

# *Arirang* is a soul song and a consolation medicine for mental and physical health: *Arirang* rhapsody (喜怒哀樂; joy, anger, sorrow, and pleasure)

Kyung-Ja Ko<sup>1\*</sup>, Hyun-Yong Cho<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1\*</sup>Research professor, Department of Pharmacology, College of Korean Medicine, Kyung Hee University, Seoul, Republic of Korea. <sup>2</sup>Professor, Korean Language Education, Kyung Hee University, Seoul, Republic of Korea

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the joy, anger, sorrow, and pleasure of Koreans in *Arirang* songs. *Arirang* is a representative song that strengthens the collective identity and social bond of Koreans. For Koreans who mainly eat rice, *Arirang* represents rice, life, and reason for its existence. Koreans have been singing *Arirang* together for a long time, overcoming pain, sadness, and hardships and consoling their minds and bodies. *Arirang* is a national music that is loved more and sung more often than the national anthem. The hill on the mountain is not a place to stay. The pass is a passing place. This gives us a lot of thought. We have various difficulties living in the world. The word *Arirang* means that *Arirang* is not one state. The end of joy, anger, sorrow, and pleasure is surely a joy. *Arirang* Pass (*Arirang Gogae*) is not a staying pass, but a crossing pass. *Arirang*, which contains joy, anger, sorrow, and pleasure, is a soul song and a consolation medicine for mental and physical health. We suggest that *Arirang* song compared to standard care may have beneficial effects on anxiety, hope, pain, and depression in patients.

**Keywords** soul song and a consolation medicine, *Arirang* rhapsody (喜怒哀樂; joy, anger, sorrow, and pleasure), *Arirang* Pass

## INTRODUCTION

Ethnic music plays a role in reflecting geographical regions and ethnic characteristics. (Jian and Karin, 2022). *Arirang* is a representative song that strengthens the collective identity and social bond of Koreans. For Koreans who mainly eat rice, *Arirang* represents rice, life, and reason for its existence. Therefore, *Arirang* is a national music that is loved more and sung more often than the national anthem.

Music and language have been cognitively intertwined in many ways (e.g., shared syntactic resources: Patel, 2003, 2013; auditory working memory systems: Salamé & Baddeley, 1989, Anna et al., 2021). *Arirang*'s lyrics express human inner emotions that cannot be fully expressed in words without filtering. Koreans have been singing *Arirang* together for a long time, overcoming pain, sadness, and hardships and consoling their minds and bodies. As such, group singing was found to have an important influence on emotional expression, pleasure, fun, rest, and mental emotional variables that stimulate imagination (Iolanda et al., 2020).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Singing requires diaphragmatic breathing that promotes deep and slow breathing (J. Yoon Irons et al., 2020). This diaphragmatic breathing influences a number of important physiological functions, such as the cardiovascular system and the autonomic nervous system (Russo et al., 2017). Singing also stimulates both the auditory and sensory-motor pathways in the brain (Wan et al., 2010). Studies have continued that singing together has a good effect on mental and physical health and well-being. (Fancourt and Finn, 2019; Clift et al., 2010; Helitzer and Moss, 2022). The elderly living in the community feel less social isolation (Skingley et al., 2016), they feel happy and young, and they also feel that social connection is good (Lee et al., 2020). It affects positive acceptance and even attitude improvement for guardians of dementia patients (Osman et al., 2016; Corvo et al., 2020). The biological significance of music is being seen in its capacity to enhance and maintain social interactions within a group, to the mutual benefit of its members (Aleksey et al., 2019). As such, music has a unique ability to evoke both intense emotions and vivid autobiographical memories (Ilja et al., 2021).

Koreans say that *Arirang* contains our life history. The life history here could be history. It could be a matter of business. I mean, it's the history of my life and it could be something that happened in my life. Therefore, *Arirang* is a song about the joys and sorrows of Koreans, life and death. *Arirang* has developed into a unique color in each region, with more than 1,000 songs handed down. There will be no objection to choosing *Arirang* as a representative song of the

\*Correspondence: Kyung-Ja Ko

E-mail: [sono-1004@hanmail.net](mailto:sono-1004@hanmail.net)

YouTube; K-culture pangpangtongtv

[https://youtu.be/SSenbSwI\\_5c](https://youtu.be/SSenbSwI_5c)

Received Nov 07, 2022; Accepted Nov 23, 2022; Published Nov 31, 2022

doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5667/CellMed.2022.015>

©2022 by CellMed Orthocellular Medicine Pharmaceutical Association

This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC license.

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/>

*Arirang is a soul song and a consolation medicine for mental and physical health: Arirang rhapsody (喜怒哀樂: joy, anger, sorrow, and pleasure)*

Korean people. On the other hand, *Arirang* has its own characteristics, and each lyric has its own specialty. There will be constant changes because of improvisation. The range is wide from slow rhythm to fast rhythm, and it is also exciting from sad lyrics to fun lyrics full of satire. Therefore, it is difficult to find common ground. We think they are songs that only resemble the expression *Arirang*. But there seems to be something in common. It may be figurative, but it crosses the *Arirang* Pass. *Arirang* in the song is the pass of pain, the pass of sadness, and the pass of anger. At the same time, *Arirang* is also a pass of joy, a pass of delight, and a pass of pleasure. Due to the nature of the hill, it is difficult to climb, but it is comfortable when coming down. After crossing that hill, pain is just pain, sadness is just sadness, joy is just joy, pleasure is just pleasure. The hill on the mountain is not a place to stay. The pass is a passing place. This gives us a lot of thought. We have various difficulties living in the world. The word *Arirang* means that *Arirang* is not one state. By singing *Arirang*, we don't stay in one emotion. It's not the same feeling all the time. You'll face difficulties in your life anyway. You have to go up. It's going to be hard. You'll be out of breath, you'll sweat, and sometimes you'll be crying. So in *Haeju Arirang*, I would have said that I cry when I pass and come back. That's why *Mungyeong Saejae* Pass is a tear pass in *Jindo Arirang*. However, as seen in the chorus of the main *Arirang* (*Bonjo Arirang*), which we know the most, we ask to pass me to *Arirang* Pass. Crossing your difficulty so that you can forget your sadness and live a different life. Then, like *Miryang Arirang*, I sing with a smile to ask for a look at me as if I saw a winter solstice flower, and I hold a dishcloth skirt in my mouth and smile. *Arirang* is sad because it only looks at one side. Please listen to *Arirang* and meet various *Arirang* when you sing it. Please feel our emotions in each *Arirang* and feel that living is going up and passing like climbing *Arirang* Pass. The end of joy, anger, sorrow, and pleasure is surely a joy. *Arirang* Pass is not a staying pass, but a crossing pass.

Music can significantly relieve various symptoms, specifically music chosen by the participants. We recommend that *Arirang*, which contains joy, anger, sorrow, and pleasure, is a soul song and a consolation medicine for mental and physical health.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

For those who participated in the concert and contributed,  
Sing a song: Kyung Ja Ko, Hyun Yong Cho.  
Djembe: Chang Keun Kim  
Jangu (hourglass drum): Kyung Ja Ko  
Jing (large gong): Hyun Yong Cho.  
Buk (barrel shaped drum): Soo Ran Park  
Ajaeng: Hyung Min Kim  
Background work: Korean painter Kyung Hyun Kim.  
Gyu Seong Cho, who provides traditional Hongik pigment.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None

## REFERENCES

Aleksey Nikolsky, Eduard Alekseyev, Ivan Alekseev, and Varvara Dyakonova. The Overlooked Tradition of "Personal Music" and Its Place in the Evolution of Music. *Front Psychol.* 2019; 10: 3051.

Anna Marie Fennell, Jennifer A. Bugos, Brennan R. Payne, and Elizabeth R. Schotter. Music is similar to language in terms of working memory interference. *Psychon Bull Rev.* 2021; 28(2): 512–525.

Clift, S., Nicol, J., Raisbeck, M., Whitmore, C. and Morrison, I. Group singing, wellbeing and health: a systematic mapping of research evidence. UNESCO Observatory. 2010.

Corvo E, Skingley A, Clift S. Community singing, wellbeing and older people: implementing and evaluating an English singing for health intervention in Rome. *Perspect Public Health* 2020;140(5):263–9.

E Helitzer and H Moss. Group singing for health and wellbeing in the Republic of Ireland: the first national map. *Perspect Public Health.* 2022 Mar; 142(2): 102–116.

Fancourt D, Finn S. What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being? A scoping review. Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe; 2019.

Ilja Salakka, Anni Pitkämä, Emmi Pentikäinen, Kari Mikkonen, Pasi Saari, Petri Toiviainen, Methodology, Validation, and Teppo Särkämö. What makes music memorable? Relationships between acoustic musical features and music-evoked emotions and memories in older adults. *PLoS One.* 2021; 16(5): e0251692.

Iolanda Costa Galinha, Manuel Farinha, Maria Luísa Lima, and António Labisa Palmeira. Sing4Health: protocol of a randomized controlled trial of the effects of a singing group intervention on the well-being, cognitive function and health of older adults. *BMC Geriatr.* 2020; 20: 354.

Jian Cui and Karin Khomkrich. Ethnic Music Inheritance and Environmental Monitoring Using Big Data Analysis from the Cultural Perspective. *J Environ Public Health.* 2022; 2022: 2485596.

J. Yoon Irons, David Sheffield, Freddie Ballington, and Donald E. Stewart. A systematic review on the effects of group singing on persistent pain in people with long-term health conditions. *Eur J Pain.* 2020 Jan; 24(1): 71–90.

Lee S, O'Neill D, Moss H. Promoting well-being among people with early-stage dementia and their family carers through community-based group singing: a phenomenological study. *Arts Health.* Epub ahead of print 29 October 2020.

Osman SE, Tischler V, Schneider J. 'Singing for the brain': a qualitative study exploring the health and well-being benefits of singing for people with dementia and their carers. *Dementia* 2016;15(6):1326–39.

Patel AD. Sharing and nonsharing of brain resources for

*Arirang is a soul song and a consolation medicine for mental and physical health: Arirang rhapsody (喜怒哀樂: joy, anger, sorrow, and pleasure)*

language and music. In: Arbib MA, editor. Language, music, and the brain (Strüngmann Forum Reports) J. Lupp, Series ed. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press; 2013.

Potter J, Sorrell N. A history of singing. New York: Cambridge University Press; 2012.

Russo, M. A. , Santarelli, D. M. , & O'Rourke, D. (2017). The physiological effects of slow breathing in the healthy human. *Breathe*, 13, 298–309.

Salamé P, Baddeley A. Effects of background music on phonological short-term memory. *The Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology Section A*. 1989;41(1):107–122.

Skingley A, Martin A, Clift S. The contribution of community singing groups to the well-being of older people: participant perspectives from the United Kingdom. *J Appl Gerontol* 2016;35(12):1302–24.

Wan, C. Y. , Ruber, T. , Hohmann, A. , & Schlaug, G. (2010). The therapeutic effects of singing in neurological disorders. *Music Perception*, 27(4), 287–295.