

**Appreciating Hindustani Music**  
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**Lecture 41**  
**Dhrupad - Style and Structure**

Our ancient texts talk about Gandharva and Gandharva has been defined as *gandharvam trividham vidya swara taala padaatmakam*. Swar, taal and pada - these are the three main components of Gandharva that was supposed to be the classical music of the ancient times. Dhrupad in its completeness carries this tradition and explores and exploits all these three components beautifully in the music and it is embedded in the structure of Dhrupad, the structure that is three tiered alaap, bandish and layakari. This forms the composite whole in elaborating the swara, the tone, the tala, the beat with rhythm and metre and of course, pada the song text, the entire gamut of the lyrical tradition that we have and how the pada is enunciated.

So, we can see that the aspect of swara is fully explored in the alaap; alaap actually forms the melodic crux in its completeness and then you have the tala, the rhythmic intensification that follows in the Dhrupad tradition very much, because there are specific improvisations, the rhythmic intensification through the rendering of the tala. And as I always say Dhrupad is not just a melodic tradition, it is also a lyrical tradition and that is found in the pada- in the poetic content.

But, all together they form a complete unity. They are all unified together in the swara, tala, pada construction of the musical form of Dhrupad. Now, how does this happen? This is possible only through the music aesthetics that is embedded in the rendering of alaap, bandish and layakari and this is possible through proper tonal inflections of the sound of the swara and all this happens in the canvas of raga.

Raga has its own characteristics, own discipline, own regulative principles that operate every moment while we are singing or playing the raga and all these renderings have a character, have a style and Dhrupad evolved in so many different ways through the musical style, which is found in the banis, the four banis.

So, we have the system of the bani and the giti. The banis clearly have connection with the ancient gitis, which has been very clearly explained in Matanga's Brihaddeshi. So, I will talk about the banis and gitis later. Let me briefly illustrate the two main musical aesthetic terminologies: the surbheda and the gamaka. They are very very important in shaping the music that we find in Dhrupad on every level of the performance whether it is alaap, bandish or layakari.

Now, what is surbheda? As I said, when we start to perform, the swara constitutes the shrutis; then we have the varna, we have the alankar, we have the gamaka and we have the sthaya. Gamakas are in the context of the swaras: how you are making the swara create the beauty in the swara and there are so many different ways of tonal shakes and tonal

embellishments that are to be found in the gamaka.

Sthayas actually embody the raga and we have so many ways of decorating the raga with all the tonal articulation; they are complex in character. So, we have the 15 types of gamakas and 96 sthayas that are explained in the sangeet shastra.

Now, shruti and swara are very important in understanding in delving deep into the tonality of a Dhrupad performance, more so in the alaap. And, alaap as I said is an independent unity, it is an independent system and alaap -- if one knows the alaap - one can make the bandish rich with the knowledge of the alaap and the rendering of the alaap.

The bandish gets enriched through the process of alaap and a lot of ideas can be taken from the alaap. Similarly, a good bandish where a good vaggeyakara composes a bandish - it is a raga capsule. So, you can see that alaap and bandish actually complement each other; they nourish each other and make the music complete and beautiful.

So, now just notice how the shrutis get manifested through the swara in the alaap or in the rendering of the raga. So, my guru used to say that you never sing a shruti, shruti is a concept and swara is the percept you are actually hearing the swara. So, when I start to sing, the point of attack, the aaghaata is the shruti point, but what follows through the tonal shake, what follows in the resonance is a swara and that is what we actually enjoy in the raga.

That is the realisation of the sound, the swara and finally, shruti and swara is just the formal aspect in shaping the raga. Finally, we experience the nadha that follows ultimately the ultimate sound is the nadha. So, this is how we get all the stages of experiencing sound, experiencing rhythm, experiencing the poetry, the lyrics in the Dhrupad tradition. [Music].

Now, notice just the tonal inflection of the Re makes Raag Shree. It is almost ati komal. [Music]. This is (raga) Todi. Now, notice how the intonation of the Re has changed. Now, this is surbheda, the right articulation of the sound is necessary and the raga is immediately projected, the raga takes the colour and the beauty emerges immediately. So, that is also the beauty of swara. That is why swara is also swayam rajate iti swara. Swara has its own autonomy.

If you have the tonal precision and if you have the feeling of the raga, the swara is going to emerge properly and all this is possible in the oral tradition of Dhrupad where the guru shows you the right path and it is a lifelong dedication to keep your musical sadhana. [Music].

Now, see I am not singing just the notes, my guru used to say - describe it. You have to describe the note, you have to describe the raga, you have to describe the phrases according to the mood of the raga [Music]. Imagine you see the horizon, it is early morning and the sun is going to rise. There is some orange light in the horizon [Music]. The sun appears. It rises from the horizon [Music].

This is Raag Bhairav, wonderfully depicted you see, I only have the sound. It is only an abstraction of the sound; my guru used to say it is the amurthan ki upasana. It is a worship of the sound - shapeless, formless yet you can describe, you can visualize through raag dhyana. So, this is how Bhairav is pronounced. [Music]. We call it the argi rishabh. So, you are in the river, in the water and you are offering your salutation to god, the arha [Music]. This is shastanga dhaivath. We are prostrating before the god [Music]. Lord Shiva is in the meditative posture; Parvati comes very quietly, offers the flowers to him and quietly goes away. [Music].

So, the right pronunciation of rishabh, the right pronunciation of dhaivath is important. This is surbheda and you have to describe every swara in details [Music]. The gandhar tells you that this is Raag Darbari [Music]. Coming to the banis, there is a saying Zor zor se kandahar bole

Madhur bol ko nauhar leve

Saas badi hai gouhar ki

Aalaapchari dagur ki

aSaas badi hai gouhar jNow, see how clearly the verse talks about the stylistic content of Dhrupad that rest in the banis. Zor zor se khandhar bole, this is forceful, that is ojas, that is vigour [Music]. There are subtle gamakas, tonal shakes, lot of meen- d this characterises the dagarbani.

In fact, dagarbani is known for its alaap and of course, renderings are systematic and soft even the layakari that follows. So, this is the characteristic of dagarbani- aalapchari hai dagur ki]. The dagarbani gives you a complete framework in the melodic rendering. Saas badi hai gouhar ki - the clarity, the openness, the tonal precision and long sustaining notes characterise the gauharbani.

Now, to understand the banis you have to delve into the gitis because banis actually evolved during the time of Akbar when Tansen was there at that time - the legendary Tansen and in fact, the musicians got their identity, their social identity, their socio-cultural position in the society was through the banis.

So, they would suffix the banis in their name as their identity that such as an artist is a gauhari, he is a nauhari, he is a daguri, he is a khandhari. So, today in the 21st century the banis are redundant though the musical peculiarities stay intact, but the cultural identity is not important and they are redundant now. But, still for understanding the musical culture, the musical status, the musical character of Dhrupad we have to know the banis and for a better understanding of the banis we have to understand what are the gitis. See we have the five gitis - shuddhaa, bhinnaa, gaudi, begaswaraa and sadharani. Now, these gitis are in the context of the ragas, they are not just stylistic understanding or rendering of the music. Not just so, it is very important even to understand the personality and the character of the raga. For example, [Music]. This is Marwa, it is very clear. This is the shuddhaa giti.

Now, you can associate the gauharbani with the shuddhaa giti for its clarity for long sustaining notes. So, immediately you know that Marwa is the shuddhaa giti raga. [Music]. Subtle gamakas, round phrases that characterise the bhinnaa giti. You find traces of that in the Dagarbani very clearly [Music].

Begaswaraa giti very clear in Sohani, some ragas have this character. [Music] Also Deshkar you cannot sing Deshkar very slowly the character is begaswaraa and very clearly indicates. Nauhar bani has some traces of the begaswaraa and also the Carnatic tradition carries a lot of embellishments coming from the begaswara giti.

Gaudi giti has some special heavy gamakas and they call it the dyohati - the cheek is kept downwards and we have the heavy movements. [Music]. This is a good example of gaudi giti like Raag Darbari has the gaudi character very much so and these heavy gamakas that you also find in the khandarvani.

So, in fact, when we talk about the banis in the current oral tradition to the in Dhrupad we have the dagarbani, you have the the Darbhanga tradition of Dhrupad in Bihar; the Bettiah tradition still survives, the Vishnupur tradition is gradually dwindling of Bengal, then you

have the temple tradition of Dhrupad also. These are the current living oral traditions. So, that is how we can understand the banis through the gitis.

Very briefly about the gamaka: it comes with the word “gum” meaning locomotion movements. Now, gamakas are not just specific tonal shakes, heavy tonal shakes - that is a very narrow meaning of gamaka. Any tonal movement whether slow or fast or medium would come under the gamut of gamakas.

So, you have a wide range of gamakas in the oral tradition and even the sangeet shastra talks about them in length. In fact, the gamakas could be temporal, it could be with the intensity of sound, it could be through the phrases. [Music] Now, this is ullasitha. [Music]. This is naamith, one going in the ascending order, one in the descending order. In the oral tradition this is called dhuran and muran; dhuran is when you are searching the sound, muran is to turn back.

So, you see all these are so, beautifully designed and explained to make the music more beautiful and aesthetically fulfilling. There is no end to all these illustrations. About the banis there is a beautiful composition of Tansen I will just recite

Bani chaaron ke vyavahara sun leeje ho

Gunijan yeh vidya saar

Raja gowarhar faujdaar khandar

deewan dagur baksi navarhaar

Now, this is how even the banis are categorized in this Dhrupad of Tansen. [Music]. I will recite a small self-made composition where I tried to explain the Dagarbani [Music]. This is in Sur taal [Music] [Music]