

# [Introduction the scale, as seen in raga](https://assignbuster.com/introduction-the-scale-as-seen-in-raga/)

INTRODUCTION

A raga us a musical mode in the Indian classical music tradition used in an improvised performance. There are over 300 ragas in existence.  The word raga means color and each raga is known to have its own unique sound. These sounds are associated with certain emotions, times of day, Hindi deities and seasons. Such as raga Khamaj which is associated with the Hindu personification of the god Radha Krishna and the time between midnight and 3am. Most western music is written down or composed whereas Indian classical music is improvised. Indian music has been passed down from generation to generation between Guru and Shishya, two individuals that have a very close relationship. The melody is created in real time by the musician as he or she is playing it. However these improvisations are guided by the " rules of the raga". These are the scale, specific pitches used in a music piece, arohana or the ascending form of the scale in this sometimes a note is skipped (re) while going up such as in raga Khamaj. Whereas Avarohana is the descending form of the scale. Vadi (which is the tonic note or sa) is an important note that the musician plays more frequently than other notes and samvadi (is a note that is fourth or fifth away from the vadi or ma/pa) a secondarily important note. Arohana is the ascending form of the scale. At times, a note can be skipped as you ascend up the scale, as seen in Raga Khamaj, (skips over re). Avarohana is the descending form of the scale. It may not be the same as the arohana.  Pakad are mini melodies that define the raga. These form an extended skeletal melody called the Chalan. In indian music, the notes used in the diatonic scale are " sa re ga ma pa dha ni sa." Ragas have six main characteristics which are the raag must use a minimum of five of the seven swaras of the sapthak or thaat, there must be both Arohana and Avarohana in a raag, the notes MA and PA cannot be omitted, a raag must contain Swara or Vadi (SA), the raag must be derived from a thaat and the raag must be pleasing to the ear.

Rock and roll is a popular style of music that originated in the United States in the mid-1950s and began to evolve by the mid-60s into what we now call rock. Rock and Roll is said to be a merge between country music and rhythm blues, however the genre is not as simple as it seems. It was a mic of black cultured music and white cultured music. Black vocal groups such as the Dominoes and the Spaniels started to combine gospel music and harmonies with call and response with a more aggressive rhythm and blues-rhythm. In rock and roll music, the notes of the diatonic scale used are " do re mi fa so la ti do" In the earliest rock and roll styles of the late 1940s and early 1950s either the piano or saxophone was often the lead instrument, however these were generally replaced by guitar in the middle and late 1950s. Rock and Roll inspired various distinct subgenres and by the 1960's these began to emerge. These subgenres included blues rock, folk rock, heavy metal, punk rock alternative and indie rock, and lastly Britpop.

Link 1: Pitch Bend or bending strings

String instruments such as the guitar (used in rock and roll) and the sitar (used in ragas) provide musical possibilities and techniques that other instruments cannot, such as bending strings. The strings are free to move from side to side on the fret board which means that the pitch can be gradually changed between full semi-tones even after a note is played. This bending adds a level of expression to the performance.  When bending strings, it can be done quickly as seen in the above extract of music by Chuck Berry or it can be performed slowly as in ragas.

As seen in the above extract of music, Raga Maru Bihag by Ravi Shankar, the bending of strings is used as an expression in the piece and is an example of bending that is performed slowly.

We can see that the two ways of bending strings tells the listener a lot about the mood of the piece they are listening to. This can be seen with music (above, right) such as wonderful tonight by Eric Clapton.

Link 2: improvisation

Improvisation is a spontaneous, extemporaneous musical creation, in the sense that one can " make it up as they go." It is the creative activity of immediate or " in the moment" musical composition which combines performance with communication of instrument techniques, emotion and a response to other musicians. Improvisation is used in both rock and roll music (including its sub-genres) as well as ragas.

In rock and roll music, improvisation can go on to different levels. The improvised parts or solos can go beyond the notes of the scale that the song is played on and in many cases completely change key too as seen in Jump by Van Halen.

Key change

Original key

In many cases there are cadenzas written for rock and roll soloist to play. They are written down by the composer so the piece does not get affected.

However, in Indian music (ragas) there always is a pulse with no written cadenzas.

Ragas are almost always improvised; however, there is a " fixed" improvisation. This means that the soloist can only improvise within the boundaries of the raga and only change elements such as the rhythm and tempo.

Link 3: texture of music

The Raag is a set melody on which music is improvised. As mentioned earlier, most ragas begin with a solo by the sitar but later get developed and are accompanied by several instruments such as the tambura and the tabla which plays the tala. All these instruments when played together give the raga a certain texture, one that can be easily identified. It is a soft, unpredictable (to a certain extent) and sentimental texture that one can hear. A section of raga Maru Bihag clearly shows this. (2: 53)

This texture that is prominent in raga music is very similar to the texture of rock and roll music. In raga music, the main instrument in a sitar (string instrument) and in rock music, a guitar (also a string instrument). There is an accompaniment of the tabla (percussion) and in rick music the drums. There is also another string instrument called the tambura in raga music. This provides a 1-5-5-1 bass line to the raga. This sets the foundation of the music on which the raag develops. It is a plucked string instrument. The bass guitar is a plucked string instrument used very often in rock music. These are all evidence to show that the texture of the two genres of music is very similar to each other. There are also different types of textures in a piece of music such as a monophony, polyphony and homophony. A monophony is music with a single part and includes a single melody. Polyphony consists of two or more simultaneous lines of independent melodies and a homophony is an accompaniment to the melody.

In both rock and roll music and ragas, the piece almost always begins with a monophonic texture and gradually goes into either a polyphonic texture or a homophonic texture.

Link 4: Modes of the scales of Ragas and western music

In western music, a mode refers to a type of scale that is coupled with a set of characteristic melodic behaviors. A mode has is said to have be more affective or have an emotional quality to it. A piece is said to have a " Dorian feel" or a " Lydian flavor." The idea that each mode corresponds to a certain emotion or mood is ancient and it dates all the way back to the early Greek music. This is still used in other cultures as well such as Arabic music and Indian classical music or ragas. The mode that any music is in has a lot to do with what that piece is emotionally trying to convey.

There are seven modes of western music whose scales are related to familiar major and minor keys. These modes are Ionian, Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian, Mixolydian, Aeolian and Locrian.

In classical Hindustani music, the modes are called " Thaats". They always have seven different pitches called " swara", and are the basis for the formation and classification of Ragas in North Indian Classical Music. There are ten basic Thats. Bilawal, Kafi, Bhairavi, Kalyan, Khamaj, Asavani, Bhairav, Marva, Purvi and Todi. However, is a Saptak not a Thaat. The first six are relative to the six modes of the related Western scales. The last four are unique to Indian Music. Bilaual is related to the Ionian C, Kafi is related to Dorian B flat, Bhairavi is related to the Phrygian A flat, Kalyan is related to the Lydian G, Khamaj is related to the Mixolydian F and Asavari is related to the Aeolian E flat. The last four modes as mentioned earlier are unique to Indian classical music. Bhairav as two unique flats which are D flat and A flat, Marva, Purvi and Todi have F sharp in common with ascending number of flats.

An example would be Raag Kamaj. It is related to the Khamaj That and therefore its western relative scale would be the Mixolydian F scale. Similarly, raag Maru Bihag is played on the Kalyan that and therefore its relative Western scale would be the Lydian G.

Words without link 3: 1, 606

Conclusion:

After a thorough analysis of the two genres, Rock and Roll from the Western Culture and Ragas from classical Hindustani music, it is evident that these two have a lot of similarities as well as differences. There is a lot of influence that each genre has given the other. An example of this would be Raga rock which is rock or pop music with a heavy Indian influence in its construction, its timbre or the use of Indian instruments. An explanation for this could be the fact that India was colonized by the British for almost fifty years and therefore an influence of culture was bound to happen. Not only are there cultural influences on the music but there are similarities in the elements of music as well such as the modes and the way both genres heavily rely on improvisation, the texture of both the genres are very similar especially the families of instruments used in both. However there are differences in the music of the two genres, and these differences are the ones that distinguish Ragas and Rock and roll and allows the listener to clearly distinguish the two genres that they are listening to.

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