

Exploring Expressive Attributes, Emotions and Visual Mental Imagery in Hindustani Classical Music

ABSTRACT

Despite the growing popularity of Hindustani classical music, its communicative aspects have received limited attention in the literature. This thesis addresses this gap by systematically exploring three fundamental communicative aspects of Hindustani classical music: expressive attributes, emotions, and visual mental imagery. Four studies are conducted utilizing both qualitative and quantitative methods. The study begins with a content analysis of expressive attributes in five fundamental concepts associated with *rāgas* — melodic frameworks of Hindustani classical music. These concepts include *svaras-śruties* (musical notes and microtones), *rasas* (aesthetic emotions), *guṇa-doṣas* (quality and flaw theory), *rāga-rāginī* (male-female classification) and *thāṭs* (modal structures). The analysis identifies a list of key expressive attributes and their continuity in the evolutionary context of Hindustani classical music. In the next step, a semantic differential scale is developed by adopting a multistage process to capture the perceived expressive attributes in response to Hindustani classical music clips by contemporary listeners. Exploratory factor analysis reveals four dimensions of expressive attributes perceived in response to Hindustani classical music clips. Next, the thesis explores the relationship of music-evoked discrete emotions (happy, sad, calm, exciting, fear) with musical features employing a continuous music rating interface. The results give insights into the relationship between the musical emotions perceived and the key structural features that trigger them. Finally, the work examines the role of visual mental imagery that contributes to a rich narrative experience for the listener. It specifically investigates how calm and sad Hindustani classical music clips trigger vivid mental images. Thematic analysis reveals that the music clips' valence and socio-cultural contexts influence visual mental imagery. The research has implications for understanding Hindustani classical music's ability to convey expressive attributes, the relation between musical features and perceived emotions, and accompanying music-induced imagery that all contribute to the listening experience. This work contributes to the fields of musicology and music psychology, highlighting the significance of expressivity of Hindustani classical music.

Keywords: Emotions, Expressive attributes, Hindustani classical music, Visual mental imagery