

Rhythm in Music Therapy – Composition and Composure

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- **Paper Description:**

We begin by saying - Music is Universal. You will never find a culture without Music. All cultures have multiple systems of health beliefs and practices about prevention, cause and treatment of illnesses. And Indian Music system has had a long tradition of understanding and creating music for Health and Wellness.

'Know Your Rhythm' (KYR) is our programme to discover one's musicality and become aware of one's sense of rhythm or lack of it, to use rhythm to establish harmony and wellness in the person. Can we then understand a diseased body as a 'human being' who is out of rhythm or is in disharmony?

Our current work is in the area of training teachers to compose and deliver music as therapy to children with special needs in schools. The teachers represent the second-last mile in large demography like India where the ratio between the formally trained Music Therapist and client is skewed to the disadvantage of the client; in this case the client is the child with special needs. (<http://media.ninad.in/>)

The approach is ground-up. We begin with what we already 'know'. Rhythm seemed most appropriate as choice because we all as human beings, have heard and sensed the rhythm of the mother's heartbeat in utero. Rhythm is percussive in nature, easily loopable. It has a smooth progression, as well as a disrupt-harmonise ability. The rocking of a child is rhythmic, lullabies add melody to that rhythm! We build on this rhythm-sense to discover one's own sense of musicality.

Within the larger context of Rhythm, for this paper we choose to discuss the aspect: *Laya* or tempo.

This can be located in Nature and in our body system. The tempo of a Rhythm can be discerned in musical parlance as ranging from very very slow (*ati ati vilambit*) as watching a sunrise or sunset; to very fast (*ati drut*) as during severe convulsions following epilepsy, to very very fast (*ati ati drut*) as during thunder and lightning strikes leading to severe rainstorm. Variations can be understood within this range and therein is the indicator to choose the appropriate *laya* to achieve therapeutic goals. (<http://therapy.ninad.in/>, photo gallery)

<i>ati ati drut</i>	640 beats-per-minute
<i>ati drut</i>	320 beats-per-minute
<i>drut</i>	160 beats-per-minute
<i>madhya</i>	80 beats-per-minute
<i>vilambit</i>	40 beats-per-minute
<i>ati vilambit</i>	20 beats-per-minute
<i>ati ati vilambit</i>	10 beats-per-minute

Source: http://chandrakantha.com/articles/indian_music/laya.html

Figure 8 Laya

Teachers are also trained to use smart phones to share and record their music and evidence; handle audio equipment, music instruments; to allow children to spontaneously create music. About 45 teachers who reach out to over 550 children with special needs have been happy and enthusiastic participants of our KYR program.

Laya infuses a definite vitality into music. Where client challenges range between non-vocal—non-verbal—physical, mental and intellectual—extra-perceptive, we have found that it is *Laya* that they

respond to most positively. And when they can 'hold' the *Laya* even for a few minutes, they seem to have conquered their challenges; they are triumphant in their victories and composed in their lives. Their composure derives from entrainment, empowerment and empathy. (<http://therapy.ninad.in/> , Ta Na Na song)