

Original Article

Emotion, Judgment, and Musical Experience: A Comparative Study of Rasa Theory and Kantian Aesthetics

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Abstract - Musical experience touches upon a level of human consciousness where emotion and judgement are inextricably linked. However, Eastern and Western philosophical traditions have taken different approaches to explaining this experience. While existing studies have analysed Indian and Kantian aesthetics separately, a comprehensive theoretical analysis of the two approaches focusing on musical experience has so far been lacking. This study aims to address this by developing a dialogical aesthetic framework through textual and interpretive analyses of Bharata Muni's *Nāṭyaśāstra*, Abhinavagupta's *Abhinav Bharati*, and Kant's *Critique of Judgement*. The analysis shows that the *sādhāraṇīkaraṇa* of aesthetics, the transformation of personal emotion into universal aesthetic experience, and the Kantian idea of subjective universality, the claim of universal validity of personal aesthetic judgement through the *sensus communis*, are two deeply parallel but different philosophical insights. The study also reveals that musical experience has two complementary dimensions: a dimension of affective and evaluative content related to the Rasa theory and a dimension of reflective aesthetic judgment related to Kant's aesthetics. These two dimensions prove to be intertwined in the aesthetic experience. This integrated approach opens new analytical possibilities in comparative music aesthetics and provides a theoretical basis for future empirical music psychology and cross-cultural aesthetic research.

Keywords - Comparative Aesthetics, Kantian Aesthetics, Musical Experience, Rasattva, Subjective universality.

1. Introduction

Music is one of the most ancient and profound phenomena in human civilization. It is not only a means of entertainment but also a source of human knowledge, aesthetic experiences, feelings, and a way to perceive the world. Music is performed in a variety of ways in different societies. The feeling of beauty evoked by music has been considered both universal and variable in different cultures. Therefore, it is not surprising that in all civilizations in which philosophy has developed, special aesthetic doctrines have arisen, devoted to the nature of music and artistic experience in general. Among the many traditions that have contributed to aesthetic thought, the classical Indian tradition represented by Bharata Muni's *Nāṭyaśāstra* and Abhinavagupta's commentary provides an influential framework for understanding aesthetic experience. However, the goal of Indian aesthetic theory remains questionable. In Bharata's understanding, art, and in particular music, is a universal source of enjoyment, transforming even the most trivial and prosaic sensations into aesthetic ones. Thus, in the Indian philosophical tradition, any work of art, including music, is designed to elevate man above the individual to the

universality of beauty and joy, making the personal aesthetic. In both Indian and Western traditions, music is evaluated through the prism of aesthetic categories, primarily emotion. However, the two traditions differ radically in their understanding of music's role and power. In contrast, Western music philosophy has developed within a rational, philosophy-centred framework. Immanuel Kant interpreted aesthetic judgement as 'disinterested pleasure', whereby the value of art is determined through aesthetic judgement, independent of personal interests. Schopenhauer gave music a unique status compared to other arts because, according to him, music directly expresses the inner form of the human will. In this context, the musical experience is linked to both aesthetic judgement and existential perception.

Despite the breadth of these traditions, an important problem remains: philosophical accounts of musical experience are often developed within separate cultural and conceptual frameworks, while empirical music research usually investigates emotion, perception, or cognition without directly placing these findings in dialogue with classical aesthetic theory. The present study addresses this



problem by treating musical experience as a multidimensional phenomenon in which affective response and aesthetic judgement are related but analytically distinguishable. Its originality lies not in claiming that Rasa theory and Kantian aesthetics are identical, but in developing a dialogical framework that compares how each explains the movement from individual response toward a broader claim of aesthetic significance.

2. Literature Review

Aesthetics and musical thought are two of the oldest and most reflective practices in human civilization. However, these practices have not always been confined to the same philosophical framework; rather, different theoretical models have developed to explain musical experience in various geographical and cultural contexts. For instance, the Indian aesthetic focuses on emotional experience and dramatic content as the center of artistic experience and drama, while the Critique of Judgement by Immanuel Kant considers reflective and analytic judgment in aesthetic judgment [1,2,3]. The previous research studies did not consider the interrelation between two different approaches to music. The literature review will address this gap in research by critically analyzing original texts and contemporary research studies.

2.1. Relevance and limitations of Nāṭyaśāstra and oriental aesthetics

Bharata Muni's Nāṭyaśāstra is recognised as the oldest and most influential text in Indian aesthetics. Here, the theory of 'rasa' is presented as the fundamental principle of aesthetic experience [1]. In Manomohan Ghosh's translation, 'rasa' is presented as a generalised form of aesthetic experience rather than an individual emotion. In music, the concept of rasa-genesis from the combination of shruti, talam, raga and bhava provides Oriental musicology with a powerful emotional framework. In his commentary on the Abhinavabhāratī, the philosopher Abhinavagupta elevates the concept of rasa to a metaphysical level by interpreting it as 'the embodiment of self-bliss' [4]. Although rich in philosophical content, such vertical interpretation of aesthetic categories in music has been challenged by later scholars, who highlight the tendency of Abhinavagupta to overlook the sociohistorical context of musical experience [11]. Therefore, the very premise of the superiority of the music-theoretical approach to the study of music seems questionable nowadays.

2.2. Immanuel Kant and the position of music in Western aesthetics and controversy.

In his Critique of Judgement, German philosopher Immanuel Kant introduces the idea of 'disinterested pleasure' as the foundation of aesthetic judgement [2]. This work, and more specifically, this idea, has had a significant influence on the development of Western aesthetics.

Although Kant acknowledged the role of individual subjectivity in taste judgement, he argued that such judgement always contains a claim to universality, thus introducing the problematic concept of 'subjective universality' [2].

However, Kant's position on music is controversial. Although he included music in 'free beauty', Kant believed that music was limited in its ability to construct conceptual meaning and that its aesthetic effect was transient. Consequently, he considered music to be a less permanent art form than painting or poetry. Nevertheless, he did not altogether renounce its aesthetic appeal [2,3]. This view has been the subject of extensive discussion in modern science. The new research findings confirm the possibility of applying Kantian aesthetics to the analysis of the structure of the musical experience, particularly at the level of listening perception and its evaluation [6]. This debate suggests that Western aesthetics provides a powerful framework for understanding music through judgement rather than emotion, providing an opportunity for significant comparison with the emotion-centred framework of Eastern aesthetics.

2.3. Eastern and Western Aesthetics: Dialogue

Recent research has tended to view Eastern and Kantian aesthetics within a dialogical framework. While aesthetics emphasises the transformation of feelings and enjoyment, Kantian aesthetics explains the role of judgement and aesthetic judgement [8]. Coomaraswamy [9] argued that both schools of thought conceived art as a disinterested, transformative experience transcending everyday practicality. However, a limitation of existing comparative studies is that they mostly focus on literature or painting. The practical application of these two theories to the analysis of the listening experience in music remains insufficient [6].

Contemporary research further indicates that musical emotion is shaped by both perceptual structure and context. Reybrouck and Eerola [7] describe musical emotion through psychobiological and evolutionary mechanisms, while Fritz et al. [17] demonstrate that some basic emotional cues in music can be recognised across culturally distinct listener groups. Leder et al. [12] similarly model aesthetic appreciation as an interaction of perceptual processing, cognitive mastery, and evaluation. These studies provide useful empirical background, but they do not themselves establish the philosophical claims of either Rasa theory or Kantian aesthetics. This distinction is important for the present study: empirical findings are used as supporting evidence and points of comparison rather than as direct experimental verification of a classical theory.

2.4. Research Gap

Although there is a considerable amount of literature on the aesthetics of drama and Kant's aesthetics, their joint and

critical application to musical experience remains under-researched. Existing comparative work often treats Eastern and Western aesthetics as broad, internally uniform categories, and comparatively little attention is given to the specific relationship between aesthetic emotion, judgement, and universality in music listening. The present study, therefore, addresses three related gaps: the limited dialogue between Rasa theory and Kantian aesthetics in music, the insufficient integration of philosophical and empirical perspectives, and the lack of a clearly articulated account of how culturally mediated musical responses can nevertheless participate in broader human aesthetic experience. The study responds to these gaps by constructing a dialogical theoretical framework rather than by asserting the superiority of either tradition.

3. Materials and Methods

This qualitative, theoretical, and comparative-hermeneutic study aims to facilitate a dialogue between two influential yet contrasting frameworks of Eastern and Western philosophy in the aesthetic interpretation of musical experience: Bharatamuni's Aesthetics and Immanuel Kant's Aesthetics. The study adopts a descriptive literature review and a theory-driven analytical approach. The reason for focusing this comparative analysis on music is that, although both aesthetics interpret aesthetic experience as a disinterested and deeply human experience, they proceed in different philosophical directions with regard to the questions of feeling, judgement, and universality. Essentially, 'music' is a particularly suitable field for examining this difference. Within this study, musical experience is defined as the listener's aesthetic encounter with organised sound in which perceptual, emotional, cognitive, and culturally mediated responses interact. The term does not refer to emotion alone or to judgement alone. Rather, it denotes the integrated process through which a listener perceives musical features, experiences affect, interprets those experiences through prior knowledge and cultural learning, and forms an aesthetic evaluation. This definition provides the conceptual basis for comparing Rasa theory's account of aesthetic emotion with Kant's account of reflective aesthetic judgement.

The methodological framework of the research consists of three interconnected levels.

Firstly, it should be stated that the textual analysis method is based on Bharata Muni's *Nāṭyaśāstra*, Abhinavagupta's *Abhinavabhāratī*, and Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgement*. These sources' relevant passages and chapters were examined using the close reading method to extract the concepts of taste, aesthetic judgement, feeling, disinterestedness, and universal validity.

Secondly, the study employed hermeneutic and philosophical analyses. Here, Rasa theory is interpreted as an emotional and experiential aesthetic model, while Kantian

aesthetics is interpreted as a judgement- and concept-based model. The interrelationship between affect and judgement in the context of musical experience has then been analysed.

Thirdly, a dialogical analysis of these two aesthetic frameworks has been constructed using the comparative method. This comparison is not intended to determine superiority but rather to create an analytical framework for understanding the tension between cultural specificity and aesthetic universality in the context of musical experience.

Secondary sources were selected according to clear criteria. Only peer-reviewed international journals and recognised academic publications were included. Non-academic sources, such as Wikipedia, have been deliberately avoided to ensure the theoretical basis and academic acceptability of the research remain intact. As this research is theoretical in nature, it does not include any empirical fieldwork. However, as the analysis is conducted in clear steps, this theoretical framework can be applied to future research on music performance, specific ragas, or audience-based studies.

4. Results and Discussion

This paper aims to investigate the two sides of the musical experience, namely, the emotional and intellectual ones, to compare Eastern and Western (Kantian) aesthetics via the two approaches. Focusing on music, the discussion examines how cultural contexts shape aesthetic experience, while also moving towards a relatively universal human experience. This section presents the theoretical findings, and the following discussion analyses their interpretation and broader implications.

4.1. Results

This section presents the study's main theoretical findings from the comparative textual analysis. The findings are organised around four themes: (1) the emotional structure of Rasa theory, (2) the judgement-centred framework of Kantian aesthetics, (3) the relationship between emotion and judgement, and (4) the two concepts of aesthetic universality. The results are theoretical findings derived from close reading and comparison; contemporary psychological and neuroscientific studies are used to illuminate or qualify the interpretation, not to claim direct empirical validation of the philosophical theories.

4.1.1. Musical experience in *Rasattva*: the process of Generalising Feelings

In Indian aesthetics, *Rāsa* is recognised as an influential theoretical framework for aesthetic experience that can be applied to music. The concept of *Rasa* was systematically formulated in Bharata Muni's *Nāṭyaśāstra* (c. 200 BCE–200 CE). Here, *Rasa* is presented not as a simple emotional reaction, but as a structured aesthetic experience that produces a unique mental transformation in the listener [1].

Structure of Rasa Generation

Per Nāṭyaśāstra, three things are essential to produce Rasa or sentiment. The first is vibhāva, the excitant of one of the eight fundamental sentiments. In the case of music, however, these take the form of raga, tal, tala, and the artist's presentation technique. Second is anubhāva, the external and internal reactions of the listener. Thirdly, there is the transient mental state between experiences, known as 'vyabhicharibhāva'. The combination of these three components usually results in Rasa [1, Ch. 6]. In particular, through the musical means of sound and rhythm, specific emotional tones familiar to the listener can be highlighted. In his article published in Acta Orientalia Vilnensia, Dalia Tamošaitytė argues that certain Indian classical music rhythms or ragas are associated with certain aesthetic emotions according to the theory of Rasa [10].

Sādhāraṇīkaraṇa: The Process of Generalisation

The most essential philosophical innovation of Rasattva is its concept of sādhāraṇīkaraṇa, literally "generalisation", which is a process in which the listener's individual feelings are invested in a work of art so as to beget a general aesthetic experience, thus going beyond their personal subjectivity. In other words, when listening to music, a person does not only experience their own personal sorrow or joy; rather, that feeling is connected to a universal human experience that can be shared with other listeners [8]. From this perspective, the musical experience is an interpersonal aesthetic process, not just a personal psychological event.

Abhinavagupta's interpretation: The Spiritual Dimension

Abhinavagupta lends Rasattva new philosophical depth in his commentary on the Abhinavabhāratī. He interprets it as a kind of feeling and self-bliss, an ānanda. According to Abhinavagupta, at the moment of enjoyment, the listener loses himself in transcendental consciousness, in the blissful consciousness beyond individuality, and becomes one with Brahmananda [5]. This interpretation presents Rasattva as both purely aesthetic and a philosophical and spiritual theory of experience. Moreover, modern scholars have argued that Abhinavagupta's view of spirituality may be detrimental to understanding music experience in a social and historical context [11]. Thus, the strength of the theory of aesthetic taste is also its weakness.

Connections with modern music psychology

This music theory framework is remarkably consistent with modern music psychology research. Leder et al. [12] demonstrated in their information processing model that aesthetic experience occurs in several stages: perceptual analysis, memory integration, cognitive mastery, and evaluation. These stages together determine aesthetic emotion and aesthetic judgement. This model bears a strong resemblance to the vibhāva-anubhāva-vyabhicharibhāva framework of music theory, as both view aesthetic experience as a multi-level cognitive-emotional process.

Similarly, Zentner et al. [13], in their 9-factor model, show that music-evoked emotions are organized by temporal and contextual features, which aligns with the idea of sādhāraṇīkaraṇa in music theory. Specifically, the raga-based system in Indian music is considered an appropriate example of such an organization of musical pieces. The specific way of intonation, plus the timing, plus the gamut of emotion characteristic of each raga, contribute to their capacity to trigger the sādhāraṇīkaraṇa process in the listener, resulting in their aesthetic communication [14].

Theoretical Implications

Within the Kantian strand of Western aesthetics examined in this study, aesthetic judgement is approached through reflection on pleasure, form, and claims to universal validity. Abhinavagupta's interpretation of this process is grounded in spiritual philosophy, whereas contemporary music psychology research provides useful empirical parallels to some features of the framework, but does not by itself validate the philosophical theory.

4.1.2. Musical experience in Kantian aesthetics: The Framework of Judgement

German philosopher Immanuel Kant's Critique of Judgement (1790) is generally regarded as one of the most ground-breaking pieces of work in the Western philosophical tradition. In this work, Kant distinguishes aesthetic judgement from practical or personal interests and argues that judgements of taste involve a claim to universal validity.

In the case of music, Kantian theory provides a specific analytical framework through which the intellectual and evaluative aspects of musical experience can be explained [2,3].

Disinterested Pleasure: The Concept of Disinterested Pleasure

The main idea of Kant's aesthetics is the concept of disinterested pleasure. According to Kant, aesthetic judgment is pure pleasure that comes from the essential qualities of the object of judgment, separate from personal or practical interests, or any other desires or moral beliefs. Applied to music, this would mean that the pleasure derived from listening to a particular piece of music has nothing to do with whether it is popular, common, or valuable but instead comes from the structure of melody and rhythm [2]. In this regard, the perception of music is presented as a pure aesthetic process in which a person's conscience forms an unbiased and pure judgment about the work.

Universality: Personal yet universal

Another essential aspect of Kant's aesthetics is subjective universality. In this regard, it is interesting to note that when an individual judges music as beautiful, she/he expresses her/his personal taste, but at the same time, claim that other people can also find this music beautiful. By doing

this, a person does not appeal to objective evidence; rather, she/he refers to a common *sensus communis* [2,15]. In the case of music, this concept explains why different listeners can have a similar aesthetic response to a particular piece of music, despite their personal experiences and cultural contexts being different.

The position of music in Kantian art theory

Kant considered music to be an example of free beauty. By this, he meant that music is able to produce pleasure in a listener independently of any idea or concept, thus differing from other arts by being non-conceptual. However, precisely due to this, Kant considered music to be a lower art compared to poetry and painting, as its pleasure is only a subjective effect, lacking “conceptual content” and being merely “transitory” [3]. Modern researchers, however, have argued that this assessment does not account for the complexity of aesthetic judgement, and that Kant’s aesthetics provide valuable insight into the listener’s perception of music [15].

Connections with modern neuroscience

The Kantian concept of aesthetic judgement has taken on new significance in the context of modern music neuroscience research. The emotional reactions to music occurring in the human brain are now accessible to empirical investigation. Through fMRI, Brattico et al. showed that the emotional content in music is associated with characteristic patterns of activity in the brain; specifically, the emotions of joy and sadness are related to different patterns of activity [6].

This observation is consistent with the Kantian concept of aesthetic judgement, as in both cases musical experience involves an active mental and intellectual process, not just an immediate emotional response.

Theoretical Implications

In Kantian aesthetics, musical experience is a judgement-centred process in which individual aesthetic experiences claim universal validity through disinterested pleasure and subjective universality. The concept of *sensus communis* explains why a common aesthetic response to music is possible among different listeners. Modern neuroscience provides evidence that music listening involves interacting affective and cognitive processes; these findings can illuminate the discussion of judgement but do not empirically confirm Kant’s philosophical account.

4.1.3. The Difference and Complementarity between Feeling and Judgement

A fundamental question in the aesthetic analysis of musical experience is whether the listener’s experience is primarily affective or evaluative. Rasa theory gives analytical priority to the emergence and transformation of aesthetic emotion, whereas Kantian aesthetics gives a central role to

reflective aesthetic judgement. These positions should not be treated as mutually exclusive descriptions. They address different but interconnected dimensions of musical experience: one explains how music becomes aesthetically felt, while the other explains how that experience can become the object of reflective evaluation.

The Primacy of Emotion in Rasa Theory

Within the Rasa framework, musical experience begins from conditions that make aesthetic emotion possible. In the context of music, melodic organisation, raga, tala, expressive performance, and the listener’s receptive state contribute to the emergence of an aesthetic response. The resulting emotion is not treated as an entirely private or chaotic reaction. Through *sādhāraṇīkaraṇa*, the personal affective response is transformed into an aestheticised and generalised experience. The analytical question is therefore not simply what emotion music produces, but how an individual’s response is transformed through artistic form into an experience that can be shared at a broader human level [1,8].

The Primacy of Judgement in Kantian Theory

In Kantian aesthetics, musical experience cannot be reduced to immediate emotional reaction. Aesthetic judgement is an active reflective process in which the subject responds to the form of the object while making a claim to universal validity. Applied cautiously to music, this framework draws attention to how listeners evaluate formal and perceptual features without reducing aesthetic value to practical usefulness or personal desire. The judgement remains subjective because it is grounded in the subject’s feeling of pleasure, yet it is not merely private because it carries a claim that others ought to be able to share the judgement [2,15].

The Complementary Relationship between the Two Theories

The comparison suggests that emotion and judgement are best understood as complementary dimensions rather than as two completely separate stages. At the phenomenological level, an affective response may arise before a listener explicitly reflects on its aesthetic value; at the analytical level, however, the two processes can interact continuously. Leder et al. [12] similarly describe aesthetic appreciation as involving perceptual processing, emotional responses, cognitive mastery, and evaluation. Their model, therefore, offers an empirical point of comparison for the present theoretical argument, although it should not be treated as experimental proof of Rasa or Kantian aesthetics. The proposed framework consequently allows a listener to be emotionally moved by music while also reflecting on its aesthetic character.

The Role of Cultural Context

The relationship between emotion and judgement is also mediated by cultural context. Musical conventions, prior listening experience, training, and familiarity with particular

systems of melody and rhythm can influence what a listener notices and how a musical response is interpreted. This is especially relevant to Indian classical music, where knowledge of raga conventions may shape the listener's experience. At the same time, cross-cultural research suggests that some broad emotional cues can be recognised across culturally different listener groups [17]. The appropriate conclusion is therefore neither complete cultural relativism nor complete universality, but a layered account in which basic responses may show cross-cultural regularities while richer aesthetic meanings remain culturally mediated.

Theoretical Implications

The theoretical finding is that musical experience should be conceptualised as multidimensional. Rasa theory explains the affective and transformative dimension of aesthetic experience, while Kantian aesthetics explains the reflective and evaluative dimension. The two frameworks are therefore complementary rather than alternative. Their complementarity does not mean that they make identical claims; rather, each illuminates a different aspect of the same complex experience. This distinction strengthens the proposed dialogical framework by avoiding the reduction of musical aesthetics either to emotion or to judgement alone.

4.1.4. Two Concepts of Aesthetic Universality

One of the most pressing issues in aesthetics concerns the nature of the beauty of music – is it a matter of taste, or does it have qualities that can give rise to a common aesthetic experience? Eastern and Western aesthetics address this question from different points of view. However, a fundamental insight can be observed in both approaches. For instance, although the beauty of music originates from personal experience, aesthetic appreciation is ultimately connected to a broader human experience. In this context, a comparative analysis of the two concepts of *sādhāraṇīkaraṇa* in Aesthetics and Kant's concept of subjective universality is particularly significant.

Kant's Subjective Universality

In Kant's 'Critique of Judgement', subjective universality is one of the distinctive features of aesthetic judgement. When one judges a certain performance of a musical composition as beautiful, one actually believes that others can share the same aesthetic attitude toward the judged object.

The ground of such a universal claim, according to Kant, is the *sensus communis* that is "a common human sense, present in varying degrees in everyone" [2,18]. Thus, the peculiar role of *sensus communis* in musical judgement is that it serves as a guarantee of the possibility for different individuals to have the same aesthetic response to a particular musical piece. Here, universality comes from the sense of judgement. The listener believes that their aesthetic evaluation is not only their own, but could also be accepted by any sensitive person.

Sādhāraṇīkaraṇa of Rasattva

The idea of universality, indeed, has taken a different turn in Indian aesthetics. According to the tradition of *Nāṭyaśāstra*, particularly Abhinavagupta, the process of *sādhāraṇīkaraṇa*, viz. generalization, constitutes the essential content of *Rasattva*. In this process, the personal emotions of the listener are freed from their personal history and limitations by the artwork and take on a generalised aesthetic form [1,19]. In other words, when listening to music, a listener does not only experience their own personal sorrow or joy. Rather, that feeling is connected to a universal human experience that can be shared with other listeners. In this sense, universality stems from the transformation of emotions: personal emotions acquire an aesthetic form through art that can resonate with many listeners.

Comparative Analysis of the Two Concepts

When the two concepts are considered together, an important similarity and a fundamental difference become apparent.

In terms of similarity, both assert that aesthetic experience emanates from personal sentiments but expands to larger humanity. Coomaraswamy [9] contended that both Eastern and Western aesthetic philosophies perceive art as an essentially disinterested and transforming experience beyond utilitarianism. In terms of difference, Kant's universality is expressed through the idea of judgement, whereby the listener believes that their aesthetic evaluation can be accepted by others. In contrast, the universality of *Rasa* is expressed through the transformation of emotion, whereby personal feelings are given a generalised form through art that can be experienced equally by many listeners. In short, Kant's universality is the universality of judgement, whereas the universality of *Rasa* is the universality of feeling.

Support from Modern Research

Modern research in cross-cultural psychology of music partially confirms the hypothesis of dual universality. Thus, Fritz and colleagues found that people from different cultures can recognise several broad emotional characteristics conveyed by music across culturally distinct listener groups [17]. This observation connects with the notion of emotional universality in music theory. On the other hand, Koelsch [16] has found that the brain's judgment process while listening to music is similar across cultures, which provides an empirical point of comparison, rather than a direct neuroscientific validation of Kant's philosophical claim.

Theoretical Implications

In this step, two aesthetic universality concepts were separated from each other. Firstly, there is the emotional universality of the *sādhāraṇīkaraṇa*, in which feeling is transferred from an individual to a collective. Secondly, Kant's judgment is universal, in which the subjectivity of aesthetic judgment transforms into general validity through

the *sensus communis*. Both concepts show that individual music experience is able to become universal in nature

4.2. Discussion

In this section, the research results are interpreted in light of Eastern and Western aesthetics, with a particular focus on Kant. The theoretical patterns presented in the previous 'Results' section are analysed in detail here. The interrelationship between the cultural and intellectual dimensions of musical experience, the concept of aesthetic universality, and the broader implications of these results in the context of comparative aesthetics will be discussed in particular.

4.2.1. Musical experience: Cultural or Intellectual Experience?

This is a fundamental question in the study of musical experience that has long been discussed in aesthetics and musicology. That is, is the experience of music primarily culturally constructed, or is it an intellectual and universal process of the human brain? In order to answer this question, both Eastern and Western aesthetic traditions must be considered together. Firstly, the cultural dimension of musical experience cannot be denied. The way in which a listener experiences music varies across cultures, as the raga, rhythm, melody, and style of presentation differ. In Indian classical music, for example, a particular raga is associated with a specific time, emotion, and aesthetic context, developed through cultural education. From this perspective, musical experience is a culturally mediated phenomenon in which the listener's prior knowledge, social environment, and habits play an important role [1]. However, musical experience is not necessarily framed within cultural contexts. According to Kant's judgment of taste, particularly the Second Moment of the Critique of Judgment, aesthetic judgement is subjective in its basis while nevertheless making a claim to universal validity; that is, a judgement of beauty is presented as communicable to other human subjects [2]. Modern music psychology and neuroscience research also support this dual perspective. Research has revealed that distinct regions in the human brain, including the limbic area and prefrontal cortex, become active when an individual listens to music, suggesting a combination of emotional and cognitive responses. At the same time, certain fundamental musical elements, such as rhythm, repetition, and intonation, can elicit fairly similar responses in individuals from different cultural backgrounds [6].

In this context, it can be said that musical experience is dual in nature. It includes both the cultural and intellectual dimensions that are combined in a way that the former determines the significance and role of music in human experience, while also being evaluated on the basis of the latter. In this regard, it is argued that music is not a purely intellectual or cultural phenomenon but rather an aesthetic experience that involves people's emotions, social

interactions, and personal perceptions. This analysis makes it clear that an integrated theoretical framework is needed to understand musical experience. This framework should include both the emotion-centred perspective of Eastern aesthetics and Kant's intellectual aesthetics. This integrated perspective can explain music as a multidimensional aesthetic experience. This experience is culturally mediated while also containing dimensions that may be shared across human listeners.

4.2.2. Why music is a Suitable Field for Comparative Aesthetics

Music seems to be a good candidate for discussion of aesthetic questions in comparison between Eastern and Western philosophies, and the reasons for this are two-fold: its very abstract nature, which makes it accessible to any analysis, and the way musical activity engages the listener's feelings.

Firstly, music's lack of language establishes it in a unique aesthetic position. Language plays a central role in conveying meaning in art forms such as literature and drama, which often depend on a specific cultural context. However, music, and particularly instrumental music, overcomes the barriers of language and reaches deep into the soul of the listener. This property of music makes it an excellent candidate for comparative studies, to which end several articles below are dedicated. Studies have demonstrated that individuals from various cultural backgrounds can recognise fundamental emotional qualities in music, such as joy, sadness, or excitement, despite being unaware of its cultural context [17].

Secondly, music evokes a combined emotional and perceptual experience. This makes it even more important in the context of comparative aesthetics. On the one hand, emotional responses are generated in listeners while they are listening to music. At the same time, an intellectual process is activated, analysing rhythm, harmony, and melodic structure. This dual process establishes music as a field in which both the emotion-centred perspective of Eastern aesthetics and the intellectual analysis of Western aesthetics can be applied. Modern neuroscience research suggests that music listening engages interacting affective and cognitive processes [16]. These findings provide an empirical point of comparison for the present theoretical argument, but they do not by themselves establish the philosophical claims of Rasa or Kantian aesthetics.

Additionally, the temporal and structural properties of music establish it as an analysable aesthetic object. Elements such as repetition, variation, and the violation of expectations in music create complex emotional responses in listeners that can be analysed through cognitive science [20]. This feature makes music an ideal field for the theoretical and practical

analysis of aesthetic experience. Taking all these factors into account, it can be concluded that music is an ideal subject for comparative aesthetics. This is because it is able to overcome cultural differences and is connected to the fundamental structure of human experience. Eastern aesthetics explains the emotional aspect of music, while Kant's aesthetics analyses the intellectual and judgmental aspects. Combining these two perspectives establishes music as a powerful comparative aesthetic field. This opens up new analytical possibilities in contemporary research.

4.2.3. *The Languageless Nature of Music and the Universal Aesthetic Experience*

One of the main reasons why music is considered a special field for comparative aesthetics is its lack of language. In art forms such as literature, drama, and poetry, meaning and emotion are expressed through language. As a result, the aesthetic experience in these spheres is largely determined by cultural and linguistic characteristics. At the same time, music, more specifically instrumental music, bypasses the need for language and directly affects the emotions of the listener. For this reason, music is often considered a comparatively universal art form [21].

In Eastern aesthetics, the theory of Rasa explains this non-verbal experience of music on an emotional level. According to Bharata Muni [1], the purpose of art is to create an aesthetic experience that transcends personal emotions and becomes a generalised experience. In music, the combination of raga, tala, rhythm, and ornamentation gives the listener a more emotionally dependent sensation than that of linguistic interpretation. As a result, the aesthetic effect of music is largely based on emotional structure as well as auditory experience rather than semantics. The absence of language in music is another crucial issue in the context of Western aesthetics. According to Kant, music is an art form that appeals to feelings rather than ideas. Although he considered it to be a relatively transient art form compared to painting, his concept of aesthetic judgement is key to explaining the non-verbal aesthetic experience of music. According to Kant, aesthetic experience does not depend on any specific concept, but is rather a free combination of feeling and judgement. This occurs when the individual enjoys a work of art disinterestedly [2].

Modern music psychology also supports the thesis of music being emotionally exciting, but at the same time nonverbal. The research has shown that people from different cultures could identify similar emotions in music, regardless of their cultural background, when they were unfamiliar with the cultural context of the musical piece [17]. In other words, there is a partially universal aesthetic code that may be recognised across some culturally distinct listener groups at the level of broad emotional cues. However, music cannot be considered completely free from cultural influences. The emotional response to music is largely related to cultural

habits, musical education, and listening experience. In other words, music is both universal and culturally mediated. This duality is particularly important in comparative aesthetics. Rasa theory explains the emotional universality of music, while Kant's aesthetics analyses the intellectual and judgmental aspects of the experience. Combining these two views allows us to appreciate music as an aesthetic field in which human relationships can be formed that go beyond what is possible with words.

4.2.4. *Dialogue with Existing Literature and New Contributions*

The existing research on the aesthetic analysis of music contains a considerable number of studies that explore various aspects related to the art of music, both in Indian and Western cultures. The Indian tradition of Nāṭyaśāstra and Abhinavagupta's commentary on it presents a comprehensive understanding of the aesthetic effect of music and art in general [1]. On the other hand, Western aesthetics is largely based on the judgment of taste developed by Immanuel Kant in his Critique of Judgement, which provided the theoretical framework for subsequent intellectual assessments of art through the lens of aesthetic judgement, disinterested pleasure, and subjective universality [2]. However, these two disciplines have largely developed in isolation from each other. While Eastern aesthetics focuses on the experience of emotion and taste, Western discussions emphasise aesthetic judgement and intellectual frameworks. This separation highlights an important limitation of the existing literature. That is, musical experience has not been adequately analysed as an integrated emotional process.

Modern research in areas such as music psychology and neuroscience has attempted to analyse the interrelationship between emotional and cognitive processes. In most cases, however, these studies have not engaged in direct dialogue with philosophical aesthetics [16]. Similarly, some studies in comparative aesthetics have examined Eastern and Western theories. Nevertheless, efforts to develop a coherent theoretical framework centered on music remain limited. In this respect, by engaging with the literature on the aesthetics of Rasa and Kant, the current analysis identifies several theoretical contributions. First of all, by interpreting musical experience through the prism of emotional and intellectual perception in the context of aesthetics, the article develops a dialogical interpretation that is not fully articulated in the existing literature.

Secondly, by making music the center of comparison, this research aims to demonstrate that music, as a largely non-linguistic art form that is filled with feelings, can act as a mediator between Eastern and Western aesthetics. Thirdly, the study reinterprets the concept of aesthetic universality. By analysing Kant's concepts of subjective universality and the generalised emotions of Rasa, it is demonstrated that, although aesthetic experience is personal, it is also connected

to a broader human experience. This perspective is an important theoretical contribution to aesthetic theory. Fourthly, the application of these theories within the context of South Asian music or Hindustani music is also discussed. In this section, an effort is made to show that these theoretical aesthetics are not merely philosophical ideas, but they can also be applied to actual practice, especially to Hindustani music.

Overall, this research is not just a repetition of someone else's work, but a critical reading of others' literature and a construction of a new theory based on it. The study creates a connection between Eastern and Western aesthetics and considers music experience as a unified, multi-layered, and universal phenomenon.

4.2.5. Theoretical Limitations and Critical Review

Although Oriental and Kantian aesthetics provide important theoretical frameworks for explaining musical experience, both schools have limitations that require critical review in a discussion of comparative aesthetics. These two theories take different philosophical approaches to explain the aesthetic experience of music. In other words, while the first one focuses on emotional responses to music, the second one concentrates on the judgment of aesthetic value. At the same time, in reality, these two aspects are intertwined in a single phenomenon of musical experience. Consequently, it is challenging to fully explain the aesthetic complexity of music through any single theory.

One of the main drawbacks of Indian aesthetics is its cultural relativity. The theory of *rasa*, *bhava*, and performance as described by the *Nāṭyaśāstra* was formed on a particular historical and cultural development of Indian art. Therefore, when interpreting this tool, one should consider the possibility of its irrelevance in understanding the aesthetics of other cultures. In particular, to perceive Indian music's emotional content, one needs prior cultural literacy and familiarity with the unique system of *raga*. Thus, one cannot claim universality in perceiving the aesthetic experience as Bharata Muni suggests [1]. On the other hand, Kant actually believed that aesthetic judgment has universal validity. Furthermore, his ideas were created within the context of the European Enlightenment. Kant ranked music relatively low among the arts because he regarded its aesthetic effect as more transient and less conceptually determinate than that of some other arts.

However, modern theories of music and contemporary music psychology enable one to understand that music can influence our consciousness; in other words, it is not simply an emotional phenomenon, as Kant claimed [2]. Modern music psychology research also shows that although music can evoke some universal emotions, the interpretation of more complex aesthetic experiences is acquired through cultural learning. In other words, while people from different

cultures may perceive certain basic emotions in music similarly, their ability to comprehend more nuanced aspects of music aesthetics is shaped by cultural specificities [17]. This implies that music is not purely universal but rather partially universal. At the same time, it is not only culturally specific but partially specific as well.

Nevertheless, despite these limitations, the importance of *Rasa* and Kant's aesthetics remains intact. In fact, a critical analysis of these limitations can enrich comparative music aesthetics. This is because it shows that musical experience cannot be explained as purely emotional or purely intellectual. Music is an aesthetic field in which feelings, judgements, cultural practices and human experience are intricately related. This study, therefore, suggests that *Rasa* and Kant's aesthetics be considered as two different conceptual frameworks that are complementary rather than contradictory. It allows music to be seen both as a cultural artifact and as something universal that can be understood across cultures.

4.2.6. Future Research Prospects

This study has attempted to develop a unified theoretical framework for musical experience by comparing Eastern and Western (Kantian) aesthetics. However, this study's discussions open up the possibility of more extensive research in the field of comparative music aesthetics. In particular, there is significant scope for interdisciplinary research into the relationships between music, emotion, aesthetic judgement and cultural experience.

Firstly, future research could delve deeper into the relationship between aesthetics and contemporary music cognition. Modern neuroscience and music psychology have demonstrated that emotion, memory and cognitive processes are activated simultaneously during music listening [16]. This observation opens up the possibility of connecting the concept of aesthetic emotion in Indian aesthetics to new scientific discussions. In particular, the way in which *raga*-based music shapes the emotional response of listeners could be examined in greater detail through empirical music psychology.

Secondly, research on non-Western music traditions within the field of comparative aesthetics remains relatively limited. Most Western aesthetic discussions have centred on European musical genres. Consequently, rethinking South Asian musical traditions, such as Hindustani and Carnatic music, in terms of Kant's aesthetics, phenomenology, or contemporary aesthetic theory, may contribute greatly to future research. This will make comparative philosophy of music more multidimensional.

Thirdly, cross-cultural research into the universal nature of music aesthetics is also important. The current study has shown that, while music is partly universal, it is also

influenced by cultural context. Future research could more clearly define the limits and potential of aesthetic universality by analysing the musical responses of listeners from different cultural backgrounds in a comparative manner. In particular, the relationship between the emotional perception of music and cultural conditioning could stimulate new discussions in comparative music psychology [17].

Fourthly, digital technology and contemporary listening culture are changing the nature of musical experience. Streaming platforms, algorithmic recommendations and the global circulation of music mean that music from different cultures is rapidly becoming part of cross-cultural exchange. An important area of future research may be how effectively Rasa and Kantian aesthetics can be applied in this changing musical environment. Significantly, analysing how digital aesthetics and virtual listening experiences are transforming the aesthetic experience of music will contribute to contemporary music studies.

Overall, despite the current research's attempt to provide a theoretical basis for comparative music aesthetics, it may open the way for future interdisciplinary studies. Viewing music through the lens of both cultural art and a multidisciplinary field of feelings, judgment, knowledge, and experience could create new theoretical horizons for the discussion of comparative aesthetics.

5. Conclusion

This study presents musical experience as a multidimensional aesthetic process by comparing Indian and Kantian aesthetics. Text-based and interpretive analyses of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, the *Abhinava Bharati*, and the *Critique of Judgement* reveal that, despite originating from completely different philosophical traditions, Eastern and Western aesthetics are capable of complementing each other deeply in the interpretation of musical experience. This integrated approach reveals analytical potential in the field of comparative music aesthetics that was previously absent from single-stream studies.

5.1. Summary of Main Findings

The study presents four main theoretical insights. Firstly, personal emotion in aesthetics is transformed into a universal aesthetic experience through *sādhāraṇīkaraṇa*. Secondly, within the Kantian framework, personal aesthetic judgement carries a claim to universal validity through disinterested pleasure and *sensus communis*. Thirdly, the comparative analysis reveals that musical experience involves complementary affective and evaluative dimensions, with the emotional model of Rasa and the reflective model of Kantian judgement illuminating different but interconnected aspects of aesthetic experience. Fourthly, two parallel concepts of aesthetic universality have been identified, which, together, are able to explain the intercultural dimension of musical experience more fully.

5.2. Theoretical Contribution

The main contribution of this study is the development of a dialogical analytical framework focused on musical experience that bridges the gap between Eastern and Western aesthetics, a topic overlooked in existing research. It suggests that an interpretation of the aesthetic nature of musical experience in terms of both Emotion-based and Kantian judgment-based models might actually help explain the complexity of the aesthetic response to music. Additionally, Hindustani raga music has been identified as a rich field for comparative aesthetic analysis, where the simultaneous application of both theories is effective.

5.3. Research Limitations

As this study is purely theoretical, it was not possible to empirically verify how these theories are reflected in the experience of real listeners. The analysis of Rasa is limited to the works of *Nāṭyaśāstra* and *Abhinavagupta*; therefore, the perspectives of Bhamaha, Anandavardhan and Mammet were not included. Similarly, the musical philosophies of Schopenhauer, Hegel and Hanslick lie outside the scope of this study, indicating the need for more extensive comparative research in the future.

5.4. Future Research Prospects

The study indicates several ideas for future research that may build on the findings. Testing the statements through empirical neuroscience studies would be a natural way to take on the challenge. The value of this study would also be enhanced by the inclusion of Carnatic music and other South Asian traditions in the study, thus broadening the basis for comparative music aesthetics. The present work's theoretical framework's ability to be applied in a digital music and streaming culture is also a relevant topic for future research.

5.5. Concluding Observation

Music is a human art form that touches the deepest feelings of people, extending beyond linguistic meaning while remaining responsive to cultural context. Although aesthetics and Kantian aesthetics interpret this experience differently, they both point to a common truth.

That is, the experience of music is not necessarily purely personal and has the potential to create a universal human connection. This research is a meaningful attempt to identify that connection theoretically, building a dialogical aesthetic foundation for future researchers.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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