

AESTHETICS OF MUSIC –A DETAILED STUDY ON RAGA THERAPY

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Abstract: Indian classical music is believed to kindle the emotions (Rasas) within. The aesthetics of music have helped several researchers find its effective usage for an improved lifestyle. Both Hindustani and Carnatic ragas possess the quality of evoking the rasas. Raga therapy is believed to be effective in relieving the stress, relaxing the mind and regularize the blood flow. There are lot of health benefits through Raga therapy which our ancient texts have long ago reiterated. This article is an attempt to show how the emotions in music have been successfully proven to be an effective tool in curing various psychological, neurological disorders and emotional disturbances.

Keywords: *Aesthetics, RagaChitiksa, Rasas, Sruthi interval, time theory, Ayurveda.*

I. INTRODUCTION:

Indian music has been an age old tradition, dating back to the time of the vedas where it was used as a medium to recite them. Ever since it has been closely tied to human experiences as it touches the soul of both the performer and the listener. Involuntary movement of shaking the head, clapping the hand in rhythmic pattern or tapping the leg to the tune are all the actions caused due to experience of listening to music and its ability to touch the soul. It has the power to open up the emotions hidden within. Many a times we have witnessed people listening to their favourite music while working to reduce the work stress. It is very evident that music can be used to improve our lifestyle.

A characteristic feature of Indian music is its melody, which are recognized through “ragas” - in both Hindustani and Carnatic music. The raga, is an arrangement of combination of swaras (Seven basic notes in Indian Music). Our ancient texts, written many centuries ago, have highlighted the connection between the Swaras and our body. Ragas that are present in the music have the power to move the listeners both physically and emotionally. This unique relationship between Ragas and emotions (Rasas) has been widely accepted as a tool in therapy sessions in medical field and has also been used to improve the quality of life. This article will further throw light on this relationship by detailing the effects of the emotions that are evoked through ragas.

II. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SWARAS AND HUMAN BODY:

There are several ancient texts related to music as early as 4th century. Most important text of them is ‘Sangitha Rathnakara’ written by Sarangdeva during the 12th century. It is a magnum opus and has substantial amount of information regarding every aspect of Music. It is still being considered and looked into for various references and research in the field of music. In his work Sarangdeva ascertained the relationship between Swaras and Human body. His knowledge about Ayurveda which he inherited from his father, was very helpful to him in proving this theory.

Sarangdeva, also illustrated the connection between the Murchana (the ascending and descending combination of swaras) of the SadjaGramam (4 3 2 4 4 3 2) and the 22 important Nadis. According to him, the seven swaras are related to the seven supportive tissues (Dhatu).

Table1: Relationship between swaras, 22 sruthis and tissues [1]

DHATU	SWARA	NO.OF SUPPORTING TISSUES AND SHRUTHI VALUE	LOCATION
Semen	Sadja (Sa)	4	Brahma granthi(Center of the body)
Marrow	Rishaba(Ri)	3	Navel
Bone	Gandharam(Ga)	2	Heart
Fat	Madhyama(Ma)	4	Throat
Flesh	Pancama(Pa)	4	Root of the Palate
Blood	Dhaivatha(Dha)	3	Cerebrum
Skin	Nishadham(Ni)	2	Crown or otherwise called as Saharara

Ayurveda, the science of life, basically uses natural herbs from plants for therapy while treating illnesses, disorders or imbalances in the body. According to Ayurveda, there are seven chakras (Mooladhara, Swadhishtana, Manipuraka, Anahata, Vishudha, Ajna and Sahasra) in our body and the seven swaras are related to the chakras. The chakra is activated when the corresponding swara is sung. (Refer Table1). The word ‘Nada’ is understood to have been derived from two syllables, ‘Na’ representing the vital force and ‘Da’ representing fire. Thus, Nada represents the sound produced by the combination of the “vital force” and “fire” [2]

Singing the full scale, i.e., all the seven notes – both arohana(ascending order) and avarohana(descending order) activates all the chakras which is equivalent to doing a pranayama. According to Swarashastra, the 72 melakartha ragas are associated to the 72 vital nerves of our body. Figure 1 clearly illustrates the connection between the chakras of our body and the swaras. It is interesting to note that, Veena (a South Indian String instrument) has a striking resemblance with human body and the 24 frets in the veena are compared to the 24 vertebrae in the body.

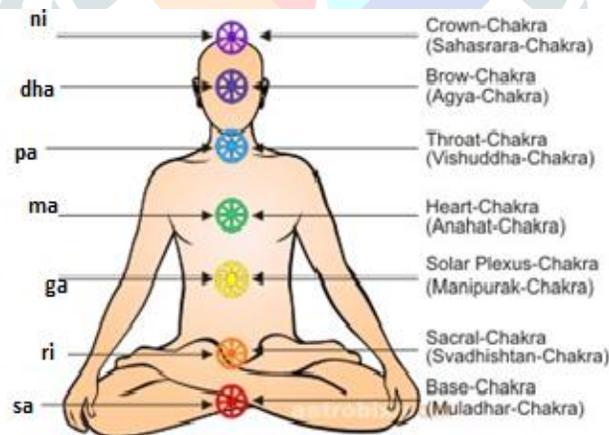


Figure 1: Relationship between Swaras and Chakras[3]

III. EMOTIONS AND MUSIC:

Music can also be termed as language of emotions. Prof. Sambamurthy says that music is an art (kala) and also science [4]. It is believed that the success of any art form is when it evokes emotions through the medium. References connecting music with emotions are found in NatyaShastra, one of the earliest text on music written by Bharatha. According to him, Love(Rati), laughter(Harsya), Sorrow(Soka), Anger(Krodha), Energy(Utsala), Fear(Bhaya), Disgust(Jugupsa), Astonishment(Vismaya) are the emotions[5]. However, Sarangdeva adds one more rasa to Bharatha's list and sums it up to nine emotions (Navrasas).

As per his theory, music evokes the following rasas Shringara(Erotic), Roudra(Anger),Harsya(Comic), Bhibhatsa(ludicrous), Jugupsa(Disgust),Vismaya(Wonder), Karuna(Pathos), Veera(Valour) and Shantha(Tranquility). He also establishes the fact that all the swaras exhibit the quality of the emotions and the following table illustrates that fact.

Table 2: Relationship between swaras and Rasas (Emotions)[6]

Swara	Rasas	Emotion(bhava)
Sa & Ri	Veera, Roudra,Adbhutha(Vismaya)	Heroism, wrath and wonder
Ga & Ni	Karuna	Compassion, Pathos
Ma & Pa	Humour & Love	Laughter, Shringara
Dha	Harsya & Shringara	Laughter and Shringara

Music is believed to evoke one of the above emotions and transcend the individual to a state much superior than the state he/she was before. This is achieved through Ragas (melody created with the help of a certain sequence of swaras). Raga helps the individual to elevate themselves from the current frame of mind. The emotion evoked from the raga depends on the swaras. The Vadi swara (most prevalent swara of a particular raga), samvadi swara(next important swara), Jiva swaras(life of the raga) bring out the desired rasas. Each swara has its own characteristics, which are used while identifying the vadi and the samvadi swaras. Sa and Pa are tranquil notes as they don't have any variants, R₁ and D₁ swaras indicate disturbance, R₂ and D₂ are perceptions, G₁ and N₁ are disagreeable (conflicting) notes, G₂ and N₂ swaras indicate enquiry. M₁ represents optimism and egoism and M₂ indicates degradation. The lower tetrachord indicates a sensual pain of consciousness whereas the higher tetrachord reveals intellect [7].

IV. FACTORS DETERMINING THE ESSENCE OF RAGA:

The aesthetic value of a raga is significant and crucial in order to bring out the emotions. With just the sequence of swaras, the required emotion cannot be obtained to the desired level. Several factors in association with the raga bring out the rasa more effectively such as:

- a) Tala
- b) Sahitya/Lyrics
- c) And Time theory.

Rhythm or Tala or Kala is an important aspect in Indian classical music. It can even be said that it is interlinked with the Melody (Raga). Music is generally termed spiritual or divine, nevertheless, the importance of Tala cannot be denied. Therefore one can define music to be both emotional and intellectual, where the melody takes care of the emotional aspect, and the intellectual part is brought out by the tala [8].

As mentioned earlier, the tempo/rhythm/Tala of the composition is very important to obtain the required emotion out of the raga. A composition depicting valour or heroism cannot be set to any other tempo other than the drutha laya (Fast tempo). Likewise, a song that is full of pathos has to be set in the Vilambit laya(Slow paced). This indicates how the rhythm of the song plays a key role in bring out the intended emotion. Here are some additional examples:

1. Shantha and Karuna – Vilambit laya
2. Shringara rasa - Madhyama Laya
3. Veera , roundra – Drutha laya.

The second factor which is crucial for bringing out the rasa of the song is the lyrics/Sahitya. The lyrics of a song bring out the emotions in the literary sense. The lyrics are composed in a way such that the required emotion is depicted and a corresponding raga is tuned to it. The required emotion is effectively evoked only if appropriate lyrics is matched with the raga.

Thirdly, there is an influence of time, which is vital in expressing the true essence of the music. When a raga possesses more than one jiva swara or more than one vadi swara, difficulty arises in identifying its characteristics. The ragas are indeed sung at a specific time of the day to bring out the preferred effect, which highlights the connection between “Time theory” and Indian Classical Music.

V. TIME THEORY IN INDIAN CLASSICAL MUSIC :

The aesthetic beauty of the raga is effectively understood when it is sung at the specified time of the day. Time theory is very predominant in Hindustani Music. A specific combination of sruthi intervals in a raga, creating a relationship with consonance and dissonance, can determine whether the raga is pleasing to hear or not [9]. The twenty four hour cycle of the day is divided into two phases: Purvanga and Uttaranga. Each phase is further divided into 4 segments of 3 hours thereby giving 8 phases (8 Yamas of the day). Table 3. Shows the way the 8 phases of the Day are split, based on the time. Purvanga Ragas mainly comprise of ragas where the swaras Sa, Re, Ga, Ma & Pa take the responsibility of a Vadi Swara. Meanwhile Uttaranga ragas are those where Ma, Pa, Dha, Ni and Sa(higher octave) take the role of Vadi Swara. The exact period of when the time theory came into practice is not clearly known. However, we find references in ancient treatise, Raga Tarangini, written during 11th century by Lochana Kavi. From the start of 20th century, Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande who is hailed as the father of Hindustani music systematized and structured this time theory system. His heptatonic scale of system is the most successful which is still being practiced.

The first four Prahars are called as Purvanga and the rest are termed as Uttaranga. There are specific ragas in Carnatic music as well which are sung at a particular time of the day. For eg, Malayamarutham, Bowli are very effective when sung in the morning hours.

Table 3: Day Cycle

First Prahar	7am -10 am
Second Prahar	10am – 1pm
Third Prahar	1pm -4pm
Fourth Prahar	4pm -7pm
Fifth Prahar	7pm -10pm
Sixth Prahar	10pm-1am
Seventh Prahar	1am-4am
Eighth Prahar	4am-7am

Table 4 illustrates some of the primary Carnatic ragas, its equivalent Hindustani ragas and the time of the day it is sung and its corresponding emotions.

Table 4: Relation between Ragas, corresponding time and emotion [10].

Carnatic Raga	Hindustani Raga	Time	Emotion
HanumathTodi	Bhairavi	Morning	Sad
MayamalaGowlai	Bhairava	Dawn	Reverence
Chakravaham	AnandaBhairava	Anytime	Love
Natabhairavi	Sindhubahiravi	Night	Sad
Karaharapriya	Kafi	Noon	Passion
Harikambhoji	Jhinjoti	Night	Imploring praise
Sankarabharanam	Bilawal	Morning/Evening	Calm
Chalanattai	–	Night	Boldness
Subapantuvarali	Todi	Evening	Adoration
Gamanapriya	Marva	Evening	Passion
Mechakalyani	Kalyan	Evening	Merriment

In addition to music, the time theory is also followed in Ayurveda. Ayurvedic treatment is based on the three Doshas (imbalance): Vata, Pitta and Kapha. They are identified and treated based on the specified time of the day. The time when the three Doshas are predominant is listed as follows

Kapha – 7am -11am & 7pm -11pm

Pitta – 11am – 3pm & 11pm -3am

Vata – 3pm – 7 pm & 3 am -7 am

The different types of raga classifications also help in improving the life style and self-confidence. For eg:

Audava Ragas (Ragas with 6 notes as its scale) are used to cure sickness and bad health

Shadhava Ragas (Ragas with 5 notes) are used to gain beauty and wealth

Sampoorna Ragas (full scale ragas) are used to gain strength, wisdom and wealth [11].

There are instances where classical music has cured diseases and created miracles. Muthuswami Dikshithar's Navagraha composition is believed to have cured one of his disciple's stomach pain. Thyagaraja composition, 'Naa jeevadhara' has brought back life. Tansen composed song in 'Miyan ki Malhar' Raag in the court house of Akbar and brought rain during the drought. Amrithavarshini' in Carnatic Music also brought rain.

VI. EFFECTS OF AESTHETICS IN MUSIC: A PROVEN FACT

Raga, Rasa and time theory, a unique combination when used together, has effectively shown positive results. The connection between swaras and our body and the emotions that are evoked from ragas have been explored from the beginning of 20th century. These studies have resulted in some notable findings. The left hemisphere of the human brain is related to musical ability. Positive effects of music are seen in dealing with neurological, psychological and emotional imbalances. Researchers have proved that music has benefitted patients suffering from various ailments. For instance, Cancer research in United Kingdom has shown that music has helped cancer patients reduce their anxiety [12].

We often find ourselves with tears being welled up while listening to music. This is the effect elicited as music evokes the emotion within us that in some cases, results in tears. Many a times, music has transformed people into leading a better life style. Nowadays it is common to hear soothing music in the waiting hall in a hospital. This music works as a stimulus to calm the mind of the patient and thus, preparing him for the treatment. A detailed study has proved that music with regular rhythmic pattern can be used to induce emotions and be used as a stimulus [13].

The aesthetics of music have enormous benefits especially as a therapeutic and palliative cure. Receptive Music therapy helps in decreasing the imbalance caused in the three doshas and also reduce mental depression [14]. Researchers across the globe have agreed that music helps in pain management. It is proved that Music releases endorphins which are helpful for relieving pain. This is also a reason why it is being used in chemotherapy for cancer patients. International Journal of Humanities and social sciences Research stated that Music therapy for Autism has been in practice since the 1950s.

VII. THERAPEUTIC RAGAS:

The connection established between the swaras, sruthi intervals and Ayurveda with our human body has paved way for many researchers to find out how ragas can be effectively used. Raga Therapy plays a crucial role in therapy sessions by helping people calm their mind and relieve from stress. For example, Raga Darbari Kanada is believed to ease stress. Experiments have proved that the composition of brain waves can be altered with the help of music and rhythms, enabling them to be used as a tool in decreasing every mental disorders [15].

Listening to music (sound of veena, in particular) during the last trimester of the pregnancy is believed to produce positive vibrations to the baby inside the womb. This has been an age old custom still being followed in some parts of South India. In the 21st century, a study proved that pregnant ladies had positive influence on hearing Kalyani raga daily [16]. With the advancing world, hyper tension is another illness that is prevalent. Listening to a Raga continuously for a longer period of time has considerably reduced the Systolic and Diastolic Blood pressure and Pulse rate [17]. Dwajavanthi is believed to give some relief from paralysis. Nadanamakriya is set to soften adamant people. Ahirbhairav relieves tension, Darbarikanada helps in patients suffering from bronchitis, asthma and Bageshri helps in Mixed Anxiety Depression Syndrome (MADS). Raga therapy has also shown good results while treating disorders like insomnia, depression, arthritis. International Ayurvedic Journal has suggested few more ragas that are being used in therapy and cure certain diseases [18].

VIII. CONCLUSION:

Indian Classical music has a lot to offer in improving the lifestyle of an individual. Music not just improvises the lifestyle of an individual, it also prevents negative emotions from dominating oneself [19]. Several ragas, when sung at the specific time of a day as suggested in Ayurveda, have shown positive results. Raga as a tool in the area of pain management is also proven. Raga Therapy is also successful in treating Psychological, emotional and neurological disorders. It has gained popularity over the years, however, more avenues of research are required to show the world the benefits of Raga treatment given that our country has a rich musical tradition. Music (Raga) therapy is still in the early stages. Only few ragas have been mentioned in this article. Further studies would help in understanding the effects of Ragas as a therapeutic and palliative cure. Each raga possesses the quality of its own to help humanity for a better improved lifestyle. More scientific research has been done in the recent past in order to practice and prescribe this treatment with the support of scientific evidence. Given the background on the effects of Ragas, it would be beneficial to conduct research that focus on particular target groups like women above 40 years experiencing Peri Menopausal Syndrome (PMS). This would help to explore how Ragas can help deal with the emotional impact of hormonal changes. With the advancement of medical field, the growth of the existing raga therapy centers and continuation of the relevant research in this area, more such therapeutic center can be established in the future. In conclusion, Music (Ragas) can certainly be attempted as a method of treatment and cure to live a life with same zeal and passion and positivity.

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