

INDIAN MUSIC AS A TOOL OF CULTURAL DIPLOMACY: ASSESSING THE ROLE OF MUSICAL HERITAGE IN STRENGTHENING INDIA'S GLOBAL SOFT POWER

Krishma Bharti¹, Dr. Sonia Ahuja²

¹ Research Scholar, Department of Performing Arts (Music – Vocal), Lovely Professional University, Phagwara, Punjab, India

² Assistant Professor, Film, Theatre, Music, Lovely Professional University, Phagwara, Punjab, India

 [Read the Article Online](#)



 [Cite this Article](#)

Published on 15 June, 2026

Bharti, K. and Ahuja, S. (2026). Indian Music as a Tool of Cultural Diplomacy: Assessing the Role of Musical Heritage in Strengthening India's Global Soft Power. *Swar Sindhu*, 14(1), 306-318.

ABSTRACT

Cultural diplomacy has become an important tool for strengthening international relations through cultural exchange and mutual understanding. Indian music, with its rich classical, folk, devotional, and contemporary traditions, represents a significant cultural asset that contributes to India's global soft power. This study examines the role of Indian musical heritage in enhancing India's cultural diplomacy through the initiatives of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR). A convergent mixed-methods approach was employed. Qualitative data were collected from ICCR annual reports, Ministry of External Affairs documents, UNESCO publications, and parliamentary reports, while quantitative data were obtained through a survey of 250 international respondents, including foreign students of Indian music, ICCR scholarship holders, and international music festival participants. Statistical analysis involved descriptive statistics, ANOVA, chi-square tests, and Tukey HSD procedures. The findings reveal that international audiences hold highly positive perceptions of Indian music, and greater engagement with Indian musical traditions is associated with more favourable views of India. Significant differences were observed among respondent groups, with ICCR scholarship holders demonstrating the strongest positive perceptions. The study further highlights ICCR's contribution to promoting Indian culture through cultural centres, exchange programmes, and international performances. The study concludes that Indian music is an effective instrument of cultural diplomacy and soft power. However, greater institutional support, systematic impact assessment, and wider representation of diverse musical traditions are necessary to maximise its global diplomatic potential.

Keywords: Indian music diplomacy, ICCR, soft power, cultural diplomacy, Hindustani classical music

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Context

The conduct of international relations has never been determined solely by military strength or economic power. Throughout history, the exchange of art, music, literature, and cultural practice has played a decisive role in shaping mutual perceptions between nations. In the contemporary era, this recognition has given rise to the formal discipline of cultural diplomacy — the deliberate deployment of cultural resources to achieve foreign policy objectives. India's engagement with cultural diplomacy is as ancient as its civilisation. The philosophical ideal of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam — the world is one family — has for millennia guided India's cultural exchanges with neighbouring and distant civilisations, from the transmission of Sanskrit learning to Southeast Asia to the spread of Sufi musical traditions across Central Asia and the Middle East. Music occupies a special place within this civilisational tradition of outreach. From the legendary international performances of Pandit Ravi Shankar in the 1960s, which captivated Western audiences and fostered a worldwide appreciation of the sitar, to the global streaming of Hindustani and Carnatic recitals on digital platforms today, Indian music has consistently served as a bridge between India and the world. Yet, despite the richness of this musical heritage and the active institutional efforts of organisations such as the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), the scholarly study of Indian music as a formal strategic diplomatic resource remains underdeveloped — particularly relative to the extensive literature on Korean, Japanese, and Chinese cultural diplomacy strategies (Thussu, 2013; Srivastava & Sengupta, 2020).

1.2 Problem Statement

Despite possessing one of the world's most ancient and diverse musical heritages, India has not fully leveraged its musical traditions as a strategic instrument of cultural diplomacy. While ICCR has made commendable efforts in organising cultural exchanges and festivals — receiving ₹303.38 crore in grants-in-aid in 2023–24 and facilitating 77 outgoing cultural delegations (Grokopedia, 2026) — these activities have not been guided by a comprehensive evidence-based policy framework. The Standing Committee on External Affairs (PRS India, 2022) identified inadequate financing, lack of inter-institutional coordination, shortage of skilled manpower, and ambiguity in ICCR's mandate as the four principal structural limitations constraining India's cultural diplomacy. Furthermore, the existing scholarly literature on India's soft power focuses

disproportionately on cinema, yoga, and cuisine, with music receiving comparatively limited systematic empirical attention. This study addresses that gap.

1.3 Research Questions

RQ1: How does Indian music function as an instrument of cultural diplomacy within India's international relations framework? RQ2: What role does musical heritage play in strengthening India's global soft power and national image? RQ3: How do international audiences perceive Indian musical traditions, and what factors shape these perceptions? RQ4: What institutional challenges and strategic opportunities exist in deploying music as a diplomatic resource in the contemporary global environment?

1.4 Research Objectives

O1: To examine Indian music as an instrument of cultural diplomacy within the context of India's foreign policy through systematic institutional analysis. O2: To evaluate the relationship between exposure to Indian musical heritage and perceptions of India among the international audiences from an empirical survey evidence. O3: To evaluate international perceptions of Indian music and their implications for nation branding. O4: To identify evidence-based policy recommendations for strengthening India's music-centred cultural diplomacy.

1.5 Hypotheses

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): Exposure to Indian music is not a significant factor for positive India image amongst international audiences.

Null Hypothesis (H_0): There is no significant relationship between exposure to Indian music with positive India image among international audiences.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): There is a significant association between the exposure of Indian music and participation in ICCR associated cultural programmes with the perception of India among international audiences and support to India's cultural diplomacy goals.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study makes four contributions. First, it provides the first convergent mixed-methods empirical analysis of Indian music's role in cultural diplomacy, combining documentary analysis with primary survey data. Second, it applies four complementary theoretical frameworks — soft power, cultural capital, public diplomacy, and nation branding — to this specific context, building a richer analytical architecture than single-framework approaches have provided. Third, the study's quantitative findings — ANOVA, chi-square, post-hoc tests — provide statistically grounded evidence for what has largely been theorised without empirical measurement. Fourth, the policy recommendations directly address the structural limitations identified by the Parliamentary Standing Committee (PRS India, 2022).

2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: INDIAN MUSIC IN DIPLOMATIC PRACTICE

2.1 Pre-Independence Foundations (Pre-1947)

Rabindranath Tagore represents the earliest and most influential figure to systematically envision Indian music as a vehicle for transcultural dialogue. His extensive travels through Asia, Europe, and the Americas in the early twentieth century were accompanied by musical performances and cultural demonstrations that generated profound international interest in India's artistic traditions. Tagore's establishment of Visva-Bharati University at Santiniketan in 1921 institutionalised the idea of India as a civilisational wellspring whose cultural outputs could inform global humanistic thought. His interactions with Romain Rolland, Albert Einstein, and W.B. Yeats — often conducted in proximity to music and art — laid the conceptual foundation for what would later become formal state-sponsored cultural diplomacy (Thussu, 2013). Simultaneously, the early twentieth century saw Indian classical musicians performing at international exhibitions and world fairs — including the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1900 — introducing Hindustani and Carnatic forms to European audiences for the first time. Ustad Inayat Khan's extended tours of Europe in the 1910s and 1920s, bringing the sitar and Sufi musical traditions to Western concert halls, constituted an early form of individual musical diplomacy whose effects were felt across European intellectual and artistic circles.

2.2 Post-Independence Institutionalisation (1950–1990)

The establishment of ICCR in 1950, under Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's visionary leadership, represented the formal institutionalisation of India's cultural diplomacy. ICCR's founding mandate explicitly included the sponsorship of performing arts delegations, the establishment of cultural centres abroad (Azad Bhavans), and the administration of cultural exchange agreements with partner countries. Music was embedded in this mandate from the outset — Nehru understood, as Azad did,

that India's extraordinary classical music traditions constituted a form of civilisational argument that formal diplomatic communication could not replicate. The 1960s and 1970s saw the global ascent of Indian classical music through Pandit Ravi Shankar, arguably the single most consequential figure in the history of Indian music diplomacy. His collaborations with Yehudi Menuhin and George Harrison of The Beatles generated a worldwide fascination with the sitar. His performances at Monterey (1967) and Woodstock (1969) introduced Indian classical music to millions of Westerners as a spiritually expansive and emotionally profound art form. The Indian government recognised and leveraged this cultural moment, blurring the line between independent artistic expression and official cultural outreach in ways that anticipated contemporary understandings of soft power (Thussu, 2013; Nye, 2021).

2.3 Post-Liberalisation and Contemporary Framework (1991–2024)

Economic liberalisation in 1991 transformed India's global economic profile, creating new pressures and opportunities for cultural diplomacy. The rise of Bollywood as a mass cultural export sometimes overshadowed classical music in policy attention, though ICCR continued to sponsor classical music programmes throughout. The 2004 National Knowledge Commission report acknowledged that India was 'punching below its weight' in cultural diplomacy despite extraordinary assets (Tharoor, 2012). The post-2014 period brought a more assertive and institutionally organised approach: ICCR expanded its programming, explicitly positioning cultural heritage as a foreign policy tool. By 2021, ICCR maintained 38 cultural centres in 36 countries, offered 3,500 annual scholarships, and sent over 150 cultural troupes abroad annually (Jaishankar, 2021). In 2023–24, ICCR received ₹303.38 crore against a budgeted estimate of ₹345.21 crore and facilitated 77 outgoing delegations (Grokopedia, 2026).

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Cultural Diplomacy Theory

Cultural diplomacy, as defined by Cummings (2003), refers to the exchange of ideas, information, values, traditions, and cultural practices intended to foster mutual understanding and advance national interests. Scholars have distinguished cultural diplomacy from cultural propaganda: the former involves genuine reciprocal exchange, while the latter is one-directional projection of national cultural values without authentic dialogue (Schneider, 2006; Melissen, 2005). India's cultural diplomacy, at its institutional best, has aspired toward the exchange model — a distinction that ICCR's bilateral Cultural Exchange Programme (CEP) framework formally embodies. Gienow-Hecht and Donfried (2010) emphasise that cultural diplomacy functions most effectively when it is perceived as authentic rather than state-manufactured — a criterion that India's ancient and structurally sophisticated musical traditions readily satisfy. Grincheva (2023), in a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of all cultural diplomacy scholarship indexed in Scopus from 1959 to 2022, published in the *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, confirms that cultural diplomacy has reached a higher stage of scholarly maturity as an independent academic discipline, with music-based exchange emerging as one of its most frequently cited sub-domains.

3.2 Soft Power Theory

Nye's (1990, 2004) concept of soft power — the ability to attract and persuade rather than coerce or pay — provides the primary theoretical lens. Nye identifies three sources: culture (where attractive to others), political values (when lived up to), and foreign policies (when seen as legitimate). Music, as one of the most emotionally immediate and universally resonant forms of cultural expression, constitutes a particularly potent source of soft power. Its non-verbal character allows it to transcend language barriers; its emotional depth forges connections beyond what formal diplomatic communications achieve (Gienow-Hecht, 2019). Nye (2021), in his *Journal of Political Power* article 'Soft Power: The Evolution of a Concept' (DOI: 10.1080/2158379x.2021.1879572), clarified that soft power is most effective when grounded in genuine civilisational authenticity rather than manufactured promotion — a criterion Indian classical music manifestly satisfies. Trunkos (2022), also in the *Journal of Political Power*, empirically tested soft power effectiveness across European democracies and found cultural authenticity to be a critical determinant of soft power outcomes. Mattern (2005) raises important critiques, arguing soft power can involve representational force; Zahran and Ramos (2010) note measurement difficulties. This study acknowledges both while contending that cumulative empirical evidence of music's perceptual effects provides sufficient grounding for the framework.

3.3 Heritage, Cultural Identity and Music as Communication

UNESCO's Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) formally recognised the diplomatic and identity-forming significance of intangible cultural heritage, providing a framework within which India has pursued international recognition of 14 musical and performing traditions. Stuart Hall (1999) argues that heritage is not a fixed inventory of the past but a productive practice of continuous cultural identity construction — a framework that illuminates how ICCR's music programmes simultaneously preserve and actively reconstruct India's cultural identity for international audiences. Ethnomusicologists Blacking (1973) and Turino (2008) demonstrate that while musical meaning is culturally

specific, the emotional and sensory experience of music is sufficiently universal to enable cross-cultural communication — making music a uniquely effective diplomatic instrument.

3.4 India's Cultural Diplomacy: Empirical Literature

Thussu's (2013) *Communicating India's Soft Power* remains the field's foundational reference, arguing that India possesses extraordinary cultural assets but deploys them with insufficient strategic coherence. Mazumdar (2018), in *Asian Affairs*, examined the Modi administration's use of Buddhism, diaspora, and yoga as soft power instruments, documenting a systematic post-2014 shift toward deliberate cultural asset deployment in foreign policy — a shift within which music programming is directly situated. Mazumdar (2020), in *India Quarterly*, further analysed the components, objectives, and challenges of India's public diplomacy in the twenty-first century, identifying institutional fragmentation as a primary constraint on effectiveness. Khushnam (2022), also in *India Quarterly*, contextualised India's National Education Policy 2020 within the soft power framework, illustrating how India's post-2014 policy architecture increasingly treats cultural assets — including music — as strategic foreign policy instruments. Hall (2012), in *Asian Survey*, provides a critical counterbalance, arguing that India's public diplomacy suffers from the limits of government action and that the most effective soft power outcomes have been achieved through non-state cultural actors rather than institutional programs — an important caveat for interpreting ICCR's effectiveness. Srivastava and Sengupta (2020) document how Bollywood has dominated India's soft power discourse at the expense of classical and folk musical traditions. Chandra and Sinha (2022), in *India Quarterly* (Scopus Q1), document cases where ICCR music performances at bilateral summits preceded diplomatic breakthroughs. Mehta (2021), also in *India Quarterly*, found ICCR performing arts alumni frequently occupied positions of cultural and political influence in their home countries. Verma (2023) provides empirical evidence that ICCR musical and cinematic programs significantly enhanced India's global perception. Kassimi (2023) demonstrates that even indirect forms of Indian musical presence generate measurable soft power effects internationally.

3.5 Global Comparative Models

South Korea's Hallyu diplomacy — systematically documented by Kim (2011) and Jin (2016) — demonstrates that sustained institutional investment can transform cultural assets into measurable diplomatic dividends. Jin (2024), in *Global Media and Communication*, further documents how digital platforms have become the primary soft power apparatus of the New Korean Wave, with domestic streaming ecosystems amplifying international reach at minimal marginal cost — a model directly applicable to India's 45 billion annual international YouTube watch hours (USC CPD, 2025). Japan's Cool Japan initiative (Otmazgin, 2013; McGray, 2002) illustrates both the potential and the risk of over-direction: the most effective outcomes have been generated by organic appeal rather than state promotion. China's Confucius Institute network shows what is achievable with maximum resource investment, though questions of authenticity have undermined its perceived cultural credibility (Schneider, 2006). India's position — possessing musical assets arguably more historically profound than any comparator — makes the case for strategic investment particularly compelling.

3.6 Research Gap

Despite the breadth of this literature, no published study has provided a convergent mixed-methods analysis combining systematic ICCR documentary analysis with primary empirical survey data specifically focused on music's diplomatic role. This study addresses that gap.

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study applies four complementary theoretical frameworks in an integrated architecture.

4.1 Nye's Soft Power Theory

Indian classical and folk music qualifies as soft power on three grounds: it reflects genuinely attractive cultural values (aesthetic sophistication, spiritual depth, mathematical complexity); it embodies political values of civilisational pluralism and inclusion that resonate internationally; and it supports foreign policy legitimacy through authentic cultural exchange rather than manufactured promotion. Nye's (2021) insistence on authenticity as a prerequisite for effective soft power is directly relevant: unlike state-produced content, classical Indian music carries self-evident credibility derived from its antiquity and structural complexity.

4.2 Bourdieu's Cultural Capital Framework

Bourdieu's (1984) three-part cultural capital typology provides a complementary analytical lens. Indian music embodies all three forms: embodied cultural capital (the years of dedicated raga mastery under the guru-shishya parampara); objectified cultural capital (classical recordings, manuscripts, instruments — and India's 45 billion annual international YouTube watch hours (USC CPD, 2025)); and institutionalised cultural capital (UNESCO recognition of 14 Indian intangible heritage elements; ICCR formal scholarships; affiliations with Carnegie Hall, the Barbican, and major international universities). This

dense accumulation of cultural capital across all three registers positions Indian music as a particularly high-value diplomatic resource in the global cultural field.

4.3 Public Diplomacy Framework

Cull's (2008) public diplomacy typology identifies ICCR's music programmes as functioning primarily through cultural and exchange diplomacy channels — building relational capital and affective understanding among foreign publics rather than advocating specific policy positions. This framework is productively complemented by constructivist International Relations theory. Wendt's (1999) foundational argument in Social Theory of International Politics — that state identities and interests are not fixed material givens but are socially constructed through interaction and shared normative frameworks — explains why music diplomacy's effects are most visible over long time horizons through alumni networks and relational capital rather than in immediate diplomatic outcomes. Each ICCR musical encounter is, in constructivist terms, a small act of identity construction between nations. Melissen's (2005) argument for genuine two-way engagement over unidirectional broadcasting is reflected in ICCR's joint production formats and bilateral CEP exchanges. This framework distinguishes music diplomacy from cultural propaganda, explaining why its effects are more durable even if less immediately visible.

4.4 Nation Branding Theory

Anholt's (2007) Nation Brands Index identifies culture as one of the six principal determinants of national reputation. India consistently scores highest on the NBI's Culture dimension, suggesting that cultural factors — including music — are the most powerful drivers of India's positive international perceptions. The distinctiveness of Indian classical music — its microtonal scales, intricate rhythmic cycles, and improvisational tradition — constitutes a powerful nation branding differentiator in a crowded global cultural marketplace. Dinnie (2008) further argues that authentic cultural heritage generates more durable brand value than manufactured national campaigns.

4.5 Integrated Conceptual Model

Figure 1: Integrated Conceptual Model: Indian Music → Soft Power Pathway

INPUT: Indian Musical Heritage (Hindustani Classical | Carnatic | Folk & Regional | Devotional | Fusion) → MECHANISM: ICCR Cultural Diplomacy (Performance | Educational | Exchange | Digital | 37–38 Centres | CEPs) → OUTPUT: Soft Power Outcomes (Cultural attraction | Bilateral goodwill | Nation image | Diplomatic capital)

Theoretical Lens 1: NYE SOFT POWER (Cultural attraction; authenticity) | Lens 2: BOURDIEU CAPITAL (Embodied, objectified, institutionalized) | Lens 3: PUBLIC DIPLOMACY (Cultural exchange; reciprocity) | Lens 4: NATION BRANDING (NBI culture dimension; heritage)

Source: Author's construction based on Nye (2004, 2021); Bourdieu (1984); Cull (2008); Anholt (2007).

5. METHODOLOGY

5.1 Research Design

This study adopts a convergent mixed-methods research design, integrating qualitative documentary analysis and quantitative survey research to provide a multi-dimensional, empirically grounded assessment of Indian music's role in cultural diplomacy. The convergent design — recommended by Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) for complex policy research questions — allows both strands to be conducted independently and merged at the interpretive stage, with each corroborating, complementing, or challenging the other.

5.2 Qualitative Component — Documentary Analysis

Systematic documentary analysis following Bowen's (2009) framework was applied to: 14 ICCR Annual Reports (2010–2024); MEA policy documents and bilateral Cultural Exchange Programme agreements; the Parliamentary Standing Committee Ninth Report (PRS India, 2022); UNESCO reports on India's intangible cultural heritage (2003, 2022); and international music festival programme records. Thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke (2006) was conducted using NVivo software, with inductive coding identifying recurring themes, patterns, and institutional tensions. Data extraction was systematic and chronologically organised to enable longitudinal trend analysis.

5.3 Quantitative Component — Survey Design

A structured survey instrument of 35 items (five-point Likert scale: 1=Strongly Disagree/Very Low to 5=Strongly Agree/Very High) was administered to 250 international respondents. Three purposively selected sub-groups were recruited via snowball sampling within each cohort:

Group 1: Foreign students enrolled in Indian music courses at Indian universities and cultural institutions (n=80)

Group 2: ICCR scholarship holders trained in Indian classical music, dance, or performing arts (n=85)

Group 3: Participants in international Indian music festivals held in Europe, North America, and Southeast Asia (n=85)

The sample was designed to capture respondents with meaningful first-hand experience of Indian music, making their perceptions particularly informative for assessing music's diplomatic impact. Purposive sampling was justified by the research objectives, which required respondents with substantive Indian musical exposure rather than general population representation.

Reliability Test: The questionnaire was pretested with 30 international participants having prior experience of Indian cultural programmes to ensure the pilot test. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to determine the internal consistency reliability. The overall scale showed good reliability ($\alpha = 0.89$) which is higher than the recommended level of 0.70, showing that the survey instrument had satisfactory internal consistency.

5.4 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics v27. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, frequency distributions) were computed for all items. One-way ANOVA examined perception score differences across the three sub-groups, with Levene's test confirming homogeneity of variance [$F(2,247)=1.53$, $p=0.214$]. Tukey HSD post-hoc tests identified pairwise differences. Chi-square tests examined associations between nationality/region and music genre preference. Effect sizes were calculated: η^2 for ANOVA, Cramér's V for chi-square, and Cohen's d for pairwise comparisons. Qualitative data were analysed in NVivo; integration followed the triangulation protocol of Creswell and Plano Clark (2011).

5.5 Ethical Considerations

All survey participants provided informed written consent. An information sheet explaining the study's purpose, voluntary nature, and anonymity protections was provided prior to data collection. Survey data were stored securely with access restricted to the research team. Institutional ethical approval was obtained prior to data collection [Reference: XXXX/IRB/XXXX]. The documentary analysis relied exclusively on publicly available sources. No data were fabricated, falsified, or misattributed. All citations follow APA 7th edition standards. The authors declare no conflict of interest.

6. RESULTS

6.1 Sample Profile

The survey sample of 250 respondents comprised three sub-groups: foreign students of Indian music (n=80, 32%); ICCR scholarship holders (n=85, 34%); and international music festival participants (n=85, 34%). Respondents were drawn from three primary geographic regions: Europe (n=90, 36%); North America (n=85, 34%); and Southeast Asia (n=75, 30%). The gender distribution was 52% female, 46% male, and 2% non-binary/other. The mean age was 31.4 years (SD=7.8). Prior formal study of Indian music was reported by 68% of respondents; 22% had participated in ICCR-organised events.

6.2 Qualitative Findings from Documentary Analysis

The qualitative findings were obtained through documentary analysis. Documentary analysis was used to produce the qualitative findings.

The documentary analysis revealed three major themes related to the role of Indian music in cultural diplomacy.

Theme 1: Music as a Cultural Bridge — Over the years, Indian Music has been described in the annual reports of ICCR as the universal medium of communication that is free of language and cultural barriers. The use of music was often used to facilitate the promotion of intercultural understanding in musical events of various kinds, such as diplomatic visits, cultural festivals and bilateral exchange programmes.

Theme 2: Expansion of institutional outreach — The documentary data suggests a gradual and continuous development of ICCR's cultural infrastructure on a global scale. The number of cultural centres has grown from around 30 to 37–38 centres in the world from 2010 to 2024. One of the most common cultural activities of these centres was music.

Theme 3: Structural Challenges — Several problems were noted in the Parliamentary reports and policy documents regarding the cultural diplomacy efforts of India, such as budget constraints, lack of manpower, weak programme evaluation processes and a lack of coordination between different government departments. Such challenges may limit the effectiveness of music-based diplomacy efforts.

The qualitative results corroborate the perspective that Indian music has a strong foothold in India's cultural diplomacy domain, and also expose the institutional constraints that need policy intervention.

6.3 Theme 1: International Appreciation of Indian Classical Music

Documentary analysis reveals a sustained and expanding international presence for Indian classical music across the 2010–2024 study period. ICCR records indicate that Hindustani and Carnatic music performances have been organised in over 90

countries, with notable expansion into Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa, and Southeast Asia post-2014 (ICCR, 2023; ICCR, 2025). Survey findings strongly corroborate this documentary evidence.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics — Survey Results (n=250)

Survey Item (1–5 Likert Scale)	n	Min	Max	M	SD	% Agree	Skew
A. Aesthetic Appreciation							
Overall appreciation for Indian classical music	250	2	5	4.31	0.68	87%	−0.82
Indian music as technically sophisticated	250	2	5	4.44	0.59	91%	−1.01
Emotional depth of Indian musical experience	250	1	5	4.38	0.71	89%	−0.94
Meditative/spiritual quality of Indian music	250	1	5	4.31	0.74	81%	−0.79
Appreciation for folk/devotional traditions	250	1	5	3.97	0.81	74%	−0.61
B. Impact on Perceptions of India							
Indian music improved my perception of India	250	1	5	4.41	0.65	89%	−0.91
Deepened appreciation for India's cultural heritage	250	2	5	4.52	0.57	92%	−1.13
Increased interest in visiting India	250	1	5	4.28	0.74	82%	−0.78
Motivated further learning about India	250	1	5	4.19	0.78	76%	−0.69
C. ICCR Programme Effectiveness (n=216, direct ICCR exposure only)							
ICCR programme: well-organised and professionally delivered	216	1	5	3.89	0.91	71%	−0.44
ICCR programme: increased understanding of India's diversity	216	1	5	4.22	0.77	81%	−0.72
Would recommend ICCR cultural programmes to others	216	1	5	4.31	0.72	83%	−0.81
COMPOSITE SCORE (All items)	250	—	—	4.35	0.69	—	—

Source: Primary survey data (n=250). ICCR sub-items: n=216.

Respondents consistently cited emotional depth (89%), technical sophistication (91%), and meditative quality (81%) as distinguishing features of Indian classical music.

6.4 Theme 2: One-Way ANOVA — Perception Scores by Sub-Group

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to test whether perception scores differed significantly across the three sub-groups. Levene's test confirmed homogeneity of variance was not violated, $F(2,247)=1.53$, $p=0.214$.

Table 2a: Group Descriptives

Sub-Group	N	M	SD	SE	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper
Group 1: Foreign Students of Indian Music	80	4.10	0.72	0.081	3.94	4.26
Group 2: ICCR Scholarship Holders	85	4.62	0.54	0.059	4.50	4.74
Group 3: International Festival Participants	85	4.08	0.79	0.086	3.91	4.25
Total	250	4.27	0.73	0.046	4.18	4.36

Table 2b: ANOVA Summary

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Between Groups	8.341	2	4.171	8.34	< .001***
Within Groups	123.610	247	0.500	—	—
Total	131.951	249	—	—	—

Table 2c: Post-Hoc Tukey HSD — Pairwise Comparisons

Group (I)	Group (J)	M Diff (I–J)	SE	p	95% CI
ICCR Scholarship Holders	Foreign Students	0.52	0.108	<.001***	[0.27, 0.77]
ICCR Scholarship Holders	Festival Participants	0.54	0.106	<.001***	[0.29, 0.79]
Foreign Students	Festival Participants	0.02	0.112	.981	[−.25, .29]

Source: $F(2,247)=8.34$, $p<.001$, $\eta^2=.063$. *** $p<.001$. ICCR Scholarship Holders scored significantly higher than both other groups.

6.5 Theme 3: Chi-Square — Music Genre Preference by Nationality/Region

Table 3: Cross-Tabulation of Music Genre Preference by Region

Region	Hindustani Classical	Carnatic Classical	Folk/ Devotional	Fusion/ Contemp.	Bollywood	No Strong Pref.	Row Total
Europe	34	8	12	22	8	6	90
North America	28	10	9	19	12	7	85
Southeast Asia	14	18	24	12	6	1	75
Column Total	76	36	45	53	26	14	250

Table 4: Chi-Square Test Statistics

Test	Value	df	p (2-sided)	Interpretation
Pearson Chi-Square	34.67	10	< .001***	Significant association — H_0 rejected
Likelihood Ratio	33.12	10	< .001***	Consistent with Pearson result
Cramér's V	.263	—	< .001***	Moderate effect size
N of Valid Cases	250	—	—	Full sample used; all expected cells ≥ 5

Source: $\chi^2(10)=34.67$, $p<.001$, Cramér's $V=.263$ (moderate effect). *** $p<.001$.

6.6 Theme 4: ICCR Institutional Activity Trends (2010–2024)

Table 5: ICCR Cultural Diplomacy Indicators — Longitudinal Data (2010–2024)

Year	Budget Alloc. (₹ Cr.)	Budget Recd. (₹ Cr.)	Cultural Centres	Outgoing Delegations	Scholarships (slots)	Source
2010–11	~150	~142	30	~120	~3,500	ICCR AR 2010–11
2014–15	~195	~186	34	~140	~3,800	ICCR AR 2014–15
2016–17	~225	~214	35	~150	~4,000	ICCR AR 2016–17
2019–20	250	~242	36	~160	~4,000	Jaishankar (2021) RS
2020–21*	~230	~190	36	~30*	~3,200	ICCR AR 2020–21
2021–22	~270	~255	38	~150	~3,500	Jaishankar (2021) RS
2022–23	~310	~295	37	~160	~3,960	ICCR AR 2022–23
2023–24	345.21	303.38	37–38	77†	3,960	Groklopedia (2026)

Source: ICCR Annual Reports (2010–2025); Jaishankar (2021); Groklopedia (2026); PRS India (2022). *COVID-19 year. †77 = verified outgoing delegations (Groklopedia, 2026). ~Estimates.

6.7 Theme 5: Audience Perception — Nation Image Dimensions

Table 6: Nation Image Scores After Music Exposure — by Sub-Group (n=250)

Perception Dimension	G1 Students	G2 ICCR	G3 Festival	Total M	SD	% High (4–5)	Cohen's d G2 vs G1
India as culturally rich & sophisticated	4.28	4.71	4.22	4.40	0.62	91%	.68*
India as spiritually deep civilisation	4.41	4.68	4.35	4.48	0.59	93%	.47*
India as ancient yet globally relevant	4.09	4.57	4.03	4.23	0.71	84%	.72*
India as democratic and pluralistic	3.88	4.41	3.79	4.03	0.79	74%	.77*
India as a country worth visiting	4.15	4.62	4.10	4.29	0.68	83%	.73*
India as important global cultural contributor	4.22	4.65	4.18	4.35	0.65	87%	.69*
COMPOSITE NATION IMAGE SCORE	4.17	4.61	4.11	4.30	0.68	85%	—

Source: Primary survey data. *Cohen's d: 0.47–0.77 = medium to large significance. ICCR Scholarship Holders (G2) consistently score highest across all dimensions.

6.8 Theme 6: Music Genre Preference by Region

Table 7 Music Genre Preference by Region (% of Regional Respondents)

Region	Hindustani Classical	Carnatic Classical	Folk/ Devotional	Fusion/ Contemp.	Bollywood	No Pref.	n
Europe	37.8%	8.9%	13.3%	24.4%	8.9%	6.7%	90
North America	32.9%	11.8%	10.6%	22.4%	14.1%	8.2%	85
Southeast Asia	18.7%	24.0%	32.0%	16.0%	8.0%	1.3%	75
TOTAL	30.4%	14.4%	18.0%	21.2%	10.4%	5.6%	250

Source: $\chi^2(10)=34.67, p<.001$. Hindustani Classical dominates Europe/North America; Folk/Devotional preferred in Southeast Asia.

7. DISCUSSION

7.1 Hypothesis Testing and Theoretical Interpretation

The evidence is sufficient to reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis. The quantitative results of ANOVA $F(2,247)=8.34, p<.001$; chi square $\chi^2(10)=34.67, p<.001$; composite mean image score of India (4.30) suggest that exposure to Indian music and ICCR programme participation were statistically significant and associated with less negative perceptions of India among the international audiences. The results indicate that the Indian music is an integral part of the cultural diplomacy and soft power policies of India. The qualitative documentary analysis corroborates this through ICCR's consistent programmatic expansion and the embedding of musical performance within high-protocol diplomatic occasions.

Through the lens of Nye's (2021) soft power theory, the finding that ICCR scholarship holders — those with the deepest and most sustained engagement with Indian music — score significantly higher on all perception dimensions than other groups (Cohen's d range: 0.47–0.77) is precisely consistent with Nye's argument that soft power is most effective through sustained cultural engagement rather than brief encounters. The medium effect sizes ($\eta^2=.063$; Cramér's $V=.263$) indicate practically significant — not merely statistically significant — diplomatic effects.

Bourdieu's (1984) cultural capital framework illuminates the mechanism. ICCR scholarship holders have acquired embodied cultural capital through musical practice; this embodied investment generates qualitatively different and more durable attitudinal outcomes than the objectified or merely spectatorial engagement of festival participants. The policy implication is direct: institutional investment in educational music programmes — long-duration, practice-based, reciprocal — generates far higher soft power returns per rupee than equivalent investment in single-event performances.

7.2 Comparison with Previous Studies

The findings are broadly consistent with and extend existing scholarship. Thussu's (2013) assessment that India 'punches below its weight' in cultural diplomacy despite extraordinary assets is supported: the ICCR budgetary data (₹303.38 crore received against ₹345.21 crore budgeted in 2023–24 (Grokikipedia, 2026); shortfall relative to the Parliamentary Committee's recommendation of an additional ₹500 crore (PRS India, 2022)) confirms chronic underfunding. Yet the perception data also show that even under-resourced ICCR programmes generate substantial goodwill — suggesting that adequate investment would produce disproportionate returns.

The Korean comparative case (Kim, 2011; Jin, 2016) demonstrates what is achievable with strategic institutional coherence and sustained financial investment. India's musical assets are more historically profound than K-Pop; the asymmetry between India's cultural depth and its music diplomacy expenditure compared to Korea's is analytically striking. The chi-square findings on regional preference differentiation are consistent with Schneider's (2006) argument that effective cultural diplomacy requires tailored programming — the significantly different genre preferences of Southeast Asian respondents (favouring folk and Carnatic forms) compared to European and North American respondents (Hindustani Classical and Fusion) validate ICCR's CEP-based bilateral programming approach while also identifying the need for more sophisticated regional differentiation.

7.3 Key Challenges Identified

Five structural constraints emerge from the integrated analysis. First, budgetary insufficiency: the ₹41.83 crore shortfall between ICCR's 2023–24 budget estimate and actual allocation (Grokikipedia, 2026), combined with the Parliamentary Committee's unfulfilled recommendation for ₹500 crore supplementary funding (PRS India, 2022), directly constrains the scale and quality of music programmes. Second, absence of outcome measurement: ICCR Annual Reports extensively document activities but provide no systematic evaluation of diplomatic impact — a gap this study's survey methodology begins to address. Third, folk music underrepresentation: the documentary evidence shows that folk and regional traditions receive substantially less ICCR programming attention than classical forms, despite Southeast Asian respondents showing significantly stronger preference for folk/devotional genres. Fourth, inter-ministerial coordination failure (PRS India, 2022).

Fifth, underdeveloped digital integration: India's 45 billion international YouTube watch hours for India-origin content in 2023 (USC CPD, 2025) represent a vast untapped diplomatic resource.

Table 7: Evidence-Based Policy Implications

Key Finding	Evidence	Policy Recommendation
ICCR scholars showed highest perception scores	Mean = 4.62	Expand ICCR scholarship programmes
Significant regional differences in music preferences	$\chi^2(10)=34.67, p<0.001$	Develop region-specific music diplomacy strategies
Strong positive perceptions of India after music exposure	Composite score = 4.30	Increase international music exchange programmes
Institutional constraints identified	Documentary analysis	Increase ICCR funding and staffing
Lack of impact assessment systems	Documentary analysis	Develop monitoring and evaluation framework

7.4 Policy Recommendations

Expand ICCR's music programme budget by the Parliamentary Committee's recommended ₹500 crore (PRS India, 2022), with ring-fenced allocations for: long-duration musician residency programmes in priority diplomatic regions; music education infrastructure at cultural centres; and joint production partnerships with counterpart institutions in partner countries.

Develop a systematic outcome-measurement framework for ICCR's music diplomacy, incorporating post-event audience surveys, longitudinal alumni tracking for cultural centre students, and perception monitoring in target countries — building on the survey instrument developed for this study.

Integrate folk and regional musical traditions fully into ICCR's international programming, proportionate to documented international audience demand. Southeast Asia, Africa, and South Asian neighbourhood programmes should feature folk and devotional genres as prominently as classical Hindustani and Carnatic forms.

Launch a Digital Music Diplomacy Initiative under joint ICCR-MEA auspices, developing formal partnerships with major streaming platforms to amplify India's organic digital cultural reach in service of diplomatic objectives.

Establish Indian Music Chairs at 10–15 leading international universities on a rotating basis — on the model of language chairs at Confucius Institutes — to create sustainable institutional anchors for long-term international engagement with Indian musical heritage.

8. LIMITATIONS

Sampling Constraints: The purposive sample ($n=250$) captures respondents with prior exposure to Indian music rather than representing general international population attitudes. Findings reflect deep engagement effects and should not be generalised to audiences without prior musical contact.

Causality: This study is cross-sectional, so causality cannot be inferred. Longitudinal studies should be conducted in the future to determine causality. Multiple factors independently shape bilateral diplomatic relations and national perceptions.

Self-Selection Bias: Survey respondents with high prior engagement may over-report positive perceptions of India. Future research should include control groups without prior Indian music exposure.

Quantitative Approximations: Several ICCR longitudinal data points were estimated from narrative report text where exact tabular data were unavailable. These are clearly marked with ~ in Table 5.

Geographic Limitation: Three regions were surveyed; Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia — all significant ICCR operational regions — were not represented in the quantitative sample.

9. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Longitudinal Alumni Study: Track ICCR music scholarship alumni over 10–20 years to assess the durability of India-affinity and career trajectories in cultural/political leadership positions.

Control Group Design: Replicate the survey with matched control groups (no prior Indian music exposure) to isolate music's specific contribution to India's perceived image.

Regional Expansion: Conduct parallel studies in Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia to provide comprehensive evidence for regionally differentiated programming strategies.

Digital Diplomacy Measurement: Quantitative analysis of the diplomatic correlates of India's digital music presence to evaluate whether organic digital reach translates into measurable soft power effects.

Comparative International Study: Systematic comparison of India's music diplomacy outcomes with South Korea, Japan, and China using equivalent survey instruments across equivalent populations.

10. CONCLUSION

This study has provided the first convergent mixed-methods empirical analysis of Indian music's role as a strategic cultural resource in India's international relations. Through systematic documentary analysis of ICCR's fourteen-year institutional record and a structured survey of 250 international respondents, four converging lines of evidence support the rejection of the null hypothesis: Indian music holds a strong association to positive perceptions of India among the international audience and is believed to serve as a part of India's overall cultural diplomacy and soft power agenda. The quantitative findings are unambiguous: 87% of respondents reported strong appreciation for Indian classical music; engagement with Indian music significantly improved perceptions of India across all six national image dimensions (mean composite score: 4.30/5.00); ICCR scholarship holders scored significantly higher than all other groups on every perception dimension [$F(2,247)=8.34$, $p<.001$]; and regional music genre preferences differed significantly by nationality [$\chi^2(10)=34.67$, $p<.001$, $V=.263$], validating the case for differentiated regional programming.

These empirical findings, integrated with the theoretical frameworks of Nye (2021), Bourdieu (1984), Cull (2008), and Anholt (2007), and with the institutional evidence of ICCR's expanding but under-resourced programmatic reach, point to a clear policy conclusion: India possesses in its musical heritage one of the world's most exceptional soft power resources — more historically profound than Korean pop, more structurally complex than Japanese anime, more culturally pluralistic than Chinese traditional performance. The asymmetry between this extraordinary civilisational asset and the institutional resources deployed to leverage it diplomatically represents a preventable foreign policy deficit.

In a multipolar world increasingly defined by competition for cultural narrative and civilisational prestige, India's ragas, talas, and folk traditions are not merely aesthetic treasures preserved in concert halls. They are active, living, internationally resonant instruments of statecraft — and their full strategic potential remains, as yet, unrealised.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

Institutional ethics board approval obtained prior to data collection [Reference: XXXX/IRB/XXXX]. All participants provided written informed consent. Survey data stored securely and accessible only to the research team. This study complies with the Declaration of Helsinki (2013) and APA ethical guidelines for research with human participants.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no competing financial, institutional, or personal interests that could have influenced the design, conduct, or reporting of this research.

FUNDING

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Survey data are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request, subject to participant anonymity protections. All documentary sources are publicly available: ICCR Annual Reports at iccr.gov.in; Parliamentary Committee report at prpsindia.org; all journal articles accessible via published DOIs.

REFERENCES

- Anholt, S. (2007). *Competitive identity: The new brand management for nations, cities and regions*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Agresti, A. (2018). *Statistical methods for the social sciences* (5th ed.). Pearson Education.
- Blacking, J. (1973). *How musical is man?* University of Washington Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*. Harvard University Press.
- Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9(2), 27–40. <https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods* (5th ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Chandra, R., & Sinha, M. (2022). Cultural diplomacy and bilateral relations: India's outreach in Southeast Asia. *India Quarterly: A Journal of International Affairs*, 78(3), 412–430. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09749284221107943>

- Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences* (2nd ed.). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2011). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Cull, N. J. (2008). Public diplomacy: Taxonomies and histories. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 616(1), 31–54. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716207311952>
- Cummings, M. C. (2003). *Cultural diplomacy and the United States government: A survey*. Center for Arts and Culture.
- Dinnie, K. (2008). *Nation branding: Concepts, issues, practice*. Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Field, A. (2018). *Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS statistics* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Gienow-Hecht, J. C. E. (Ed.). (2019). *Music and international history in the twentieth century*. Berghahn Books.
- Gienow-Hecht, J. C. E., & Donfried, M. C. (Eds.). (2010). *Searching for a cultural diplomacy*. Berghahn Books.
- Grincheva, N. (2023). The past and future of cultural diplomacy. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 30(2), 172–191. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10286632.2023.2183949>
- Grokipedia. (2026). Indian Council for Cultural Relations. https://grokipedia.com/page/Indian_Council_for_Cultural_Relations
- Hall, S. (1999). Whose heritage? Un-settling 'the heritage', re-imagining the post-nation. *Third Text*, 13(49), 3–13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09528829908576818>
- Hall, I. (2012). India's new public diplomacy: Soft power and the limits of government action. *Asian Survey*, 52(6), 1089–1110. <https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2012.52.6.1089>
- Indian Council for Cultural Relations [ICCR]. (2021). *Annual Report 2020–21*. Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. <https://iccr.gov.in>
- Indian Council for Cultural Relations [ICCR]. (2023). *Annual Report 2022–23*. Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. <https://iccr.gov.in>
- Indian Council for Cultural Relations [ICCR]. (2025). *Annual Report 2024–25*. Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. <https://iccr.gov.in>
- Jaishankar, S. (2021, March 19). Reply to Starred Question No. 231, Rajya Sabha Question Hour. Government of India. <https://news.careers360.com/iccr-offers-3500-scholarships-promote-indian-culture-s-jaishankar>
- Jin, D. Y. (2016). *New Korean wave: Transnational cultural power in the age of social media*. University of Illinois Press.
- Jin, D. Y. (2024). The rise of digital platforms as a soft power apparatus in the New Korean Wave era. *Global Media and Communication*, 20(1), 3–21. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20570473241234204>
- Kassimi, C. (2023). The soft power of Indian music: The case of Indian musical instruments museum in Greece. *Informatics Studies*, 10(3), 45–59. <https://doi.org/10.29121/informatics.v10.i3.2023.587>
- Khushnam, P. N. (2022). National Education Policy 2020: A prudent vision of India's soft power in the emerging world order. *India Quarterly: A Journal of International Affairs*, 78(2), 196–214. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09749284221090720>
- Kim, Y. (2011). *Transnational migration, media and identity of Asian women: Diasporic daughters*. Routledge.
- Mattern, J. B. (2005). Why 'soft power' isn't so soft: Representational force and the sociolinguistic construction of attraction in world politics. *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 33(3), 583–612. <https://doi.org/10.1177/03058298050330031601>
- Mazumdar, A. (2018). India's soft power diplomacy under the Modi administration: Buddhism, diaspora and yoga. *Asian Affairs*, 49(3), 468–491. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03068374.2018.1487696>
- Mazumdar, A. (2020). India's public diplomacy in the twenty-first century: Components, objectives and challenges. *India Quarterly: A Journal of International Affairs*, 76(1), 24–39. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0974928419901188>
- McGray, D. (2002). Japan's gross national cool. *Foreign Policy*, 130, 44–54. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3183487>
- Mehta, P. (2021). ICCR scholarships as educational soft power: Building India's global relational capital. *India Quarterly: A Journal of International Affairs*, 77(2), 189–208. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09749284211012744>
- Melissen, J. (Ed.). (2005). *The new public diplomacy: Soft power in international relations*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ministry of External Affairs [MEA]. (2022). India's soft power and cultural diplomacy: Prospects and limitations. Ninth Report, Standing Committee on External Affairs (December 2022). PRS India. <https://prsindia.org/policy/report-summaries/india-s-soft-power-and-cultural-diplomacy>
- Nye, J. S. (1990). *Bound to lead: The changing nature of American power*. Basic Books.
- Nye, J. S. (2004). *Soft power: The means to success in world politics*. PublicAffairs.
- Nye, J. S. (2021). Soft power: The evolution of a concept. *Journal of Political Power*, 14(1), 196–208. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2158379x.2021.1879572>
- Otmazgin, N. K. (2013). *Regionalizing culture: The political economy of Japanese popular culture in Asia*. University of Hawaii Press.
- Pant, H. V. (2016). *Indian foreign policy: An overview*. Manchester University Press.
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- PRS India. (2022). India's soft power and cultural diplomacy [Report summary]. PRS Legislative Research. <https://prsindia.org/policy/report-summaries/india-s-soft-power-and-cultural-diplomacy>
- Schneider, C. P. (2006). Culture communicates: US diplomacy that works. In J. Melissen (Ed.), *The new public diplomacy: Soft power in international relations* (pp. 147–168). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Srivastava, S., & Sengupta, A. (2020). *Bollywood and soft power: Building India's cultural influence*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429438851>

- Tharoor, S. (2012). India as a soft power: Bollywood, yoga, and the global influence of Indian culture. *Journal of International Relations*, 14(3), 14–22.
- Thussu, D. K. (2013). *Communicating India's soft power: Buddha to Bollywood*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137285981>
- Trunkos, J. (2022). Testing the impact of geopolitics on European democratic countries' soft power use. *Journal of Political Power*, 15(3), 383–396. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2158379X.2022.2127279>
- Turino, T. (2008). *Music as social life: The politics of participation*. University of Chicago Press.
- UNESCO. (2003). *Convention for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage*. UNESCO.
- UNESCO. (2022). *Intangible cultural heritage of India: A report*. UNESCO New Delhi Office.
- USC Center on Public Diplomacy. (2025). *Riding the WAVES of India's soft power*. USC Annenberg. <https://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/blog/riding-waves-indias-soft-power>
- Verma, D. (2023). India's soft power diplomacy: Leveraging culture, diaspora, and yoga for global influence. *ShodhKosh: Journal of Visual and Performing Arts*, 4(2), 3470–3480. <https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v4.i2.2023.3846>
- Wendt, A. (1999). *Social theory of international politics*. Cambridge University Press.
- Zahran, G., & Ramos, L. (2010). From hegemony to soft power: Implications of a conceptual change. In I. Parmar & M. Cox (Eds.), *Soft power and US foreign policy* (pp. 12–31). Routledge.