

**Appreciating Hindustani Music**  
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**Lecture 39**  
**Dhrupad and Khayal- Some Comparative Remarks**

Khayal and Dhrupad are primarily compositional forms and are respectively the main compositional forms used in the genres of Khayal and Dhrupad. There is much scholarly debate about the origins of these two styles and it is generally agreed that Dhrupad is older. Some scholars believe that Khayal has links to forms like the Jhombada that is also mentioned in the Sangeet Ratnakara. There are others who argue for a Persian Arabic connection and influence. The very word “Khayal” is Urdu and suggests Khayal's connections with Persian and Arabic culture.

In fact, the word “Khayal” means idea, imagination, thought whereas, Dhrupada means Dhruva pada that is fixed or enduring text. So, even the very names are suggestive of some very fundamental differences between the two forms. Now, clear textual sources are hard to come by, especially about the origin of Khayal, but musical lore generally includes three names in the context of a discussion of the origins of Khayal.

These are Amir Khusrow (14th century) and then you have Sultan Hussain Sharki of the 15th century and Nyamat Khan, whom we have talked about before, of the 18th century. Amir Khusrow was an inordinately talented man; he was a writer and scholar attached to royal courts of the Delhi Sultanate; Delhi Sultanate rulers including Allauddin Khilji. He was a prolific poet, a gifted musician and a dedicated disciple of the Sufi Saint Nizamuddin Auliya. Amir Khusrow is credited with the creation of Kawaali among other things. The musical form Kawaali is a musical form that is performed in Sufi Dargahs and such is the legendary status of the man that he is credited with the invention of the tabla, the sitar as well as the Khayal. Scholars however, find it hard to substantiate these claims. His contribution to Khayal and its evolution continue to be debated.

Especially given the fact that he does not mention the name Khayal anywhere in his prolific writings.

Now Sultan Hussain Sharki of Jaunpur was himself a musician and a generous patron of the Khayal form and Niamat Khan Sadharang as we all know was a court musician in the Mughal emperor Muhammad Shah Rangeela - during his reign - and Sadarang's Khayal compositions are still performed and are among the oldest available Khayal compositions whose authorship is known.

So, without going into details of the debate of the origins of Khayal - and it is a fascinating debate - it must be said that it remains an unsolved issue. It is also possible that seeking a single origin theory may be fallacious; musical forms rarely have a single trajectory of evolution.

Now, scholars have suggested and musicians also there is a tradition of belief that the compositional form and style of presentation of Khayal has been influenced by Kawwali and Tappa, which are two other genres of North Indian music. Tappa is characterised by a profusion of fast, very short and sharp melodic runs or tans throughout the composition; the

composition itself is studded with taans, very very intricate and very dense densely clustered taans. [Music]

and since Khayal incorporates taan in its vistaar as we have seen and Dhrupad does not, it is easy to speculate that Khayal was influenced by Tappa. And as for Kawwali the use of the text of the song for improvisation and its manner of word and rhythm play are both quite distinctive and Khayal might have drawn upon these elements in its Bol Baant. We saw in the lecture demonstration by Satyasheel Deshpande how Agra Gharana - the way it creates Bol Baant the way it plays with the words and creates Mukhada Bhandi - that has very close parallels with the Kawwali tradition.

Kawali, Tappa all these musical genres are regarded as having influenced Khayal, but if we were to consider which form of presentation Khayal is closest to, at least today, it would be Dhrupad - not Tappa or Kawali. So, the basic texture of presentation as it moves from very slow and leisurely to fast, from the sparse to the dense - this is like Dhrupad not Tappa, Kawali.

What are the main differences between Khayal and Dhrupad? Khayal and Dhrupad differ in the ornaments that are employed. Khayal we may say is somewhat more generous with the variety of ornaments used and, again, within schools of Khayal some schools employ more variety than others. Whereas, Dhrupad enters each tonal area and explores it with great intensity. Khayal on the other hand is more vested in melodic phrases. Dhrupad has been deeply impacted by the majestic instrument Been - Rudra Been while Khayal, especially the prominent school of Kirana Gharana has been impacted by the sound of the Sarangi. There are of course, schools of Khayal that have been influenced by Dhrupad and therefore, by the Been indirectly. Now, Khayal again differs in its what is called Tala Vyavastha - that is the relation between the text and the tala and how the tala binds the music is different in Khayal; the compositions in Dhrupad are bound in taal in a different way.

And of course, I am speaking of music of the past 100 years or so for which we have documented music - we have music recordings. Khayal is also different from Dhrupad in its inclusion of taans as I have said and all elements of improvisation or vistaar are moved into the composition. And the act of filling the Avartan and taking the Mukhada becomes central to the Khayal presentation. In Dhrupad, alaap, which is the most important aspect of vistaar, the alaap is sung entirely before the composition and that is quite extensive.

And then after that the composition is rendered and then Bol Laya or the rhythmic patterns using the text of the song are performed. So, that is the Dhrupad presentation. The song structure of Dhrupad is also different and in general the importance that Dhrupad places on the composition is not found in Khayal. Now, overall it has been argued and it is frequently said that Khayal presents a less rule bound idiom for musical exploration compared to Dhrupad.

Now, what does this mean, what sense can we make of this? There are a few areas where Khayal seems to loosen up as compared to Dhrupad. First the compositional form of Khayal is very short, just 4 lines usually running into just four avartanas. Dhrupad compositions are generally longer and traditionally they ran into 4 parts and Dhrupad as a genre is deeply vested in the composition, in the pada, its textual beauty and integrity. Khayal treats the composition more cursorily - at least some schools definitely do not give the composition itself much importance.

Certainly an attitude of reverence that we find among Dhrupad performers for composition is rarely found among Khayalias and as I said in fact, some schools or Gharanas of Khayal pay almost no attention to the lyrical aspect of the Bandish, the Bandish serves merely as a peg

to work improvisation around it. Now, with the status of the composition itself somewhat reduced the stage is set for bringing improvisation to centre stage. And so, in this sense it is more a freer form. I use the word "freer" advisedly - it is freer in the sense that one particular restraint, some restraints are not there - that does not necessarily mean that it is better.

The setting of the composition in tala is different. Khayal compositions are typically more melismatic that is they are not tied down to the matras of the tala, but they flow between the matras and the composition itself is fitted into the avarthan of taal with some degree of freedom and variability whereas, Dhrupad compositions are more rigorously set in taal with the composition tied down to individual matra certainly.

There is not this kind of ... the extent of variation that Khayal compositions are subject to - that we do not find in Dhrupad.

Laya: in Dhrupad the laya remains the same throughout the presentation. That is, a composition is rendered at a particular laya and improvisation in the form of Bol Baant is performed. While there are rhythmic variations, there is a rhythmic play definitely, but the laya of the composition is not changed, whereas, in Khayal in most schools of Khayal the laya of the tala is increased as the presentation progresses.

This makes for greater variety and excitement which for the Dhrupad lover could be a sign of decadence. Dhrupad singers often stress that their intention is not to offer excitement and entertainment and their musical performances are more of an inward journey, almost a spiritual journey.

Then we have (in Khayal) elements of improvisation, these are alaap, bol alaap, bol baant, bol taan, taan etcetera; these are woven into the composition; once the composition is rendered these are performed within the structure of the taal and there is a lot of freedom regarding how these elements are brought together.

So, there is no one template to say that first you sing alaap, then you sing bol alaap, then you sing bol baant, then taan - no, there is no such thing. Definitely, once the presentation has progressed to some extent, then there is a lot of freedom regarding how these various elements are brought together, whereas in Dhrupad and also Carnatic music a certain arrangement of the presentation is expected.

So, in Dhrupad as I said, it is alaap, then the bandish, then layakari. In Khayal the Bandish is presented and then alaap, bol alaap, bol laya taan etcetera are woven into the presentation according to the school, according to the musical sensibility of the performer, according to the moment.

The nature of percussive accompaniment is different. We have seen this earlier in the lesson on tabla and since the Khayal singer does not keep taal in his hand, but leaves that to the tabla player there is another very important kind of freeing up.

So, to repeat the point I made earlier, in traditional art music it is not necessarily a virtue to be freer - restraints define a musical tradition in an important way. Dhrupad musicians cherish the restraints of their genre just as Khayal musicians cherish theirs while also celebrating the fact that some of the restraints of Dhrupad are not for them to worry about. And so one of the very important differences between the two genres is the restraints that they acknowledge and there are clearly many areas where Khayal does not acknowledge the restraints that Dhrupad does and while Khayal might celebrate this Dhrupad might see this as a corruption.

So, Dhrupad then presents a very different aesthetic and approach to raga presentation from Khayal. Broadly, Dhrupad, the Dhrupad genre is regarded as having 4 main styles though

doubtless there are some others, but the main styles which are called Baani; Baani is the equivalent of Gharana.

So, the Baani is style and there are 4 main Banis of Dhrupad and these are Dagar, Nauhar Gowarhar and Khandhar and there is a pithy couplet which captures the broad features of these 4 Baanis and it is this.

Zor zor se khandhar gaave  
Madhu bole se nauhar leve  
Saas badi hai gohar ki  
alap chari hai dagur ki.

The poem indicates that the Khandhar Bani became famous due to its voice culture - zor zor se bole - that is broad and high-pitched tones forceful expression, the Nauhar Bani was is famous for its sweet and delicate expression, the Gauhar bani was known for its deep and sustained breath control - saas badi hai - and the Dagar Bani developed great expertise in alap - aalaapchari - with much attention to the treatment of the swaras.

In the next few video modules Pandit Ritwik Sanyal who is a noted exponent of Dhrupad and former head of the department of music of the Banaras Hindu University will take us through important facets of Dhrupad. Pandit Sanyal is a representative of the Dagar Bani of Dhrupad. In fact, the Dagar Bani of Dhrupad has been the most prominent Bani for the past century or so. Let us enter the world of Dhrupad with Pandit Ritwik Sanyal.