

Therapeutic Potential of Kohomba kankariya Music: a Rationale Based on Socio Cultural Context

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Introduction

Religious chants, invocations and sounds producing instrumentation are deemed as spiritual music in the context of ritual. These kinds of music directly interact with human consolation. In this context, it is relevant to discuss therapeutic potential of folk religious ritual music.

Ratanjankar (1952) interprets a correlation between folk chant and god as the call to the power behind natural phenomena. According to him initial call was in a prolonged vowel sound and the Hindus know this first invocation to God Almighty by the syllable “OM”. In Vedic rituals of 3700 years ago used literature as metric compositions (i.e. stanzas) for praying and OMkar was lifelong sound used to call god. Today, OM has transformed to a broad social therapeutic implement.

Seneviratne (1978) claims that the germinal kankariya is represented by *Kuveni asna* prose poetry of Kotte in the 14th century AD. According to the *Kuveni asna* a Vedic ritual was held to ward off evils of king Parakramabahu VI of Kotte. Traditional experts also conform to the idea. For example, Tittapajjala Suramba, the expert of Kohomba kankariya says “the ceremony is an expression of a Vedic feature whereby one engages in a blessing activity (*vidika shantikarma*)” (Wallcot, 1978). In this connection, the fact that can be identified is today’s spiritual music of Kohomba kankariya includes and depicts some influences of Vedic chants and invocations. OM is used as a method of music therapy today for stress management (VND Society); likewise, music of Kohomba kankariya may have such potential because of its social religious base.

Research Problem

Beneficial therapeutic properties in spiritual music of Kohomba kankariya, which have been gifted by a long social and cultural process, have

unconsciously served humans for a long period of time. However, these properties have never hitherto been formally investigated in socio cultural context.

Objectives of the Study

The objective is to identify innate therapeutic potentials of Kohomba kankariya's music in socio cultural context.

Theoretical Considerations and Empirical Evidence

Receptive Music Therapy (RMT) is one of the modern music therapeutic methods, which can be identified as germinal aspect of music therapy. Kenneth E. Bruscia (1998) defines the Receptive Music Therapy as follows:

In receptive experiences, the client listens to music and responds to the experience silently, verbally or in another modality. The music used may be live or recorded improvisations, performances, or compositions by the client or therapist, or commercial recordings of music in various styles. The listening experience may be focused on physical, emotional, intellectual, aesthetic, or spiritual aspects of the music, and the client's responses are designed according to the therapeutic purpose of the experience. (p.134).

The main clinical goals of Receptive Music Therapy are to promote receptivity, evoke specific body responses, stimulate or relax the person, develop auditory/motor skills, evoke effective status and experiences, explore ideas and thoughts of others, facilitate memory, reminiscence, and regression; evoke imagery and fantasies; connect the listener to a community or socio cultural group; stimulate peak and spiritual experiences.

Methodology

Vedic ritual sound, which has become a universal method of music therapy today, is compared with Kohomba kankariya spiritual music expressions. Innate therapeutic aspects in music of Kohomba kankariya are determined comparing with one of theorised modern music therapeutic methods, which is based on listening to music, known as Receptive Music Therapy. Live experience of Kohomba kankariya music is used to perceive

therapeutic aspects in comparing with such music experiences explained in the literature of MT.

Key Findings

Some similar sound aspects of Vedic chants can be found in the chants of Kohomba kankariya. In the receptive experience of spiritual music in Kohomba kankariya, interaction between music and audience can be seen in several dimensions.

People listen to voice (i.e. chants, invocations, rigmaroles etc.) with or without drum rhythms. In some of these stages, they tend to worship towards voice due to the well worn religiousness of literature. Rapid singing tempo is not affected here for impulsive mentality because literature brought through music, which is focused on religion and articulation are more impressive and rich enough to exceed temporal sensations. For example, “*mal yahan kavi*”, verses sung inviting gods include names of Buddhists’ sacred places, and gods.

According to another dimension, people feel rhythms of drums through dance. Drums provide various kinds of rhythms; the inseparable relationship between drummers and dancers creates a rhythmic environment in the kankariya function. People unconsciously engage bodily with dancers; but they actually response to the rhythm of drums. These events provide self enjoyment as well as communal engagement. The events like *yak anuma* and *kuveni asna* dances of Kohomba kankariya are prominent examples for these interactions.

The drum performances can be taken as another dimension of interaction, which makes people pleasurable and joyful. The auspicious drums or *mangul bera* and *atya bera* are highly promotable examples in this context. People tend to respond to players by whistling, conversing and clapping while experiencing creative and impressive drum performances, which are seemed sometimes to be impulsive.

In this natural therapeutic process, *yakdessas* (i.e. exorcists) claim the duty of therapist while members of audience are being as clients. Aroma, decorations done by using natural materials etc. may be augmentative properties of music in receptive experience of audience. Each of these experiences can be explained with extended examples. Totally, it is able to

comprehend Music therapeutic aspects of Kohomba kankariya by a deep analysis of its soundscape, which includes voice, sound of drums and anklets complemented by the background sounds of the environment.

Conclusion

In accordance with some of the reasonable and internationally identified conclusions on music therapy today, a rationale can be built relating to the soothing aspects of music in Kohomba kankariya. Chants, invocations, singing and drumming or in other words tonal and metrical aspects of folk religious rituals in all over the world seemingly are pure rudiments of post developed scientific theories of Receptive Music Therapy. It includes pristine and independent characteristics of human's natural conversation with music. Moreover, it provides a sound example for the rationale in terms of the generalization of ritual music's innate therapeutic potential.

The music of Kohomba kankariya, which depicts some relationships of sound of Vedic ritual, achieves main clinical goals of Receptive Music Therapy. In this receptive experience, people listen to music and responds to the experience silently, verbally and in another modality like clapping or whistling. Hence, spiritual music of Kohomba kankariya promotes receptivity to evoke specific body responses, stimulate or relax the person, evoke effective status and experiences, explore ideas and thoughts of others, facilitate memory, evoke imagery and fantasies; connect the listener to a community or socio cultural group; stimulate peak and spiritual experiences, which have been theorized in the definitions as clinical goals of RMT.

Key words: Kohomba Kankariya; Spiritual Music; Therapeutic Potential; Receptive Music Therapy

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