

MUSICAL JOURNEY OF DHRUPAD, KHAYAL & THUMRI AND THEIR CHANGING FORMS

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ABSTRACT

Indian classical music has evolved over centuries through different styles, each reflecting cultural, spiritual, and artistic transformations. Among the most important vocal forms of Hindustani classical music are **Dhrupad, Khayal, and Thumri**, each representing a distinct phase in this musical journey.

The evolution of Hindustani classical music reflects a rich blend of spirituality, creativity, and emotional expression. Dhrupad, Khayal, and Thumri are three प्रमुख vocal forms that illustrate this journey. From the rigid and devotional Dhrupad to the imaginative Khayal and the expressive Thumri, each form has undergone significant transformation while preserving its unique identity.

Dhrupad originally a strict, spiritual, and court-centered form, Dhrupad has changed by becoming more accessible to modern audiences. Performances are now shorter, and presentation styles have adapted, while traditions are still preserved by lineages like the Dagar Gharana. Dhrupad is traditionally divided into four main banis (styles). These are Dagar Bani, Gauhar Bani, Khandar Bani, Nauhar Bani.

Khayal developed later as a flexible and imaginative style, gaining popularity under Muhammad Shah Rangila. Its changing form includes greater improvisation, diverse gharanas, and modern, audience-friendly presentations.

Khayal music developed through different gharanas (styles), each with its own unique गायकी (singing approach). Some of the most important Khayal gharanas are Gwalior Gharana, Agra Gharana, Jaipur-Atrauli Gharana, Kirana Gharana, Patiala Gharana.

Thumri focuses on emotion and lyrical beauty, flourishing in Lucknow and Varanasi under Wajid Ali Shah. It has evolved from court and dance traditions to stage and even film music. Thumri is deeply connected with emotion (bhava), and certain moods are most commonly expressed Shringaar (Love/Romance), Viraha (Separation), Bhakti (Devotion), Karuna (Pathos), Hasya (Joy/Playfulness).

Keywords: Dhrupad, Khayal, Thumri, Hindustani Classical Music, Musical Evolution, Gharana, Indian Music Tradition, Raag, Emotion.

Introduction

Indian classical music is not merely an art form but a living tradition that carries the essence of centuries-old cultural, spiritual, and aesthetic values. Its journey is deeply intertwined with the history of temples, royal courts, and the emotional lives of people, making it both timeless and dynamic. Among its many forms, Dhrupad, Khayal, and Thumri stand as three significant pillars that reflect the gradual transformation of musical thought and expression.

From the meditative and disciplined nature of Dhrupad to the imaginative and expansive style of Khayal, and finally to the deeply expressive and emotive Thumri, this journey highlights a shift from structure to creativity and emotion. Each form not only preserves its unique identity but also adapts to changing audiences and cultural contexts. This evolution beautifully demonstrates how Indian classical music balances tradition with innovation, ensuring its relevance across generations.

Briefing On Dhrupad, Khayal & Thumri:

1. Dhrupad (The Foundation of Classical Tradition)

Dhrupad is considered the most ancient form of Hindustani classical music, with roots tracing back to Vedic chants and temple traditions.

- Origins & Development:

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It flourished in royal courts, especially during the reign of Akbar, where legendary musicians like Tansen elevated its status.

- Characteristics:
 - Serious, meditative, and spiritual in nature
 - Focus on purity of swara (notes) and raga
 - Structured into Alap, Jor, and Dhrupad composition
 - Accompanied by the Pakhawaj
- Themes:
Devotion, philosophy, and praise of gods or kings
- Changing Form:
Over time, Dhrupad declined due to its rigid structure and limited audience appeal. However, in recent decades, it has seen revival through dedicated gharanas like the Dagar Gharana, adapting slightly to modern audiences while retaining its purity.
- Some Bandish of Dhrupad:
 - Shish Jataa Ganga Shohe
Raag: Bhairav; Theme: Devotional (Lord Shiva)
 - 2. Om Anant Hari Narayan
Raag: Yaman; Theme: Spiritual / Vishnu bhakti
 - 3. Jai Jai Jagadishwari
Raag: Malkauns; Theme: Goddess worship

2. Khayal (The Expression of Imagination)

Khayal, meaning "imagination," emerged as a more flexible and expressive form compared to Dhrupad.

- Origins & Development:
It developed during the late Mughal period and is often associated with Amir Khusrau (though historically debated). It gained prominence under rulers like Muhammad Shah Rangila. Sadarang(Niyamat khan) and Adarang(are two of the most important composers in the history of Hindustani classical music, especially in the development of Khayal singing.
- Characteristics:
 - More romantic and expressive
 - Allows improvisation and creativity
 - Two main parts: Vilambit (slow) and Drut (fast)
 - Accompanied by tabla and harmonium
- Themes:
 - Love, devotion, and poetic imagery
- Changing Form:
Khayal became the dominant form of Hindustani music. Over time:
 - It absorbed influences from regional styles
 - Gharanas (like Gwalior, Kirana, Jaipur) developed unique approaches
 - Modern performances are shorter and more audience-friendly
 - Fusion and experimentation have expanded its reach globally
- Some Bandish of Dhrupad:
 - 1. Eri Aali Piya Bin
Raag: Yaman; Mood: Viraha (separation)
 - 2. Abhu Lalan Mai Ka
Raag: Bihag; Mood: Shringaar Rasa

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- 3. Ab More Saiyan Ghar Aaye
Raag: Desh; Mood: Joy
- 4. Shakhi Sanvaro Giridhar Gopala
Raag: Khamaj; Mood: Shringaar Rasa
- 5. Rang Rangile Prem Piya Shang Khele Rang
Raag: Bageshree; Mood: Prem Rasa

3. Thumri: The Voice of Emotion

Thumri is a semi-classical form known for its lyrical beauty and emotional depth.

- **Origins & Development:**
It flourished in the courts of Lucknow and Varanasi, especially under patronage of Wajid Ali Shah.
- **Characteristics:**
 - Focus on expression (bhava) rather than strict raga rules
 - Romantic and devotional themes, especially Radha-Krishna love
 - Use of light ragas and flexible rhythm
- **Themes:**
Emotion, love, and expression (bhava)
- **Changing Form:**
 - Transitioned from court dance (associated with Kathak) to concert stage
 - Greater emphasis on vocal artistry
 - Incorporated into films and light music
 - Artists adapted it to appeal to wider audiences without losing emotional depth
- **Some Bandish of Dhrupad:**
 - 1. Kaun Gali Gayo Shyam
Raag: Khamaj; Emotion: Krishna Bhakti
 - 2. Baju Band Khul Khul Jaye
Raag: Bhairavi; Emotion: Viraha
 - 3. Mohe Panghat Pe Nandlal
Raag: Gara; Emotion: Hasya Rasa(Playful Krishna Lila)
 - 4. Ras Ke Bhare Tore Nain
Raag: Pilu; Emotion: Prem Rasa
 - 5. Aaj Shyam Mohe Rang Diyo
Raag: Kafi; Emotion: Shringaar Rasa

Changing Forms and Contemporary Relevance:

The evolution of Dhrupad, Khayal, and Thumri reflects broader cultural transformations. Dhrupad represents spiritual depth and discipline, Khayal symbolizes artistic freedom and innovation, and Thumri embodies emotional expression and accessibility.

In contemporary times:

- Dhrupad is being revived and appreciated globally for its meditative quality
- Khayal continues to dominate classical performances with new experiments
- Thumri has bridged the gap between classical and popular music

Technological advancements, globalization, and changing audience preferences have further influenced these forms, leading to new interpretations and collaborations.

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Aspect	Dhrupad	Khayal	Thumri
Nature	Serious, spiritual	Imaginative, flexible	Romantic, expressive
Structure	Rigid	Semi-flexible	Very flexible
Focus	Raga purity	Creativity	Emotion (Bhava)
Audience	Elite, niche	Wide	Popular

Conclusion

The journey from Dhrupad to Khayal to Thumri reflects the transformation of Indian society—from spiritual austerity to artistic freedom and emotional expression. While Dhrupad preserves the ancient discipline, Khayal represents creative expansion, and Thumri embodies emotional connection.

Despite their transformations, these traditions continue to preserve their core identities, adapting gracefully to the changing times while maintaining their cultural and artistic significance.

Today, all three forms continue to evolve, balancing tradition with innovation, ensuring that the rich heritage of Indian classical music remains alive and relevant.

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