

EXPLORING SYMBOLISM OF RAGAS ON COSTUME AND DESIGNING CONTEMPORARY WEAR

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ABSTRACT

Indian classical music is one of the ancient art forms in the world. Apart from being deeply spiritual, it also offers a rich visual and cultural experience.

Ragas are an integral part of Indian classical music which is a set of minimum 5 notes set in a certain progression with emphasis on certain notes, creating a specific mood or depicting certain emotions which are largely associated with the time and season in which they are sung, Character of the notes and dominant notes in a Raga.

This study was undertaken to explore the symbolism of 6 principle ragas associated with 6 different seasons in nature. Symbolism was studied for Seasons, emotions, time and color associated with Raga Bhairav, Megh, Malkauns, Hindol, Shree, and Deepak. This symbolism was correlated with costumes to design contemporary garments, using Indian fabrics like Ikkat, Kalamkari, Ahimsa Silk, Chiffon, Batik etc. These were further analyzed by musicians, students and faculty in the fashion field.

From this study, it was found that there is the association between the nature of Raga and mood created by the same. The creative process of designing a garment can be influenced by the sensory experience created by different ragas in Indian classical music which had an influence on color, texture, silhouette, and embellishment of the garment.

KEYWORDS: Raga, Notes, Symbolism, Color, Emotions, Season

Article History

Received: 28 Jun 2018 | Revised: 09 Jul 2018 | Accepted: 24 Jul 2018

INTRODUCTION

Music transcends all the barriers, touches our soul and takes us to a different realm-influencing our emotional state. It lingers in your mind much after stimulus is removed, as poet Shelly has written...

Music, when soft voices die,

Vibrates in the memory.

Music has the power to move us because it can speak to our deepest emotions through the mood it creates via different sets of notes, inspiring different feelings.

There are different genres of music broadly divided into 3 categories: Art or Classical music, popular music and Folk music.

Indian classical music is one of the finest ancient art forms of the world. Along with its spiritual propensity it also offers visual and cultural richness. Ragas are an integral part of Indian classical music which is a selection of musical notes set in a certain progression with some notes more emphasized than others. The word Raga originating in Sanskrit is defined as “the act of coloring or dyeing “: the mind, mood or emotion in this context. (<https://doi.org-Emotional> responses to Hindustani raga music-Avanthika Mathur

Bharat Natya Shastra (The treaties on music and dance) has clearly set down symbolism of ragas or emotions in color.

Each raga is a melodic idea that uses at least 5 notes of the octave. Two ragas may have the same notes as raga Darbari and raga Jaunpuri but their sound and mood created are completely different since they use the same notes differently. (India perspectives. in-moods of the ragas-Sept12-2017)

Each raga is played or sung during a Particular season or at a specific time of the day. Different ragas depict different emotions created by individual notes which are dominant thus creating moods or emotions depicting love, romance, joy, happiness, devotional, somber, serious or peaceful atmosphere. (Sunil Bose-Indian Musicological Society, 1979)

Each musical note is associated with a color, changing from white to black as you ascend from Sa to Ni. Character of the note also decides colors, thus shudha swaras (pure notes) have a lighter shade, Komal swara (Soft notes) have a darker value and teevraswara (Forte/harsh note) has a brighter shade, Vadi and Samvadi notes (dominant notes in 1 st and 2 nd half) decides dominant colors. (Yogiraj Manohar Harkar, Quoted by Kiran Phatak in Raga)

Thus, musical notes are like colors in the spectrum and ragas are like color schemes’ Karunamaya Goswami (Musicologist and Researcher) finds that the essence of the raga is Abstract, it cannot be seen but felt, for it is an expression which colors the soul.

The environment we experience influences our creative process. The sensory effects of music affect our creation. Some people can hear colors influenced by music.

Taking this theory forward the researcher is trying to explore Ragas in Hindustani classical music to associate with costumes and designing contemporary Indian silhouettes based on this symbolism.

Six principle ragas which are also related to six seasons of nature are chosen for this study.

They are Raga Hindol (for Spring) Raga Deepak (for summer) Raga Megh (for Monsoon) Raga Bhairav (for Autumn) Raga Shree (for early winter) and Raga Malkauns (for deep winter) These ragas were studied for symbolism based on seasons, emotions, time and color on costumes.

By exploring the symbolism in Ragas and their impact on costumes the researcher is trying to find the influence of the amalgamation of various art forms on Fashion.

AIM

To explore the symbolism of Ragas related to color, seasons, emotions, time and to associate this symbolism with costumes for designing contemporary garments.

OBJECTIVES

- To analyze and study six principle ragas (Raga Bhairav, Hindol, Deepak, Shree, Megh, Malkauns)
- To explore symbolism related to color, time, season and emotions with 6 ragas.
- To correlate symbolism with costumes.
- To design costumes based on this symbolism.
- To evaluate the acceptance of designs.

SCOPE

This study was undertaken to explore the symbolism of ragas used in Hindustani classical music to associate with costumes. Symbolism was studied for seasons, emotions, time and colors associated with six principle ragas which are related to six different seasons in nature.

By exploring this symbolism, the researcher is trying to associate the influence of music on costumes, thereby establishing co-relation between performing art and fashion.

METHODOLOGY

Phase I

Collection of Data

- Data was collected from various books, journals, internet, newspapers, and magazines regarding six principle ragas.
- Musicians were interviewed for specific symbolism related to raga with the help of the interview schedule.

Phase II

Analysis of Data

- Analyzing the musical features of raga based on data collected in phase 1.
- Analysis of emotional responses from musicians.

Phase III

Designing

- In this phase, garments were designed based on the symbolism found in phase 2 and these garments were further evaluated for acceptance study by students, musicians, and faculty.

DISCUSSION OF EACH RAGA



Figure 1

Raga Hindol

This is one of the ancient ragas associated with spring season in Kalyan thata.

Notes: There are 5 notes each in Aroha and Avaroha. Teevra note# is Ma, the rest are Shudh.

Re and Pa are excluded.

Aroha: Sa, Ga, Ma#, Dha, Ni, Dha, Sa

Avaroha: Sa, Ni, Dha, Ma#, Ga, Sa

Vadi: Dha **Samvadi:** Ga

Time: First part of the day

Hindol mean swing, its andolan swings on notes G_Dha_Ni. This is sung with the emphasis on Teevra Ma# with Dha and Ga on the sides. This is an extremely melodious morning raga. Music therapist uses this raga for its healing powers.

Mood: Springtime moods, Joy, Exhilarating Gay abandon reckless passion.

Color: Pink, Silver; **Dha:** Yellow, Purple; **Ga:** Yellow, Gold

(Dominant swara or teevra swara is Ma accompanied by Dha and Ga being Vadi and Samvadi swara)

Silhouette: Has a flow resembling swing and dominant colors being Yellow Red and Green

Shown through the garment representing Joy, Happiness of spring season. A material used here is Banaras silk cotton in Yellow color for Ghaghara or Skirt, Light green color of new leaves in the same material for a Choli or Blouse: and Pink Red color chiffon cape with silver badala work.

RAGA DEEPAK



Figure 2

One of the 6 ancient ragas which had the power to create fire. It is associated with the Summer season. It is rarely rendered now.

Notes: There are 6 notes so jati is Shadhav. Sa in teevra saptak, Ma in tivra and Dha is Komal

Aroha, ga, ma, pa, dha, ni, sa

Avaroh: Sa, dha, pa, ma, ga, re, sa

Vadi: Ga **Samvadi:** Ni

Time: Evening lamp lit time, after sunset

Season: Summer

Mood: Fiery, indignant, extortive, and Commanding. It makes the air so hot that the lamps are lit and the singer is burned.

It is believed to have been created by God Shiva. Tansen (famous court musician of Akbar) is said to have performed this successfully to light lamps, burning his body in the process which is cooled down by another singer singing raga Megh malhar which brought rains to cool.

Colors: Dominant note being Ga: associated with Yellow, Gold, and Ni: associated with Blue and Red

Silhouette: Resembles flame, narrow on top and flared at the bottom with colors symbolizing fire—Yellow orange-red and blue on top of the flame.

The material used here is soft and flowing Chiffon, Georgette or Crape silk with embroidery



Figure 3

RAGA MEGH

This is an important raga, regarded as one of the six principal ragas of the antiquity. There are several versions of Megh and all of them are associated with the rainy season.

Notes: This is an audav raga which has five notes in aroha and Dha is not there, other swaras are pure or shudh. Sa and Pa are dominant notes.

Aroha: Sa Re Ma Pa Ni

Avaroh: Sa n Pa Ma Re Ma Re Sa

Vadi Sa Samvadi Pa

Time: Evening or late evening (Or anytime during monsoon season when thunder strikes)

Season: Monsoon

Mood: Joy, Happiness, melancholy. This raga is associated with Lord Krishna personifying love and joy, dancing among maidens and rejoicing the onset of rain clouds. Thunder and lightning also relate to sadness and melancholy. On the other hand, new life after rains associates this with fertility.

Colors: White, gray, Blue and Green are the colors associated with raga Megh.

Silhouette: Outer structure of the garment resembles darker clouds in the rainy season. The outer jacket of loose construction relates to these clouds. Loose pajamas and tight bodice in green color relates to the abundance of green representing Monsoon season. With black net on the yolk and belt embellished with white stones represents traces of black cloud with silver lightening.

RAGA BHAIRAV

According to mythology, it is the first raga which came directly from Mahadeva (God Shiva) Sung in the early hours of the morning usually in the beginning or end of the concert.

Notes: It's a sampurna raga with Komal Re and Komal Dha producing rich atmosphere and intense mood.

Aroha: Sa -Re Ga Ma Pa –Dha-Ni Sa

Avaraho: Sa Ni Dha Pa Ma Ga Re Sa

Vadi Dha **Samvadi** Re

Time: Early morning raga

Season: Autumn/ Can be sung in all seasons

Mood: This raga comes across as a musical entity with the mood of meditation, philosophical depth and Emotional richness. Typically performed with a peaceful and serious mood.

Colors: Blue purple and yellow-orange are the colors associated with dominant notes of Bhairav. These are also the colors of the morning sky.



Figure 4

Silhouette: Asymmetric hemline of this overcoat in transparent chiffon/leheriya fabric in the background of shaded blue ahimsa silk fabrics depicts the early morning sky which is also the colors of dominant notes in raga Bhairav.

RAGA SHREE

Shree is a very old raga of Purvi thaata, associated with Lord Shiva. This is a favored raga of music for all the religious functions. This is also one of the difficult to perform because of its complex melodic movements to bring out its seriousness.

Notes: Ga and Dha are not there in Aroha

Aroha: Sa Re Ma Pa Ni Sa

Avaroh: Sa Ni Dha Pa Ma Ga Re Sa

Vadi Re Samvadi Pa

Time: Usually performed at the sunset.

Season: Early Winter

Mood: is one of majesty combined with prayerful meditation. Nature of this raga is deeply devotional. It is also recognized for its haunting quality.

Colors: Yellow gray and yellow-orange are the dominant colors. These colors are also associated with spirituality.

Silhouette: Controlled shape of this garment is in a neutral colored skirt in Kalamakari fabrics and the top part is in orange color which is usually used as a spiritual color of monks and Priests in Hindu culture.



Figure 5

RAGA MALKAUNS



Figure 6

The name derived from the combination of Mal and Kaushik, meaning he who wears serpents like garlands-the God Shiva. Created by Goddess Parvati to calm Shiva when he was outraged, this raga has a very calming quality.

Notes: Re and Pa are omitted. Ga Dha and Ni are Komal and Ma is a shudha note.

Aroha: Sa Ga Ma Dha Ni Sa

Avaroh: Sa Ni Dha Ma Ga Sa

Vadi: Ma **Samvadi.** Sa

Time: Third prahar (part) of night

Season: Deep Winter

Mood: Serious, Meditative, Lower octave and slow tempo. This produces a tranquil atmosphere and has a very strong public appeal.

Color: Ma denotes electricity color-Gray White Yellow and Pink Red ... Sa denotes White and Pink.

Silhouette: This is a structured garment in dull deeply meditative colors of Gray Blue with accents of bright pink in the form of yolk and inner skirt which is shown through the side cuts of the kurta.

This garment is made in Indian traditional fabrics in cotton/silk Ikkat.

Characteristics of Ragas

Table 1

Name of Raga	Best Season to Sing	Best Time to Sing	Deity Associated	Emotions Associated	Dominant Note: Vadi Samvadi	Colors Associated
Bhairav	All Seasons	Before Sunrise	Shiva	Devotional, Soft Somber, Peaceful Meditative, deep Philosophical	Dha, Re	Dha-Blue Purple Yellow orange Re- Yellow-gray
Hindol	Spring Monsoon	Morning	Krishna	Joy, Happiness Love, Romance	Dha,a Ga	Dha-Blue Purple Yellow Ga-Gold Yellow
Megh	Monsoon	Evening	Krishna	Joy, Love & Romance	Sa, Ma	Sa-White grey Ma-Blue Red, Silver grey
Shree	Winter All Season	Evening	Nataraja Shiva	Haunting, Serious, Meditative	Re, Pa	Re- yellow-grey Pa-Yellow, Orange
Dipak	Winter Summer	Evening, After sunset		Fiery, Angry, And Love	Ga, Ni	Ga-Gold Yellow Ni-Blue and Red
Malkauns	Autumn Winter	Later part of Night	Shiva	Serious, Serene, Meditative Soothing	Ma, Sa	Ma-Silver Steel Grey, Blue grey Sa-White, Pink

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The analysis of collected data through primary and secondary sources which is compiled in the above table no 1 have given the following conclusive results for associating symbolism based on Name of Raga, Seasons in which they are sung, Time of the day for singing, Emotions and colours associated with it, to costumes worn during this era.

- **Awareness of Ragas:** 60% of those interviewed were aware of Ragamala series of paintings and their visual representation of musical notes.
- Hindol is sung in the first part of the day.
- Megh is sung late in the evening.
- Dipak is sung in the evening
- **Emotions and Mood:** Each raga has a certain emotion associated to it like Romance, devotion, anger etc. These are created by individual notes.

All the musicians interviewed agreed that music creates the specific mood and following six ragas are matched with these moods by 90%.

- Megh- Joy, Happiness: Love and Romance.

- Malkauns – Serious, soothing, serene, meditative.
- Dipak – Fiery and angry.
- Hindol – Joy, happiness, love, and romance.
- Shree – Haunting, serious and meditative.
- Bhairav – Devotional, Sombre, Meditative, Peaceful, Soft.
- **Seasons:** Each of these ragas is sung during a season for them to be effective. Everybody interviewed agreed that all ragas are associated with the certain season. Following 6 ragas were matched with a season
 - **Megh:** Monsoon
 - **Malkauns:** Autumn-Winter or all seasons.
 - **Hindol:** Spring
 - **Shree:** Winter or all seasons.
 - **Dipak:** Summer or winter
 - **Bhairav:** All seasons
- **Color symbolism:** All of them agreed that colors evoke different moods, and every raga can be visualized in color.
 - Each musical note is associated with a color. As you ascend from Sa to Ni the colors change from white to grey or black.
 - Time of the day influences color: So, morning ragas will have fresh colors, evening ragas darker colors and Noon ragas brighter colors.
 - Autumn, winter seasons are associated with darker or heavier colors.
 - Summer- Spring see a lot of lighter, brighter colors.
 - Vadi swara (Notes dominant in the first half) decides the dominant color of that raga.
 - Characteristic of the note also decide color...so Shudha swara has lighter shade; Komal swara has darker shade and Teevra swara has brighter shade.
 - Each color is associated with certain responses related to culture. So in India,
 - Red:** denotes purity, fertility, love, beauty, wealth, opulence, energy.
 - Pink:** Is a feminine color used for romance. Denoting caring, nurturing love.
 - Yellow:** Is considered as sacred and auspicious. Used for joy and wisdom.
 - Green is a color of hope, a new beginning, peace, balance and success.
 - Blue is a color associated with Lord Krishna denoting immortality, serenity, trust, peace. It's a conservative

color used in uniforms.

Purple: Is a color for royalty. It is considered as a mystical, philosophical and melancholic color

White shows sorrow, unhappiness, also denotes peace, purity and cleanliness.

Black: Is considered as an evil, negative color in India. Denoting power, control and death.

Thus, from the above analysis following ragas are associated with specific colours:

Bhairav: Purple Blue, Yellow orange, Red orange

Hindol: Golden Yellow, Yellow green, Red orange

Megh: Blue grey, Silver Blue

Dipak: Yellow Orange, Blue Orange

Shree: Yellow Grey,

Malkauns: Silver, Steel grey, Pink grey

- **Impact of Music:** 87% agree that Music has a direct impact on garments since colors directly influence the mood created by each raga.
- Texture and embellishment on costumes depicted are directly influenced by time, mood, and emotions of the raga.
- **Time:** Every raga has a specific time to sing and this influences the imagery drawn, Garments painted, colors and textures. There is a specific raga for every part of the day.
 - Bhairav is sung before daybreak.
 - Shree at sunset
 - Malkauns is usually sung late at night.

100% musicians interviewed agreed about using lighter tones of colors and, finer Textures to be used during the day. Darker tones and heavier textures to be used in the later part of the day.

- All agreed that all art forms are interrelated, influencing each other in some form.

RESULTS OF ACCEPTANCE STUDY OF GARMENTS DESIGNED FOR INDIVIDUAL RAGA

Table 2: Acceptance Study Results

	Hindol			Deepak			Megh		
	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Excellent	Very Good	Good
COLOUR	93%	4%	3%	100%	0	0	84%	9%	7%
FABRIC	49%	33%	18%	96%	3%	1%	66%	21%	13%
SILHOUETTE	71%	23%	6%	89%	11%	0	96%	4%	0
DESIGN	91%	9%	0	91%	8%	1%	96%	4%	0
SEASON	98%	2%	0	100%	0	0	89%	1%	10%

Table 3: Acceptance Study Results

	Bhairav			Shree			Malkauns		
	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Excellent	Very Good	Good
COLOUR	97%	3%	0	63%	32%	5%	98%	2%	0
FABRIC	91%	0	9%	81%	18%	1%	91%	3%	6%
SILHOUETTE	92%	3%	5%	95%	5%	0	78%	12%	10%
DESIGN	93%	5%	2%	94%	2%	4%	86%	12%	2%
SEASON	100%	0	0	91%	5%	4%	96%	4%	0

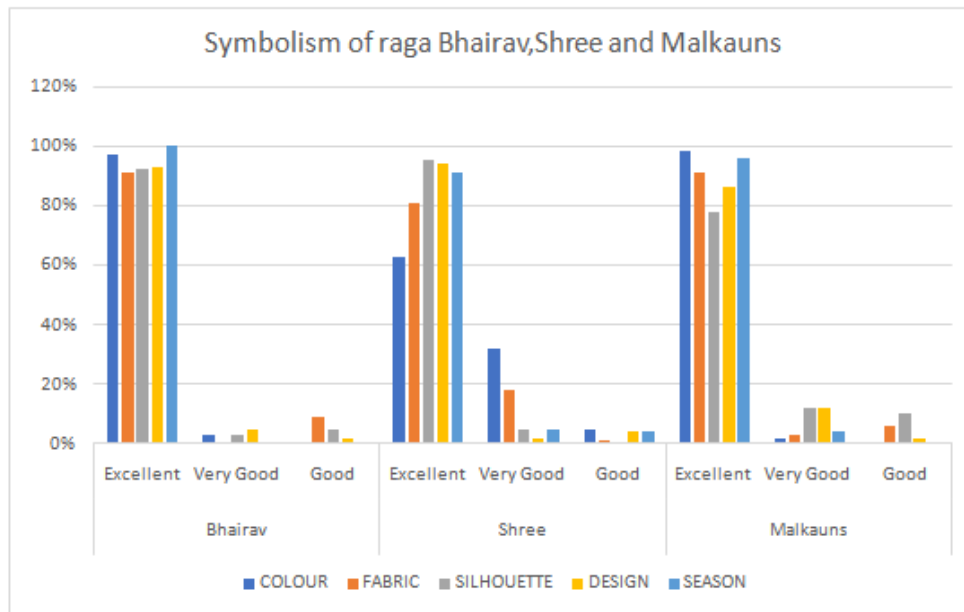


Figure 7

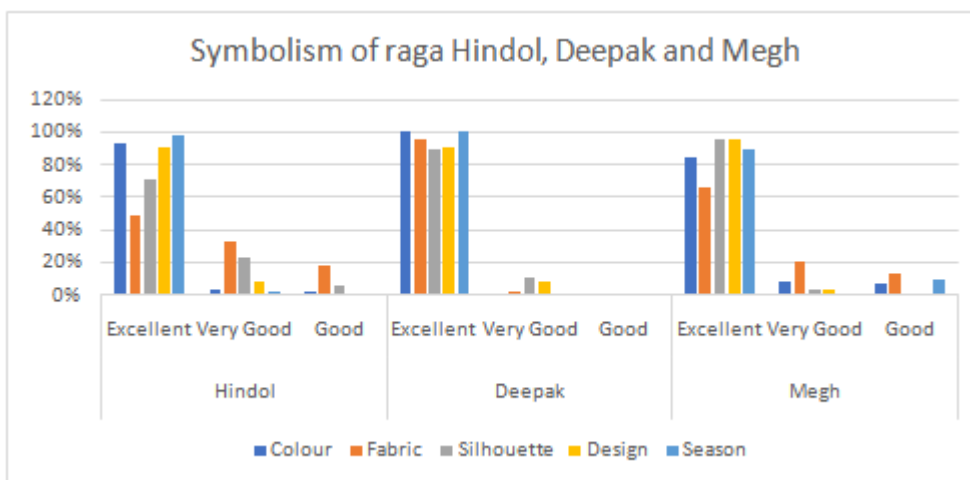


Figure 8

From the Above Tables and Graphs Following Observations Were Made

- **COLOR:** 100% respondents rated color of the garment for raga Deepakas Excellent.,98% of the respondents rated color for raga Malkauns as Excellent, followed by 97% rating raga Bhairav, 93% for Hindol, 84% for raga Megh and 63% for raga Shree.

- **FABRIC:** 96% of the respondents rated Fabric used for the garment of **raga Deepak** as Excellent followed by 91% respondents rating Fabric for raga Bhairav and Malkauns, 81% for raga Shree, 66% for Megh and 49% for Hindol
- **SILHOUETTE:** 96% of the respondents rated Silhouette of **raga Megh** as Excellent followed by raga Shree (95%), raga Bhairav (92%), raga Deepak (89%), raga Malkauns (78%) and raga Hindol (71%)
- **DESIGN:** 96% of the respondents liked the design of **raga Megh** and rated as Excellent followed by raga Shree (94%), raga Bhairav (93%), raga Hindol and raga Deepak (91%) and raga Malkauns (86%)
- **SEASON:** 100% of the respondents thought the garment appropriate for season related to **raga is Deepak and Bhairav** which were rated Excellent by everyone, followed by Hindol (98%), raga Malkauns (96%), Shree (91%), and raga Megh (89%)

Thus, the garment designed for **Raga Deepak** was appropriate as far as Colour associated with this raga. **Fabrics** used was also rated Excellent and **season** for which this is designed was according to the raga.

Garment designed for **Raga Megh** was rated Excellent for having a **silhouette** resembling Clouds and **design** symbolizing raga Megh.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Our creative process is largely influenced by the environment which we perceive around us. Creation of new product or new experience is because of the merging of different aesthetics. Costume design is largely an inspirational process where the end product is largely based on the initial stimulus. The aesthetics of different art forms are merged and can be depicted in costumes.

Music has the power to stimulate a spectrum of emotions in human beings. Many artists have experienced a positive impact of music for their creations in different fields.

This study was carried out to correlate the symbolism of ragas which is a foundation of Indian classical music, with Fashion design. The symbolism was studied for color, emotions, seasons and time in which the ragas are sung to be effective. The collective influence was used as an inspiration to design a contemporary wear for each raga.

The researcher collected data on 6 principle ragas from various sources like books, magazines, internet etc. Practicing musicians were also interviewed for their knowledge and feedback on these six ragas (Hindol, Deepak, Megh, Bhairav, Shree, and Malkauns)

The symbolism collected was used as an inspiration for designing.

The contemporary wear designed in Indian fabrics with Indian silhouette was further analyzed by students and faculty in the design field and musicians to validate the correlation of symbolism and designs. The correlation was found to be positive as all the designs were approved by the respondents.

Thus, it can be concluded that there is an interrelationship between all the art forms. The positive correlation between performing art and fashion is established.

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