use music activities, both instrumental and vocal, which are designed to facilitate changes that are non musical in nature. Music therapists work to assess physical health, social functioning, communication abilities and cognitive skills of an individual through musical response. It is not necessary that the person have the background of music. The Raga Research Centre in Chennai India is currently making a comprehensive study of Indian Ragas and evaluating their therapeutic potential with the help of musicians, doctors and psychiatrists. It is believed that classical; Indian ragas can benefit a host of medical conditions. Music is capable of improving happiness, peace, health and concentration. The objective of this paper is to establish that the music can play an effective role in helping us lead better, fruitful lives. The present study also aims to establish the curative power of music. With the experience and experiments the knowledge can be attained as to how long the music therapy is to be administered for the desired effect. The correct diagnosis of the disease and the selection of the precise raga will be helpful for specific disorders. The music therapy with a procedure, discipline and systematic method can help achieve the desired goal.

**Keywords:** Therapeutic, psychological, happiness, ragas, curative

## Introduction

Indian music has originated from the times when Vedas were created. As the legend goes, Sage Narada was the one who introduced the art of music to the Earth. He is famous for perpetuating divine gossip and is always seen with a tanpura which he uses while he sings the praise of Lord Vishu. The sound that pervades the whole universe i.e. Nadabrahma (sound of God) itself represents divinity. The representation of music in Hindu religion has always been of paramount importance. Among the Hindu deities, Vaagdevi Saraswati is considered the patron Goddess of all arts. She is seen holding a classical Veena in one of her four hands. Lord Krishna is always depicted as Carrying a flute; the holy trinity of Brahma-Vishnu-Mahesh is also not much behind in the realm of music. Lord Vishnu holds the Shankh in one of his four hands. This shankh is said to have created the primordial sound of 'Om', which is the source of all other sounds in the Universe. Brahma, the deity, is associated with Mridangam which is one of the most significant instruments in Indian music. Of all Hindu gods, Shiva has the most crucial place in the world of music and dance. He holds the mystic Damru in

his hand. The fourteen different sounds of this Damru are the fourteen Maaheshvara - Sutra or Shiva-Sutra encrypted by Grammarian Panini from where the Deva-vani i.e Sanskrit language originated. The Damaru, a symbol of conjunction of prakriti and purusha, is considered to be the first musical instrument.

Music is known as fifth veda; the ancient musical writings are generally spoken of as Gandharva Sastra or Gandharva Vedas. An important aspect of the Vedic culture was the bard- priests, like Mirabai, who wandered from one temple to another and recited songs or bhajans in praise of God. All the hymns were not written but passed on from one generation to another generation through oral tradition. Later Bharat Muni Codified them in his book 'Natya Shastra' which is a detailed compendium of technical instructions about performing arts such as dance, music and drama. Music was an integral part of two epics of Indian Literature Ramayana and Mahabharata. The Ramayana was written in Sholka (a kind of metrical Composition or verse) form by sage Valmiki. Rama was an expert in *Gandharva*, the 'classical' music of the time. Ravana, the antagonist of the epic was also proficient in music. Music in the epic Mahabharata was referred to as Gandharva, a more specific kind of music. Superhuman being called *Gandharva* were the skilled practitioners of this music. Arjuna, one the heroes of Mahabharata learnt music during his exile and his stay in heaven. The term *Marga Sangeet* (use of music to find the path of *moksha*) is mentioned in these epics to denote the accepted and prestigious mode of music. Marga Sangeet was created and propagated by Brahma and other deities. It was not meant for entertainment but to be presented before the Gods to please them therapeutically and psychologically.

Through history of the cultures of the world, the therapeutic effects of Indian classical music has been really studied due to its spontaneous connection and effects on mind, emotions and physical body. Music plays a dominant role in human life and used by people throughout the day by one or other individual. Some listen to music during leisure; some even listen during work, activity or study; in rituals, cultural activities and festivals; and some listen to music simply to overcome sadness or to feel relax. Integration of music with human activity is indicative of producing pleasure. The Indian classical music has divinity at the backdrop, and is used as a therapy for various physical and mental ailments. Music therapy helps to release the stress, stimulates brain cells, improves heart rate, helps in depression, anxiety and many other disorders related to mind and body. The effect to music in every living being may not be assessed immediately but it has a long lasting effect on the feeling, mind, emotion and behavior of both the producer as well as the receptor (Sairam, 1992). Music's impact on body is evident from the fact that when an individual listens to music, rhythmic movement of different parts of body is seen in the form of tapping finger, toes, nodding head etc. The research has established scientific reasons for these responses. It is found that biological and neuro-scientific reasons make an impact of music when it is processed in the brain. The complex processing of music consists of perceptual processing, emotional processing, autonomic processing, cognitive processing and motor or behavioral processing. Music is considered to be the art of sound in time to express ideas and emotions in significant forms through its basic elements. Music has the capacity to Calm and rejuvenate psychological and physiological well being which led music from being an art form to a scientific curative tool. The psychological effects of music are powerful and wide ranging and can be used to promote emotional health, cope with stress, boost psychological well being and provide insight into different aspects of personality (Cherry, 2019)

Music can induce and express emotion when words seem to be inadequate. This potential of music later led to its scientific application in the form of music therapy particularly in psychological or mental health related problems. In the context of music's vital role in human life, Indian classical music because of its structure and aesthetic influence on human body and mind, has significant therapeutic potential as it always points to some emotive, social, moral, religious and spiritual values. (Padaruth, 2018). History suggests that use of music in maintaining wellbeing in prehistoric period-look the form of music therapy later for psychological interaction to elevate mental health. American Music Therapy Association in its book 'Standard of Clinical Practice (2013) defined music therapy as the clinical and evidence based use of music intervention to accomplish individualized goal within a therapeutic relationship by a trained person who has completed an approved music therapy programme. Thus, music is an important resource for achieving Psychological,

Cognitive and social goal (Ragilo et al. 2015) and it has proved to be a safe alternative tool in a therapeutic set up to heal ailments.

On the basis of its structure, music therapy has been classified as- structured and flexible. Structured form of music therapy is given with structured music where musical activities are selected before the therapy session. But in the flexible form of therapy, music making and selection of musical activities are done during the therapy session. While using musical intervention in therapeutic set up, it is used in two ways –active and receptive. The active experience is when the receiver actively participates in music by playing preferred music. On the other hand, active listening to music presented by the music therapist is the receptive experience.

Indian traditional healing systems are widely recognized across the world because of their safe healing potential. Its therapeutic potential has got scientific endorsement. But, music therapy, in India as a clinical practice or as a profession is still at the developmental stage. Music therapy is a commonly heard phrase though not much in vogue in India (Srihari, 2012). In Ayurveda, there are considerable evidences linking Ayurveda with music. According to Ayurveda human body is dominated by three doshas or elements i.e. Kapha (associated with water and physical structure), pitta (fire that is associated with metabolism and digestion) and vata (associated with energy of movement) Balance of These three elements determines human health. Ayurveda includes music to balance the three elements (Swamy, 2017). The Concept that ragas, performed at its dedicated time and season can influence the health of human body and minds, is acclaimed by Ayurveda. Indian classical music therapy is an integration of ancient healing practices accompanied with traditional music.

Indian music therapy is based on classical music in general and raga in particular. Music is a regular sounds vibration. The raga therapy is based on use of vibration as a healing tool. Indian philosophy expresses that the whole universe originates from sound and vibrations It is derived from types of sounds in nature, such as chirping of birds, rustling of leaves, sounds of waterfalls or rivers and sounds of different animals producing respective musical notes. In ancient Indian classical music some of these notes were the basis of the music, Ancient Indian classical music is comprised of seven notes Sa (shadja): It is derived from the sounds produced by the cry of a peacock. "Re" (Rishabh): It is derived from sounds produced by cow when her calf is separated from her. "Ga" (Gandhar): It is derived from the bleating of goats, "Ma" (Madhyam): This note is derived from the call of the heron. "Pa"(Pancham): This note is derived from the call of Cuckoo during the spring season."Dha" (Dhaivat): This note is derived from the neighing of horse. "Ni" (Nishad): Trumpeting of an elephant is the inspiration for this note. The first and fifth notes (Sa and Pa) have only one variant. The other five notes (re, ga, ma, dha and ni) have two variants each. The notes re, ga, dha, and ni have natural and flat variants, while Ma has a natural and a sharp variant. All together, therefore, there are twelve distinct pitches (Shruti) in an octave when variants are included. The permutations and Combination of these notes create a melodic pattern; this melodic system is known as "Raga".

The therapeutic potential of Indian classical music lies in its combination of notes. The raga, a combination of selected notes (Shruties) is related to different moods and emotions which can intensity definite feelings of joy, sorrow, peace, violence etc. and based on this quality of music musical application is determined for its therapeutic use (Pathak 1969, Thomas 2021). Indian scale known as 'Saptak' contains seven notes which express different emotions. Madhyama. (Ma) and Panchama (Pa) create a feeling of love and laughter, Gandhar (Ga) and Nishad (Ni) evoke compassion. Dhaivat (Dha) creates fear and disgust, and Sadaja (Sa) and Rishava (Re) evokes a mood of anger (Thomas, 2021). Thus Raga contains emotions or feelings called Rasas, and this way specific effects on the physical body can be systematically produced, as well so the alleviation of deep emotional problems. The playing of Raga helps to find predominant Rasa in a person and can help to change mood and develop emotional intelligence by playing this music. This melodic pattern of swaras used in rendering various parts of a raga such as alaap, vistar, taan etc. has a definite impact on ailments. This way Indian classical music is more effective than other forms of music in producing positive effect on the listeners' mind which was evidenced by EEG findings (Nawasalkar and Butey 2012)

Regular exposure to a specific raga under particular conditions has clearly identified effects. While Nilambari raga can induce sleep, raga Bhupala and Malayamarutam when played before dawn serve as a pleasing invitation for people to get up from sleep. Bilahari, a joy-producing raga helps to alleviate melancholic mood and Sama raga can reduce anxiety. (Sambamurthy, 2002). Raga Puriya Dhanashri is known to have positive effects in treating acidity and it also promotes a happy disposition, raga Bageshri calms the mind and promotes mental strength. This raga has been found to control hypertension, raga Darbari has been proven to be effective in reducing the stress level of individuals, raga Todi and raga Ahir-bhairav is effective in bringing down high blood pressure, raga Malkauns is helpful in treating patients who have very low blood pressure levels, raga Bhairavi has been known to help patients suffering from tuberculosis, cancer, sinusitis, and toothache, raga Malhar has shown good results in treating the patients of asthma, ragas Hindolam and Marva help cleanse the blood. Thus, Indian Classical Music is a powerful means for different emotional modifications by controlling the brain wave pattern. With shift in emphasis on notes one raga can have multiple effects for holistic wellbeing and development. (Sambhamurthy, 2002)

## Conclusion

Ancient Indian Classical Music has its own heritage. Not only in disease but listening to the right kind of music brings out the best in a normal individual, helping him reach his fullest potential. The therapeutic potential of Indian Classical music was identified from ancient times across different cultures and was used for healing purpose through rituals. With the passage of time the benefits of music therapy was recognized to be effective to cure ailments worldwide. The therapeutic use of Indian classical music is from the period of our Vedic times. The Indian sages use music in the form of mantras and Vedic hymns to make the nervous system relaxed and used for holistic health development. This tradition was carried from one generation to another generation and took the shape of Indian Classical music and its therapeutic use. Music therapy with Indian classical music is unique and flexible. Indian Ragas can be said to be the best classical solution to physical or mental disorder. Its therapeutic effects can be used in people suffering from insomnia, depression, anxiety, developmental delays, and other childhood psychiatric conditions. The traditional Indian healing system particularly Yoga and Ayurveda has become very popular worldwide because of its scientific endorsement. Scope of music therapy is undeniably bright; however efforts must go into popularizing it by emphasizing the scientific basis of its benefits, which can be established by more clinical trials in this area.

## References:

- [1] Cherry, K. (2019). How Listening to Music Can have Psychological Benefit. Verywellmind. <https://www.verywellmind.com/surprising-psychological-benefits-of-music-4126866#>
- Pathak, S. (1969). Swasthya Par Sangeet Ka Prabhav. *Sangeet*, 35 (12), 30-32
- [2] Nawasalkar, R.K., & Butey, P. K. (2012). Analytical and Comparative Study on Effect of Indian Classical Music on Human Body Using EEG Based Signals. *International Journal of Modern Engineering Research (IJMER)*, Vol. 2(5), 3289-3291.
- [3] Pudaruth, S.K. (2016). A Reflection on the Aesthetics of Indian Music, with Special Reference to Hindustani Raga-Sangita. *Sage open*, Oct.-Dec., 1-13. Doi 10.1177/2158244016674512
- [4] Raglio, A., Attardo, L., Gontero, G., Rollino, S., Groppo, E., & Granieri, E. (2015). Effects of Music and Music Therapy on Mood in Neurological Patients. *World Journal of Psychiatry*, 5(1), 68-78.
- [5] Srihari, G. (2012). Healing with Music. *The Hindu* (April 5) available from <http://www.thehindu.com/features/friday-review/music/healing-with-music/article3283502>
- [6] Swamy, S. (2017). Music Therapy in the South-Asian-American Diaspora. In a.whitehead-cleaux and x.tan (Ed.). *Cultural Intersections with Music Theraapy: Music, Health and the Person*, 55-89, Barselona Publishers.
- [7] Sairam, A. (1992). Sangeet ki Manovigyan, *Sangeet*, Nov. 34-38.
- [8] Sambamurthy, T. (2002). *South Indian Music*, Book V (8th ed.) Chennai, Indian Music Publishing House.
- [9] Thomas, L. (2021). Indian music therapy. *News Medical*. [www.news-medical.net/health/indian-music-therapy.aspx](http://www.news-medical.net/health/indian-music-therapy.aspx)