

**Appreciating Hindustani Music**  
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**Lecture 40**  
**Dhrupad: An Overview**

[Music]

Namaskar. Welcome to the tele-enhanced learning appreciation course for Hindustani classical music with reference to Dhrupad or Dhruvapada. As we all know, Dhrupad is a very vast discipline with all the ancient wisdom supporting the genre and we also know that Dhrupad is not just a musical genre supporting Sur, laya and raga, but it is a complete system of Indian classical music with all the complexities, peculiarities revealing the structure, style, substance, the living context, the ideology and to a point where we immerse into the spirituality of this music.

I will very briefly spell out some of the characteristics defining and describing Dhrupad. “Dhrupad”, the diminutive of “Dhruvapada”, is both a musical and a lyrical tradition. It is believed to be the oldest, purest, most revered musical genre of Hindustani classical music, in form and content and also as a complete system and ideology of Indian music.

Dhrupad is one of the several distinct styles of Indian classical vocal music performed today in North India. Dhrupad is supposed to be the oldest of these styles, older than the better known Khayal and Thumri and it has contributed much to the development of the younger vocal styles and to the parallel traditions of North Indian instrumental music.

Historically, it forms a link with the music of mediaeval and pre-mediaeval times and with the musical forms of South Asia. Thus, to understand the history of musical art in South Asia and its present practice, it is necessary to understand Dhrupad. It is believed that during the period of Raja Man Singh Tomar of Gwalior in the 16th century, Dhruvapada as a genre got formulated taking musical and lyrical elements from the system of prabandha gana and the composers (vaggeyakaras) composing dhrupad lyrics in madhya-deshya bhasha of that region.

Dhruvapadha comprises of two value loaded terms, dhruva and pada suggesting the tonal rhythmic syllabic content and musical lyrical semiotics in depicting the three-tiered alaap, dhrupad, layakari performance as a composite whole. Dhruva in dhruvapada is something fixed, constant, it implies permanence, it also is the North Star fixed in the sky, the destination, and the goal.

There is also a complete, unbroken unit of the music depicting inherence - samavaya - and the universality of sound in realizing the absolute. There is also specifically the refrain which we call mukhda today that is also the dhruva. So, it is the mukhda of the song which is also known as dhruva. It also gives us the philosophy of profound and integrated classicism that all art music is aspiring for in the musical creation in all the aspects that we find today.

It also paves the way for a better understanding and sharing of concepts with other genres of music as a subsystem. In substance and spirit, Dhrupad has been barely secular and more a profound and mystical tradition in experiencing the creative excellence of music for self

realisation as nad yoga and also for seeking liberation, moksha and also absolute joy, the brahmananda. Truly, the profound and ineffable marga sangeet of the current era.

Dhrupad is a system of Indian classical music that connects the Vedic agama syncretism with the later secular traditions. It also bridges the schism of the textual shastra and the oral prayoga traditions that some scholars and musicians refrain from mediating upon them.

Finally, dhrupad is not just exploring a specific style of music, but a musical involution and an eternal journey of delving deeply into the hidden sounds both for the musician and the listener by experiencing the vastness of the raga and connecting to meaningful silence for the sake of eternal bliss.

Now, I will illustrate very briefly what a Dhrupad performance sounds like. I will be reciting Raga Lalit, a brief aalaap in char taal. [Music]. The song depicts the value of music [Music].