



# AN ANALYTICAL STUDY ON THE APPLICATION OF DHRUPAD ANG IN THE KHAYAL GAYAKI OF USTAD FAIYAZ KHAN

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## ABSTRACT

*This article focusses upon the traditional and aesthetic influence of Dhrupad ang on the Khayal gayaki of Ustad Faiyaz Khan, a distinguished figure of the Agra Gharana. While Dhrupad and Khayal are often regarded as distinct traditions within Hindustani classical music—each with its own aesthetic, historical, and technical foundations—many gharanas have developed a syncretic style that reflects elements of both. The Agra Gharana, in particular, has historically preserved and integrated Dhrupad idioms into its Khayal repertoire, and Ustad Faiyaz Khan emerges as a vital exponent of this synthesis.*

**Keywords:** Dhrupad ang, Agra gharana Khayal gayaki, Ustad Faiyaz Khan

## Introduction

The Agra Gharana is one of the prominent Khayal gharana in Indian Classical Music. It traces its origins to the Nauhar Bani of the Dhrupad tradition. During the Middle Ages, the various singing styles known as Dhrupad were referred to as Bani. The development of contemporary Indian music can be traced back to the historical evolution of this Bani. The evolution of Hindusthani classical music represents a continuous interaction between tradition and innovation. Among its primary vocal forms—Dhrupad and Khayal—each possesses unique aesthetic principles and performance practices. Nevertheless, these traditions have not developed independently. This article examines the intersection of the ancient Dhrupad tradition and the dynamic embellished Khayal style, as exemplified in the gayaki of Ustad Faiyaz Khan, an eminent figure from the Agra Gharana. The Agra Gharana, which includes the singing of the Dhrupad-Dhamar, expanded through disciples and training mainly through the children of Khudabaksh and the family of his brother Jangu Khan.

Ustad Faiyaz Khan Saheb, the eminent luminary of the Agra Gharana, was an exceptional musician of the 20th century and a pioneering artist. He was born on February 8, 1881, in Sikandara near Agra. Ustad Faiyaz Khan's lineage is distinguished by several esteemed musicians of India, including his paternal grandfather Muhammad Shah Rangeele and Haji Sujan Khan, a member of a musical dynasty on his maternal side. His maternal grandfather was Ghulam Baj Khan. Ustad Faiyaz Khan acquired his singing and musical style from his maternal grandfather Ghulam Abbas Khan and Ghulam Abbas Khan's brother Kallan Khan. He was associated with the 'Rangeele' gharana through his paternal lineage and the 'Agra' gharana through his maternal lineage. Ghulam Abbas Khan provided strict and systematic training in Dhrupad, Dhamar, and Khayal to him from the age of six. He also accompanied him on tours to various musical events for performance experience in prestigious venues. He began performing at notable musical events from the age of eighteen, and his reputation grew rapidly. At twenty, he performed at the court of the Maharaja of Mysore and received recognition. He subsequently performed at many important musical centres and conferences. Ustad Faiyaz Khan's gharana was referred to as the 'Rangile Gharana'.

## Methodology

This study, based on a comprehensive assessment and analysis of existing literature and archival recordings of Ustad Faiyaz Khan, employs a qualitative research approach. The methodology for this analysis includes the following: an extensive review of scholarly publications on Indian music, encompassing books, journals, and conference proceedings; historical text analysis to understand the



evolution of musical traditions over time; and the evaluation of his dhrupad-influenced gayaki through archival recordings.

### **Intrinsic Dhrupad Ang in the Agra Gharana**

The original tradition was the singing of Dhrupad-Dhamar of Nauhar Bani. Naturally, in the Agra Gharana, Dhrupad emerged as a distinctive genre with an inherent seriousness of thought, along with other classical characteristics. Perhaps the most well-known Khayal custom for conserving Dhrupad ang is the Agra Gharana. Its slow, syllabic exposition of the raga utilizing syllables like nom, tom, and aa re na, evocative of Dhrupad alap, is what distinguishes its gayaki.

### **The way of Voice culture**

Each gharana possesses its distinct vocal technique. The Agra gharana, rooted in the Dhrupad-dhamar tradition, employs udatta - voices that are open, heavy, and powerful - to impart a sense of solemnity to the Dhrupad. Prior to the focused singing, the vocalists of this gharana engage in nom-tom alap, similar to the alap portion of the Dhrupad. This vocalization, whether it involves pronouncing nonsensical syllables such as akar-ukar-ikar-makar-nakar or performing Dhrupad-dhamar, Khayal Bandish, or utilizing elements like meend or gamak, is distinguished by an open and clear voice throughout.

### **Alapchari**

A special feature of the alapchari of the Agra gharana is the use of 'nom-tom' in singing the alap part. The practice of commencing an alap from the Shadaj swara has become prevalent within the Agra Gharana since Ustad Faiyaz Khan's influence. To expound upon the form of the raga, masters of the Agra Gharana employ Ri, Re, Na, Nom, Tom, among others. This technique is utilized in the discourse of Dhrupad Anga.

### **Laykari**

Within the Agra Gharana, laykari is introduced subsequent to the bandish and ragavistar. Laykari is principally categorized into two types: Bolbant and Boltaan. This laykari part originates from the Dhamar style of Agra singing. The tradition of Hori and Dhamar singing is intrinsic to the Agra singing style. The Dhamar singing style is characterized by its complex application of various laykari, such as Ateet-Anagat and intricate patterns like Dogun-Tingun -Chargun and Aad- Kuad laya. Similar to Dhrupad, where the bol of Dhrupad is presented through varied melodic structures like dogun, chargun, aad-dogun, aad-chargun, the Agra Gharana's khayal singers utilize bol in different melodies and apply it through taan. Thus, there is a direct influence of Dhrupad in this context.

### **Bolbat**

Bolbat is a rhythmic style in the rhythm cage, keeping the underlying meaning of the bol of the bandish unchanged, it is also a part of the Dhrupad that includes the Upaj ang influence. Expansion through the bol is a significant feature of the Agra gharana's gayaki.

### **Astadash Ang**

A unique feature of the singing of the Agra Gharana is the training of Astadash(eighteen) ang for the overall presentation of the Dhrupad and khayal. Inspired by the Dhrupad, the artists of this gharana develop their own singing style on its basis by assimilating the Dhrupad singing style. These are lagdant, sarpa, khinch, gaz, sut, ghasit, mand, lahak, murak, daga, meend, tan bandhan, bidar ang, behelwa, khatka, phanda, gamak, dhunak.

Through the above discussion, the characteristics of the Agra Gharana singing style that have been highlighted, it is clear that there are various parts of the Dhrupad singing style that have the imprint of



various angas and all of these elements were profoundly represented in Faiyaz Khan's gayaki, which guaranteed the persistence of Dhrupad aesthetics in Khayal.

### Analysis of Faiyaz Khan's Gayaki

The use of the phrase 'Nom Tom' in the Agra Gharana Khayal is a distinctive feature introduced by Ustad Faiyaz Khan. He was the first vocalist to perform extended Alap in the Dhrupad style on record and played a crucial role in popularizing this technique within Khayal. Faiyaz Khan's disciple, S.K. Choube, stated, "The esteemed Ustad was the only Khayal exponent capable of musically conveying this creative interpretation of Raga through the Alap technique."<sup>1</sup> According to Pandit Madhusudan Joshi and other singers of the Agra Gharana, Ustad Faiyaz Khan's presentation of Raga involved an extended Alap followed by a Madhya-laya Khayal in Dhamar and then a brief Khayal.

Deepali Nag noted, "After an hour and a half of 'Alapchari,' he would invariably start with a composition in Madhya-laya rather than a Vilambit Asthaye. He ensured that there was no repetition of Alankars sung in the Alap or Vilambit sections when transitioning to Madhya-laya, understanding the audience's capacity for absorption."<sup>2</sup> The HMV recording of his Alap in Raga Jaijayanti showcases his naturally resonant, sweet, and finely developed voice.

Kumar Prasad Mukherjee remarked on Ustad Faiyaz Khan Saheb's singing, saying "his voice seems rich in the resonance akin to a hundred bees."<sup>3</sup> During his era, the influence of Dhrupad in the Agra Gharana was profound, leading him to develop a unique style incorporating Alankars such as Meend,<sup>4</sup> Khinch,<sup>5</sup> Ansh, Gamak, Dhunak,<sup>6</sup> Lahak<sup>7</sup>, Mand<sup>8</sup>, etc., which visibly displayed the full effect of Dhrupad Ang. His mastery in utilizing 'Nom-Tom' Bani, including techniques like Kaku (tone modulation), Kañswar, and the optimal combination of Nom-Tom Bani with tonal movement, was exemplary.

In his recordings, he performed ragas such as Ramkeli, Lalit, Darbari, Jayjayanti, and Puriya remarkably, leading into the Chhota Khayal within minutes while gradually increasing the tempo and revealing the raga's comprehensive range through precise tone harmony across three octaves. To preserve the raga's purity, he adeptly employed Dhrupad techniques and Abhirbhava-Tirobhava. His training in Dhrupad enabled him to effortlessly execute powerful Bol-Taan and Taan, particularly in the Alapchari section, where extensive use of Gamakpurna Tan was evident.

Initially, this Alapchari set him apart from others. His unmatched skill in using Meend, the gentle and melodious tone of Raga Darbari, and the application of 'Aandolit' ang are widely recognized and commendable. Furthermore, his vocal prowess in Raga Kamod "Lagi Re Mori Nai Lagan" and Raga Shankara "Aiso Dhita Langara Kara Jhakjore" remains memorable. His impeccable use of pukar, foot, kampil, and daab stands as an introduction to his unique singing style. All these elements have become integral to his performance through years of dedicated practice.

1 S.K. Chaubey, *Musician I Have Met* (Uttar Pradesh: Prakashan shakha, 1958), P.5

2 Nag Dipali, *Ustaad Faiyaz Khan*, P.49-51

3 Ibid

4 The meend constitutes a crucial and complex aspect of Indian classical music. Its accurate rendition requires not only the proper placement of the opening and closing notes but also a thorough understanding of the vocal techniques employed in ragas, precise timing for inserting the meend, and correct articulation of intermediate tones. The integral component of the meend utilized in the Dhrupad style of singing is embodied in this musical embellishment.

5 When a swara is introduced three or four positions away from an ascending swara, it is referred to as Khinch. In this instance, the swara incorporated into the mantra sapta becomes the primary swara and undergoes extension. For example: D - - - M, or Ni - - - Pa etc. Some scholars refer to this as 'Sut' or 'Ghasit'. The 'Khinch' aspect reflects the influence of the 'Sut' embellishment found in Dhrupad

6 Dhunak refers to the technique of transitioning from one note to another without contacting any intermediary notes. This practice is commonly utilized during alap singing. Additionally, Dhunak involves stretching or lengthening a note without creating a lasting impact.

7 In Lahak the phrases and bandish are rendered at a slightly accelerated pace. The tempo is carefully balanced, being slower than the tone yet faster than the alap. During this part, the bandish or phrases are executed in a manner that maintains a consistent rhythm, creating an impression of the phrases swinging irregularly within different rhythmic patterns. This embellishment resembles the 'lahak' signs characteristic of Dhrupad music.

8 To pronounce a swara at a relatively low pitch, then gradually increase the volume and intensity of the swara, before slowly lowering the volume and returning to the initial state. This verb is commonly used in the alap part of the Dhrupad.



Among his notable contributions to Hindustani music, the most significant is his emphasis on 'Alapchari'. It is widely acknowledged that the practice of singing Dhrupad-Dhamar as taught by Ghagge Khudabaksh was intrinsic to the Agra gharana's vocal tradition. Every disciple commenced their musical training with a bandish of Dhrupad. The discussions held by Ustad Allabande Khan, Ustad Zakiruddin, and Ustad Nasiruddin (Dagar) left a profound impression on Khansaheb, who spent considerable time absorbing their insights. He admitted to Ustad Ghulam Rasool, "Why can't I begin Khayal with a comprehensive alapchari similar to Dhrupad musicians?"<sup>1</sup> Consequently, his Alapchari became a landmark in the history of music.

Besides, the use of Dhrupad ang in his singing is evident in various aspects of the khayal, such as: The practice of performing appropriate taans at double or triple speeds, among other techniques. The application of different types of Tihai during the laykari. The significant use of gamak influenced by Dhrupad-dhamar. In gamak, each specific swara is articulated along with the adjacent swara. Thus, his khayal singing was as dignified as Dhrupad.

To analyse the influence and application of Alap and Dhrupad in his Khayal singing, this text presents an analytical and exploratory discussion of a Khayal Sung by him.<sup>2</sup>

### Analytical observation

This analysis focuses on Raga 'Gunkeli' as performed by Ustad Faiyaz Khan Saheb. For clarity, a link to the recording is provided below, with specific points referenced by their corresponding minute marks. Raga Gunakeli, belongs to Bhairav Thata, features flat 'Rishabh' and 'Dhaivat' notes. It is a devotional raga rich in Karun rasa and classified as a Meend Pradhan raga among the main Uttaranga ragas.

- Ascending: S R M P D S
- Descending: S D P M R R S, D S
- Pakad: M P D P M R, S D S

The raga is performed for a duration of 27 minutes and 48 seconds. It is divided into two stages—

1. Dhrupad Ang Ragalaap—15 minutes and 05 seconds
2. Vilambit Khayal set into Ektaal—14 minutes and 33 seconds

Unlike his contemporaries who preferred high pitches, he opted to sing in the A scale. His resonant, melodious voice evokes Kumar Prasad Mukherjee's observation that "His voice sounds like hundreds of bees humming together."<sup>3</sup>

Initially, it will be observed that the performer commenced with Dhrupad Ang Alap. In the Dhrupad style 'Nom-Tom' Alap, he adeptly employed the Bani 'Om Ananta Hari Narayana'. It will first be noticed that he begins with a Thaya Laya Alap in a solemn voice. This Alap is essentially an improvisation of the critical tones of the Gunkeli Raga, where each Swara is sung sequentially. Furthermore, some influence of Dhrupad ang Merukhandi Alap is apparent. Firstly, he has used the combination of notes—

rS S (ra na), S S S (na, re, ne), S d(te re na), d d (re na), d S (nom), S S S (ri re ne), d S(na), dS dS (re ne), (m) d S (nom), M dS dS d S (a re ne nom), dS dS(re ne), d M d S (nom), S S S(na re ne) S S(re ne), (d)R (nom), S S S(re ne ne), dS r (ta re), rS rS (nom), S S S(re ne re ne re), d d S, r (ta na tom)— If we observe the singing of this part, it is evident that the "Nom Tom Vani" used in the Alap of Dhrupad, specifically

1 Nag Dipali, Ustaad Faiyaaz Khan, P.49-51

2 [https://youtu.be/\\_5GOIQR4Qi0](https://youtu.be/_5GOIQR4Qi0)

3 Mukherjee Kumarprasad, The lost world of Hinduthan music, Penguin Book Publishers, New Delhi, 2006



the words nom-tom, are employed skillfully. Additionally, each Swara is presented sequentially, similar to the Merukhandi Alap of Dhrupad. The seriousness of the Dhrupad ang Alap, alongside the utilization of meend and shruti, is prominently reflected. The use of meend from Dhaivat to Shadaj, as well as the 'mukhra' Ang conveyed through a stroke in the Pakhawaj, can be heard in the Alap section of this recording. The progression involves taking one swara forward. After establishing the swara around the Mandra Saptak and Shadaj, the singing transitions towards the swara madhyam(M) — (3:00 minutes). The Swarsangati is as follows—S- - M, S S S S, M r, r r, S S S, d S r (Mukhra), S M(Ri) M M M (re ne ne), MP (S), P (Ne), MP(Ne), M r (Na O), S (Re Ne) - 3:36 minutes In this Swarsangati, the influence of Dhrupad ang is evident. After singing for approximately 4 minutes, swara pancham (P) is introduced. P P P (A Re Ne) S S S S S (Na - - -), S, P P P (Re Ne Ne) (4:50) —In this combination of swaras, the 'Sut' alangkar of the Dhrupads is used precisely, alongside the influence of the 'Khinch' alangkar observed in the Agra Gharana's singing. The noteworthy use is the Pancham swara from the shadaj swara in this instance. Additionally, jod-ang alap is introduced in two-two or three-three rhythms following the Barabar-laya alap, establishing the shadaj by using all the swara in the Gunkeli raga from Mandra and Madhya Saptaka. The following swara are used—(7:20 to 7:38 minutes) d S S (ri te re), M dS dS dS(re ne re ne re), S S (ri), M M M (te re re), P P (re re), d d (nene) d S (na-), S S S SS(re ne re re ne), r r r (ri re ne), S (na), S S S(re ne ne). S P (na-)—11:36 min. The use of swara in this piece resembles the 'Sut' ang of Dhrupad. This technique is referred to as Dhunak in Agra singing. From a rhythmic perspective, there is a slight increase in the rhythm of the pair of ang taken in two-two rhythms, which might be termed Sanchari alap. In general, the Jod-ang alap employs a consistent increase in rhythm to two-two rhythms, in context of instrumental music, thereby blending elements of Dhrupad with the Khayal gharana style. This approach has been maintained in the compositions of Ustad Faiyaz Khan, a prominent figure in the Khayal gharana of the Agra gharana.

Subsequently, we will observe that he has transitioned to a four-four rhythm in the alap and commenced the Jhala anga alap (12:38 minutes—M M, r r r r, S S S S S, r r r r, Sd rS, r r r r, S S S S S, d d d d, S S S S S, d d d d, S S S S S, d d, r r r, S S S S S, rS rS rS r, S S S S S, MS M M M, M (r r) S, M M r S, M M r S, M M M M, d d d d, S S S S S S, d d d, S d r S, S, S S S S S S, d d, P P P, M M, r r r r, S S S S S—The swaras are presented in char-char chand with the nom-tom bani. The use of gamak is minimal, but it is employed sparingly. Additionally, one can observe the influence of jhala anga towards the conclusion of the Dhrupad, where the full effect of the ornaments from the Alap section of the Dhrupad such as Sut, Sphurit, Gamak, etc., becomes evident. Listening to Ustad Faiyaz Khan Saheb's Khayal rending and the Alap of the Dhrupad reveals the profound application of Alap, specifically the utilization of Dhrupad ang, within the Agra Gharana. This comprehensive usage of the Dhrupad-style Alap continues to exert influence today.

Next, he will perform a Bandish in Ektaal. The Bandish, although classified as bada-khayal, maintains a relatively moderate rhythm. Similar to the Dhrupad, an open and resonant voice is utilized, often invoking the Dhrupad style throughout his singing. In this section, the raga is expressed through the Bandish's melody using specific notes: (M) r r, d r S, MS r, Pa M r, d P M r. This harmony demonstrates a proficient application of the meend, which is one of the characteristic ornaments of the Dhrupad. The boltaan or taan is frequently employed, showcasing the gamak-taan technique, which is believed to be influenced by the Jhala-ang elements from the alap segment of the Dhrupad.

This recording of the Gunkeli raga includes an extensive rendition of the alap section. The analysis indicates that Ustad Faiyaz Khan Saheb of the Agra Gharana has adhered to the traditional style of the



Dhrupad and applied its techniques. It is noted that the alap sung by him resembles the genre of the Dhrupad alap.

## Conclusion

Gayaki by Ustad Faiyaz Khan is a powerful illustration of how tradition and innovation can coexist. By maintaining the Dhrupad ang in his Khayal performances, he helped to establish a tradition that honors both artistic flexibility and structural rigor. His compositions serve as a reminder that Hindustani music's genre borders are fluid and ever-changing due to the creative process of musicians who respect their heritage while broadening their appeal. Many Agra gharana musicians continue to uphold the tradition today. This practice not only enriches the singing style of the Agra gharana, but also helps preserve its historical practices.

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