

RAGA AND ROOTS: REIMAGINING CULTURAL BELONGING THROUGH HINDUSTANI CLASSICAL MUSIC

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ABSTRACT

As the world continues to increasingly globalize and cultural loss mounts, traditional art practices struggle to maintain a cultural relevance. Hindustani classical music and its *Raga* system have served as an important cultural archive that preserves oral knowledge, emotional expression, and a sense of belonging through generations. However, younger generations have increasingly distanced themselves from these traditions. Simultaneously, diasporic communities are seeking ways to reconnect with cultural roots. Music as a dynamic cultural practice is at a critical juncture. This research will consider the issue of cultural disengagement by exploring how Hindustani classical music cultivates identity and belonging and significance for Hindustani music, not only in India but also within diasporic and global Indian communities. This research will also ask if traditional pedagogical practices and digital practices can be successful in maintaining relevance in *Raga*-based music. Through an ethnomusicological lens, the study combines ethnographic interviews with music practitioners and music students, an analysis of virtual *baithaks* and online educational platforms, as well as field experiences from live performances that were undertaken in urban India and around the world. The findings suggest that while the *guru-shishyaparampara* represents a valuable channel for depth and authenticity, technology driven models - *riyaz* apps, virtual masterclasses, and social media discussion groups - are generating renewed interest in music amongst youth (new technological citizens). *Raga* is larger than a resource of melodies; it represents an emotional, cultural and community connection. The paper ends arguing that when Hindustani classical music is embraced through ethical, collaborative and mixed modes and methods, it can bridge generational gaps, reactivate cultural knowledge, and strengthen identities in communities forming in diaspora and digital connectedness. This study contributes to our conversations about cultural sustainability, decolonization, and the importance of indigenous knowledge in contemporary education systems.

Keywords: hindustani classical music, Raga, belonging, guru-shishya, diaspora, digital music

1. Introduction

1.1. Cultural Identity in a Globalizing World

With an age increasingly molded by globalization, technological revolution, and migration, identity, heritage, and belonging are matters of urgent concern. In the new social and cultural order, music remains a potent means for the expression, preservation, and re-imagining of cultural identity. In the Indian context, Hindustani Classical Music has been a living tradition for centuries—not only in its

melodic modes (*Ragas*) and rhythmic cycles (*taals*), but also in its means of transmission, emotional resonance, and its identifications with spiritual, seasonal, and geographical contexts. This thousand-year-old oral tradition continues to develop, reflecting and influencing the lives of its practitioners today. This paper explores *Raga* as a site of cultural belonging for those based in India and for those in the Indian diaspora negotiating hybrid identities in foreign lands.

1.2. *Raga* as a Living Archive of Belonging

Raga is often conceived only as a framework for improvisation. Yet, *Raga* is more than music; it is an anthology of lived experiences, feelings (*rasa*), environmental memory, and, centuries of spiritual stories, which relate to the *Raga*. Each *Raga* is associated with time, mood, and season to create a particular feeling - *Megha* (rain), *Basant* (spring), *Yaman* (longing), *Puriya Dhanashree* (dusk) and many more. As knowledge of *Raga* gets transferred from *guru-shishya* (master-disciple line), it embeds learners into a grand cultural and ecological memory. Therefore, Hindustani Classical Music is a sound community - it is ancestry we inhabit, perform, remember, and transform.

1.3. Research Rationale: Heritage Loss and Cultural Disconnection

This study is motivated by two primary questions: the disappearance of intangible cultural heritage through the convergence of global media and the increasing disconnection that many young people, especially women and diaspora learners, face with their cultural roots. As Western pop and digital music pervade mainstream culture, Hindustani Classical Music and similar traditional art forms are dismissed as "outdated" or "elitist". This study counters that view, suggesting that when viewed through the lens of belonging and identity, these traditions can provide meaningful, embodied, and emotionally rich paths for self-expression and cultural connection.

1.4. Music and the Construction of Selfhood

At the core of this paper is the idea that music does not simply reflect identity; it helps create it. For women learners in particular, engaging with Hindustani music offers a unique opportunity for self-creation. It lets them explore roles, express feelings, and connect to their heritage in ways that may not be available in typical educational or social settings. Furthermore, performing *Ragas* in personal, community, or diaspora environments helps them re-establish their roots, expressing identity not through passive inheritance, but through active and creative involvement in a living tradition.

1.5. Objectives of the Study

The goals of this study are threefold:

- (1) To investigate how Hindustani Classical Music fosters cultural belonging among learners in India and the diaspora;
- (2) To look into how the oral and physical teaching methods of the *guru-shishya* tradition support the transfer of memory and identity across generations;
- (3) To explore the gendered and emotional aspects of this engagement, particularly among women practitioners.

1.6. Scope and Relevance

This research explores the intersection of ethnomusicology, cultural studies, and identity theory. While India serves as the primary cultural anchor of this study, it also considers the experiences of diaspora learners—especially second-generation Indian women—who are increasingly turning to online platforms, digital gatherings, and mixed learning environments to reconnect with their heritage. This work contributes to wider discussions about cultural sustainability, oral transmission, and the practice of belonging in a globalized world.

1.7. Framing Hindustani Music as a Contemporary Practice

In the end, this investigation portrays Hindustani Classical Music not as a thing of the past, but of a current legacy of cultural persistence and self-determination. As modernity introduces challenges and meanings of cultural symbols fade, traditions like *Raga* can provide important, not only aesthetic, frameworks with which to ground oneself in time, to remember, and to envision one's position in the world.

2. Literature Review

Scholarly publications referencing the complexity of Hindustani Classical Music as both a performance and pedagogical system date back to at least Bonnie C. Wade's (1984) and Nazir Ali Jairazbhoy's (1995) writings on the grammar of the music system, the nature of oral transmission through the *guru-shishyaparampara*, and relation to sound - and the meanings established and recognized through sound, context, memory, and lineage - through Wade's ethnographic stance, and, *Raga* structure and improvisation in ways that do not anchor Hindustani music system in strict rules, and thus, thrives in lived knowledge and experience. Regula Qureshi also made significant contributions (1990) in musical sound as sensory and social - especially in performance spaces, where ethnographies underscored that tradition was actively produced in real time through people's interactions, attenuating the idea of preserving tradition in a physical form. This aligns with Amanda Weidman's (2006) analysis of how modernity and media changed and continue to change the soundscapes of classical traditions, particularly related to voice, gendered soundspace, and broadcast media in South India. This also pertains to Hindustani music, as practitioners attempt to traverse digital spaces today.

Current scholarship has shifted from studies focused on structure and history to one that emphasizes music building identity and emotional connections. Scholars like Martin Stokes (1994) and Thomas Turino (2008) illustrated how music is a factor in social identity formation, establishing a social space for feeling and remembering. These two notions of music are especially pertinent to diaspora communities. For diaspora communities, performance and the sharing of *Raga* can carry similar aesthetic feelings, but it also functions to preserve cultural continuity.

The gender dimensions of Hindustani Classical Music have begun to be explored more recently. For example, Neuman's (1990) fieldwork and Farrell's (1997) documentation of women vocalists articulate how women musicians have historically navigated space and visibility through music practice in male-defined circles. Using these two studies as a framework, Ananya Kabir's (2015) work highlights the emotive labour of women musicians, suggesting that performance can act as a medium for personal empowerment and relay these experiences through emotional inheritances.

At the same time, new literatures are beginning to explore the implications of digitation on music learning. For example, Srinivas (2020) discussed how sources such as YouTube and Zoom have changed the traditional access to Hindustani music teaching, especially for the learner in the diaspora. Hybridity is a new means in which *guru-shishya* learnt, one that is not firmly rooted in traditional space, but one in which intergenerational practices of learning are still possible while bringing consciousness to authenticity, community and practice. Banerjee and Sharma (2021) observe that virtual baithaks and curated playlists are not just convenient tools but also redefine cultural memory and teaching intimacy.

Finally, there has been a surge of interest in viewing *Ragas* as containers of ecological and seasons-based knowledge. Scholars such as S.A.K. Durga (1998) have suggested that *Ragas* such as *Megh*, *Basant*, and *Malhar*, convey more than aesthetic qualities—they serve as mnemonic devices of time, space, and emotions which represent inherent aspects of Indigenous ecological knowledge. Viewed holistically, these works provide a strong framework for examining the ways in which Hindustani Classical Music can serve as a site of cultural re-rooting, particularly for women

and other learners in the diaspora looking for emotional, spiritual and identity-based connections through sonic tradition.

3. Methodology

This study utilizes a qualitative ethnographic methodology influenced by cultural and music studies. Given the lived, performative, and emotional nature of Hindustani Classical Music, qualitative approaches embrace *Raga* practice as an opportunity to discover and understand how identity, belonging, and gendered performance may be articulated and shared. The objective is to explore not simply the musical form, but rather the conditions in which cultural meanings can be articulated, maintained, negotiated, and experienced.

Research Design

A multi-site ethnographic design was used, combining field observations, semi-structured interviews, and digital ethnography. This framework allows the study to look at both traditional learning settings in India and new digital spaces for diaspora learners. The approach follows the interpretive paradigm, which focuses on making meaning, self-reflection, and understanding context.

Data Collection Methods

a) Ethnographic Observation

Participant observation took place in three types of settings:

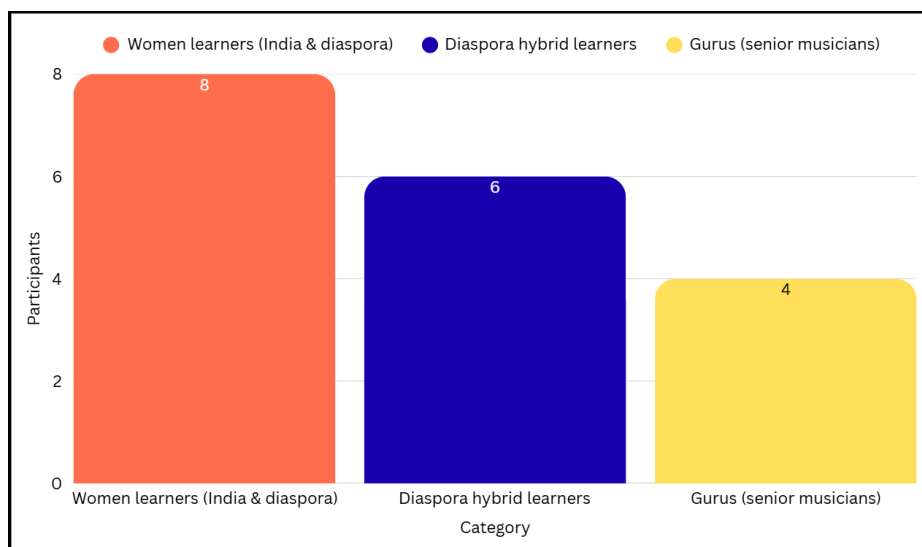
1. Traditional baithak-style lessons in Indian urban centers,
2. Concert performances (live and digital),
3. Community music events involving participation from different generations.

Observations focused on how *Ragas* were communicated verbally and non-verbally, gender dynamics in learning environments, ritual aspects of performance, and seasonal or emotional connections noted by teachers and students.

b) Semi-Structured Interviews

A total of 18 semi-structured interviews were conducted with:

1. 8 women learners (ages 22–40) in India and the diaspora,
2. 6 diaspora practitioners involved in hybrid learning models),
3. 4 diaspora practitioners involved in hybrid learning models.



Interviews explored personal stories around identity, experiences with learning *Ragas*, emotional connections to music, cultural memories, and how participants view their relationship to tradition. The semi-structured format allowed participants to share their experiences while keeping the conversation focused on key research themes.

Participant Profile

Participants were chosen through purposive and snowball sampling. All had at least three years of formal training in Hindustani Classical Music and came from diverse locations including Delhi, Mumbai, Dubai, and London. Most women learners were part of second-generation diasporic communities or were urban Indian youth with a renewed interest in cultural roots. All participants were informed about the study's purpose and provided verbal or written consent.

Digital Ethnography

With the growth of online learning during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, digital ethnography became a crucial part of the study. The research examined:

- Zoom-based *riyaz*(practice) sessions,
- YouTube *guru*-disciple tutorials,
- Instagram and WhatsApp group exchanges among learners.

These virtual spaces were analyzed to see how digital tools are changing oral transmission, improving access for diaspora learners, and creating new ways for community building and cultural continuity.

Analytical Framework

Thematic analysis was used to code and interpret interview transcripts and field notes. Recurring themes were organized into categories like "*Raga* and emotion," "identity through music," "digital transmission," and "gendered voice." Narrative analysis assisted to the lineation of the individual life stories that were associated with the musical journeys. Theoretically, findings were framed by ethnomusicology, feminist cultural studies, and diaspora identity theory. Key authors Wade (2005), Turino (2008), and Weidman (2006) shaped the interpretative methodology.

Ethical Considerations

This study followed ethical guidelines for social research. All participant names have been changed to ensure their anonymity. Adequate cultural respect and sensitivity was followed when interpreting findings, especially when transcribing oral narratives and/or analyzing performances involving spiritual or ritualistic components.

4. Findings and Analysis

In this section we convey relevant findings from the ethnographic observation, semi-structured interview, and digital ethnography data provided in this dissertation. The findings can be grouped into four broad themes, which highlight how Hindustani Classical Music signifies cultural belonging, identity negotiation, and gendered self-presentation in both traditional and diasporic contexts.

4.1 Overview of Analytical Approach

A mixed qualitative method approach was utilized for the analysis of the ethnographic data: thematic and narrative analysis. We coded the interview transcripts, observation notes, and digital field reporting manually, with the transcripts being coded according to emerging themes using a bottom-up, inductive coding method.

Four major thematic clusters appeared in the dataset:

- *Raga* as Emotional and Cultural Memory
- Identity Formation Through Musical Practice
- Gendered Spaces in Musical Transmission
- Digital Baithaks and Hybrid Learning

Each theme was refined through careful reading, memo-writing, and grouping of meaning units across cases. We preserved narrative fragments, especially first-person accounts, to keep authenticity and emotional depth.

Theme 1: *Raga* as Emotional & Cultural Memory

In the context of Hindustani Classical Music, *Ragas* function as affective and mnemonic devices that preserve emotional and ecological memory. Rather than existing solely as melodic frameworks, *Ragas* are deeply embedded in the cultural psyche as carriers of emotional states, seasonal transitions, and spiritual moods. The study concludes that learners and practitioners engage with *Ragas* in the form of immersive experiences that activate sensory memory and intergenerational continuity. *Ragas* such as *Yaman*, *Malhar*, and *Basant* are felt and not just performed - they are almost always linked with specific timetables and environmental conditions. The particular times of day and seasons they are linked to create a temporal sonic map through which memory is activated and meaning negotiated. The dimensions of emotional saliency are not incidental, but essential to the pedagogy and performance of Hindustani Classical Music, and especially for oral traditions. The *guru-shishya* pedagogy also emphasizes emotional resonance as a mode of transmission. Students are encouraged to suture themselves in the *Raga*, not just repetition but through an embodied affective connection. This reinforces the idea that *Ragas* are “living archives” -- being vehicles for cultural and ecological knowledge systems that communicate through the generations. For diasporic learners especially, *Ragas* being aural anchors resituate rootedness and belonging, even in contexts of displacement or cultural uprootedness.

The study indicates that the emotional characteristics of *Ragas* are not tangential, but integral to the cultural transmission of Hindustani Classical Music, which highlights the important role of emotion to help learners make *Raga* salient along personal pathways and cultural histories so that collective belonging is possible.

Theme 2: Identity Formation Through Musical Practice

The data illustrates that continued interaction with Hindustani Classical Music was significant to the participants’ sense of self, especially when cultural continuity was challenged. For multiple participants from the diaspora, the practice of *Ragas* delivered a concrete link to ancestral heritage and was used as a reference point for the cultural memory, as well as negotiated hybrid forms of identity. Learners in India framed their practice as part of national and regional continuum, also using it to connect to family ancestry and localized practices.

Participants referenced identity formation as mediated through three interconnected domains:

Cultural Anchoring – For diaspora participants, the disciplined learning of *Ragas* was a means of asserting one’s ethnic identity in a multicultural context. The interaction with the *guru-shishya* tradition afforded a sense of belonging among a larger transnational community of practitioners, even if this was virtual.

Personal Narrative, and Self-Definition – Learners often described their musical training as part of personal narratives involving, resilience, creativity and pride in culture. They spoke about the practice of *Raga* they engaged in, not as a form of leisure, but another continuing life experience which related to shaping their values, and worldview and subsequently their relationships with others.

Negotiation of Hybridity – Diaspora participants frequently navigated dual identity spaces, adapting *Raga* practice to align with Western educational and professional demands. This

adaptation sometimes involved blending Indian classical performance formats with contemporary global music styles, creating hybrid expressions without eroding the core aesthetics of the tradition. A comparative analysis indicated that while both diaspora and India-based learners developed strong musical identities, the pathways and motivators differed. India-based learners often inherited music as part of an existing cultural ecosystem, whereas diaspora learners actively sought it out as a counterbalance to assimilation pressures. This divergence shaped not only their learning priorities but also their modes of performance and audience engagement.

Theme 3: Gendered Spaces in Musical Transmission

The *guru-shishyaparampara* in Hindustani Classical Music is often celebrated as a sacred teaching system based on lineage. However, when we look at it through a gender perspective, it reveals both support and limitations for women practitioners. This discussion examines how gender influences access, experiences, and understanding of musical knowledge in both traditional and modern learning environments.

Women learners, particularly in home or community settings, often practice in private, gendered spaces like drawing rooms, kitchens, or women-only gatherings. In these environments, musical expression is shaped by family expectations and societal norms. These settings highlight the emotional qualities of *Ragas* while also limiting freedoms related to performance, visibility, or career advancement.

The study found that while many female learners view the *guru-shishya* relationship as nurturing and transformative, others deal with unspoken gender hierarchies. Some participants noted that expectations of modesty, emotional restraint, or conformity to feminine ideals influenced how they were taught or assessed. In diasporic settings, online platforms offer more access, but they often replicate traditional hierarchies and aesthetic standards in digital spaces.

Despite these limitations, music serves as a space for asserting agency. Many women said that *Raga* performance allowed them to express emotional depth, reclaim hidden histories, and build alternative identities. Singing or performing becomes both an artistic and political act, subtly challenging patriarchal structures by asserting their voice, presence, and ownership.

In conclusion, musical transmission is not gender neutral. It is deeply tied to social power dynamics, yet it also opens up opportunities for resistance, healing, and redefining self-identity.

Comparative Table : Gendered Perspectives in Learning & Teaching

Aspect	Women Learners (India)	Women Learners (Diaspora)	Women Gurus
Learning Environment	Domestic/home-based baithaks	Hybrid (home + online platforms)	Institutional or private studios
Access to Gurus	Dependent on family networks	Broader access through digital means	Often self-established after breaking patriarchal norms
Emotional Expression	Encouraged but within cultural bounds	Used as identity negotiation and cultural reclamation	Emphasized as core to musical pedagogy
Constraints Faced	Visibility, mobility, performance norms	Cultural dualism, authenticity anxiety	Under-recognition, gender bias in performance circuits
Agency and Voice	Negotiated through familial approval	Asserted via digital communities and independent practice	Enacted through mentorship and leadership roles

Theme 4: Digital Baithaks and Hybrid Learning

The Covid-19 pandemic triggered a great deal of how Hindustani classical music is learned. This pushed traditional oral teaching methods to digital places. This topic sees that the Zoom Riaz Session, WhatsApp Learning Group and the YouTube training have changed emotional, social and teaching aspects of *Raga* practice, especially for migrant students and women.

Traditionally, *guru-shishyaparampara* focused on learning hands, where the music description was divided through physical proximity, repetition and careful hearing. Digital equipment changes this proximity. While students can reach the *gurus* anywhere, they remember some prosperity in the lesson about them, such as tone changes, breathing control and gestures improvement.

However, these online places have also created new communities. WhatsApp groups share recording to students, receive colleagues' reactions and are associated with cultural practice in real time. Virtual *Baithaks* has helped women, especially in the areas of orthodox or remote, to get guidance and receive guidance without worrying about meeting problems. YouTube training programs provide access to self-book learning and rare limitations, making music education available to self-teachers around the world.

For second generation migrant students, hybrid learning combines formal texts with digital units, helping them balance their double cultural identity. These students mix Western music skills with *Raga*-based reforms, creating new teaching and expression methods.

Overall, digital belt shows a break from the tradition and a way of continuing it. They offer a flexible and growing structure that challenges the traditional value of learning in the tradition that maintains the essence of Indian classical music and makes the reach wider.

Timeline: Evolution of Learning Modalities in Hindustani Classical Music

Time Period	Mode of Transmission	Key Characteristics
Pre-2000s	<i>Guru-shishya</i> in-person tradition	Co-residence, oral learning, exclusive access
2000s–2010s	Institutional + private studio lessons	Semi-formalized, curriculum-based, urban-centric
2020–2022 (COVID)	Digital migration (Zoom, WhatsApp, YouTube)	Remote learning, asynchronous access, peer feedback loops
2023–present	Hybrid learning environments	Mixed modalities, cross-cultural fusions, increased inclusivity

4.2 Cross-Theme Observations

The subjects discovered in this study show a lively interaction between gender, technology, education and cultural conditions. In different places and learning conditions, Hindustani classical music stands not only as a cultural monument, but a vibrant place of identity.

An important aspect is how gender access, expression and music affect authority. Female students, especially from migrant communities, link both as a cultural anchor with *Raga* and a way of expressing emotions are often ignored in public discussions. Their experience respects the tradition, especially when online platforms make participation easier and reduce obstacles, challenging patriarchal norms.

Originally seen as a threat to oral heritage, technology instead becomes a means of maintaining and rebuilding traditions. Digital *Baithaks*, Peer-Learning WhatsApp Groups and YouTube archives formed parallel communities where the dynasty, emotions and experiment coexistence. These platforms enable micro communities to create, based on shared music interests rather than location or social reputation, which challenge the traditional ideas of "authentic" learning.

A surprising tendency was that digital rooms encouraged emotional closeness and thoughtful self-expression. Contrary to the belief that online learning reduces depth, many students, especially migrant women, felt a strong relationship. He quoted flexible formats and low performance pressure as significant benefits. This change indicates a major cultural change where the identity is actively shaped rather than passively achieved, even in digital places.

These insights across themes indicate that Hindustani is not related or straightforward in classical music. It is layered, influenced by gender, evolving, and highly personal. The tradition remains vibrant because it adapts and continues to resonate across various bodies, borders, and digital platforms.

4.3 . Interpretive Framing

The findings from this study can be understood through a combined theoretical lens, including migratory identity theory, feminist dance science and sonic ecology.

Diaspora Identity Theory (Brah, 1996; Hall, 1990) helps us see the experiences of second-generation learners as acts of cultural re-rooting. In this context, music acts as both an archive and an agent. It connects the “routes” and “roots” of diasporic life. Performing *Raga* becomes a way to express “home,” enabling diasporic individuals to build hybrid cultural identities in a global space. Feminist ethics (Weidman, 2006; Qureshi, 1999) provides the equipment to find out how gender music affects music practice, authority and access. For female students, music is not just a skill; It is a place for emotional and cultural expression. This gives them a voice - both literally and symbolically - when navigating their identity in patriarchal systems. The digital migration of music changes this mobility often strengthens women by removing practical and cultural obstacles to participation. Sonic ecology and embodied memory expose emotional and environmental connections of the *Raga* tradition. We see from scholars as Turino (2008) and Fielded (1996), and see the *Raga* as a "living collection" of seasonal, emotional and geographical memories. The oral, pregnancies and sensory methods to pass the *Raga* promote ecological awareness, and connect students to time, location and body that often lack in today's educational systems.

Together, these frames mean as a complex website to make Hindustani classical music. Here, sound as a medium for cultural continuity, sex resistance and migrant -related acts. It is not a certain tradition, but a vibrant practice that is of living experiences of those who carry it, change and share it.

5. Discussion

5.1 Linking Findings to Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to check how Indian classical music strengthens cultural among students, helps to pass identity for generations and affect gender experiences in both traditional and digital environments. Conclusions suggest that *Raga* not only acts as music structures, but also as emotional and cultural memories; This conclusion directly addresses the first goal. Emotional relationships with specific *Ragas*, such as the cloud or evening reflection for monsoon nostalgia, show that students use music as a link to cultural and environmental memories. The second research goal, which views the role of oral teaching passing identity, is shown from the importance running in *Guru-shishya* and online learning places. Even in the digital environment, students actively maintain rituals such as reciting *alaap* before exercising or using respectable titles when referring to the *guru*, highlighting the constant importance of built-in learning.

The third goal involves examining gender aspects, which are addressed by this observation that female doctors experience both authority and boundaries. While the learning process provides creative freedom and conditions for inheritance, patriarchal criteria sometimes affect the choice of performance and public visibility.

5.2 Theoretical Implications

These findings expand the diaspora identity theory (Brahma, 1996; Hall, 1990) as a physical form of cultural interaction. Unlike the symbols of identity, which are purely abstract, *Raga* practice requires ongoing physical engagement, which increases its role in creating identity in hybrid contexts.

From the viewpoint of the feminist ethics (Videman, 2006; Qureshi, 2007), this study confirms that women's participation in music is subtle, but still challenges sex hierarchy. The home environment, which is often seen as limited, can be a place for creative freedom when women use it for practice, teaching and performance.

Finally, a sound shows a complex bond between *Raga* and environmental elements, using an ecological perspective. This confirms the idea that music is not different from ecology, but part of the cultural heritage.

5.3 Cultural and Social Significance

This research reveals the strength of Indian classical music as a living tradition that can adapt to maintaining the necessary values. For migrant communities, it acts as a cultural basis, which gives a structured sense of beauty and a structured sense of belonging. For female students, it gives personal expression and social recognition, which gradually helps to change gender norms in art.

5.4 Practical Applications

The findings suggest practical actions for:

1. **Educators:** Including contextual storytelling and *Raga*-environment connections in lessons to increase learner engagement.
2. **Cultural Organizations:** Organizing hybrid concerts and digital baithaks to connect different geographic locations while upholding traditional values.
3. **Policy Makers:** Supporting funding initiatives for cultural preservation that focus on mentorship and female leadership in the arts.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

Although the qualitative approach allowed for detailed exploration, the sample size (18 participants) limits broader application. The geographic representation, while varied, does not encompass all diaspora hubs. Digital ethnography focused only on publicly available content and information shared by participants, leaving private conversations outside the study's reach.

5.6 Future Research Directions

Future studies could investigate the long-term effects of musical practice on identity retention among diaspora youth or compare identity-building processes across Indian classical and other oral music traditions. Quantitative methods could assess links between *Raga* engagement and indicators of cultural connection.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Summary of Key Insights

This study explored how Hindustani Classical Music (HCM) serves as a living practice of cultural belonging in India and the Indian diaspora, focusing on women learners and hybrid (offline and online) teaching methods. Four main findings emerged:

1. **Ragas acts as an emotional and cultural memory:** *Ragas* acts as the season's changes, daytime and emotional archives associated with specific feelings. These compounds help maintain organic and cultural memory through learning on hands instead of written forms.
2. **Construction of identity through practice:** engaging with music is a place to develop identity. In India, the study of *Raga*'s legacy and cultural knowledge confirms. In the diaspora it helps to

reinstate the culture and navigate in mixed identity. In both situations it is related, not just found in the inherited.

3. **Gender room in transmission:** *Guru* and *Shishya* (Teacher and Pupil) Teaching method provides deep learning and emotional conditions, while visibility, singing options and also reflects gender norms related to authority. Women's students express their agency and voice through music, even though they are overwhelming boundaries in homes and institutional surroundings.

4. **Digital *Baithak* and Hybrid Continuity:** Digital Tools such as Zoom, YouTube and WhatsApp promote oral transfer in geographical boundaries. They change the nature of shared learning, but create new communities, provide flexible access and elaborate on arithmetic resources. Hybrid approaches become a permanent form of continuity rather than a temporary solution.

Overall, these findings show that HCM is not a certain legacy. It is a dynamic and atmosphere of conversation and interaction. The strength lies in adapting in different organs, boundaries and technologies, while at the same time the essential aspects of conditions, learning and emotional depth.

6.2 Implications for Cultural Policy and Education Curriculum and Pedagogy

- Reference-rich teaching: Include *Raga* senses and oral history in classrooms to strengthen organic and cultural memory.
- Hybrid design: accept the mixed approach (workshop and online follow -up) as a valid extension of the learning *guru* and head; Create evaluation criteria that assess the process, not just results.
- Assessment of bodily skills: Use evaluation formats as reflective magazines and process recordings to capture emotional and improvised skills.

Equity and gender

- Tarked support for female doctors: Providing scholarships, results grants and mentors networks that solve the challenges related to mobility, carers and access to locations.
- Leaders: Encourage women to take roles such as *gurus*, curators and leaders of ensembles; Include gender -sensitive behavior codes in studios and festivals.

Cultural Infrastructure

- Community archives: Support small archives for documenting *bandish*, oral histories, and regional styles (with consent protocols), ensuring access for learners in India and overseas.
- Artisan ecosystems: Involve instrument makers, archivists, and local organizers in funding efforts; view them as co-creators of the musical economy.
- Place-based programming: Coordinate concerts and teaching with seasonal *Raga* themes (e.g., Monsoon Malhar Festivals) to strengthen sonic and ecological connections.

Digital Strategy

- Quality and ethics online: Encourage open-access masterclasses with clear attributions, consent, and fair-use guidelines; promote subtitled and annotated resources for better accessibility.
- Platforms for continuity: Support digital *baithaks* and moderated learner groups that encourage peer feedback, reflective practice, and exchanges across generations.

Research and Evaluation

- Mixed-method evaluation: Combine qualitative measures (belonging, voice, continuity) with participation metrics to evaluate program impact without reducing musical practice to mere numbers.

- Comparative and longitudinal work: Fund studies that track how hybrid learning influence identity and musical repertoire over time in various diaspora locations.

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