

Review of: "Designing a Hypothetical Model of Fourfold Vedic Music Therapy (FVMT) from the Aśvamedhic Uttaramandrā-Gāthā"

Peter Fraenkel

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

Review of UN055J Designing a Hypothetical Model of Fourfold Vedic Music Therapy

This is an interesting manuscript, suggesting through detailed scholarly investigation of early texts that music was used in Indian culture as a therapeutic modality for thousands of years. It then proposes building an approach to music therapy based on this history, specifically, the Vedic tradition.

However, I have a number of concerns about the manuscript in its current form. These concerns are listed below:

1. In general, the manuscript could use a re-edit to eliminate repetition. It is far too discursive, rather than focused on laying out their argument in a clear, stepwise manner. Much in the way that Indian music cycles around particular themes, the authors repeat themselves – for instance, the practice of a king losing his royal status for a year to a priest while a horse is set free to wander is stated at least three times. Although repetition of themes works well in music, in a scientific paper it has the quality of needless redundancy.
2. There are many Sanskrit terms that are not defined, and must be for readers not familiar with the language. For instance, on p. 8, the word “Avesta” – it seems to be referring to yet another sacred text: “Not limited to Indian literature, the forms of gāthā were popular in the
3. Avesta, wherein gāthā means a hymn.”
4. The authors use the term “homeostasis” but do not define what they mean by it; they seem to use it to denote a return to sameness, which is roughly what it denotes in system theory “equilibrium”). But it’s not clear, and they should substitute words that more specifically describe what they intend – for instance, on p. 3, “Aggravated Rajas (passion) and Tamas
5. (inertia/stolidity) are the two fundamental causes of psychological disorders, whereas the qualities of Sattva are to bring back homeostasis.” Here the term could mean “back to health,” or “back to psychological balance.”
6. Another word for which the authors should provide more specific terms is “context.” They use this term in apparently different ways. For instance, on p. 1, “It is found that the quotation by Kallinātha is from a context, called Uttaramandrā-gāna or Gāthā-gāna.” It’s not clear what they mean here. Another example, on p. 5: “This is a direct indication that buddhi as sattva can subdue the rajas and tamas, the causes of mental disorders. In the upcoming sections, this aspect will help us in contextual understanding.” They could probably just eliminate the word here, and

rephrase the sentence as “In a later section, we explore the role of buddhi as sattva in subduing the rajas and tamas, which will clarify its role in eliminating psychological disorders.”

7. The entire manuscript needs to be read and edited by a person with expertise in standard English – there too many instances of odd phrasing for me to list them all.
8. On p. 4, the authors refer to “five gross elements” that make up the universe. On p. 13, they finally describe these elements, which are roughly the same five elements described in traditional Chinese medicine (e.g., fire, earth, wood, metal, and water)? Please explain this on first mention.
9. The authors could tighten up the long introduction and focus much more on the model of music therapy they are proposing. What is missing is a comparison to other contemporary forms of music therapy, and how an approach to music therapy based on ancient Vedic traditions would contribute something new and unique to the already rich history and practice of music therapy in other parts of the world.