

## Role of Sound in Spirituality: Effect on Physical and Mental Health

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Received 08 Feb 2020, Accepted 10 April 2020, Available online 13 April 2020, Vol.8 (March/April 2020 issue)

### Abstract

Currently, an individual's spiritual health or well-being is gaining great momentum across the globe. Spiritual Health referred to as the state in which there is perfect balance between physical, psychological and social facets of a human being. Every religion has its own way to do practices and to reach their spiritual path such as Om chanting in Hinduism, throat-singing in Buddhism, vocalizations in Islam, the shofar in Judaism, or the bell in Christianity (Rosalind I. J. Hackett). Music has the quality of expressing one's feelings and emotions. This study explores the role of music in spirituality with reference to various religions such as Hinduism, Jainism, Islam, Christian, and Buddhism and also their effects on mental and physical health. Through this study we will study how various spiritual practices affects our physical and mental health.

**Keywords:** Spirituality, Sound, Mental health and Physical health.

### Introduction

The distinction between one's personality and its essence leads to duality. Also referred to as duality of one's mind and soul. Spirituality is simply the elimination of this duality within an individual. It is being practicing since the evolution of human being only the ways had being changing gradually. Spirituality is not being a religious person but it has great significance in all the religions. The ultimate goal of spirituality is to get transited in the divine. Every religion has its own definitions of spirituality. Hinduism defines spirituality as "Moksha" (freedom from the endless cycle of life).

According to Buddhism, spirituality is reaching to the state of Nirvana. Also, many other religions had defined spirituality in various different contexts. Listening to music and musicking are important tools of bringing change and self-development, enhancing well-being and 'wellness' and provides means for recovery and quality of life in the face of illness (Kari Bjerke Batt-Rawden & Tia DeNora Even Ruud Jul 2009). This process of self-development can be achieved through spirituality. There exists a type of energy and vibrations in each sound. The vibrations in the sound we hear affect us in different ways. Some of them are uplifting and some are calming, while others may have a negative effect on us (Simon Heather).

Only the individual's direct experience with the music can describes the spiritual power of music without any restriction by the doctrines, texts, and social practices that have a great influence on musical practice in an Asian context (Jay Keister 2005). The studies of particular religion or type of religion, may be, indigenous religion or particular forms of musical practice followed by these religions, such as chanting in Hinduism or sacred song traditions in Christianity (Rosalind I. J. Hackett). Sound plays a significant role in leading a way to spirituality. Hindu scriptures (such as the Sabda-Brahman of the Upanishads and the Nada-Brahman of Yoga, Saivism, Saktism, and Vaishnavism) have its own idea of cosmos that is originated and permeated by sound (Rosalind I. J. Hackett).

"Nada Brahma" has observed the universe's nature as musical and vibrating, recognizing the whole world as sound in Hindu views (Antonio Ricardo Nahas 2016). Om has five symbols: a, creation's acoustic root; u, preservation's acoustic root; ma, destruction's acoustic root; (.) the symbol of the manifested universe; and this symbol also signify the process of manifestation (Suresh Emre Sept 2013). OM is considered to be a spiritual symbol in many Indian religions. This one word is significantly used not only in Hinduism but also in Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism as well. Ancient Indian scriptures define Om as the most powerful of all the mantras. It is found in each and every prayer. Worshipping to most gods begins with this syllable (Ajay Anil Gurjar, Ajay P. Thakare, and Siddhath A.

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14741/ijmcr/v.8.2.12>

Ladhake April 2011). Continuous chanting of OM affects our nervous system thus results in the generation of positive energy therefore, eliminating negative ones. This syllable is used in the beginning as well as in the ending of the chapters of Vedas. Jainism use condensed form of Om with reference to Panca- Parameshti. Later schools of Buddhism such as Tibetan Buddhism chant Om as they were influenced by Indian Hinduism. Ik Onkar is the beginning word of Guru Granth Sahib (Sikh Scriptures). So, it is clear that Om chanting highly impacts the spiritual practices of various Indian religions. In Islamic spirituality the word 'Allah Hu' means everything in universe ends in the name of Allah. Hu means "Fanah", they concentrate and focus on Allah Hu. Singing simple chants again and again over a long period of time makes the mind of the singer relaxed and clear. This effect is used in most spiritual traditions (Simon Heather September, 2007). Buddhist musical practices involves, full body movements and also have some prescribed non-movements in some cases, as a way of establishing principle of stillness in the body. In addition, sometimes these practioners also used their body as instruments while they perform throat singing which provides audibility to the body's resonant chambers (Paul D. Greene, 2002). When we repeat the same phrase over and over again, in Hinduism it is known as 'kirtan'. But this can only be achieved when we sing or chant with great devotion (Simon Heather September, 2007). In the Islamic culture, Sufism is developed together with the hearing and listening to music or speech (Jean During, 1997). In Islamic spirituality the Sufis were referred as the foremost Muslim Mystic and for them music is not only permissible (halal) but also it is a required practice (wajib) (Dr. Leonard Lewislohn). Sufis organized a proper musical environment also known as 'Sama' which adds glory to their spiritual practices by enhancing it in a positive way. According to 'the University of Zurich Faculty of Theology' Christians practice their spirituality by singing, praying, blessing and reading and listening to the Holy way of life. The opening of prayer or worship in events held by Christians often done by creating sound on shofar (Kate Shellnutt, 2018). Though shofar blowing is done by Jewish as the announcement of God's intervention but it have an eschatological aspect in Christian's point of view (Kate Shellnutt, 2018). For different reasons, Sikh and Jain devotional music known as 'kirtan' and 'bhakti' respectively. The Jains of contemporary times practice the Sakra Stava as a daily Hymn and is mythological source for Jain bhakti (Bob Van Der Linden, 2019). Jain Stavan, also referred to as bhajan, is mostly sung by women for parsing Jina (liberated one). The genre of Sikh kirtan on the other hand, is performed by male professionals those are primarily involved in singing hymns of Guru Granth Sahib (Nirinjan Kaur Khalsa- Baker, 2019). Many religions like Hinduism, Christianity, and Buddhist practiced bell ringing for spiritual purpose it can be said it is neither required nor forbidden in any religions but many people thought of this practice as their way to remind the presence of God in one's life. In Hinduism ringing of bells is witnessed in their

daily prayers with the vocalization of various mantras and devotional songs (bhajans). These bells symbolize as Antarala the gap which found between the earth and the sky. According to Islamic spirituality poetry and spirituality are close companions or complimentary opposites (Amidu Sanni, 1990). Not only in Islam, poetry is also practiced in Sikhism, Jainism, and Hinduism in the facet of words used in Gurbani, as shloks and dohas.

## 2. Spiritual Health

In recent times many scholars and researchers have laid their focus on spiritual well being or we can say spiritual health of an individual. Spiritual Health referred to the state in which there is perfect balance between physical, psychological and social facets of a human being. In Islamic view, spiritual health includes a Sound Heart, the one who is satisfied with the destiny and vitality. A calm, confident and optimist soul always have a hope of Mercy from the God, as mentioned by (Mino Asadzandi, 2018). The simple chanting of Adi mantra 3 to 5 times results in alignment of our mind, body and spirit to become alert and assert for the fulfillment of its intention (Kundalini Research Institute, 2012). Meditation at its low- tech form has the tendency of lowering blood pressure, heart- rate, thus providing benefits to cardiovascular health (Tamara L. Goldsby, Michael E. Goldsby, Mary McWalters and Paul J. Mills, August 15, 2016). Antonio Ricardo Nahas in his research examines the brainwaves of Buddhist monks while they were meditating which determines that, they have the ability to stop, reign and bring the focus and energy of mind at a single point inside a brain and be able to return to that same point again and again without wandering from that particular spot (Antonio Ricardo Nahas, 2016). Singing and chanting same phrase again and again over a period of time with great devotion, we find a state of joy and inner peace (Simon Heather September, 2007). Through deep concentration one can withdraw from sense objects of the world, and then only, the senses will follow the mind which leads to withdrawal from the external world. This provides the mind with a sense of identity (Tess A. Barber). Chanting Ohm has an effect on various corresponding chakra's in our body "bilaterally along the spine from the neck to the tailbone creates relaxation, general balance, grounding, and tonification of organs and systems, continue into the sacral hiatus and coccyx to liberate unresolved issues from the past" (Sonia Joseph June 2019). Sufism has some science qualities of curing ailment of the soul, by untying the knots that are hindering the wedding of the soul with the spirit. With the usage of spirit a Sufi master protect his disciple's soul and excite the soul to get to the stage of spiritual union and possessing the state of ecstasy (Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 2008).

## 3. Sound and its Biological Changes

Meditation results in building up lunar energy inside the body which further leads in opening of pineal gland such

as Tai Chi called Soma, the Amrit fluid found in Bindu chakra in top and back of the skull. Practicing meditation again and again pulsates the skull with Aion energy so that opening of the spirits' takes place to experience astral travel (2018). Simon Heather's define toning as 'to make sound with an elongated vowel for an extended period'. Toning oxygenates the body, deepens breathing, relaxes muscles and stimulates the whole body. It has many other benefits too such as toning in a group creates a connection between people of the group also, toning helps in releasing stress and repressed emotions. It results in strengthening of our vocal muscles and our digestive system and provides energy at the same time (Simon Heather, 2007). Use of Tibetan bowls and Tibetan bells is common in Buddhist meditation. When these bells struck together they produce a low sonic frequency which leads to synchronization of our brain waves to that of the bells thus gives a feeling of relaxation (Tess A. Barber). Effect of singing bowls found to be positive as it results in increasing spiritual health and faith of an individual (Tamara L. Goldsby, Michael E. Goldsby, Mary McWalters, and Paul J. Mills, August 15, 2016). The Gurbani Kirtan serves as the 'Vehicle of the Spiritual Journey' as it shows how rhythmic, melodic and organizational structure provides guidance to the practitioner and listener on sonic pilgrimage (Nirinjan kaur Khalsa- Baker, Aug 2019). Some people thought of music as a medium to achieve inner happiness, inner contentment and inner peace while some thought of music has the ability of restoring and rejuvenating the energy levels (Terrence Hays). Jonathan Goldman & Andi Goldman had been highlighted seven sacred vowels (UH,OOO,OH,AH,EYE,AYE, EEE) that effects all the seven chakra's inside a human body like, the vowel UH effects the first chakra that is found in base of the spine( the area between the genitals and anus), OOO has its effect in the second chakra the area three inches below the navel, OH has its effect in third chakra( in navel) whereas AH is the vowel sound for heart, EYE is located in the fifth chakra also known as throat chakra, EYE is located in forehead between the eye, it is also referred to as sound of the third eye and last and highest of all the vowel sounds is EEE that is located at the top of the head (Jonathan Goldman & Andi Goldman). In addition to the above stated effects that we have observed on the mind, soul and body of an individual there exists some more positive effects on our body such as the throat singing as practiced in Buddhist culture helps in realizing some useful hormones in the body such as oxytocin and helps in providing oxygen to the cells so that the proper flow of energy takes place inside the body on a human being.

### Conclusion

Researcher concludes that music play very important role in spirituality with reference to various religions such as Hinduism, Jainism, Islam, Christian, and Buddhism. It was observed that in Hinduism various mantras and hymns were used to create a positive spiritual environment. Sufis

in Islamic culture use different music pieces and patterns to get in contact with the great Divine. Through all this discussion we can conclude that music has a great influence in enhancing the path to spirituality. Music was proved to be a positive medium in the way to spirituality. Culturally, music has a connection with the religion and spirituality and as an art form, music has a quality to speak multitudes of individuals in personal. Therefore, we can say that these three elements i.e. spirituality, religion and emotions are key in understanding the psychological factors of music (Anais Dorian Norman, 2013). Every frequency has different effects on the mind and soul of an individual. By changing the frequency of the music, we can change the frequency of our minds as well (Sonia Joseph June 2019).

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