

Traditional Healing System and Modern Music Therapy in India

Introduction: Healing is an age old concept. It emerged since time unknown. Modern day medical practices to bring about healing of an individual from a pathological condition had its inception after following the traditional healing mechanisms. Taking India under consideration, it can be said that India is the land of all religions. Therefore, different systems of healing are practiced in India. It is the hub of traditional healing practices. To note a few religious opinions of healing through music it can be noted that—The holy book of Hinduism that is Bhagwad Gita promotes that music increases meditation of an individual, the Bible propagates that music contains mood altering properties, among the Muslims the recitation of the Namaz five times a day by a muezzin is done on a particular musical note which is considered to be holy in nature. Therefore, traditional healing system and modern music therapy in India has a close contact with each other.

Understanding the role of Music: Music has been a very sensitive course of medication that not only relaxes the mental conditions, thoughts, emotions and feelings of a human being but also reduces stress and strain of the central nervous system, muscles and relaxes the entire constitutions of the human body. Music has always been a vent in the pent up stressful thoughts and depressions. Music at its perfection, with its particular time, and tonal quality, its tunes, rhythm, everything creates an atmosphere of harmony, peace and mainly an arena of mental satisfaction that rejuvenate the forces and spirit of life – doshas and gunas, balances the mind-body set up. Music in every way praises the positive note of life and thus its appropriate timings, tones drives out the negative feeling of the inner self-world. Musical tones as believed by the modern researches, releases the Nitric Oxide(NO), which possesses the antibacterial, antiviral, immune –modulatory function. Modern researches has mainly focused that listening to the music has generated exactly those physiological reactions as it is evident from some other emotional reaction like changes in heart rate, respiration, hormone secretion, skin temperature, electro-dermal responses.

Exploring Indian Classical Music and healing: The elements of Indian classical music are:-

- Nada (sound)
- Swara (note)
- Shruti (a musical interval)
- Rhythm (tala, laya, matra)
- Drone (constant playing of drone with the singer is very important to suit his key note like tanpura).
- Raga or Melody is basically a formal sequence of all the selected notes which provides the various moods and emotions of joy , sorrow, peace, exuberance and so on. All these lay the platform for a therapeutic application. By having different emotional modifications and controlling the brain wave patterns, Ragas are the most positive and appropriate method of alleviating or rather eliminating the distresses and ailments of the modern society. Thus Ragas are the classical solutions to the pathological conditions of life.

Music Therapy—Music Therapy work in a very biological way. Music creates the psychological responses when the tunes and notes hits the auditory cortex of the brain and then processes the music. Music processing occurs in the centre of emotions, sensations and feelings. Thus it is very clear that music is able to alter and modify emotions and mood through effective and cognitive recognition. A person's shifting of the mood is mainly effected by his or her frame of the mind, reaction to the given tune, tone and note of the music, and all these gives rise to various health outcomes.

Biorhythm and Ayurveda – Bio rhythm refers to the cyclical timing of singing the ragas. According to the Sangita Makaranda by Sri Narada, a particular rag sung at a particular time period of the day and night brings happiness and calms the environment and also maintains the environmental parity, or else it disturbs the environment and distracts the social mental physical emotional peace.

Ayurveda emphasizes on the fact that if a particular raga is sung at a particular time of the day, it smoothenes the natural transition and balances the body mind to the circadian circle. The fundamental aim of the Indian Music is that to inculcate the roots of love, compassion, self-assurance and calmness within the listener. Thus music basically is the emotional medicine used for the curing and healing of the mind and body both.

Music as a pain management tool in the modern medicine: Music is definitely a very sensitive and sensational creation of the aesthetic world. Modern researches have considered music as a non-pharmacological pain management tool in the midst of the modern medicinal procedure of healing. Surgeries, operations, medical examinations, medicines all in a bulk create an environment of fear, anxiety and tension. Music therapy works out all the anxieties and tensions in a very emotional sensitive way.

Music has already become a very common element of relaxation, a vent in the pent up hectic work schedules or emotional stress periods.

One should not be mistaken to overlap the concepts of music therapy with the simple ways of listening to the music. According to the **World Federation of the Music therapy**, music therapy includes specific musical elements like sound, tune, tone quality, rhythm, tempo, harmony, melody etc. which leads to the betterment of the emotional states, movement and positive interactions. Both the World Federation of Music Therapy and American Music Therapy Association has defined music therapy as the clinical and evident use of music and its elements to appropriate the individual's physical and mental balance, secure the impaired functions and develop a better intrapersonal and interpersonal integration.

Music therapy is of two types:

- Receptive
- Active

Receptive music therapy (passive mode)—It allows the patient to choose a music with the help of trained music therapy which will help the patient to recall the past events mainly. It mainly allows the patient to listen to the music. Indian music therapy is under this type.

Active music therapy includes both the patient and the therapist in action simultaneously. Both of them get involved in creating the music, it is participation based therapy. Sometimes include dance and other bodily movements, playing the instruments. The patient and therapist both

create music and improvise them. The therapist inspires the patient even to dance and improvise the music. Western music therapy is of this type.

Henceforth one can claim that music therapies help to recreate and rejuvenate the positive energetic healthy mood of the patient.

Many a times, children often suffer from severe pain and anxiety in clinical institutions, or when they are hospitalized and they undergo invasive procedures like venipuncture, heel sticks, and intramuscular injections. During hospitalization, children are often exposed to unpleasant and unfamiliar environment which confines them into fear, anxiety, tension and pain to severe pain which is both psychological and physiological. Thus an utter need for the varied level of pain management for the pediatric arena, gave rise to the intense use of music therapy as a pain management tool during invasive procedures. Melody is the basic element of the Indian Music and “raga” forms the base of the melody.

Music has been a very positive medicine in cases of the patients with chronic pain, children with migraines, patients with tinnitus. Music always aims at reducing stress strain, depressions and mental tensions and increase relaxations and mental peace.

Music therapy has also shown positive impact in the preoperative and postoperative surgical sets as it successfully reduces the pain or mental stress and tensions in the surgical theatre. Music therapy relaxes the mind and thus helps the patient to reach at his or her comfort level. Studies have shown that patients after knee arthroplasty suffer from severe pain and music played at that reduces its severity as it relaxes the mind and distracts the mind from the pain. Music therapy affects the brain waves to vibrate with the beats- faster beats means sharper thinking and more alertness of the mind, slow beats means calmness and mental peace. This leads to the slower heart rates and breathing which paves the way for the relaxation process, music brings out the positive state of mind removing the tensions, stress strain and anxieties. One should not forcefully listen to the relaxation music since it may lead to much more strain, it's better to listen to the most preferred type of music that one feels to listen. Music therapy helps physical and intellectual abilities, fine and gross motor skills, mood and behavior, self-esteem, self confidence, self awareness, social and cognitive skills, attention, spiritual quest and inner calm, control agitation and depression, reduce stress, receptive/expressive language, memory recall.

Music therapy also leads to the betterment of the conditions of patients who suffer from Dementia or Alzheimer's disease, Stroke/Parkinson's Disease and Physical Rehabilitation; cancer and epilepsy too.

The music therapy has been a very useful method of bridging the cultural gap and differences among people. Music has always been a universal language of expressing the emotions and feelings of joy, sorrow, happiness, anger, compassion, love. Music therapy has varied effect on different population of a country. Music heals the wound of life – both physical and psychological wounds. Music works as an interlocking bridge for the refugees in a country, who are mentally rootless and feel helpless confused in a new environment and get distracted and disturbed in the new culture to cope up with. An appropriate example of this case is the Sudanese who landed on to the Australia as refugees from Africa. The Sudanese children were compelled to adapt themselves in the new Australian school environment. The music therapy in general tries to encourage the students to bring out their emotional developments and

betterment of feelings through a variety of musical activities. Australian music therapists mainly focuses on the psychological, emotional, aesthetic elements of the music for the betterments of human being, while the Sudanese used music as the steps or pathways to the spiritual world , divine diagnoses and cures. Sudanese also created music for the social change. Thus the Sudanese used music as a social messenger and their immense attraction towards the hip-hop artists prove crystal clearly that they that the rap music has the potentiality to intervene therapeutically this young population.

Role of Ethnomusicologists: Ethnomusicologists are mainly concerned about the cultural traditions of the songs, its texts, analyzed the musical structure relationship between the music, ritual and belief system. Traditionally also the music was used in the healing process. In the present century, the music therapist tries to input the critical elements of the music therapy into the modern clinical process. Culture is ornamented with music and even dance which is both accompanied by tempo, rhythm, note, and tune. Thus, ethnomusicology helps in healing through sinking deep into the core culture of the social community which is assisted by music.

Importance of Chanting: In India, the chanting of the doctrines of Vivekananda, or the Sri Krishna through shangha or Iskon community is also a very popular way of eliminating the fear and negative anxieties, or feelings of life. Not alone , but in a form of a group , these chantings with music , drumming, with musical instruments like khol, kartal, people share their mind and distract their fields of regular involvement which is hectic, disturbing, and over stressful. These chanting leads to the peace of mind and a sense of belongingness thereby removing fear and loneliness from the minds of the individuals.



Pirit chanting is a Buddhist doctrine which protects the community members from all unwanted fears and negative unnecessary anxieties. In Sri Lanka, this Pirit chanting is very effective in Sri Lanka where it is chanted altogether in a ceremony form to drive out the fear of immense epidemic, grief, sadness, tensions, commencement of any new journey, in times of fear, a sickness, a long journey, the launching of a new business, before marriage, or birth giving. The aims of pirit are to out root the unwanted fears and to ensure the welfare of the community.

Views of Different scholars on Music as a medium of Healing: Regina Gelfo in her paper: Indigenous Music Healers' Techniques: Entrainment as Bridge between Traditional and Contemporary Music Healing, studied the use of music by the indigenous healers. According to the study, no proper and one standard formula has been found of the music therapy being

utilized by the indigenous healers. On the contrary, some commonalities are being found in the process and belief systems. Mostly in all the countries, it is believed by the indigenous healers that illness originates from the spiritual or emotional ground, or because of the possession of the malevolent spirit like ghost, ancestor, inside the soul of one person, or due to the disharmony in the village, disharmony between the emotional and physical or spiritual realms.

Dr. Kenneth Bruscia, opines Music healing is the use of any music for healing body, mind and spirit and the soul. **Sound healing** is the use of any sound with the music or with any of its elements for healing. Carter defines Music therapy as “the scientific application of music or music activities to attain therapeutic goals” (Bruscia, 1998, p. 268). Music therapy is basically the scientific application of the elements of music for the healing purposes. Over the last 30 years, the music therapy has gained popularity in the western field of medical healers who were dead against the concept of the relation between the body and the mind. The spiritual healing mainly works in the spiritual sphere to induce healing. The healing techniques among the shaman, jhankri, and nele are similar as their music healing has the same components or belief systems. There is a dominant formula among the shaman, jhankri, and nele in their healing process - trance, possession, divination, and curing. In this formula the healer uses the music to enter in a trance state and then gets occupied by the helping spirit and then gets the information of the cause and remedies (healing songs) of the diseases. **Entrainment** is basically the tendency where the two oscillating bodies come into the phase of vibration into harmony. Entrainment has a pivotal role to play in shamanic drumming, binaural beats, music that shifts brainwave states, and psychological entrainment to the mood of music being listened to.

Aboriginal traditional healing practices: There are different practices that are used by the aboriginals to bring about healing of an individual. It includes not only traditional medicines made up of herbal plants, Indian ayurveda, Chinese medicine and Arabic unani, animal parts or minerals, manual and spiritual therapies to promote human being's well being and development. The traditional healing is basically wholistic in nature. Thus it must also include the ontological, cosmological and epistemological perspectives associated with healing. Western medicine is a myth in the true sense of the term. Healing is basically incomplete if it is only concerned with the physical curing. No physiological healing can become successful without the psychological healing. Aboriginal healing mainly deals with the trauma affected population and their wholistic remedies. The intense trauma, confusion and anxieties of insecurities due to colonisation, including the forcible removal of lands, the breaking up of societies and families and the removal of children away from their cultural heritage and often into situations of cultural, physical and sexual abuse, have been well evident, both in Australia and also in other countries like India, Bangladesh etc. Traditional healing cures the individuals, family and community altogether.

Efforts to bring about healing through Music: Alokanda Roy with the prisoners imparting them the dance and music therapy to bring them back into positive light of life. Most recently music along with the dance therapy has been used in the form of dance drama for healing the criminals in the jails driving out the criminality from the wrong doers. Dancer Alokanda Roy has been the protagonist head to lead the therapy of the dance drama in bringing the wrong doers back into the main stream, arousing the positive side of their mind and soul through music, rhythm, beats and dance. The ancient Indian music healing system has been rooted in

the Nada, yoga, raga system as well as Vedic chanting. Thus, the classical dance dramas include all elements of Indian must flourishes the positivity of the soul.

Nizel Akkara was a hardened convict along with all others in the correctional homes who got transformed into a positive spirited life. The life which got dipped into the darkness of criminality, through the music therapy accompanied with the dance and rhythm, and other elements of the Indian music, it transformed into a positive mainstream life. Thus, Transformation was achieved through music and dance of a convict into an actor, businessman.

Conclusion: It can be concluded that music is indeed one of the most accepted ways by which healing is brought about among the members of the society. Different ways are being devised so that people in the society can be healed from their present condition through music. Kalyani in West Bengal has recently started to heal the acid victims through the medium of music. Eve Ensler, the American author and activist who has recently started the One Billion Rising Campaign where she goes to the prostitutes and tries to bring them back to the normal ways of life. This attempt of Ensler is to eradicate the guilt present in the minds of the prostitutes on their body. Thus, different other scholars as well as practitioners are using the system of music to heal the patients out of their pathological condition in the society.

