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Dr. Supriya Sanju

Assistant Professor, Department
of Sanskrit, Amity Centre for
Sanskrit and Indic Studies,
Amity School of Liberal Arts,
Amity University, Haryana,
India

Effect of mantras and music on mental and physical health

Dr. Supriya Sanju

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Abstract

Mantra and music are extremely effective means of maintaining mental well-being. When we are mentally healthy, our physical health naturally follows suit. Mantras hold great significance in life. When we chant mantras with focus, our inner powers are awakened. These powers bring a renewed vigor to life. Music has a profound impact on our emotions and enhances overall mental and physical health. According to various studies, music (at approximately 60 beats per minute) can synchronize our brain with the rhythm of the music and promote the release of alpha brainwaves, which assist in relaxation and inducing sleep.

What is a mantra or how is it described? Vedic seers and sages have explained that a mantra is not merely a combination of words; it is a source of power. Acharya Yasak described the mantra as 'Manant Mantrah Iti' meaning that in a mantra, it is not the contemplation of words but the contemplation of power. That word is considered as the power of speech. In Vakyapadiya, the word is described as Brahma and the form of Shakti. Therefore, the sages have regarded the word in the form of a mantra as the power of speech and stated that the group of words in the form of a mantra is a potent force that is not without purpose.

Ancient Vedic texts mention hundreds of thousands, even millions of mantras. All of these are associated with Vedic deities or the forces of nature, and by chanting them, we can fulfil our desires. However, there are also some mantras used by individuals with negative thoughts to instil fear in society. In other words, just as there are people with positive and negative thoughts in this universe, mantras can also have both positive and negative effects.

Listening to soothing music can alter the functioning of our brain, similar to the way drugs do. Fast-paced music increases our alertness and concentration levels. Music stimulates our brain to release dopamine (a feel-good hormone) in our body. An adequate level of dopamine hormone can make us feel happy, content, energetic, and motivated. It also contributes to improving our physical, mental, and emotional health and well-being. Music can serve as a powerful tool for relieving stress because when music plays, our brain synchronizes with the music, diverting our attention from other depressive thoughts. Music therapy, when combined with other therapeutic approaches, is beneficial for individuals dealing with depression, anxiety, and other mental health issues.

Keywords: Mantra and music, mental health issues, depression, anxiety, negative effects

Introduction

The power of music and mantras is a well-established fact, supported by numerous examples and experiences. Music serves not only as a source of joy but also as a potent remedy for a variety of issues. Music and mantras have the capacity to invigorate the mind, alleviate stress, evoke emotions, and promote mental serenity. Each person has a personal connection with music and mantras, often having favourite songs they turn to in times of both happiness and distress. Similarly, while some mantras may be recited as mere words, others are infused with deep emotional resonance in our minds. It is not an overstatement to assert that music and mantras exert a positive influence on the mind and body, contributing to the overall health and well-being of individuals.

In recent years, scientific research has sought to validate, through empirical evidence, what our ancient sages have known for centuries that music and mantras play an internal role in maintaining our health.

Corresponding Author:

Dr. Supriya Sanju

Assistant Professor, Department
of Sanskrit, Amity Centre for
Sanskrit and Indic Studies,
Amity School of Liberal Arts,
Amity University, Haryana,
India

Various studies have examined music and mantras as highly structured auditory languages, attempting to understand how they function in promoting well-being.

Impact of Mantras

Mental Health Benefits: The practice of chanting mantras and meditation can significantly enhance mental peace and stability, reducing mental stress and improving overall mental health.

Physical Health Benefits: As mental health improves; physical well-being can also experience positive effects. A stable and healthy mental state can contribute to maintaining physical health, given the interconnectedness of the two.

Awakening Inner Strength: The recitation of mantras has the power to awaken inner strengths, infusing life with new energy and enthusiasm.

Impact of Music

Mental Health Benefits: Music possesses the remarkable ability to deeply affect our emotions. Pleasant music can evoke positive feelings and may be instrumental in alleviating anxiety and sadness.

Physical Health Benefits: Upbeat music can enhance physical alertness and focus. Music has the capacity to stimulate the release of dopamine, a pleasure hormone, in the brain, resulting in feelings of happiness, contentment, energy, and inspiration.

Stress Relief: Music serves as a conduit for stress relief, offering individuals profound joy and solace.

Main Points

In this research, two therapeutic practices for mental and physical health—mantras and music—are explored. While both of these practices impact physical health, their true efficacy is most pronounced in their ability to address mental health concerns.

In the main points of this research paper, an in-depth analysis of mantras and music has been provided, explaining how they are used for therapeutic purposes.

Mantras

Mantras are tools that liberate us from the cycle of birth and death. Mantras help us free ourselves from our worries. The meaning of each mantra is infinite. A mantra is sound, transcending the knowledge of the mind. When the mind is unable to experience, it simply dissolves and enters a state of meditation. When we meditate on mantras, the energy within our body becomes intense. The meaning of mantras is said to be essential in the initial stages of mantra meditation, but in the advanced stages, it is often only a minor consideration. In this state, even the cessation of meaning is recommended because maintaining the focus of the mind is the main reason, which is facilitated by not paying attention to the meaning of the mantra. The significance is not as important as feeling the vibrations of these mantras. However, contemplation of meaning has its importance. It elevates the practitioner to a certain level, after which the sound of the mantra itself works. Mantra definitions have been given by various seers in different Vedic texts. All religions, sects, their founders, sages, and Acharya's have defined mantras according to their beliefs. Here, we will only discuss the major definitions of mantras as presented in the science of mantras, which will make it easier to understand the concept of mantras. "Mantra is that which, when contemplated, frees one from all worldly suffering and bestows liberation." "Mantra is that which

imparts knowledge of the Self and the Supreme". "Mantra is that through which contemplation on the orders of the soul (voice of the inner self) is performed". "Mantra is that which, when used in worship and meditation, invokes the presence of the deity and its blessings." "Mantra is that which, when chanted, offers complete protection and convenience to the practitioner". "Mantra is the representation of the deity along with offerings in worship, repetition, and meditation". "Mantra is the discernment of the practitioner in sadhana, which is the awareness of the practitioner, the practice, and the goal". "All letters are seed mantras, and they are called mantras; they are of the form of Lord Shiva". "Mantra is the secret science." In this way, different sages and Acharya's have defined mantras according to their own views and beliefs. Mantra is the secret science of awakening and harnessing the inner powers of the soul.

In the universe, every object attracts other objects towards itself. When we recite mantras or perform rituals, it has a highly positive impact on the environment. Mantras emit positive waves into the atmosphere through their pronunciation, and listening to them brings peace to the mind. Ancient religious texts extensively emphasize the significance of mantra chanting. The tradition of mantra chanting has been prevalent in Indian culture since ancient times. In ancient Vedic texts, thousands of mantras are mentioned, which refer to the fulfilment of objectives. Mantras form the basis of our faith in spiritual practices. Through the repetition of mantras, the soul, body, and the entire environment become purified. Gayatri Mahamantra is considered the holiest mantra, signifying a prayer for wisdom and the right path for everyone from the Supreme Being. These short mantras have the potential to transmit boundless energy. Through the chanting of these mantras, individuals can attain liberation from all difficulties and troubles. Mantras have an impact in such a way that they channel the energy of the universe, attracting, holding, and directing it.

Om Sound

The sound 'Om' is considered the essence of all mantras in the world. It not only carries vibrations through pronunciation but also has a positive effect on the body. The importance of Om sound has been known in Indian civilization since ancient times. In scriptures, Om sound is given more than a hundred meanings. It represents the state of being eternal, infinite, and the state of nirvana. It is considered a symbol of the Holy Trinity, symbolizing the Earth, Heaven, and the world of the gods. It helps in focusing the mind and promotes regular heartbeats and blood circulation. It helps in eliminating mental illnesses, and it facilitates the flow of energy in the body. Both uttering and listening to it provide benefits. While chanting it, purity is maintained. Chanting the Om sound in the morning is highly beneficial.

Om Namah - Adding the word 'Namah' to Om instills humility in the mind. This results in the circulation of positive energy.

Gayatri Mantra

Om Bhur Bhuvaḥ Svaḥ

Tat Savitur Vareṇyam

Bhargo Devasya Dhīmahi

Dhiyo Yo Nah Prachodayāt

This mantra is a combination of the "Om Bhur Bhuvaḥ Svaḥ" from the Yajurveda and the verse 3.62.10 from the Rigveda. It is a meditation on Savitar, the Sun god, and is therefore also

called the Savitri mantra. It is believed that by chanting and understanding this mantra, one can attain the divine. It is also worshiped as the female form of Goddess Gayatri. This mantra is considered one of the most powerful mantras. Its meaning is that "we meditate on the brilliance of the creator, the Supreme Being, who is the source of all physical, mental, and spiritual life, and who may inspire our minds".

Whenever the mind begins to lose its peace due to any problem, chanting the 'Gayatri Mantra' brings tranquility to the mind. Seers of mantras say that by simply reciting this mantra daily, many problems and calamities can be eradicated. According to scriptures, the origin of the 'Gayatri Mantra' was through rigorous penance by the sage Vishwamitra. It was written in Sanskrit in the Rigveda. Scientists believe that when the Gayatri Mantra is chanted, it generates 110,000 different types of waves (vibrations) per second. This helps in relieving mental stress and provides a sense of peace to the mind. Chanting the Gayatri Mantra before sunrise is highly beneficial and effective, even leading to the cure of several diseases.

Therefore, the chanting of the Gayatri Mantra is considered essential. The spiritual significance of the Gayatri Mantra is well-known, but it has also been recognized for its therapeutic importance by science. When the Gayatri Mantra is chanted, the first syllable "Om" resonates in your lips, tongue, palate, throat, and brain. This resonance stimulates the release of relaxation hormones in our body, making our body and mind relaxed and providing us with great happiness and peace. An article in the International Journal of Yoga states that regular chanting of the Gayatri Mantra not only enhances memory but also makes the chanter more focused compared to others.

When anyone recites the Gayatri Mantra, it activates the three chakras in their head and face. These chakras are directly related to concentration and are responsible for improving it. Since our lives are influenced by the movement of the planets, if any planet is causing obstacles in life, this mantra removes those obstacles. "Mahamrityunjaya Mantra" is considered the most powerful mantra for Lord Shiva. It is believed to protect from untimely death, keep the body healthy, increase wealth, and free from the cycle of birth and death.

It is said that when chanted regularly with faith, even severe problems are resolved through this mantra. It has a crucial role in pacifying the influence of celestial bodies. Since our life is affected by the movement of the planets, if any planet is causing obstacles in life, this mantra removes those obstacles. The "Mahamrityunjaya Mantra" is dedicated to Lord Shiva as the conqueror of death. It signifies victory over death and liberation from the cycle of birth and death. It helps in solving various life problems, and when chanted with devotion, it can even delay or avert death. Vedic scriptures and Puranas mention the significance of chanting the Mahamrityunjaya Mantra to obtain relief from incurable diseases and to prevent untimely death. It is considered a mantra to please Lord Shiva. The effect of this mantra helps a person escape death even when death seems inevitable, and it has the miraculous power to revive the terminally ill.

It is said that this mantra has the power to make Lord Shiva happy and attain His boundless grace. The continuous chanting of this mantra not only ends or reduces the impact of several diseases but also helps in resolving difficult life situations. It is important to note that the "Mahamrityunjaya Mantra" is not just spiritual but also scientifically recognized for its therapeutic effects. When this mantra is pronounced, the first syllable "Om", creates vibrations in your lips, tongue, palate, throat, and brain. These vibrations stimulate the

release of relaxation hormones from your body, resulting in a relaxed body and mind, leading to great happiness and peace.

Treatment of diseases through Mantras

Various physical and mental illnesses can be benefited from mantras. Even experts now believe that not only is the human body influenced by mantras, but the entire universe is also constructed through Vedic vibrations. Whenever imbalances occur in the body's three doshas-Vata, Pitta, and Kapha-due to various reasons, it is possible to successfully treat them through mantra therapy.

In the Bhagavad Gita, it is said, "The mind is the cause of both bondage and liberation for humans. The mind that is attached to external objects leads to bondage, but the mind that is free from desires and attachments leads to liberation." In other words, the mind plays a crucial role in human bondage and liberation. A person's thoughts have a direct impact on their body. If the mind is unhealthy, the body also becomes afflicted. The mere anticipation of future troubles can make a person so fearful that all their energies become weakened. This is indicative of the weakness of the mind. The weakness of the mind is what destroys a person's physical health and happiness. More than the severity of calamities, it is the instability of the mind that makes us unhappy and discontent.

Human beings accomplish everything through the power of the mind. Whatever good or bad actions a person performs are driven by the subtle and unknown powers of the mind. The power that arises in the mind is what governs actions in the body. When a person worries, the effect of that worry directly impacts the body. If the mind is troubled, its influence will certainly be felt in the body. Therefore, it is essential to maintain a pure and balanced mind in connection with the undivided relationship between the body and mind. Only then can we remain healthy and utilize the divine power of the mind to progress.

According to the Atharvaveda, mental diseases arise due to an excess of the Rajas and Tamas qualities in the body. Consequently, the mental strength starts diminishing, and as a result, a person's self-confidence is lost. The outcome is that the disease-preventing elements in the body also start diminishing, and we become afflicted by diseases. Therefore, the sages have emphasized that maintaining the self-confidence inherent in humans is essential, and mantra meditation is one such method through which the transmission of this self-confidence occurs.

According to Vedic sages, it was common practice to discuss the treatment of diseases with mantras before the occurrence of any illness, and mantras, havans (fire ceremonies), etc., were regularly included in daily routines. As a result, they lived healthy and long lives. Atharvaveda mantra 10/2/27 mentions that diseases can be eradicated through the power of mantras, and Rigveda 10/162/2 states that chanting of soundless mantras can eliminate disturbances in the body and mind. As a result, physical and mental disorders are resolved, and negative thoughts in the mind come to an end. After the elimination of disorders, the body and mind become healthy once again.

Music

Music, with its soothing and therapeutic properties, has a profound impact on our emotions. Pleasant music can elevate positive emotions, reduce anxiety, and alleviate sadness. It also has a physical impact, enhancing alertness and focus. Music can stimulate the release of dopamine, a pleasure

hormone, in the brain, leading to feelings of happiness, contentment, energy, and inspiration. Through music, individuals can find relief from stress and experience profound joy. It is a tool for relaxation and inner peace. Music affects both mental and physical health, providing a holistic approach to well-being.

Music plays an important role in everyone's life. It fills the empty spaces in human life with sweet sounds, keeping people engaged and bringing tranquility. Organized sound, created through the creation of melody, is called music. Another definition is that music is that which can be sung properly. In other words, it is the subject of sound, rhythm, pure expression, and precise gestures, combined with lyrical content.

Music provides us with entertainment, inner peace, and also promotes good health. It is an integral part of everyone's life, whether as a singer or a listener, music has a profound impact on us. Indian classical music is one of the oldest forms of music in the world, and it is considered superior to the music of other countries. One of the unique features of Indian classical music is the system of "ragas" (melodic modes).

Music therapy is highly popular among various forms of sound therapy. When we experience it deeply, we find that the entire structure of the universe is inherently musical. In the beginning of creation, there was an unstruck sound, meaning the sound of "Om", and from that, the process of creation began. Every aspect of creation is driven by rhythm and music.

The Origin of Music

According to the Vedas, music was created by Lord Brahma, who bestowed this art upon Goddess Saraswati, the deity of knowledge and the arts. Goddess Saraswati is known as the one who holds the veena (a musical instrument) and the book, symbolizing literature. She is considered the guardian of literature and the arts. She imparted the knowledge of music to Sage Narada. Later, Sage Narada taught music to the celestial beings, Gandharvas, Kinnaras, and Apsaras. According to spiritual tradition, Narada practiced intense meditation for many years, and Lord Shiva, pleased with his devotion, granted him the gift of the art of music.

The source of music is considered to be natural sounds, even in Vedic times, where an attempt was made to understand the nature of human sounds and their unique rhythms. The nature sounds that touched the human mind and intellect became the foundation of civilization's musical journey. These sounds, which stimulated human emotions, became the basis for developing music, shaping its emotions and rhythms.

Vedic literature refers to the singing of Gandharvas, Gathins, and Samins, indicating the presence of music in those times. The Rigveda mentions these musical terms, reflecting the deep roots of music in Indian culture.

The origin of music is also attributed to natural sounds. In the Prakriti Yuga (a historical age), attempts were made to understand the natural sounds of humans and their specific rhythms, which eventually led to the development of music. It is believed that this art form had developed so much that it was considered an Upaveda (subsidiary knowledge) of the Samaveda.

Bharata Muni, in his Natya Shastra, outlined the concepts of Shruti (musical notes), Grama (musical scale), Murchhana (modes), and Jati (rhythmic patterns). These principles, along with the Sapta Swaras (seven musical notes), their relationships, and various other musical theories, are still accepted and followed in contemporary music.

Saptaka of Music

Bharata Muni explained the concept of Saptaka (the octave), where the seven musical notes are divided into three categories: Vadi, Samvadi and Anuvadi, creating a relationship among them. These relationships, along with other principles in music, are still widely accepted not only in Indian music but also in various music traditions worldwide.

Music Therapy

"In many Vedic texts, the method of healing through music is described. Sage Charaka, in the sixth chapter of his book 'Siddhinath', has explained the therapeutic effects of music. According to Ayurveda, diseases arise from the imbalance of doshas and dhatus. Maintaining their balance in the body and mind is the task of physicians. The Samaveda also describes the use of ragas for the treatment of diseases. Acharya Sharangdev, in his book 'Sangeet Ratnakar', elaborately discusses the origins of notes and their connections with nerves, chakras, and physical organs in the chapter on self-study. Particularly, the singing of Samavedic hymns is very beneficial for heart patients. The swara waves of the Samaveda have a favorable effect on blood circulation in the body, increasing the oxygen levels in the blood. The Vedic texts describe various methods of healing through music in different places. Sage Charaka, in the sixth chapter of his book 'Siddhinath', has described the therapeutic effects of music.

Indian medicine considers three primary causes for the origin of physical and mental diseases: 1. Vata, 2. Pitta, and 3. Kapha. Any medical system aims to balance these. The ancient sage Tumburu Gandharva, also known as a music therapist, is considered the first music therapist. In his book 'Sangeet Swaramrit,' he wrote that the influence of high and unmatched sounds affects the pitta (fire) element, while soft and gentle sounds affect the kapha (earth and water) elements. Sounds that are a combination of all three elements have an impact on tridoshas and are called "Sannipaat."

In the 'Sangeet-Makarand' text, Narada mentions the influence of different types of ragas (Audav-Shadav-Sampurna) on the patient's mind and body based on various situations. In the 'Sangeetadhyaya' section, Narada has determined the singing and playing of ragas in different conditions:

'One should sing complete ragas for the enhancement of lifespan, righteousness, fame, prosperity, and for achieving the fullness of one's lineage. In essence, complete ragas should be sung for the growth of age, righteousness, fame, progeny, prosperity, and for the achievement of desired goals'.

In the Vedas, music is considered the most excellent means to attain liberation. In the Rigveda, there is a mention of a physician named "Gathapati", who is associated with music therapy. The Sama Veda, which is considered the Veda of music in India, provides guidelines for the singing of melodies as a means of healing. The Atharva Veda contains mantras related to life, daily activities, and health.

Brahma Ratna, the expert in music, recognized the qualities of both music and medicine. Through yagnas (rituals), he promoted the balance of physical, mental, and behavioural aspects of individuals. The Atharva Veda describes treatments using mantras, music (Sama), and medicines.

Ayurveda recognizes three bodily elements, known as "Dhatu" - Vata, Pitta, and Kapha. To maintain the balance of these three elements, sound power, mantra power, and the power of music were employed. Rishis and sages used music and mantra meditation to gain control over various aspects of life and achieve miraculous results.

Tumburu Gandharva is considered the first music therapist. In his book "Sangit Swaramrit", he explains that high-pitched and uneven sounds affect Vata, serious and stable sounds affect Pitta, and soft and gentle sounds affect Kapha. Balancing these three elements through musical sounds can help eliminate diseases.

According to the principles of yoga, connecting with one's inner self is essential. When an individual connects with their inner self, emotional stress reduces, and positive emotions become stable. Music therapy encompasses various aspects, from listening to music to creating music, producing melodies, discussing music, and providing training through music. In this way, music is used in various forms under the umbrella of music therapy to promote well-being.

Indian classical music is an ancient therapeutic practice that offers specialized treatment for individuals affected by various age groups and diseases. It affects the physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional aspects of the body.

Listening to music enhances activity in different parts of our brain. Sweet and favourite music attracts our complete attention and can instantly recall memories associated with specific events. Knowledgeable listeners compare and analyze music based on their previous knowledge. Unfamiliar or less knowledgeable listeners are merely entertained by music, affecting physical and mental activities, which regulate hormonal control and enzymes.

Music therapy is a comprehensive concept that connects body and soul. It combines elements like notes, rhythms, and concentration to create a positive impact on both mental and physical health. Especially when used alongside other medical practices, music therapy enhances the healing process by increasing the chances of recovery due to its mental effects. Music therapy affects various bodily systems and functions depending on the nature of the disease and the type of music used.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be stated that the recitation of mantras has the potential to enhance a person's inner strength and life force, thereby strengthening the body's ability to combat diseases and promoting overall well-being. Mantras not only produce audible sound waves but also subtle waves of faith and intention, which can have a profound impact on a person's mental and physical health. These subtle waves, beyond the audible sound waves, act as channels, transmitting the healing power of the chanted mantras into the body. The power of mantras aims to awaken the prana energy within.

Hence, faith, devotion, and belief play a crucial role in harnessing the power of mantras. These qualities help stabilize a person's mind, leading to inner peace and the alleviation of suffering.

Indian classical music also has a positive influence on human health. The seven musical notes, "Sa, Re, Ga, Ma, Pa, Dha, Ni" are believed to affect various aspects of the human body, aligning with the seven chakras described in the Vedas that regulate different bodily functions. The seven musical notes are thought to help maintain the balance of these chakras.

In conclusion, music has a profound impact not only on the body but also on the mind, bringing joy and happiness to our lives. While human life is inherently musical, modern lifestyles, materialism, ignorance, and ego have caused the true essence of music to be obscured. The melody has become discordant, and the rhythm of life has been disrupted. Therefore, there is a contemporary need to reintegrate music into our lives through the practice of music therapy to restore

harmony and balance.

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