

Appreciating Hindustani Music
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Lecture 30

Ashtaanga of Khayal- The Many Limbs of a Khayal Presentation

Khayal presentation is a coming together of various limbs or parts. We have the bandish, alap, bol alap, bol Baant, taan etcetera. It also incorporates various ornaments including meend, gamaka, kan, khatka etcetera. Musicians often speak of the Ashtanga of Khayal or the 8 limbs or 8 elements of Khayal.

Like in many aspects of this vibrant world, there is no consensus on what these 8 limbs are. But the idea is Khayal is a performance in which various elements are brought together in an effective manner, so as to evoke the presence of the raga and or create rang.

There is considerable diversity between schools and musicians in regard to what the elements are and how they are brought together. So, though there is a great variety in Khayal presentation and generalisations are not easy, one thing is universally true of all Khayal schools, all Khayal performances. That is the crux of a Khayal presentation is the act of filling the aavartan with alap or bol alap or taan or whatever.

So, you fill the aavartan with some element of vistaar and you pick up the Mukhada and then you show the sam or you land on the sam. Avartan bharna, mukhada uthaanaa, sam dikhaanaa - this, in a nutshell, is what happens in a Khayal performance. What is used to fill the aavartans? How do you fill the aavartans? How these things are used, how the various elements are brought together - this differs across schools and musicians.

Perhaps one of the most exciting aspects of a Khayal performance is how every time you fill the aavartan, the musician fills the aavartan with some element of vistar and then you build up towards the point in the tala cycle where the mukhada has to be picked up and the sam is shown and this is really a high point in Khayal presentation. And as the raga presentation progresses this thing becomes more and more pronounced.

Now, please observe in this case how there is a build up as the aavartan progresses to seamlessly move into the mukhada and the mukhada is picked up to land on the sam. As I have mentioned earlier, the mukhada is of course ... typically in every composition the mukhada starts on a certain matra. In this case it starts on the 4-th matra.

But that can be varied. That is, where the mukhada starts or where you pick up the mukhada - that can be varied. In this case I might pick it up in the 5-th matra or I might even pick it up in the 6-th matra, but what is not negotiable and has always to be maintained is that the sam has to be maintained. The syllable of the text which falls on the sam - that has to be maintained; the mukhada can vary. How, where exactly you pick up the mukhada can vary. So, in this demonstration there will be some alap and then there will be bol alap, bol baant, sargam and taan.

So, the words are khelat basant. The mukhada is khelat basant and the sam falls on sant - basant. So, khel, rupak right 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 1. That is whether sam falls; rupak is a 7

matra cycle. So, it sounds like this 1, 2, 3 khe la [Music] tha ba sant tha, so that is how let me demonstrate with this.

[Music]. So, this is the bandish and I will make a very short presentation of it around just this sthai. I will not sing the entire composition. And you can see how the various elements of vistara are woven in and out of, and within the aavartans.

How aavartans are filled, how the mukhada is picked up and the sam is shown [Music].

Raag Hindol is a raag which has prominently only four swaras. The 5-th- that is the Nishaad is taken only as a grace note. As in the meend between Sa and Dha [Music] not like this [Music], but that is all the presence of the Nishad the Ni.

Otherwise it says [Music] so that is it. So, this is one of the very few ragas which has only 4 prominent swaras. The other is almost almost hidden - the 5-th; and Hindol is one of the very major ragas. It is counted among the 5 ragas of the raga ragini system also - so ancient and important and it is associated with spring [Music]. So, Basant [Music] and it is uttaraang pradhan - it stays mostly in the higher ranges [Music] [Music] [Music] [Music] [Music] [Music].