

Impact of Music on Mental Health

Ramesh Pokharel^{1*}

¹Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 11 April 2021

Revised: 21 May 2021

Accepted: 3 June 2021

*Correspondence:

Ramesh Pokharel | Ph. D.

Associate Professor

Tribhuvan University,

Kathmandu, Nepal,

E-mail:

drrameshpokharel@gmail.com

Citation:

Impact of Music on Mental

Health. MedS. J. Med. Sci.

2021;1(1):101-106

ABSTARCT

INTRODUCTION: Music affects our brain at different levels. Our mood changes with different types of music. However, at a very deep level, its effect is similar to that of deep meditation. The main objective of this study was to explore the impact of music on mental health. This paper explores, how daily listening and practising of music affects our body and mind. **MATERIALS AND METHODS:** Qualitative method based on personal experience and document review method was used in this research. Relevant and related literatures were searched through different search engines to draw the conclusion. **RESULTS:** Different systematic experimentations have shown that music practice cultivates the life of a human being. Music as yoga is a combination of breathing exercises and physical activities. **CONCLUSIONS:** Music has valuable, powerful and important role in happiness, managing mental stress, and for providing relief to the mind.

Keywords: Body and mind, music, self-consciousness, yoga

INTRODUCTION

Music has a lot of power and makes a place in the minds of people in many ways [1]. It has a thoughtful effect on everyone's life, from humans to plants, flowers, birds, animals and others [2]. It is also important for caring and entertaining illness [3]. Its usage have been very successful in the treatment of different diseases. Sound has an important role in our lives and we are surrounded by different sounds having different effects [4]. Eastern classical music is born from this understanding of sound [5]. The vibrations of sound and its effect on consciousness have been a matter of great mystery from the time when early human walked on the face of the earth. The anahata concept refers to silent vibrations of self, which are thought to be so closely associated with one's self and the self that a person cannot share their anahata with another human being [6]. In other words, this inner sound, silent vibration of the self, is sacred and once reached will open the practitioner's chakras, which ultimately will unite the body to the divine/cosmos [7].

Music is the combination of science and art and our voice is the form of sound [8]. Motion in each breath expresses a rhythm. The purpose of music is not just to entertain. On one hand it awakens the aesthetic consciousness dealing with expression of one's feeling and emotions and grants on him

unbounded joy and happiness, wherein at this state, music enables a man to enjoy the inherent beauty of nature and the inspiring calmness of the soul as well [9]. On the other hand, it is a science concerned with the systematic management of sound at all levels in the Universe [10]. Happiness, freshness and fresh mind are necessary for every human being whereas strong and healthy mind can do everything in this world [11]. A good music practice is fruitful for making a healthy mind and body which causes a good thought [12]. It helps us a lot for healthy lifestyle and for leading a better life. Music can play a valuable role in recovery from mental illness [13]. It can stimulate emotional and aesthetic responses, develop creative, technical, social and vocational skills, improve expression, communication, confidence and self-esteem, and facilitate positive changes in behavior and well-being [14].

Music listening and music making have been associated with a broad range of positive outcomes in the domains of health and well-being [15]. The most widely studied effects of music are the calming and stress reducing effects [16,17]. For decades, music has been used as an intervention for stress reduction, such as music activities (like singing or music making) [18], music listening for a

certain patient group ('music as medicine'), and live music therapy offered by music therapists [19].

Music is a language by itself and is capable of expressing refined thoughts and refined ideas [20]. There are different types or genres of music practices worldwide, which we can enjoy according to our need and requirement. It is also the best way to practice yoga and meditation, to improve physical and mental health [21]. It fills our mind with art, and every great invention requires art, creativity and imagination [22]. It develops our brain and the abilities associated with it. It is beneficial for developing skills of children and other age group individuals. Music therapy helps in curing dangerous and some chronic diseases [23]. The emotional appeal of music transfers to the mental and physiological dimensions leading to its therapeutic effect [24]. It is said that certain eastern classical ragas are capable of curing illnesses. Music cure was known not only in ancient times but even today. Some doctors use it to alleviate pain during certain painful treatment and also to help the patients towards a speedy recovery [25]. Thus, aesthetic could serve the same purpose as anesthetic in removing pain, but without having any adverse effect on the speed of recovery. But we should be careful about what type of music we are listening to. For example, there are some songs which have impolite language or rude words which should not be heard by the children, otherwise they will keep them in their mind which is not at all good for them. But overall, it is very beneficial for all of us and should be included in everyone's daily life.

Music is an international language. It has no barriers of religion, race, caste, class, faith or philosophy. When music comes to be entirely practiced, there will be far less corruption, crime in this world and the earth will be a cheerier place to live in [26]. The objective of this study was to deeply highlight, the impact of music on mental health.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Overall impact of music was analyzed with a qualitative approach. This was a descriptive and analytical study based on secondary sources of information. Relevant books, articles, journals, websites, research reports were the sources of this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Listening Music

Music is a major necessity of our life. Its study and practice gives taste, grace, attraction, gentleness and fine-tuning to a person. It develops the creamy qualities of human kindness and sympathy. A composer expresses his ideas through the medium of musical sounds. It is one of the joys of humanity. The monotony, boring and routine character of life are considerably relieved by listening to a good music. It is common mother-tongue of humanity, universal language of feeling and a great unifying force. While listening to music that you know and like, it tends to cause the strongest brain response and release of dopamine. Unfamiliar melodies may stimulate your brain, while providing a new source of pleasure as you get used to hearing them. It can be utilized to regulate mood. Because of its rhythmic and repetitive aspects, music engages the neocortex of our brain, which calms us and reduces impulsivity. We often utilize music to match or alter our mood. While there are benefits to matching music to our mood, it can potentially keep us stuck in a depressive, angry or anxious state. To alter mood states, a music therapist can play music to match the current mood of the person and then slowly shift to a more positive or calm state. A person receiving music therapy is encouraged to offer insight, alternative lyrics and tangible tools or themes from lyrics. We all have a song that we deeply connect to and appreciate and lyric analysis provides an opportunity for an individual to identify song lyrics that may correlate with their experience. Research shows the benefits of music therapy for various mental health conditions, including depression, trauma and schizophrenia. Listening to familiar music comforts you and evokes positive memories and associations. If you are 'unhappy then try to listening or making new music' to improve your mood or relieve feelings of depression. These activities not only provide physical exercise, but they can also relieve stress and build social connections also stimulate your brain. Music literally changes the brain. Neurological researchers have found that listening to music triggers the release of several neurochemicals that play a role in brain function and mental health.

A particular song can make us feel happy, sad, energetic or relaxed. Because music can have such

an impact on an individual's mindset and well-being, it should come as no surprise that music therapy has been studied for use in managing numerous medical conditions. Types of music differ in the types of neurological stimulation they evoke. For example, eastern classical music has been found to cause comfort and relaxation while rock, pop music may lead to discomfort. Music may achieve its therapeutic effects in part by elevating the pain threshold. Whether an individual is passively listening to music, playing an instrument or singing a song; there indeed is a healing power of music. Music exerts a powerful influence on human beings. It can boost memory, build task endurance, lighten your mood, reduce anxiety and depression, stave off fatigue, improve your response to pain and help you work out more effectively.

Yoga with music

Musical sound and musical experience are steps to the realization of "Self". Our tradition teaches us that sound is God—Nāda Brahma. We view music as a kind of spiritual discipline that rises one's inner being to divine peacefulness and bliss. The highest aim of music is to reveal the essence of the universe it reflects and the Rāgas are among the means by which this essence can be apprehended. Thus, through music, one can reach God. Since the ancient ages, Nada yogis skilled in music have united South Asia's speedily developing musical system with the sound cosmology and philosophy of Tantra and the Vedas.

In music, emphasis is placed on the purity of vowels, while in yoga-shastra, postures are emphasized. The goal of happiness and health can be found only by the excellence of voice and posture in both. From this point of view, both are harmonizing to each other for healthy mind and body.

Music itself is like yoga. It makes us happy and also sustains hormonal balance in our body and helps us to keep our body fit both physically and spiritually. It also works to keep us from mental problems. Nowadays there is a need to practice yoga to improve people's lives. The practice of yoga and music in daily life provides internal and external strength to the body. It is the restriction of fluctuation of consciousness (Feuerstein 1989). It helps to strengthen the body's resistance system, thus protecting against various diseases. If yoga is

done regularly, it can be another option of medicines. It also reduces the side effects of heavy medicines consumed daily. The best time to do yoga like 'pranayama' is in the morning, as it provides a better environment to control the body and mind.

Music is a companion to yoga that can invoke many emotions. Hearing a song or a melody can easily make us happy or sad. Thus, what we listen to when we are exercising is very important, as it affects the depth and the effectiveness of our practice. Meditation, relaxation and stress release are important for our health. It affects brain at different levels. Our moods change with different types of music. However, at a very deep level, its effect is similar to that of deep meditation. Probably it is a reason why all great religions have stressed music as a means for praying and meditation.

Music provides the best way of expressing emotion. It is necessary that the words of a song are the linguistic translation of the emotions. Even without the involvement of any vocal expression of language, the sounds and melody of music can convey their emotions. The flow of music expresses itself even in the absence of an audience. Listening to the music of nature - a babbling brook, birds singing or leaves whispering in the breeze - is a great way to induce a stress-relieving relaxed state. And instrumental music like flutes coupled with bass drums can work wonders. Better health, improved relationships, enhanced moods and stress relief are some of the benefits of music therapy [28]. Music has a great effect on the mental state of human beings as it brings peace, concentration and relaxation, which are the principles of yoga and meditation. Similarly, yoga techniques such as breath control and mental concentration also have their connection to vocal music. Many professional singers do practice regular yoga and pranayama to keep their voice in perfect shape. Ultimately, the connection between yoga and music is one of a shared philosophy [29], and not just a circumstantial one.

The power of music is unquestionable. It moves us. But its effects go far beyond our surface experience of song and rhythm. If you have been to a symphony performance, you have heard the musicians simultaneously tuning their instruments to the same note before they begin playing together. If one instrument is slightly out of tune, the other

instruments pull that instrument into tune, in a seemingly magical but actually natural phenomenon known as "entrainment," the process of waveforms are coming into sync. The result is a harmonious expression of sound.

We discover a deeper connection to our self and others when we focus on the rhythm of our breath. Sit next to a friend or loved one and quietly notice how quickly our breathing falls into sync. We may also try placing one hand on our heart and one hand on theirs to feel how quickly our heartbeats fall into rhythm. Pick a favorite song and do a 'sun salutation' while aligning your breath with the rhythm of the song. Notice how your mood and energy shifts when you create this kind of rhythmic alignment.

Scientists are taking advantage of new technologies to see exactly what goes on inside the brains of Nada-Yoga practitioners. The neuroscientists hypothesize that regular meditation actually alters the way the brain is wired and that these changes could be at the heart, of claims that musical meditation can improve health and well-being. But the rigors of the scientific method might never have been applied to studying the practice of meditation. Psychologists tell that music works on a very subtle subconscious level. In particular they refer to the beat or rhythm of the music. They point to the fact that before birth we felt safe, warm and secure within the womb and the most reassuring sound was that of the mother's heartbeat. The slow, rhythmic pulse of relaxing music may reflect the feelings first enjoyed when our lives were stress and anxiety-free. Thus, we can withdraw for a while from the causes of our stress and anxiety to an imaginary place of refuge and safety [30].

Music can be classified into 3 types, Satvic (mode of goodness), Raajasik (mode of passion), Taamasik (mode of ignorance). To get peaceful mind one has to try to move towards satvik nature, as satvic music helps a lot. The music like flute, veena or any melody comes under this category. If one is put in the practice of yoga, even though he/she is coming from stressful work with bad mood, it will be helpful to involve practitioners more on the practice, which has been the experience of lots of yoga followers [31]. Personally, what I feel is especially while relaxing in shavasana if you put relaxing music, its effects will be doubled.

Sacred Sound

In fact, the nerve center of yoga is the word "AUM" or 'OM', believed to be the first ever sound in the universe. The chanting of these word brings in the soothing effect of music. However, it is only in the recent years that music has found its way into yoga classes and practices. The type of music depends on the kind of yoga being practiced, but care should be taken to ensure that the music supports the practice rather than cause distraction. The choice of music is very critical to the practice, as the practitioner should feel the music rather than hear it.

As per the scriptural descriptions, often the vision of the syllables for subtle sounds (Nada) in the etheric ocean had been revealed to the rishis (eastern sages of the Vedic times) through an afflatus or intuition in their inner selves or the mantras were just 'heard' by them in a state of trance. The phonemes of the Vedic hymns and the seven fundamental nodes – Sa, Re, Ga, Ma, Pa, Dha, Ni of eastern classical music have originated (distinctly recognized by the Rishis) from the vibrations of the sublime sound of "Om" in the nature. The Vedic quote –'Ekoham Bahusyami' implies that all the sounds, all the energies, all the motions and everything existing in the universe have originated from the vibrations of this single anahata nada. This is the source of the manifestation of the Shabda-Brahma and the Nada Brahma [30].

As we go deeper in our practice, we develop a deeper state of awareness, a kind of inner listening that allows us to touch a perfect harmony within. Eventually we can align ourselves with the most subtle vibration of the universe, what yogis and mystics have described for millennia as the sound of Om. This is the experience of music and yoga. It is profound and yet profoundly simple. It is perhaps the sweetest kind of journey, because it is the one, that will ultimately lead us home.

CONCLUSIONS

Music is known to be an expression of the original sound, Naad Brahma, scripturally referred to as the word, planetary vibration or Aum. Music affects brain at different levels. Our moods change with different types of music. However, at a very deep level its effect is similar to that of deep meditation. Probably it is a reason why all great religions have

stressed music as a means for praying and meditation. If you reach a special state within yourself, then the whole world becomes sound. In music and yoga we say musical sound 'Naad - Brahma', which means 'sound is God'. This is because the foundation of this life is in vibration and this vibration is sound which every human can feel. If you look closely at such people who are deeply involved with melodious music, then you will feel that they naturally remain in the state of meditation. Music has a great effect on the mental state of human beings. It brings peace,

concentration and relaxation, which are the principles of music, yoga and meditation. Music affects brain at different levels. Therefore, if a person always involves in listening and practicing music in a proper way, then that person is happier than the rest. Because that person is always free from anxiety and stress. In this way, listening and practice provide peace in mental health of the people. As a result, healthy mind, body and thoughts definitely create a beautiful vibe in the society.

REFERENCES:

- Minsky M. Music, mind, and meaning. *Computer Music Journal*. 1981 Oct 1;5(3):28-44. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3679983>
- Ansdell G. Community music therapy & the winds of change. In *Voices: A world forum for music therapy* 2002 Mar 1 2(2). <https://voices.no/index.php/voices/article/view/1590/1349>
- Batt-Rawden KB. The benefits of self-selected music on health and well-being. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*. 2010 Sep 1;37(4):301-10.
- Özcan E. The Harley effect: Internal and external factors that facilitate positive experiences with product sounds. *Journal of Sonic Studies*. 2014 Jan;6(1):a07.
- Yang M. East meets west in the concert hall: Asians and classical music in the century of imperialism, post-colonialism, and multiculturalism. *Asian Music*. 2007 Jan 1;38(1):1-30.
- Murthy PN. A systemic view of cognition: a contribution of Indian philosophic thought and tradition. *Systems Research and Behavioral Science: The Official Journal of the International Federation for Systems Research*. 1998 Mar;15(2):93-110.
- Klausner L. *American Beat Yogi: An Exploration of the Hindu and Indian Cultural Themes* in Allen Ginsberg. 2011.
- Cook N. Between art and science: Music as performance. *Journal of the British Academy*. 2014;2:1-25.
- Marom MK. Spiritual moments in music therapy: A qualitative study of the music therapist's experience. *Qualitative inquiries in music therapy*. 2004;1:37.
- Sharma, M. *Special education music therapy*. New Delhi: S B Nangia for APH Publishing Corporation. 2007.
- Medina J. Brain rules for baby, Updated and expanded: How to raise a smart and happy child from zero to five. Pear Press; 2014 Apr 22.
- Shusterman R. Pragmatism and East-Asian Thought. *Metaphilosophy*. 2004 Jan;35(1-2):13-43.
- Hense C, McFerran KS. Promoting young people's musical identities to facilitate recovery from mental illness. *Journal of Youth Studies*. 2017 Sep 14;20(8):997-1012.
- World Health Organization. What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being? A scoping review. World Health Organization. Regional Office for Europe; 2019.
- Quiroga Murcia C, Kreutz G, Clift S, Bongard S. Shall we dance? An exploration of the perceived benefits of dancing on well-being. *Arts & Health*. 2010 Sep 1;2(2):149-63.
- Nilsson U. The anxiety-and pain-reducing effects of music interventions: a systematic review. *AORN journal*. 2008 Apr;87(4):780-807.
- de Witte M, Spruit A, van Hooren S, Moonen X, Stams GJ. Effects of music interventions on stress-related outcomes: a systematic review and two meta-analyses. *Health psychology review*. 2020 Apr 2;14(2):294-324.
- de Witte M, Pinho AD, Stams GJ, Moonen X, Bos AE, van Hooren S. Music therapy for stress reduction: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Health Psychology Review*. 2020 Nov 27:1-26.
- Tyler HM. The music therapy profession in modern Britain. In *Music as medicine* 2017 Jul 5 (pp. 375-394). Routledge.
- Mithen S, Morley I, Wray A, Tallerman M, Gamble C. *The Singing Neanderthals: the Origins of Music, Language, Mind and Body*, by Steven Mithen. London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2005. ISBN 0-

- 297-64317-7 hardback £ 20 & US \$25.2; ix+ 374 pp. Cambridge Archaeological Journal. 2006 Feb;16(1):97-112.
21. Ross A, Thomas S. The health benefits of yoga and exercise: a review of comparison studies. *The journal of alternative and complementary medicine*. 2010 Jan 1;16(1):3-12.
 22. Root-Bernstein R. Arts and crafts as adjuncts to STEM education to foster creativity in gifted and talented students. *Asia Pacific Education Review*. 2015 Jun;16(2):203-12.
 23. Kamioka H, Tsutani K, Yamada M, Park H, Okuizumi H, Tsuruoka K, Honda T, Okada S, Park SJ, Kitayuguchi J, Abe T. Effectiveness of music therapy: a summary of systematic reviews based on randomized controlled trials of music interventions. Patient preference and adherence. 2014;8:727.
 24. Pokharel R. Exploring the Different Roles and Aspects of Music. *Molung Educational Frontier*. 2020 Dec 25:125-33.
 25. Oh AL, Hassali MA, Al-Haddad MS, Sulaiman SA, Shafie AA, Awaisu A. Public knowledge and attitudes towards antibiotic usage: a cross-sectional study among the general public in the state of Penang, Malaysia. *The Journal of Infection in Developing Countries*. 2011;5(05):338-47.
 26. Hopkinson N. *Go-go live: The musical life and death of a Chocolate City*. Duke University Press; 2012 May 22.
 27. Feuerstein, G. *Yoga-sutra of Patanjali. The Yoga tradition. A new translation and commentary*. 1989.
 28. Acharya, S. S. *Music the Nectar of Life*, Maharashtra, Andheri, Mumbai: Gayatri Parivar Yug Nirman Yojna Trust. 2011.
 29. Vajpeyee M, Tiwari S, Jain K, Modi P, Bhandari P, Monga G, Yadav LB, Bhardwaj H, Shrotri AK, Singh S, Vajpeyee A. Yoga and music intervention to reduce depression, anxiety, and stress during COVID-19 outbreak on healthcare workers. *International Journal of Social Psychiatry*. 2021 Apr 5:00207640211006742.
 30. Kamakhya, K. Effect of Learning Music as a Practice of Nada Yoga on EEG Alpha and General Well Being. *Journal-Yoga Mimans: Kaivalyadham Lonavala, Maharashtra*. 2011, 43(03): 215-20.