

Appreciating Hindustani Music
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Lecture 3

Dhrupad, Khayal and Instrumental music: A Bird's eye View

[Music]. We just heard a short excerpt from a Dhrupad performance by Pandit Uday Bhawalkar, one of the foremost exponents of Dhrupad today. The link to the performance is given below and please do listen to it fully. Dhrupad as we discussed in our previous video is one of the genres of Hindustani music.

In this video we look at some broad features of Hindustani music and get a Bird's Eye View of Khayal, Dhrupad and Instrumental music. As I mentioned in the last video and as many of you would know we have two traditions of classical music in India Carnatic or the Southern and Hindustani or the Northern music.

Both are based on raga and tala, both have a compositional and an improvisational aspect. Unlike Carnatic music which is one unitary system in terms of repertoire and presentation, Hindustani music includes the three genres of Dhrupad, Khayal and Vadhya. So, we have this schema-Indian classical music involves presentation of ragas using compositions set in tala characterized by various methods of improvisation.

And we have two kinds, Hindustani music that has evolved in the North and Carnatic music that has evolved in the South. Carnatic music is a unitary system with a shared repertoire raga and tala and compositions. Hindustani music which has the three genres of Dhrupad, Khayal and instrumental music has a shared repertoire of ragas. It is these three genres share more or less the repertoire of ragas though the talas are different.

In the last video we looked at what are some of the features of these genres that is a reason for their being called classical music. How they are different from what are not classical music in India. Now, in this what follows we will now consider some fundamental features of the music itself, what are some very basic features of the music, Indian classical music.

Whether they are Carnatic or Hindustani its equally applicable. The first is that very fundamental feature of Indian classical music is that it is melodic; there is no harmony or polyphony. Melodic music means when notes are rendered in succession then we have a melody a tune is a melody.

Whereas, harmony and polyphony they are when more than one note are rendered simultaneously such as in chords for instance a chord is an example of harmonic music. And this for instance is the typical feature of western classical music or even western popular music.

All traditional Indian music is primarily melodic. Now, what kind of melody? The melody in Indian classical music is ruled by the world of ragas and we will take a look at what ragas are in considerable detail in this course. And this melody is ornamented extensively ornamented, that is, the you may have heavy or not so heavy subtle or not so subtle ornament, but it is extensively

ornamented. We will see what ornamentation is also in the course. There is no modulation or change of the tonic. Now, the tonic is a very important tone in all music in western music this usually shifts within a piece. But in Indian classical music the same tonic is maintained throughout the performance there is no modulation or shift of tonic during a concert and again we will explain this as we progress in the course.

Presentation of this music involves tala or time cycles. Tala is a cyclic measure of time divided into a specific number of units depending on the tala and the idea of returning to a particular point or unit in the time cycle is an important aesthetic in Indian classical music whether Carnatic or Hindustani.

And performance is a coming together of composition and improvisation though the nature of composition and improvisation is different across the various genres. We have oral and aural pedagogy and minimal importance is given to notation that is the music is taught orally and absorbed aurally. There is very little place for notation except as a reference tool. And notation is also rudimentary that is it does not try to capture the melodic complexity of the music.

And certainly we do not try to make music by reading off a notation. Centrality of the voice: all instruments aspire to the condition of the human voice. This is acknowledged within the tradition within the performance tradition and is in fact, worn out by many master instrumentalists aspiring to bring out the vocal nuances in their instruments. This is called Gayaki Ang or the way of singing is both prized and a matter of prestige.

But it is equally undeniable that instrumental music too has impacted vocal music and this is true in both the traditions. So, these are some broad features of Indian classical music both Carnatic and Hindustani there are of course, many differences too which we will not go into here. Now, let us take a quick look at the three genres of Hindustani music. Khayal, Dhrupad and instrumental music are about presentation of ragas using talas, then why are they taken to be different genres? That we will see as we progress. Now, the ragas as I said are drawn more or less from the same corpus there is there is a shared repertoire of ragas. Though, there are some ragas that you know Khayalians may perform, but Dhrupad performers might not and the vice versa but the bulk of ragas are shared.

Nitala: talas are different, the percussion instrument itself is different and the way of accompaniment is different between Khayal and Dhrupad. Dhrupad uses the pakhawaj whereas Khayal uses the tabla and they have different talas. And Vadhya mainly uses the tabla and tabla talas except for the rudra Veen which is a veena, a stringed instrument of the Dhrupad tradition and therefore, uses the pakhawaj.

Each of these genres there is Dhrupad, Khayal and instrumental music has its own repertoire of compositions. Nevertheless, Khayalians often use Dhrupad compositions repurposing them to or recasting them to sound like Khayal and instrumental musicians too often use Khayal and other compositions.

Improvisation is a common feature, but it is significantly different between Khayal and Dhrupad the strategy is employed, the technical and aesthetic challenges they are all different. The textures of Khayal and Dhrupad are also different primarily, due to the ornaments employed, the relation

between melody and time as well as the method of the unfolding of the presentation.

Both Dhrupad, Khayal and instrumental music there is a progression from the very leisurely and open spaces between notes to great deal of density. So, from the very slow to the very fast there is a broad range of tempo in all three traditions that is another thing that is common to all of them.

So, broadly then all three that is Dhrupad, Khayal and Vadhya are presentation of raga using tala they involve coming together of composition and improvisation. Pedagogy accords primacy to the oral aural method with very little notation. And as I said there are important differences to the compositional forms themselves are different especially, Dhrupad and Khayal compositional forms are different.

The way they are set in tala is different, the content of the lyrics is different, the kind of accompaniment is different methods the strategies of improvisation are different. And we will go into more details about these forms later, but for now we need to know that these three are interlinked genres. And the thumri idiom which I said also presents an important aesthetic.

Thumri is a lyrical idiom employing quick ornaments they create a lighter texture to the medium very easily impact impactful. And though thumri compositions are set in ragas the raga itself is not the focus, the text and the emotion the bhava are and the music deviates from the raga in which the composition is set in very in stylized ways.

Dhrupad, it is generally agreed, is the older form. In fact, a few centuries ago Dhrupad was the monarch some very famous names in Indian music were Dhrupad performers. These are musicians like Swami Haridas, the great Tansen, Nayak Gopal, Baiju and others. Compositions attributed to them are still vital parts of the Dhrupad repertoire. Khayal gained prominence as a different new style as a genre that was different from Dhrupad, but Khayal draws from the Dhrupad shaili or the Dhrupad style. And we shall see that some of the older styles of Khayal have closed links with Dhrupad presentation and Dhrupad expression. As Khayal evolved it shared many of these aspects and in a span of a couple of centuries it became the preminent genre of Hindustani classical music. In fact, in the 20th century Dhrupad faced the threat of dying out of extinction. But it received a second lease of life primarily because of a deep interest in this form this sophisticated sound that the that European listeners and west in general evinced.

This subtle art now has a good number of practitioners and listeners though it is still not as popular as Khayal. As for instrumental music the sitar, sarod, santur, flute, shehnai etcetera are some of the very visible instruments on the scene. We heard a bit of Dhrupad in the beginning of this lesson we will now listen to a brief sample each of Khayal and instrumental music.

[Music]