
EMOTIONAL IMPACT OF PT. RAVI SHANKAR'S SELECTED RAGAS: A CROSS-CULTURAL PILOT STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This study attempts to understand the effect of *ragas* created by Pandit Ravi Shankar that reflect the emotions of people from different countries, cultures, and languages. For this purpose, an online survey was conducted on people from India and Europe to see if the power of Indian classical music, through these *ragas* composed by Pt. Ravi Shankar, could cross cultural boundaries. The results of this initial survey and research were very interesting. Upon listening to these *ragas*, people felt happiness, peace, and a sense of calm, regardless of their country of origin. The survey also revealed a contrast in experiences: Indian listeners reported a deep and personal connection with the music, whereas European listeners had a unique and exploratory emotional experience. Thus, this research has demonstrated the cross-cultural emotional power of selected *ragas* composed by Pt. Ravi Shankar. Furthermore, this research also points to the important role of cultural context in shaping the perception of music. This small study provides a solid foundation for larger studies in this field for future research.

KEYWORDS: Indian Classical Music, *Raga*, Emotion, Cross-Cultural Study, Pt. Ravi Shankar, Pilot Study

RESUMEN: *Impacto emocional de los ragas seleccionados de Pt. Ravi Shankar: un estudio piloto transcultural*

Este estudio analiza el efecto emocional de algunos ragas, compuestos recientemente por Pandit Ravi Shankar, en participantes de distintos países, culturas y lenguas. Para ello, se realizó una encuesta en línea dirigida a personas de India y Europa con el fin de explorar si el impacto de la música clásica hindustani, a través de estos ragas, podía trascender las fronteras culturales. Los resultados de esta investigación inicial fueron muy interesantes. Al escuchar estos ragas, las personas sintieron felicidad, paz y una sensación de calma, sin importar su origen geográfico. Esto demuestra que la música clásica india tiene un atractivo universal. La encuesta también reveló que, mientras los oyentes indios reportaron una conexión más profunda y personal con la música, los oyentes europeos experimentaron también una vivencia emocional única y exploratoria. Así, esta investigación muestra el poder emocional universal de los ragas recién creados por Pt. Ravi Shankar. Además, este estudio también

señala el importante papel del contexto cultural en la percepción de la música. Este pequeño estudio proporciona una base sólida para investigaciones futuras más amplias en este campo.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Música clásica india, *raga*, emociones, estudio transcultural, Pt. Ravi Shankar, estudio piloto

Introduction

Music possesses a remarkable power to communicate and connect across borders, though its emotional meaning is inherently culturally mediated. It has an amazing power to transcend cultural and linguistic barriers. For centuries, scholars have said that music isn't just a beautiful form of expression but also an excellent way to exchange emotions.

According to Bigamudre Chaitanya Deva, "to know what a '*raga*' is, it is best to begin with the analogy of language and speech. Although music and speech are both forms of communication, what is conveyed by speech may not be the same as what is conveyed by music. Nevertheless, music undeniably communicates something, and often it is mood" (Deva 1981: 4).

Rasa is the divine, indescribable bliss experienced through the combined expression of song, poetry, instruments, and dance, which ultimately brings joy to the listeners. In certain situations, the various emotions that arise in a person's mind are referred to as *rasa*. In a broader aesthetic sense, *rasa* denotes the refined emotional experience evoked in the listener or spectator. In literary studies, these emotions have been divided into nine parts: *shringara* (love), *karuna* (sorrow), *veera* (heroism), *hasya* (laughter), *shanta* (peace), *vibhatsa* (disgust), *bhayanak* (fear), *raudra* (anger), and *adbhuta* (wonder). *Rasa* is a very important subject in Indian Classical music. Bharata Muni is credited with categorizing and explaining the concept of *rasa*, providing a theoretical framework for understanding the emotional responses evoked in the audience. *Rasa* is born from emotions (*bhavas*). *Rasa* and *bhava* are interconnected. The very first thought or emotion that arises in the heart after seeing, hearing, or knowing something or someone is called a *bhava*. The experience of *bhava* is confined to the mental realm.

Pt. Ravi Shankar was one of the great artists of Indian classical music. He contributed to the world of music by creating 31 *ragas* in the 20th century. Through his mastery of instrument playing, he introduced traditional *ragas* as well as his own creations to different parts of the world. In this way, he made tireless efforts to take Indian classical music to new heights. Pt.

Ravi Shankar, through his mastery of the sitar and collaborations with Western musicians such as George Harrison, Philip Glass, and Yehudi Menuhin, introduced Indian classical music to global audiences in the mid-20th century. Pt. Ravi Shankar's journey exemplifies how Indian classical music transitioned from being misunderstood to being deeply appreciated on the global stage. At the beginning of his career, when he tuned his *sitar*, audiences unfamiliar with the art form applauded loudly, mistaking it for a performance. This anecdote highlights the initial cultural gap. Yet within a decade, Pt. Ravi Shankar had become a central figure in international music festivals such as the Monterey Pop Festival (1967) and Woodstock (1969). His collaboration with Ustad Alla Rakha in these iconic events, and later the landmark "Concert for Bangladesh" in 1971 with Ustad Ali Akbar Khan, brought Indian classical music to a worldwide audience. Beyond being a virtuoso performer, Ravi Shankar acted as a cultural ambassador, not only popularizing the *sitar* but also fostering a genuine understanding of Indian musical aesthetics across cultures. In the early phase of his career, international audiences had little understanding of Indian classical music - often clapping even when he was only tuning his *sitar* (Dr. R. Sharma, personal interview, 2023). Over time, through iconic performances and collaborations, Pt. Ravi Shankar helped transform that initial curiosity into genuine appreciation and knowledge. This exposure laid the foundation for cross-cultural appreciation of *ragas*. Critics and audiences abroad began to see him not only as a musician but as a cultural ambassador of India. Despite his worldwide recognition, there has been very limited research on how international listeners experience his *ragas*. This study is an attempt to fill that important gap.

In this pilot study, we set out to see if these *ragas* of Pt. Ravi Shankar, which have no cultural history for Western listeners, could still evoke emotions in them. Our main research questions were simple: Do people from different cultures feel the same way when they listen to Pt. Ravi Shankar's *ragas*? What is the difference between the emotional reactions of Indian listeners versus European listeners? This work aims to contribute to the fields of music psychology and ethnomusicology. This survey shows Pandit Ravi Shankar's legacy in connecting cultures through music.

Literature Review

Indian classical music has always been seen as more than just an art form. It has long been considered a medium for healing, emotional balance, and inner transformation. The concept of *rasa*, described by Bharata Muni, represents the emotional essence evoked in the listener. Emotions (*bhavas*) are the foundation of *rasa*, linking music directly to affective experiences. Scholars have explored its philosophical, psychological, and aesthetic dimensions in depth. Historical evidence traces the roots of Indian music back to the *Vedic* period. According to Sakuntala Narasimhan in *Invitation to Indian Music* (1986: 12), the history of Indian music dates to the 3rd and 2nd millennia BCE, during the Indus Valley Civilization, with references to music found in the *Rig-Veda*, *Sama-Veda*, *Yajur-Veda*, and *Atharva-Veda*. In her book *Bhartiya Sangeet dwara Chikitsa* (2009: 80), Ms. Sonika Pareek highlights that even during the Copper Age, music had profound spiritual and emotional significance, often used to uplift the mind and soul.

The *Samaveda* contains several references that connect music with sacred truth and spiritual well-being. For example, verse 2.19.2 describes a “gladdening song” created for Indra, verse 2.8.6 highlights the self-purifying nature of the *Pavamana* hymns that “bring prosperity and lead man to Paradise,” while verse 2.11.3 portrays *Pavamana* as a source of strength for the singer (*Samaveda*, as cited in Wadhwa, 2013: 272). This emphasizes the creation of gladdening songs, self-purifying hymns, and melodies that enhance the listener’s well-being and spiritual strength. These historical references underline that from its earliest stages Indian music functioned as a powerful medium for emotional and spiritual engagement. This provides a strong foundation for exploring the universal appeal of contemporary Indian *ragas*, including those innovatively composed by Pt. Ravi Shankar, who expanded the traditional repertoire by creating thirty-one *ragas*. Despite his global recognition, there is limited research on how international audiences experience these *ragas*. Previous studies indicate that Indian classical music can induce calm, joy, and emotional balance.

In *Khayal Gayeki aur Bhakti Rasa*, the crucial role of devotional feelings (*Bhakti Rasa*) in music is explained. She argues that a singer’s style (*Gayaki*) and music can elevate the spirit, producing emotions such as peace, joy, and surrender (Pandey, 2014). Similarly, in *Sangeet Chintan*, the core concepts of Indian music—*raga* and *rasa*—are closely tied to nurturing

consciousness and achieving inner balance (Kashyap, 2016). Taking a psychological perspective, in *Bhartiya Shastriya-Sangeet Manovegyanik Aayam*, argues that *ragas* are not just musical scales, but emotionally charged soundscapes capable of producing measurable psychological effects (Nahar, 1999: 115).

Supporting this, Acharya Brehspati notes that while language may sometimes fail to fully express emotions, *naad* (sound) always succeeds. Even a person unfamiliar with Sanskrit can experience the aesthetic joy of Kalidasa's poetry through the sound alone (ibid). Pt. Rama Ashrey Jha emphasizes that music is unique: even those without theoretical knowledge of its grammar or principles are influenced by it in some way (ibid). The foundation of *rasa* lies in *bhavas* (emotions), which directly connect the musical experience to our deepest feelings (Kaur, 2014: 74). According to scholars, specific *ragas* and musical notes are intrinsically linked to definite emotions and *rasas* (Johri, 2003: 91). A skilled musician, through their masterful command of notes and microtones, can create an environment that bestows a sense of divine bliss upon the listener (Garg, 2016: 138). This phenomenon occurs because, as Dr. Lakshmi Narain Garg explains, music is born precisely where language fails to express a particular emotion (ibid., 137). The presence of emotion is paramount in all art, and music is the most powerful vehicle for its complete expression (Kalra, 2011: 21). According to Rabindranath Tagore, "Music is the purest form of art and therefore the most direct expression of beauty. Therefore, the true part seeks to express the universe in terms of music" (Singh Kabya, 2016: 153). Furthermore, Prof. Pradeep Kumar Dikshit states that the aesthetic experience of music (*Rasanubhuti*) is divine, unique, and extraordinary; it can be felt but cannot be fully expressed in words (ibid). Many scholars have explored the multifaceted impact of Indian classical music. Pandit Ravi Shankar famously stated that "Every subtle emotion that arises in nature and in the human mind can be expressed through music" (Johri, 2003: 85). This sentiment is echoed by Veena Mankaran, who beautifully writes that "where words become silent, music bursts forth," making it a powerful medium for expressing human emotions (Mankaran, 2015: 89). This is a testament to the fact that, as Smt. Kishori Amonkar once defined it, "Emotion is the note." A sound born from emotional inspiration is worthy of being called a *sur* (note), and each note carries its own distinct *rasa* (Shukal, 1986: 227). The very medium of this music is *Naad* (sound), which Pt. Sharangdev proclaimed to be *Brahma* itself—blissful and pervasive throughout the entire universe. The captivating sweetness of music is such that even animals, children, and snakes cannot remain unaffected by its influence (Kalra,

2011: 32). According to Veena Mankaran, when the mind's tendencies fixate on an object and become absorbed in it, the heart is submerged in an ocean of bliss, and we experience the beauty produced by the music (Mankaran, 2015: 83). While all fine arts evoke emotions, the focused and profound experience gained through music's emotional aspect makes it the supreme art (Johri, 2003: 85). The presence of emotion in music is so strong that melodies can express with ease those experiences that language fails to articulate (ibid., 80). The bliss and emotional experiences obtained through the art of music are focused and leave a profound impact on the mind. For this reason, music is considered the supreme art. Due to the universality of emotions, music can never get old. The strong emotional aspect makes music a leader among all the arts. Ultimately, the core principles of *rasa*, *bhava*, and *saundarya* (aesthetics) are deeply embedded in all aspects of this musical tradition. Without them, true bliss is unattainable (Priyahasini 2007: 14). The final goal in Indian music is *rasanubhuti*, where the musician and the listener can merge into a single, unified state of blissful emotion, leading to a sense of deep peace and spiritual immersion.

Taken together, these perspectives underline that Indian classical music has a long-standing tradition of evoking emotional responses and fostering inner well-being. This rich background provides a solid foundation for contemporary studies in music therapy and cross-cultural music perception. This pilot study addresses this gap by exploring emotional responses to selected *ragas* among Indian and European listeners. The findings highlight the universal appeal of Indian classical music and the influence of cultural context on emotional perception.

Research Gap and the Present Study

While this rich tradition provides a solid foundation for contemporary studies in music therapy and cross-cultural perception, a notable gap remains. Despite Pandit Ravi Shankar's global acclaim and the creation of 31 *ragas*, there has been limited research on how international audiences perceive and emotionally experience these particular compositions. This pilot study aims to address this specific gap by exploring the emotional responses to a selection of his *ragas* among both Indian and European listeners. The findings of this research underscore the universal appeal of Indian classical music while also highlighting the significant role of cultural context in shaping emotional perception. This modest study lays a crucial groundwork for more extensive research in this fascinating and evolving field.

Research Methodology

This study was designed as a cross-cultural pilot survey to examine the emotional effects of selected *ragas* composed by Pt. Ravi Shankar on listeners from different countries.

Participants: A purposive sampling approach was adopted to ensure a mix of cultural backgrounds, ages, and familiarity with Indian classical music, providing preliminary insights into cross-cultural emotional responses. A total of 60 participants participated, with a mean (M) age of 34.4 years and a standard deviation (SD) of 10.95, and an age range of 17–66 years. The participants included a mix of genders, with 36.7% identifying as male and 63.3% identifying as female. Participants reported varying levels of familiarity with Indian classical music: none (30%), some (30%), moderate (21.7%), and high (18.3%) took part in this pilot study. Participants were primarily residing in Italy, with a few in Germany, Austria, and India. Nationalities varied, reflecting a cross-cultural sample. They were instructed to focus solely on the music while responding to the questionnaire and to answer based on their immediate emotional reaction.

Materials: Three *ragas* composed by Pt. Ravi Shankar—*Nat Bhairav*, *Rasiya*, and *Pancham Se Gara*—were used as stimuli. Audio clips of each *raga* were provided online for the participants to listen to.

Procedure: Participants listened to each *raga* and completed an online questionnaire assessing their emotional responses. Participants were instructed to listen to the audio clips in a quiet environment using headphones or speakers, at a comfortable volume. Each *raga* clip lasted approximately 3 to 4 minutes, and participants were allowed to replay the clip once if needed. These measures ensured consistency of auditory experience across participants and minimized distractions. The questionnaire included Likert-scale items (1–5) for happiness, calmness, energy, and overall enjoyment. Participants also indicated which specific emotions they experienced, selecting from calm, happy, sad, energetic, peaceful, nostalgic, romantic, and tensed. The selected emotions were chosen based on prior research on emotional responses to Indian ragas. The Likert scale allowed participants to rate the intensity of each emotional reaction, providing a nuanced understanding of their experience.

Data Analysis: Responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, to examine patterns of emotional reactions across cultural groups. Comparisons

were made between Indian and European listeners to identify cross-cultural similarities and differences.

Limitations Note: Given the modest sample size, the analysis was primarily exploratory and descriptive, avoiding inferential claims but offering preliminary insights for future large-scale studies. While the pilot nature of the study precluded inferential statistics, the analysis offered preliminary insights into universal and culture-specific responses to the selected *ragas*.

Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted with full respect for the rights and privacy of participants. Participation in the survey was entirely voluntary. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study before taking part. Responses were collected anonymously to ensure confidentiality, and participants had the right to withdraw at any time. Although no formal ethical approval was obtained due to the independent nature of this research, all ethical principles for conducting human-participant studies were carefully followed.

Results

Table 1. Participant Demographics (N = 60)

Variable	Category	n	%
Age (years)	Range = 17–66, (M = 34.4, SD = 10.95)	-	-
Gender	Female	38	63
	Male	22	37
Country of Residence	Italy	38	63
	India	15	25
	Germany	4	7
	Austria	3	5
Familiarity with Indian Classical Music	None	18	30

	Some	18	30
	Moderate	13	22
	High	11	18
Listened to Pt. Ravi Shankar before	Yes	30	50
	No	30	50

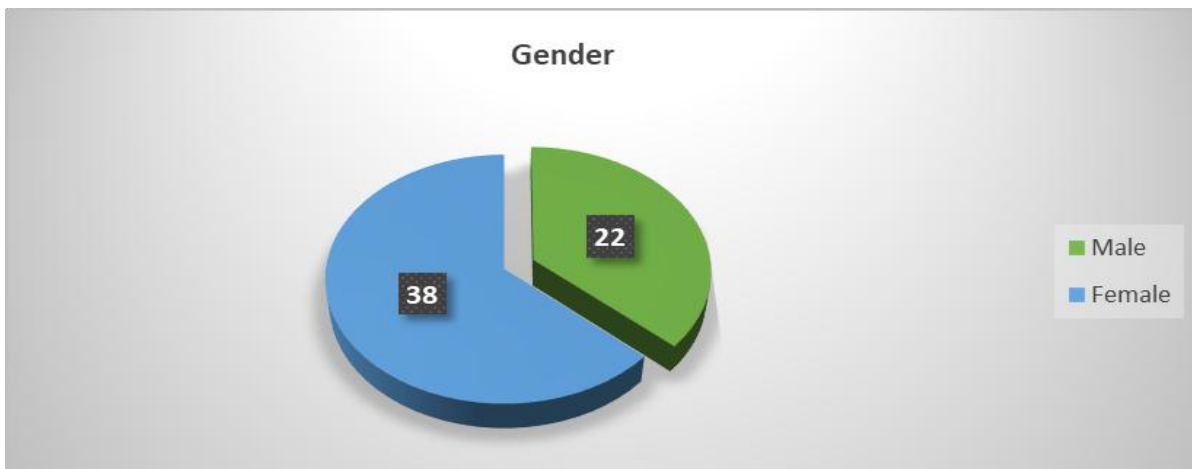


Figure 1. Distribution of participants by gender

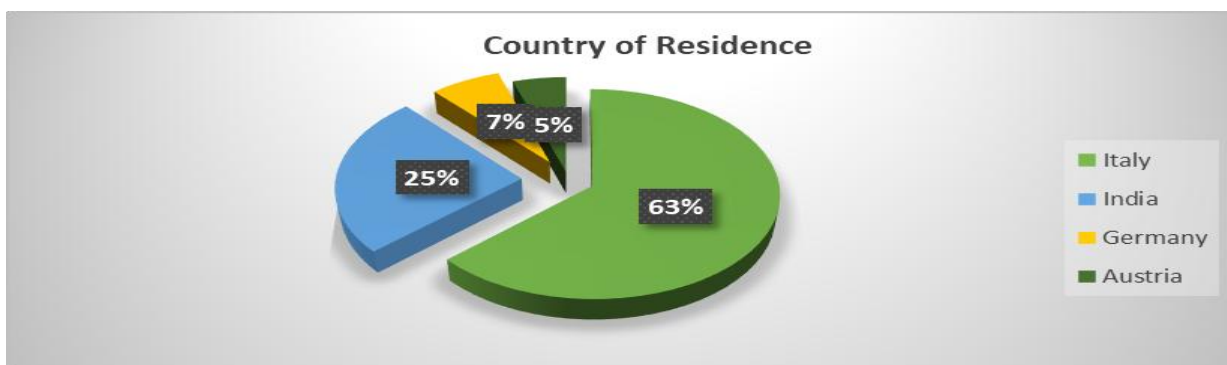


Figure 2. Distribution of Participants by Country of Residence

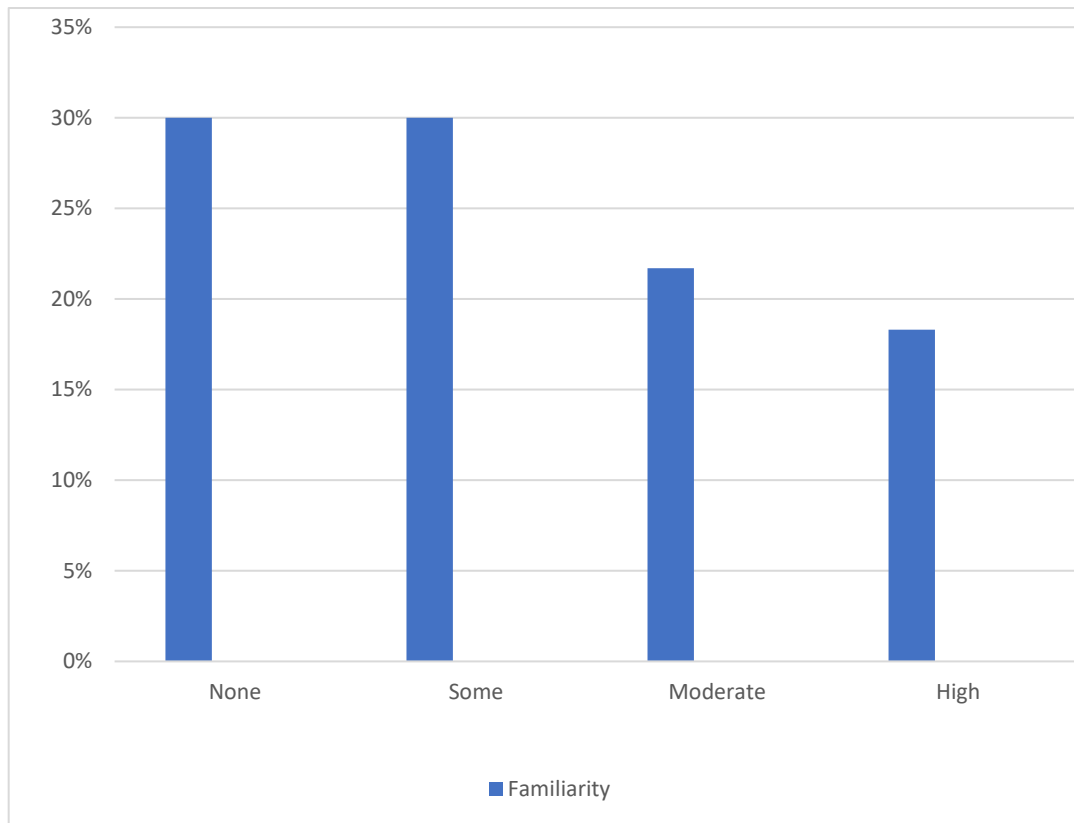


Figure 3. Familiarity with Indian Classical Music

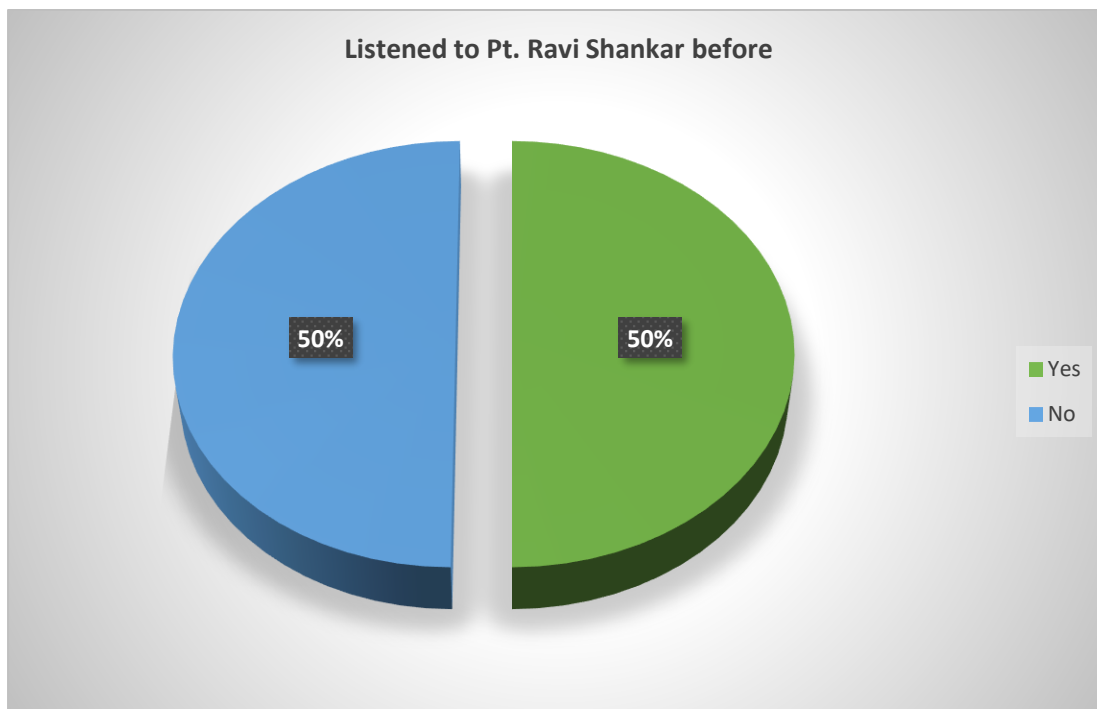


Figure 4. Distribution of Participants Who Have Listened to Pt. Ravi Shankar Before

The study's findings are based on the responses of 60 participants. Half of them had listened to Pt. Ravi Shankar's music before. This prior exposure may have influenced their emotional reactions. Yet, despite knowing his music, people still experienced the *ragas* differently. Cultural background played a role in shaping these reactions. This shows that while Ravi Shankar's music has a universal appeal, each listener perceives it in a slightly different way.

1. Raga Nat Bhairav - *Raga Nat Bhairav* revealed a strong positive emotional impact on participants. The music was highly effective in evoking feelings of happiness and calmness, as indicated by the Likert scale ratings. For happiness, participants' ratings were distributed as follows: 5% gave a rating of 1, 8.3% gave a rating of 2, 23.3% gave a rating of 3, 36.7% gave a rating of 4, and 26.7% gave a rating of 5. Similarly, for calmness, the ratings showed a strong sense of peace, with 3.3% giving a rating of 1, 8.3% giving a 2, 15% giving a 3, 41.7% giving a 4, and 31.7% giving a 5. This shows that the *raga* was very successful in creating a peaceful and joyful mood. In addition to calmness, the *raga* also made listeners feel energetic. For energy, the ratings were more spread out: 10% gave a rating of 1, 15% gave a rating of 2, 21.7% gave a rating of 3, 28.3% gave a rating of 4, and 25% gave a rating of 5. Overall enjoyment was very high, with only a few lower ratings: 1.7% gave a rating of 1, 3.3% gave a rating of 2, 20% gave a rating of 3, 31.7% gave a rating of 4, and 43.3% gave a rating of 5.

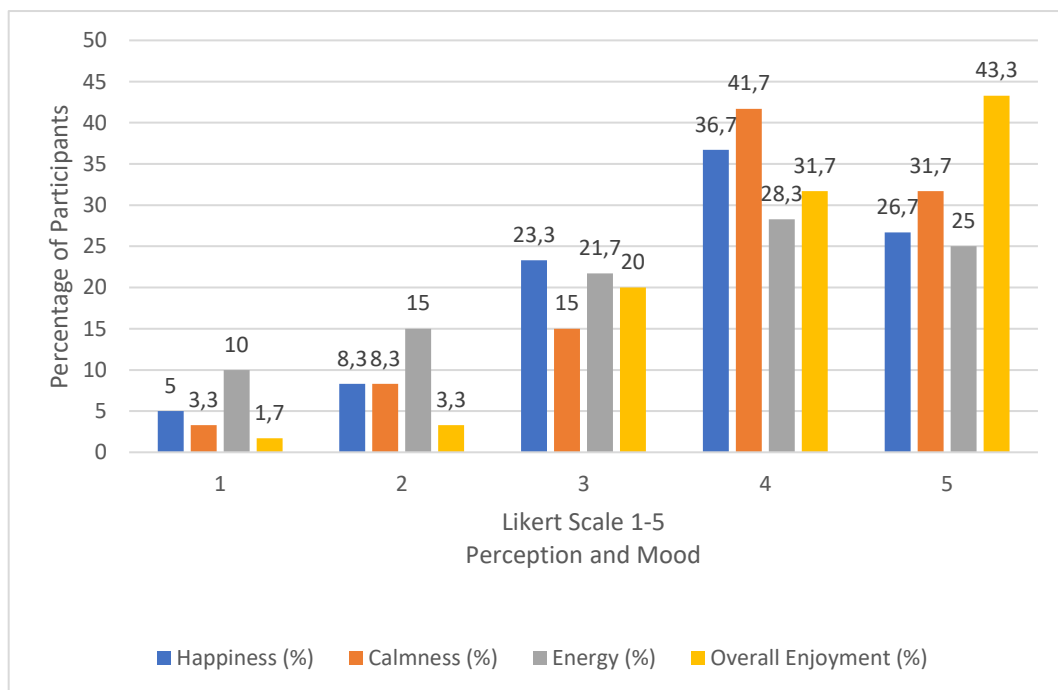


Figure 5: Likert Scale Ratings for *Raga Nat Bhairav*

In the emotional response checklist, the most frequently selected emotions were Calm (70%), Peaceful (58%), Romantic (8%), Sad (7%), Tensed (3%), and Happy (48%). This reinforces the findings from the Likert scale and highlights the *raga's* primary emotional impact. Some participants also felt Energetic (33%) and Nostalgic (20%), suggesting a mix of emotions beyond just calmness and happiness.

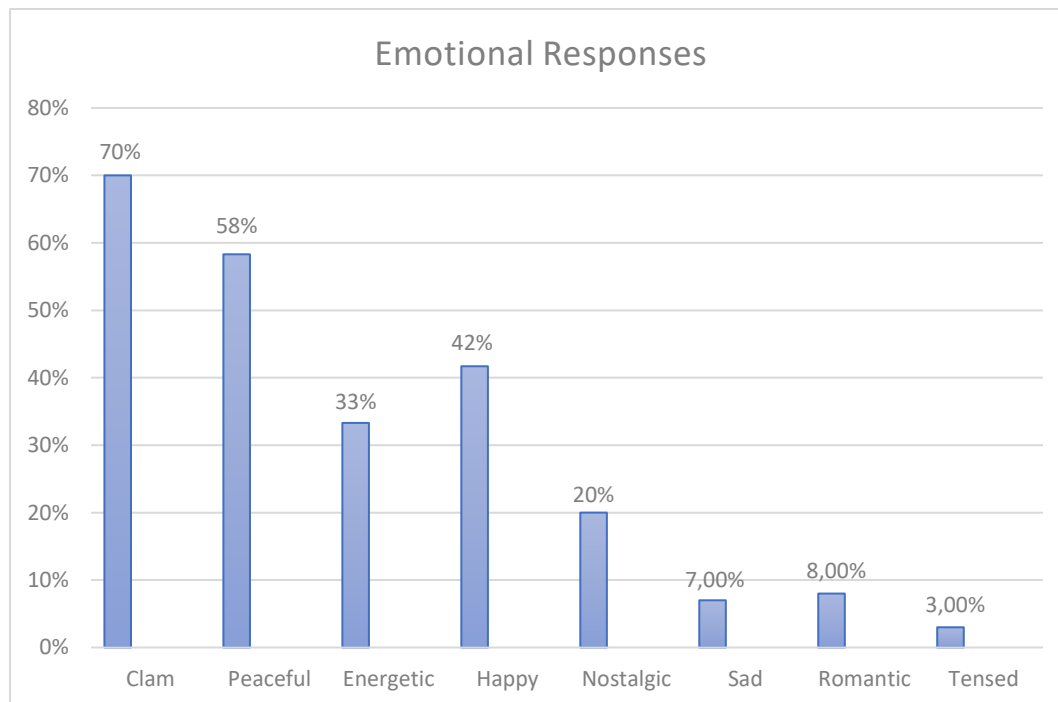


Figure 6: Percentage of Participants who Selected Each Emotion for *Raga Nat Bhairav*

2. *Raga Rasiya* - The responses to *Raga Rasiya* also showed a strong positive and energetic emotional profile. The music was highly effective at evoking feelings of happiness and energy, as indicated by the Likert scale ratings. For happiness, participants' ratings were distributed as follows: 3.3% gave a rating of 1, 15% gave a rating of 2, 18.3% gave a rating of 3, 41.7% gave a rating of 4, and 21.7% gave a rating of 5. The *raga* also evoked a strong sense of energy, with ratings distributed as follows: 10% gave a rating of 1, 3.3% gave a rating of 2, 23.3% gave a rating of 3, 35% gave a rating of 4, and 28.3% gave a rating of 5. This suggests the music was perceived as lively and uplifting. When it came to calmness, the responses were more varied, but a notable portion still found the *raga* relaxing, with ratings distributed as follows: 8.3% gave a rating of 1, 20% gave a 2, 25% gave a 3, 20% gave a 4, and 26.7% gave a 5. The overall

enjoyment was very high, with only a few lower ratings: 1.7% gave a rating of 1, 5% gave a rating of 2, 25% gave a rating of 3, 41.7% gave a rating of 4, and 26.7% gave a rating of 5.

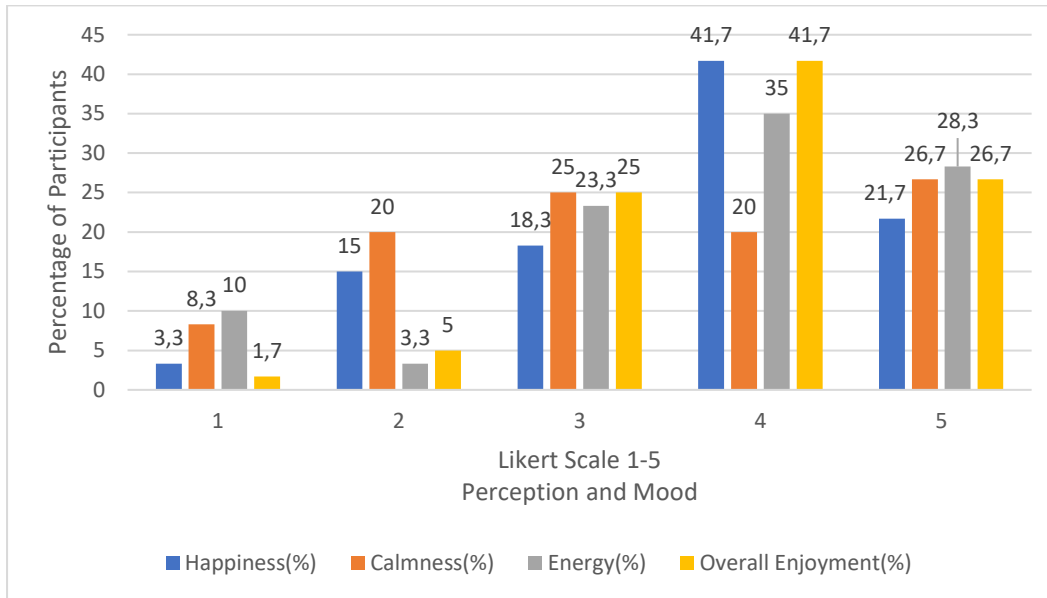


Figure 7: Likert Scale Ratings for *Raga Rasiya*

From the emotional checklist, the top selected emotions were Happy (42%), Peaceful (50%), and Calm (42%). This reinforces the findings from the Likert scale and highlights the *raga's* primary emotional impact. The *raga* also made listeners feel Energetic (42%), Nostalgic (18%), and Romantic (17%), indicating a versatile emotional range.

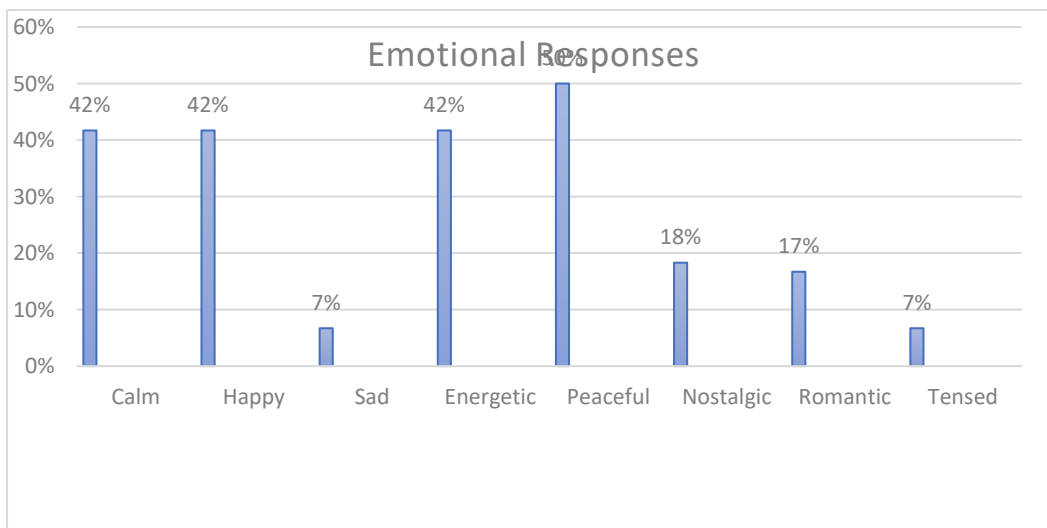


Figure 8: Percentage of Participants who Selected Each Emotion for *Raga Rasiya*

3. Raga Pancham Se Gara - The final *raga*, *Raga Pancham Se Gara*, also elicited a significant positive response from the participants. The music was highly effective in evoking feelings of happiness and calmness, as indicated by the Likert scale ratings. For happiness, participants' ratings were distributed as follows: 5% gave a rating of 1, 13.3% gave a rating of 2, 20% gave a rating of 3, 31.7% gave a rating of 4, and 30% gave a rating of 5. Similarly, for calmness, the ratings showed a strong sense of peace, with 8.3% giving a rating of 1, 15% giving a 2, 20% giving a 3, 28.3% giving a 4, and 28.3% giving a 5. This shows that the *raga* was very successful in creating a peaceful and joyful mood. In addition to calmness, the *raga* also had an activating effect, with 8.3% of participants rating it as 1, 13.3% as 2, 31.7% as 3, 21.7% as 4, and 25% as 5. Overall enjoyment was very high, with only a few lower ratings: 3.3% gave a rating of 1, 11.7% gave a rating of 2, 11.7% gave a rating of 3, 30% gave a rating of 4, and 43.3% gave a rating of 5.

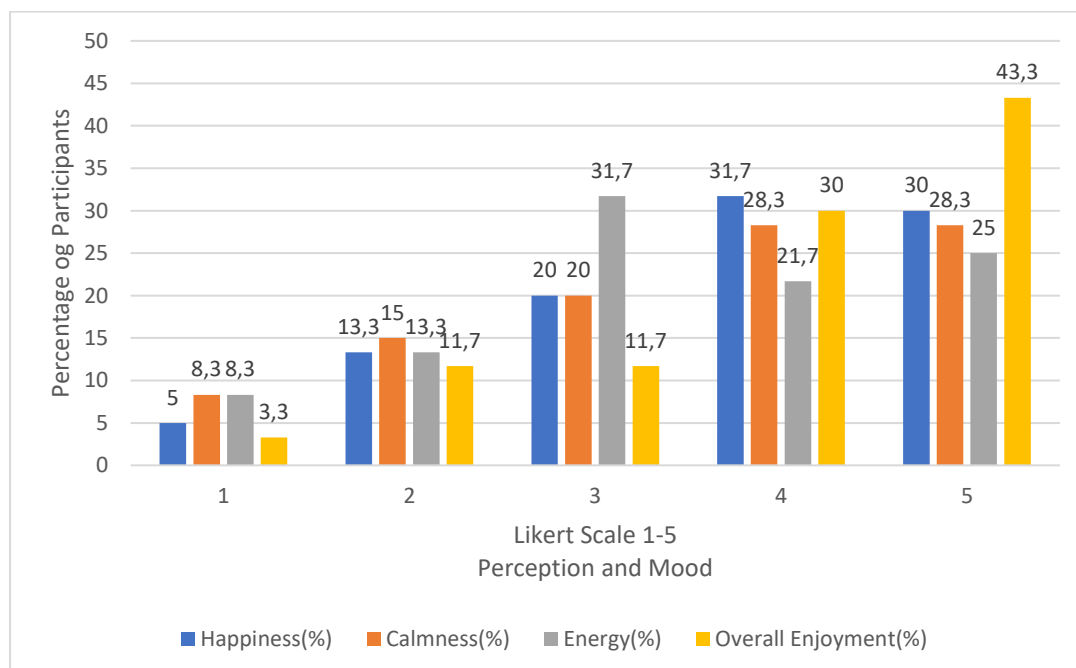


Figure 9: Likert Scale Ratings for *Raga Pancham Se Gara*

In the emotional response checklist, this *raga* was the most successful at evoking feelings of Happy (45%), followed closely by Calm (43%) and Peaceful (48%). This reinforces the findings from the Likert scale and highlights the *raga's* primary emotional impact. Other emotions selected included Nostalgic (32%), Tensed (8%), and Romantic (28%), suggesting a mix of emotions beyond just happiness and calmness.

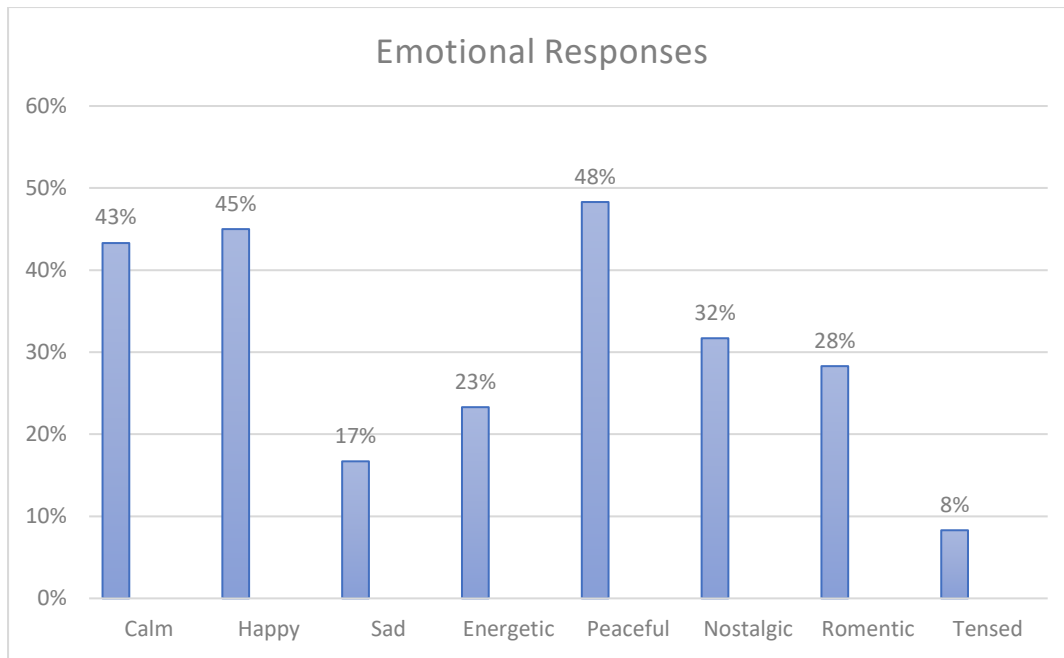


Figure 10: Percentage of Participants who Selected Each Emotion for *Raga Pancham Se Gara*

Discussion

The findings of this pilot study reveal that Pandit Ravi Shankar’s *ragas* have the capacity to evoke a wide spectrum of emotions among listeners from different cultural backgrounds. While the Likert-scale data highlighted happiness, calmness, peace, and energy as dominant responses, the open-ended comments provide richer qualitative insight into the subjective experiences of the participants.

Raga Nat Bhairav

Nat Bhairav is traditionally performed in the early morning and evokes calm and devotional emotions. Participants reported that *Raga Nat Bhairav* evoked a strong sense of calmness and nostalgia. One listener shared, “*Nat Bhairav* makes me emotional and takes me down memory lane. I feel nostalgic; it reminds me of my own people whom I have lost over time. But it also makes me calm.” Another participant noted, “While listening to *Nat Bhairav*, I felt so relaxed that I closed my eyes and just enjoyed the calmness.” This shows that the *raga* not only created peace but also awakened deeply personal memories, linking sound with lived experience. Another participant described it as “*Canzone rilassante*, feel good and relaxed to hear these *ragas*,” suggesting that even without a cultural background, the soothing quality of the notes

communicated serenity across boundaries. At the same time, an Indian listener remarked, “The Western notions of emotions do not really match what I feel,” reminding us that *rasa* cannot always be translated directly into Western categories of emotions. Interestingly, while many listeners described the *raga* as relaxing and uplifting, one participant found it “*Chanchal* (restless/playful), not suitable for meditation.” This variety reflects the personal nature of aesthetic experience, where shared feelings of *shanti* (peace) and nostalgia coexist with individual differences. From a musicological perspective, these responses align closely with the *rasa–bhava* framework of *Nat Bhairav*. The presence of *Komal Dha* adds a layer of depth and tenderness, often colouring the experience with nostalgia or a slightly melancholic shade, which directly corresponds to participants’ descriptions of memory, longing, and reflective calm. The emphasis on *Pa* as *vadi* (main note) and the *samvadi Sa* (tonic/secondary note) reinforces a grounding quality, producing a sense of centeredness and security. This balance of repose and firmness naturally communicates confidence and depth, something that several listeners interpreted as a calming strength. Furthermore, *Nat Bhairav* is traditionally performed in the early morning hours, a time associated with quiet reflection, renewal, and devotion. The morning performance time (*prahar*) traditionally associates *Nat Bhairav* with *shanti rasa* (peace) and *bhakti rasa* (devotion), and many listeners indeed reported serenity, emotional reflection, and even spiritual overtones while listening. *Raga Nat Bhairav* belongs to the *thaat* (parent scale) *Bhairav*, which naturally supports calm, devotional, and reflective *rasa* and *bhava*. This alignment closely corresponds with the feelings of peace, nostalgia, and gentle emotional introspection reported by listeners.

The emotional reactions of participants—calmness, peace, nostalgia, even the occasional sense of playful restlessness—mirror the intended *rasa* and *bhava* of *Nat Bhairav*. Nostalgia and inner stillness resonate with *shringara* and *bhakti* dimensions, while the structural stability of the *raga* reinforces feelings of balance and self-assurance. At the same time, individual differences also emerged. One participant found the *raga chanchal* (playful/restless). This can also be understood musically: the melodic interplay between *Pa* and *Sa*, combined with subtle movements around *Komal Dha*, can occasionally create a sense of gentle motion rather than static stillness. Thus, even divergent impressions are still musically justified, showing the versatility of the *raga* in evoking a range of personal emotional responses.

Thus, the survey responses suggest that listeners were indeed experiencing the very *rasa–bhava* essence embedded in the *raga*, even if they described it in different cultural vocabularies.

Raga Rasiya

Rasiya is an evening *raga* with uplifting and romantic qualities. Participants reported experiencing positive emotions, such as liveliness, energy, and happiness: “The structure and mood of this *raga* are best for evoking happiness, as it instantly uplifts and awakens a good mood,” and “*Tira su di morale, da vita*” (lifts your mood, gives life). Another listener simply noted, “Felt happy,” while others underlined the blend of calmness and vitality, with one Italian participant stating: “Very relaxing, but at the same time it infuses energy, though not frenetic energy”. Participants’ experiences highlighted the subjective and nuanced nature of emotional responses. One listener *Molto rilassante, ma allo stesso tempo infonde energia, ma un’energia non frenetica*” admitted, “The Western notions of emotions do not really match what I feel,” emphasizing cultural differences in interpreting *rasa*. Another noted, “*L’inizio aveva vibrazioni nostalgiche, per me,*” showing how the *raga* evoked personal memories and nostalgia. A few participants described the *raga* as lively and unpredictable, saying, “The mood of this *raga* is highly *chanchal* (restless/playful), and I believe it is not suitable for meditation.” These varied reactions illustrate how individual perception, cultural background, and *raga* characteristics combine to create a rich, multi-layered emotional experience.

From a musicological perspective, *purvanga* (lower tetrachord) of *Rasiya* reflects the character of *Phadi raga*, while its *utranga* (upper tetrachord) carries shades of *Yaman*. This combination gives it both a grounded, folk-like quality and an expansive, luminous atmosphere. Its *vadi* (primary note) is *Ga*, and *samvadi* (second important note) is *Dha*. The prominence of *Ga* lends sweetness, softness, and tender emotional expression, while the strength of *Dha* brings excitement, intensity, and depth. Traditionally, the *raga* is performed in the evening, a time when its dual atmosphere of warmth and balance is most fully revealed. *Raga Rasiya* belongs to the *thaat* (parent scale) *Kalyan*, which naturally supports the uplifting and serene *rasa* (essence), aligning closely with what listeners actually felt.

In terms of aesthetic experience, *Rasiya* embodies *shringara rasa* (the sentiment of love and beauty), often described as the king of all *rasas* (emotional essences). The presence of *Tivra Ma* (sharp note) intensifies this experience, connecting *shringara* with elements of *bhakti* (devotion) and a heightened spiritual energy. This creates feelings that are not only intimate

and sensuous but also elevating and transcendent. Participants' remarks about upliftment, inner balance, and "non-frenetic energy" resonate closely with these qualities. Their emphasis on happiness, calm vitality, and emotional richness shows strong alignment with the *raga's* traditional *rasa* (essence) and *bhava* (expressive mood).

Even the time aspect is consistent: the evening setting of *Rasiya*, a transitional moment between activity and rest, mirrors the dual experience participants described—relaxing yet energising. Thus, the lived responses of listeners did not diverge from the classical character of the *raga* but confirmed it. They felt the sweetness and tenderness from *Ga*, the intensity from *Dha*, the devotional and spiritual uplift from *Tivra Ma*, and above all, the rich expressive power of *shringara rasa*, which unites joy, love, and vitality.

Raga Pancham Se Gara

Pancham Se Gara is an evening *raga* with playful and versatile emotional character. Comments on this *raga* revealed that listeners perceived it as aesthetically rich and emotionally dynamic. One participant described it as "*Canzone con sound perfetto e rilassante*" (song with perfect and relaxing sound), while another wrote, "The beginning had nostalgic vibrations for me," highlighting how the *raga* evoked memory-linked emotions. Expressions like "Feel good" and "Happy" highlight its joyful quality. One listener noted, "Different phases had different impact, but all was immersive," reflecting the *raga's* dynamic character, where shifts in mood and tone influenced participants in layered ways. Some participants expressed mixed feelings: one said, "I cannot really decide between these options," reflecting the complexity of the *raga's* emotional impact. Another remarked, "*C'è anche dolcezza, anche se in certi tratti il ritmo è comunque energico e vibrante,*" noting both sweetness and energetic, vibrant moments. Additionally, several listeners mentioned that "old memories came up" while listening, showing how the *raga* evoked nostalgia along with calmness and joy.

From a musicological perspective, *Pancham Se Gara* belongs to the *thaat* (parent scale) *Khamaj*, and it is traditionally performed in the evening, when its gentle yet vibrant qualities are naturally enhanced. Its emotional character is closely associated with *shringara rasa* (the sentiment of love and beauty) and the *chanchal* (playful, lively) nature of the *raga*. The *raga's* *avroha* (descending scale) uses *Komal Ni* (flat seventh note), while the *aaroha* (ascending scale) employs *Ni Shuddh* (natural seventh note). This contrast creates a softer, more emotional, and

sensitive sound that evokes yearning and longing. Meanwhile, the presence of *Tivra Ma* (sharp fourth note) brings bursts of high-energy *shringara*, adding passion and vitality to the evening performance.

The notes *Sa* and *Pa* provide stability, grounding the melody and giving it a sense of strength and confidence. The combination of softer, emotional elements with grounding and high-energy moments gives the *raga* a multi-layered affective texture. Listeners' comments about relaxation, nostalgia, joy, and immersive experience align closely with these characteristics, confirming that the perceived *rasa* (essence) and *bhava* (emotional mood) match the *raga*'s classical profile.

Cross-cultural insights show that core emotions like calmness, happiness, and nostalgia appeared similarly for both Indian and European participants. Indian listeners linked their experience to *bhava* (emotions), the *chanchal* (playful) character, memory, and spirituality, highlighting the *raga*'s strong cultural roots. European participants approached it through descriptive terms like *rilassante* (relaxing), *sound perfetto* (perfect sound), and *strano* (strange), showing a fresh and exploratory engagement. According to classical theory by Bharata Muni, emotions known as *bhavas* form the basis of aesthetic experience, and Pancham Se Gara created *rasanubhuti* (aesthetic bliss) across cultures, even if expressed differently in words.

Thus, the listeners' responses reflected the *raga*'s inherent qualities: the soft and yearning side from *Komal Ni*, the high-energy *shringara* from *Tivra Ma*, stability and confidence from *Sa* and *Pa*, and the playful, lively mood from *chanchal prakriti*'s (playful nature), naturally brings out both relaxation and vitality, allowing listeners to experience its full emotional depth and melodic beauty.

Conclusion

These findings suggest that while cultural background influences the perception of music, the emotional essence of Ravi Shankar's *ragas* resonates across cultures. This pilot study provides preliminary evidence of the intercultural emotional power of *ragas* created by Pandit Ravi Shankar. Across Indian and European participants, listeners consistently reported feelings of happiness, calmness, peace, and nostalgia. Indian participants often described their experience in deeply personal and spiritual terms, whereas European listeners highlighted feelings of novelty, relaxation, and exploration. These findings suggest that Indian classical music can

transcend cultural boundaries, serving as a powerful vehicle for emotional transfer, while at the same time, cultural context shapes the way emotions are interpreted and described.

The study contributes to the growing field of cross-cultural music perception by examining the emotional impact of created *ragas*, an area previously unexplored. The comments and responses from listeners highlight not only the power of Ravi Shankar's music to connect diverse audiences but also the relevance of *rasa* theory in explaining contemporary experiences of classical music across cultures.

As a pilot study, the findings are necessarily limited by sample size and scope. Future research should expand to larger, more diverse populations, incorporate physiological and psychological measures, and compare traditional ragas with newly created *ragas* (in the 20th Century) to further explore the emotional cross-cultural resonance and cultural specificity of Indian classical music. Nonetheless, this study demonstrates that Pandit Ravi Shankar's musical legacy continues to inspire and connect people worldwide through the timeless language of emotion. These findings suggest that Ravi Shankar's *ragas* not only bridge cultural boundaries but also hold promise for future cross-cultural applications. These exploratory findings lay a strong foundation for future inquiry. For subsequent phases of this research, it is recommended to expand the participant sample size and incorporate inferential statistical analysis to enhance the validity and generalizability of the results. Furthermore, future studies should include a more thorough international reflection on the emotional categories used by the participants and establish a deeper dialogue with Western music perception literature to fully contextualize these cross-cultural insights. This pilot study highlights the potential of using Indian *ragas* in intercultural music therapy, and future research can integrate neuroscientific tools like EEG and fMRI to map emotional responses more precisely.

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