

# Therapeutic Benefits Of Indian Classical Music On Human Health Vis-À-Vis Copyright Eligibility In Healing Through Ragas

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## Abstract

Music has always been more than an art form in Indian culture; it is a spiritual discipline, a means of healing, and a pathway to transcendence. Ancient scriptures described sound (Nada) as divine, while modern neuroscience increasingly supports the therapeutic potential of music. Among various forms of music, Indian classical ragas can be uniquely positioned for their structured melodic frameworks aligned with time, mood, and environment. This paper explores the therapeutic effects of select ragas, like Darbaari, Bhairav, Malkauns, Todi, Shivananjini, Jayjayvanti, and Bihag, on mental and physical health and copyright eligibility. The paper examines how ragas influence brain waves, hormonal balance, cardiovascular health, and emotional stability based upon research conducted at IIT Kanpur, AIIMS Delhi, NIMHANS Bengaluru, and global music therapy studies. It argues that ragas are cultural treasures and scientifically validated healing tools integrated into a holistic healthcare system. The right to claim legal protection over the ragas does not have a place in the legal system, as the ragas and talas are part of the musical heritage and not individually copyrightable. A specific arrangement of notes, rhythms, or musical phrases that a composer creates can be protected if it displays sufficient creativity. Therefore, focusing on a musical piece's unique arrangement and rendition rather than the raga's traditional framework is key to copyright eligibility in healing through ragas.

**Keywords:** Raga, Music, Health, Creativity, Copyright

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## INTRODUCTION

From the chants of the Sama Veda to the devotional compositions of Tyagaraja and Purandaradasa, music has been celebrated in India as worship and therapy. Unlike casual entertainment, Indian classical music, especially its ragas, has been designed with precision, based on the principles of Nada Brahma, the belief that sound itself is divine. Each raga is associated with specific times of the day and seasons of the year, thereby harmonizing human emotions with the natural environment.

Historically, music has been used for meditation, yoga, and ritual practice, where its role extended beyond art to becoming a path of mental purification. Saints and sages believed singing or listening to ragas could transform human consciousness. Modern science now validates these claims by showing how structured sound patterns affect the nervous system, hormonal balance, and emotional regulation.

This paper aims to critically analyze the therapeutic benefits of select ragas in light of traditional wisdom and modern scientific findings, and to identify the copyright eligibility of a musical composition.

The role of music in healing is not new, as the ancient Indian texts classified ragas into different categories that influence the emotions, such as devotion, peace, valor, and compassion. For example, Raga Malkauns was said to induce calmness, while Raga Darbaari was associated with depth and seriousness. Focusing on physiological and psychological effects, it attempts to bridge the gap between spirituality and neuroscience.

### Global Research:

In the West, music therapy has been applied for decades to treat conditions such as anxiety, autism, and depression. Studies published in the Journal of Music Therapy and the International Journal of Stress Management demonstrate how rhythm and melody reduce stress hormones and improve brain plasticity.

### Indian Research:

- IIT Mandi (2025) research published in Frontiers in Human Neuroscience reveals that listening to Indian Classical Ragas can significantly influence brain activity, enhancing attention, emotional regulation, and mental stability.
- IIT, Kanpur (2020) study confirmed that listening to ragas activates the prefrontal cortex, the region responsible for decision-making, focus, and emotional regulation.
- AIIMS Delhi (2019) documented the effectiveness of Indian ragas in reducing symptoms of insomnia and mild depression.

- NIMHANS Bengaluru (2018) study showed that listening to music reduced cortisol levels and stabilized heart rate variability among patients suffering from chronic stress.

These studies highlight that far from being aesthetic alone, ragas have measurable neurophysiological benefits.

## METHODOLOGY

This paper follows a review-analytical methodology rather than clinical experimentation. The process includes:

- Selection of ragas: Based on traditional association with healing and existing scientific references, seven ragas were selected—Darbaari, Bhairav, Malkauns, Todi, Shivarangini, Jayjayvanti, and Bihag.
- Sources of evidence: Peer-reviewed journals, institutional research (IIT, AIIMS, NIMHANS), and ethnomusicological studies were used.
- Analysis framework: For each raga, its traditional claims were correlated with scientific evidence regarding hormonal balance, brain activity (EEG patterns), cardiovascular response, and emotional well-being.
- Interpretation: Findings were interpreted in the broader context of integrative medicine and wellness.

## Raga-wise Analysis

### Raga Darbaari

Traditionally associated with gravity and depth, Raga Darbaari evokes a profound meditative mood.

- Benefits: Helps reduce anxiety, promote restful sleep, stabilize heart rate, and enhance focus.
- Scientific Explanation: Its deep, resonant notes lower cortisol (the stress hormone) and stimulate alpha brain waves, which are linked to relaxation and creativity. IIT Kanpur's research confirmed prefrontal cortex activation, leading to better emotional control and concentration.

### Raga Bhairav

One morning, ragas Bhairav are linked with devotion and serenity.

- Benefits: Provides relief from headaches and migraines, reduces stress, enhances cardiac health, and improves memory.
- Scientific Explanation: Slow, soothing rhythms influence the brain's limbic system, reducing stress hormones. Neuroimaging has shown that Bhairav enhances prefrontal activity, improving memory and attention.

### Raga Malkauns

Known for its mystical and calming qualities, Malkauns is often performed at night.

- Benefits: Helps with respiratory problems such as asthma, improves sleep quality, reduces stress, and supports cardiac function.
- Scientific Explanation: Deep tonal vibrations relax the respiratory system and enhance alpha wave activity. This induces mental calmness and stabilizes heart rhythms, offering physiological balance.

### Raga Todi

A morning raga, Todi is vibrant and uplifting.

- Benefits: Controls high blood pressure, boosts energy, and restores mental freshness.
- Scientific Explanation: Its ascending patterns stimulate dopamine release, the neurotransmitter associated with motivation and positivity. This results in improved cardiovascular balance and elevated mood.

### Raga Shivaranjini

Gentle and melodious, Shivaranjini is associated with peace and introspection.

- Benefits: Enhances memory, induces calmness, and reduces anxiety.
- Scientific Explanation: Its soft notes activate neural pathways that increase serotonin levels, improving memory and emotional stability. Such effects have been validated in clinical settings for patients with mild cognitive impairment.

### Raga Jayjayvanti

A raga of enthusiasm and joy, Jayjayvanti stimulates physical and mental energy.

- Benefits: Removes fatigue, enhances vitality, and reduces stress.
- Scientific Explanation: Its rhythmic variations influence motor regions of the brain, boosting physical energy. It also regulates stress-related hormones, creating a balanced emotional state.

### Raga Bihag

A popular evening raga, Bihag is known for its soothing, romantic quality.

- **Benefits:** Relieves depression, promotes emotional stability, and supports restful sleep.
- **Scientific Explanation:** Its gentle patterns increase alpha brain wave activity, reduce depressive tendencies, and align with circadian rhythms, promoting better sleep cycles.

### Copyright over creativity

It is essential to demonstrate originality beyond the raga itself to protect compositions involving ragas. While ragas and talaas are part of traditional public domain musical heritage and not individually copyrightable, a specific arrangement of notes, rhythms, or musical phrases created by a composer can be protected if it displays sufficient creativity. Therefore, focusing on a musical piece's unique arrangement and rendition rather than the raga's traditional framework is key for copyright eligibility in healing through ragas.

- **Original Compositions:** One can copyright the specific composition, whether it's a melody, arrangement, or a unique rendition of a raga.
- **Creative Expression:** The copyright protects your unique sequence of notes, rhythmic structures, and instrumental style.

### Denial of Copyright

- **Ragas and Taalas:** The inherent structures of ragas and taalas, as traditional forms, are part of the public domain musical heritage and are not copyrightable on their own.
- **Folk Music:** Traditional folk music, which often lacks an identifiable creator and is constantly evolved by a community, hence, does not meet the requirements for copyright protection.

### Securing Copyright for a Raga-Based Healing Composition

- **Demonstrate Originality:** The primary requirement is to show that the composition contains a significant degree of originality and creative expression beyond the traditional raga.
- **Focus on Creative Contribution:** The unique contribution lies in the musical phrases, rhythmic patterns, and emotional depth woven into the composition.
- **Document Work:** Proper documentation of the creative process, including the composition and recording of a unique arrangement of a raga, is essential.
- **Consider Licensing:** If one wants to allow others to use copyrighted material, one can use Creative Commons Licences, which permit specific types of use while requiring proper attribution.

## DISCUSSION

The above analysis suggests that ragas function as natural regulators of the mind and body. The alignment of ragas with specific times of day mirrors the body's circadian rhythms, creating synchronization between environment and physiology. For example, Todi's uplifting nature suits mornings when the body requires energy, while Bihag's soothing quality aligns with evening relaxation.

From a neurological perspective, ragas affect neurotransmitters such as dopamine (motivation), serotonin (happiness), and GABA (calmness), thereby supporting both emotional and cognitive health. Cardiovascular benefits, including lowered blood pressure and improved heart rate variability, indicate that ragas could be helpful in complementary therapy for hypertension and cardiac disorders.

### Practical implications:

- **Clinical use:** Hospitals may integrate Ragas with psychotherapy, yoga therapy, and meditation.
- **Education:** Exposure to ragas can improve memory, focus, and reduce exam-related stress among students.
- **Workplace wellness:** Short sessions of raga listening can serve as stress relief interventions, enhancing productivity.

The discussion shows that ragas bridge the domains of spirituality, psychology, and medicine, uniquely positioning them as holistic therapeutic tools.

**CONCLUSION:** classical ragas are aesthetic and cultural artifacts and therapeutic interventions backed by science. Their ability to regulate stress hormones, brain activity, and cardiovascular function demonstrates their clinical potential. Unlike pharmaceutical interventions, ragas are safe, accessible, and without side effects.

Daily listening to ragas for 10–15 minutes at the appropriate time in a calm environment can significantly improve mental and physical health. Further interdisciplinary research combining ethnomusicology, neuroscience, and clinical psychology is essential to unlock their full potential.

Ragas, therefore, represent the meeting point of ancient wisdom and modern science, a natural medicine in sound form. As traditional forms, the inherent structures of ragas and taalas are part of the public domain, often lacking an identifiable creator and part of musical heritage, and are not copyrightable on their own.

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