

- *Dhrupad*
- *Dhamār*
- *Khyāl*
- **Light Classical Genres**
- *Thumrī*
- *Dādrā*
- **Ghazal**

Several generalizations emerge from the study of Hindustani—North Indian—vocal genres. First, vocal music has been the most significant type of music in India from ancient times; only in the late twentieth century has instrumental performance risen to its present state of artistic development and popularity with classical-music audiences. Second, the development of instrumental music cannot be separated from that of vocal music. This cultural fact and value underscores eight further generalizations about Hindustani vocal music.

- Vocal genres performed at the present time have a long history, beginning in the 1500s or earlier.
- Over time, as local traditions have affected the more widely shared classical repertoires, new genres have emerged. Each successive new infusion, initially considered light music, has gradually become more classical, with the oldest vocal genre, *dhrupad*, becoming the epitome of classicism. Use of the terms *classical* and *light classical* to describe genres performed today reflects a continuation of that process (Prajnanananda 1981).
- Only four classical and light classical genres—*dhrupad*, *khyāl* (also commonly transliterated as *khayāl*), *thumrī*, and *ghazal*—have dominated the history of North Indian vocal performance. This discussion considers two other frequently performed genres, *tarānā* and *dādrā*. Concerts featuring any of these genres often include performance of other "light" vocal forms, such as the regional song genres *ṭappā* (from Banaras, based on a Punjabi folk song), *Rabindrasan.gīt* (from Bengal), and *pad* (from Maharashtra).
- Since the 1700s, these four main genres have coexisted rather than replacing each other in historical succession (Meer 1980; Wade 1987). *Khyāl* has been the preeminent form in concerts throughout the twentieth century.
- Each of the four main genres consists of a brief composition complemented by improvisation. The compositions themselves are not radically different from genre to genre, although they are often associated with and thus represent a particular genre. It is misleading to think of a Hindustani composition as a "fixed" entity, to be performed exactly as a composer intended it to sound (Wade 1973). Even the most widely known songs by the most respected singer-composers only provide a basis for

#### Page Image

- flexible interpretation and improvisation: a raga, a tala, and a text, which together provide the basic materials for improvisation.
- Two aspects of performance—the way the singer uses the composition and the nature of the singer's improvisation—most clearly distinguish one genre from another.
- The performing ensemble and the musical roles of its members are also important differences among the genres.
- The context in which each genre developed and the sociomusical identity of the singers are important aids to understanding Hindustani vocal music (Powers 1979, 1980).

## DHRUPAD

*Dhrupad* is today considered the most serious Hindustani vocal form. Evoking images of elegance and grandeur, it demands from its singers a deep knowledge of raga and a thoroughgoing competence in vocal rhythmic improvisation. A lengthy vocal exposition of the melodic mode precedes the composition, and rhythmic play within the meter of the song concludes the performance.

### History of the genre

In the early 1500s, North India was divided into princely realms, and a variety of vocal genres existed. At that time, the *dhrupad* may have been widespread in the Indo-Gangetic plain. Historical accounts associate it mostly with Gwalior, a kingdom then ruled by an important patron of music, Man Singh Tomar (r. 1486-1516). Due to the remarkable artistry of singers employed in his court, *dhrupad* emerged as a genre whose roots lay in, but encompassed more than, the historical and widely known *prabandha*, the form it replaced in importance. *Dhrupad* was an immediately accessible genre, with compositions in the oldest and best-known ragas as well as in more locally familiar ragas. Unlike earlier classical vocal music, which had texts in the scholarly and religious language Sanskrit, *dhrupad* used texts in the vernacular Hindi language of the area. Also in contrast to earlier classical songs, its texts eschewed classical poetic meters, and were unconstricted by the demands of metrical versification. A new era in Hindustani classical music had begun.

*Dhrupad* was not merely a court-based genre. Singers of the bhakti devotional movement used this form, creating thousands of songs about the love of the milkmaid Radha for the elusive, flirtatious deity Krishna, an incarnation of the god Vishnu. Listeners understood the allegorical message: as Radha loved and sought Krishna, all humankind should seek the love of God. Religious mendicants sang devotional *dhrupad*, accompanying themselves on the vina, and a temple-based repertoire developed.

The *dhrupad* genre spread quickly to courts outside Gwalior. By 1550, it was part of the culture of the Mughal courts, where both lower-ranking Indian musicians and famous singers trained in Gwalior and employed at the court of Emperor Akbar (r. 1556-1605) performed it. *Dhrupad* became preeminent among Hindustani vocal forms, and reigned as the vocal genre of choice in regional courts of North and Central India and in the imperial courts in Delhi and Agra. The First Mughal sovereign to prefer newer, "lighter" styles of music was Muhammad Shah (r. 1719-1748), under whose patronage the vocal form *khyāl* gained acceptance into the mainstream of classical music. By Muhammad Shah's time, *dhrupad* had probably become the rather solemn and extremely serious genre known to twentieth-century audiences. Although concerts featuring *dhrupad* are now rare—with few performers, teachers, and students compared with those of *khyāl*—the prestige of the genre among classical forms remains undiminished.

### Page Image

The precise form and character of *dhrupad* in the 1500s and immediately thereafter is unclear. Pictorial evidence provides some details of the court-based *dhrupad* ensemble over time. In the 1500s, this ensemble included one singer, or a pair of singers, who kept the tala (showed the rhythmic cycle) with motions of the hands and sang to the accompaniment of the *rudra vīṇā* 'stick zither'. This instrument was still part of the accompaniment in seventeenth-century paintings, but the ensemble had otherwise changed: a *tambūr* 'long-necked, plucked lute' played a continuous drone, and the *pakhāvaj* 'barrel drum' provided rhythmic accompaniment, much like the ensemble of the present day. In the 1700s, players of vinas began to assert their musical independence, with the result that the vina (now called *bīn*) is no longer part of the *dhrupad* ensemble. The complete modern

ensemble for a performance of *dhrupad* consists of the singer(s), the keeper of the drone, and the drummer.

From surviving examples of *prabandha* (the predecessors of *dhrupad*), scholars have deduced characteristics that show similarities with those of *dhrupad* and other, more modern, Indian vocal forms (Rowell 1992:274-281). *Prabandha* had multiple sections; in the early history of the genre, *dhrupad* had three sections, whose number increased to four in the late 1800s (Srivastava 1980:31, 60). The performance of *prabandha* followed a sectionalized sequence, with changes of pace delineating some sections (from metered to unmetered music, for example) or shifts between meaningful text and meaningless syllables (vocables). Texts *prabandha* featured two-syllable rhymes; those of *dhrupad* do also, as in the words *gyānī*, *bānī*, *jānī*, and *siyānī* in the text of figure 1 (see below).

Surviving *dhrupad* texts of the late 1400s and 1500s by the greatest singers of the age (Tansen, Nayak Bakshu, and others) show a song form that could address a god or a goddess, laud a king, express feelings of intimate romantic love, describe a season, transmit musicological knowledge, or deal with a metaphysical or religious concept ( figure 1):

Kauna bharama bhūle ho mana gyānī?

Bujhata rāga akshara budha bānī,

Anjānī kachu na jānī.

Jānī na jāta, vidyā bahuta siyānī.

In what delusion have you lost yourself O knowing mind?

Though you know ragas and words and meanings of speech,

The Primal Sound [the unknown] cannot be known.

So deep is the knowledge, it cannot be grasped.

Conventionally, the first section of a piece is called its *sthāī*, and its second section is called its *an.tarā*. As is frequently the case, in this example each section is a couplet.

### ***Dhrupad* in performance**

The hallmark of *dhrupad* today is raga, the melodic mode, which the most respected Hindustani musicians—whom Indians consider repositories of traditional knowledge—present in its clearest and purest form both in improvisation and in composition. (Until the mid-twentieth century, a singer of *khyāl* often went to a singer of *dhrupad* to learn ragas.) The performance of *dhrupad* emphasizes raga, and in a present-day concert its performance, lasting forty to sixty minutes, begins with a lengthy improvisation ( *ālāp*) on the raga of the *dhrupad* that will follow. Only after fully

Page Image

Figure 2: Musical score for "Kauna bharama bhüle" in rāg miyān kī toḍī, twelve-beat *cautāl*. The score is transcribed by Rajna Kliner, from Dagar Brothers 1988. The lyrics are: *sthāī* O Ka- (u)- na na bha- ra- ma- (a) bhū- (a)- le- (e) Kau- na bha- ra- ma- (a) bhū- (a)- le- (e) ho ma- na gyā- nī bu- jha- ta rā- ga a- ksha- ra bu- dha bā- nī. kau- na bha- ra- ma bhū- (a)- le an̄tarā kau- na bha- ra- ma an- jā- nī ka-.

FIGURE 2  
The  
dhruv

composition "Kauna bharama bhüle" and improvisation on the text of the *sthāī*, as sung by N. Zahiruddin and N. Faiyazuddin Dagar. In *rāg miyān kī toḍī*, twelve-beat *cautāl*. Transcription by Rajna Kliner, from Dagar Brothers 1988. Large commas are breath marks; short, wavy lines indicate ornamentation.

introducing the scale and melodic motifs of the raga does the singer present the composition and develop it with further improvisation (Widdess 1981).

### **Melodic improvisation (ālāp)**

Accompanied only by a *tambūrā*, which continuously sounds a drone, the vocalist (usually male) begins the improvised melody, at first focusing on introducing the melodic mode and presenting with intense concentration the musical traits of the chosen raga. If there are two vocalists, they share the role of soloist, taking turns singing. Initially intoning a prolonged tonic (Sa) in their middle register (the middle C at the beginning of figure 2), the singers bring the audience into their concentration.

Then progressing slowly, they sing with thoughtful attention each pitch of the raga, each connection to the next pitch, each characteristic melodic turn, and any significant ornamentation. As they establish the mood and the traits of the raga, they give correct emphasis to its proper tones. The rhythm at this point is free, unmetered, changing, and unstructured by words, as the singers use vocables such as *na* and *re*.

Page Image

FIGURE 1

continued) The *dhrupad* composition "Kauna bharama bhūle" and improvisation on the text of *sthāi*, as sung by N. Zahiruddin and N. Faiyazuddin Dagar. In *rāg miyān. kī toḍī*, twelve-beat *ca* Transcription by Rajna Klasner, from Dagar Brothers 1988. Large commas are breath marks; show wavy lines indicate ornamentation.

Departing from the tonic, the singers explore the adjacent pitches, mostly down into the lower tetrachord (*man.dra*) but ideally as far as the lower tonic (Sa). (If two singers frequently perform

together, one may cultivate a lower vocal range.) Musical phrases emerge as the singers return briefly to the middle tonic with a recurring melodic formula (*mohṛā*) that serves to finish a melodic thought. When the singers

Page Image

continued) The *dhrupad* composition "Kauna bharama bhūle" and improvisation on the text of *sthāi*, as sung by N. Zahiruddin and N. Faiyazuddin Dagar. In *rāg miyān. kī toḍī*, twelve-beat *ca* Transcription by Rajna Klaser, from Dagar Brothers 1988. Large commas are breath marks; showavy lines indicate ornamentation.

are satisfied that they have sufficiently explored the lower register, they focus on the middle (*madhya*) register, and then gradually move to the high (*tār*) register. The artist often succeeds in creating a suspenseful, climactic, exhilarating feeling of arrival at the upper tonic (*Sa*). But that feeling may not last, because the best singers take the improvisation even higher, until they reach the fourth or fifth scale degree (*Ma* or *Pa*)

FIGU  
Begin  
of a  
dhru,  
ālāp

Na na ne na ri nu- a  
ni re re na na na ri re re re na  
na na a ri re re nu  
nu ri re re ra

improvisation, representing the first two minutes of a performance by N. Zahiruddin and N. Faiyazuddin Dagar. In *rāg miyān. kī toḍī*. Transcription by Rajna Klaser, from Dagar Brothers 1

#### Page Image

FIGU  
Nom  
ālāp  
sung

re ne ne nei ne ne ni re re re re na re re ne di re re re re na di re re re re na  
re na na na na noi re re re ne e e e e ne e e nai re re re nei ni ne ne ne re na  
ni re re ne nui nui de ne ne de ne ne de ne ne de ne ne de ne ne di ne ne na ri re di re re noi de re ne  
noi de re re de re re de re re di re de re nai de re re dire re nui ri re re re nui de ne ne de ne de ne de ne ne  
de ne ne de ne ne de ne ne di re re re re nui de ne ne de ne ne

Zahiruddin and N. Faiyazuddin Dagar. In *rāg miyān. kī toḍī*. Transcription by Rajna Klaser, from Dagar Brothers 1988.

of the high register. The ideal of sustaining musicality across such a wide vocal range puts extraordinary vocal demands on singers of improvised introductions, and it may be one reason for the custom that allows vocal duos to perform *dhrupad*.

### **Rhythmic improvisation (nom-tom ālāp)**

Gradually (and perhaps unnoticeably to listeners), the speed of the singing increases through the melodic improvisation. Melodic phrases increasingly encompass more tones. Having fully imparted the melodic aspects of the raga, the singer permits the musical element of rhythm to take on more prominence. Without pausing, he shifts into a portion of the introduction called *nom-tom ālāp*. He initiates a definite pulse by enunciating repeated vocables on repeated pitches (figure 3). The rhythm does not necessarily remain regular; in fact, rhythmic groupings can be quite irregular, drawing attention to the element of rhythm itself.

### **Dhrupad composition**

When the vocalist wishes to end the unmeasured melodic section, he subtly communicates with the drummer playing the *pakhāvaj*, who has remained silent: the moment has arrived for presenting the *dhrupad* composition. The drummer joins the performance because the composition is set to a tala (metric cycle); in Hindustani classical music, accompaniment on drums always indicates metered music.

Composers of *dhrupad* have always drawn on a large number of ragas, but they have not always used a large number of talas. Theoretical treatises of the 1600s show that performances of *dhrupad* in that period employed many talas; however, performances of the 1990s use five talas, of which two—*cautāl*, with a cycle of twelve beats (in figure 1, each bar delineates one cycle of this tala), and *jhaptāl*, with a cycle of ten beats—are preeminent.

Until the early twentieth century, the performance of *dhrupad* by a full ensemble

Page Image may have comprised four sections ( *sthāī*, *an.tarā*, *san.cārī*, and *ābhog* ), but performers nowadays usually sing only the first two, both of which are short, consisting of two, three, or four textual phrases. One distinction between these two sections lies in their relative tonal registers: *sthāī* melodies often remain mostly in the lower half of the middle register and a few pitches below the middle tonic, and the *an.tarā* ascends in its first phrase to the upper tonic. The song in figure 1 is a lesson in reality, varying the characteristic form: the *sthāī* ascends to the upper tonic in the first phrase, albeit more gradually than the ascent in the *an.tarā* (see cycle 10). The *an.tarā* composition permits smooth linkage back to the beginning of the *sthāī* (cycle 14), in terms of both the melody and the place in the metric cycle. Thus, the performance of the *sthāī* and the *an.tarā* is cyclical.

Most Hindustani compositions, including *dhrupad*, do not begin on the first count of the tala. Many begin halfway through the metric cycle, as in figure 1. The soloist sets the speed for the drummer by singing the first notes of the song alone, and the drum enters on count 1. The short, beginning phrase of the *sthāī* ("Kauna bharama bhūle" in figure 1), presented from the midpoint of one tala cycle to the midpoint of the next, provides a convenient cadential formula for further repetitions of the *sthāī*.

The artist presents the entire composed *sthāī*, often, as in figure 1, repeating the first phrase in the process. Then the singer has the option of either presenting the *an.tarā* immediately (in figure 1, tala cycle 10) or delaying its presentation by using the text of the *sthāī* as a vehicle for a newly improvised melody. Whenever the vocalist introduces the *an.tarā*, he uses its initial phrase, like that of the *sthāī*, as a cadential formula; however, performers spend far more time improvising on the text of the *sthāī*



than on that of the *an.tarā*. See the return to the *sthāi* in figure 1, at the end of cycle 14.

### ***Improvisation on the composition***

What most distinguishes the performance of *dhrupad* from that of other Hindustani vocal genres is the nature of the improvisation following the composition: specifically, its primarily rhythmic orientation. The singer must always articulate the composition clearly; but expressing the meaning of the text through melodic improvisation is far less important than using the text for rhythmic purposes ( *bolbānt*) (see tala cycles 17 to the end of ( figure 1). The singer may alter a single word, two words, or a phrase, thereby changing the speed ( *laykāṛī*), creating syncopated rhythms, or making patterns against the regular beats of the tala. All the while, the improvised melody must remain true to the raga of the composition. Few singers of other genres can match the rhythmic skill of *dhrupad* singers ( *dhrupadīyā*).

*Dhrupad* performances also contrast with those of other vocal genres in terms of the drummer's role. He does not have to play the rhythmic pattern that constantly enunciates the tala ( *ṭhekā*), as in *khyāl* and other more recent genres; rather, he is a partner in the rhythmic improvisation. He may play complex patterns, and these may or may not conform with the vocalist's rhythm-oriented improvisation. He may be silent just when listeners expect percussive emphasis on a beat, or he may try the extremely challenging technique of simultaneously improvising the same rhythm as the vocalist. This kind of drumming may have its roots in the early practice of the singer's keeping the tala, in the period before the *pakhāvaj* player became part of the ensemble.

Unless the singers mark the subdivisions and beats of the tala with their hands in the traditional visual manner [see H INDUSTANI T ALA], the performance gives the audience no indication of the metric pattern. This is an instance of connoisseurship in Hindustani music aiding the listener: being able to keep track of the tala—not

Page Image only feeling the rhythmic play within it but also anticipating the finish of an improvisational unit on a cadential count 1 ( *sam*)—can greatly enhance enjoyment of the artists' improvisations.

### **DHAMĀR**

*Dhamār* is a name sometimes given to *dhrupad*-like compositions composed and performed for the Hindu spring festival of Holī. They differ from *dhrupad* primarily in their tala: *dhamār tāl* is a cycle of fourteen beats, with irregular subdivisions of 5 + 2 + 3 + 4 beats. Conceived to show off this tala, the texts of *dhamār* display a playful lilt as they joke about Krishna's flirtations. The performance of *dhamār* is appropriate for the fun of Holī, when Indians delight in splashing one another with red powder or liquid, relishing the sexual symbolism of the color and the splashing.

### **KHYĀL**

In Hindustani concerts, *khyāl* is the most frequently performed classical form of singing. Considered a lyrical and flexible genre, it begins with the vocal presentation of a brief composition. The singer then draws on several kinds of improvisation while presenting a raga and reveals musical creativity while displaying increasing vocal virtuosity.

### **History of the genre**

*Khyāl* was developed to maturity after *dhrupad* and is second in prestige among the Hindustani vocal genres. Legend credits a royal patron of the 1400s, Sultan Husain Sharqi (r. 1458-1477) of Jaunpur, with the creation of a genre by that name. Though its relationship to the *khyāl* of today is dubious, it was probably one of numerous popular regional genres that surfaced in classical music only when a royal patron brought it into an influential cultural sphere; in the case of *khyāl*, the

patron who did this was another Mughal sovereign, Muhammad Shah (r. 1719-1748).

Historical lore has linked *khyāl* with several persons: Nyamat Khan, who played *bīn* and sang *dhrupad* in Muhammad Shah's court (and was a descendant of the great singer Tansen); Nyamat Khan's students; and singers of the Muslim religious form qawwali and an undefined genre called *khyāl*. According to tradition, Nyamat Khan chafed at his subordinate position as an instrumental accompanist and left his post. Wanting to create a livelier musical fashion than the then-ponderous *dhrupad*, he integrated into a new improvisational genre some elements of qawwali style (probably the florid, rapid melodic runs called *tān*) with traditional compositional forms. Instead of performing, he composed songs (under the pen name Sadarang) and trained two young boys, who themselves eventually became masterly artists. Muhammad Shah invited the young men to sing and offered them positions at court. Only later did he learn that the new musical genre was Nyamat Khan's innovation. The story has a happy ending: Muhammad Shah permitted Nyamat Khan to be a

Page Image soloist on the vina ( *bīn*), and the new genre, performed by top-ranking musicians (Kalāvant), joined the other genres of court-approved music.

In the waning years of the Mughal empire, *khyāl* became more classicized as musicians disseminated it throughout North India, seeking new patrons. Despite periodic cries of distress about its role in the dissolution of "pure" classical music, it became in the 1800s, and remains, the most frequently performed genre of Hindustani classical vocal music (Wade 1984). Moreover, *khyāl* performances are generally identified not by the genre but by the raga being performed, unlike performances of other vocal genres.

### ***Khyāl* in performance**

*Khyāl* differs noticeably from *dhrupad* in the hierarchy of musicians' roles within an ensemble, which consists of the featured soloist(s), an accompanist on a melody-producing instrument, a drummer, and one or two accompanists on *tambūrā* (from the 1700s to the mid-1800s, the singers were exclusively male, but since then the number of female artists has increased) ( figure 4).



FIGU  
The  
renov

Hindustani vocalist Veena Sahasrabuddhe, with *tambūrā*, performing at the New Delhi home of Pandit Ravi Shankar on the occasion of his seventy-second birthday, 1992. Photo by Stephen Sla

*Khyāl* is primarily a solo vocal genre, although male duos, usually family members who learned music together, have performed it. As in *dhrupad*, where two soloists might sing the composition and the cadential phrase together, the singers of *khyāl* divide the improvisation between them, jointly performing only one melodic solo line. Another possible vocalist might be a supporting singer, an aspiring young artist engaging in traditional performance-centered training. The player of the stringed drone (often the same person as the supporting singer) will be a trusted disciple whose nameless role is an honored position. (Conforming to the Western custom of announcing all the performers' names, concert organizers nowadays sometimes acknowledge the *tambūrā* player.) There the similarities to the *dhrupad* ensemble end.

The melody-producing instrument in a *khyāl* ensemble is a bowed lute (either *sāran.gī* or violin), or a harmonium (a small, portable reed organ), or both. The melodic accompanist is subordinate to the vocalist in every way. The accompanist's role is to complement the vocal line and provide continuity between breathing pauses by playing slight variations a split second behind the soloist's improvisation. The player may repeat either phrasal endings for continuity during short breaks or (should the soloist desire to rest) whole phrases during longer breaks. Some vocalists autocratically denounce accompanists, claiming that the player of the *sāran.gī* is poorly trained, does not know the ragas, and depends on the soloists for musical creativity. In fact, in the history of *khyāl*, there has been considerable upward mobility from player of *sāran.gī* to vocalist.

The primary reasons for the hierarchy among performers are sociocultural. The *sāran.gī* was associated in the 1800s with light music. It provided accompaniment for female singers and dancers; indeed, its tonal quality blends beautifully with that of the female voice. Some of the female singers and dancers—even the most accomplished artists, patronized in a court-related context or by wealthy landowners—offered both sexual and musical entertainment. Their accompanists acquired their social and cultural stigma. Only from the mid-1920s would some male vocalists sing with *sāran.gī* players, but soon thereafter the full complement of *sāran.gī* with tabla and stringed drone became the standard ensemble. In the past few decades, the number of *sāran.gī* players has been decreasing, for few young musicians are learning to play it; there would seem to be more interest in the *sāran.gī* among Western musicians seriously involved in Indian classical music.

The use of the harmonium is probably a twentieth-century practice, one that has received some criticism. Objections by purists focus not so much on sociocultural

Page Image factors as on the fixed tempered tuning of the instrument, which does not allow the intonational flexibility that is a hallmark of Hindustani music. In practice, players and audiences can effectively ignore the problematic fixed pitches because of the harmonium's low dynamic level.

The drummer in the *khyāl* ensemble also occupies a clearly subordinate position: he keeps the tala by repeating the *ṭhekā*. This role contrasts sharply with that of the tabla in accompanying dance and performing light music. In the performance of *khyāl*, the inclusion of a drum solo usually indicates that a special musical relationship exists between the singer and percussionist. The reasons for this subordinate position are unclear. Perhaps the drummer's role of playing the tala came into existence to contrast the performance of *khyāl* with that of both *dhrupad* and light music; perhaps singers thought a drummer who would just keep the tala would provide better balance for the greater variety of melodic improvisation in *khyāl*; perhaps performers of *khyāl* whose status was below that of performers of *dhrupad* wished to assert the superiority of their position.

### ***Khyāl* composition**

The common terms for Hindustani composition are *bandīś*, which denotes both vocal and instrumental compositions, and *cīz*, generally referring to vocal composition. *Khyāl* compositions, though similar to those of *dhrupad*, are shorter, having only two sections, the *sthāī* and the *an.tarā* (Wade 1973). The *sthāī* presents the essential musical elements of the particular raga in which the song is composed, and it remains within the middle octave of the vocalist's range. The melody of the *an.tarā* ascends to the upper-octave tonic (Sa), and even rises into the upper-octave register before descending to link with the melody of the *sthāī*. The initial phrases of the *sthāī* and the *an.tarā*, known as the *mukhrā*, provide the material for cadences throughout the improvisation.

Compositions fall into two categories depending on the speed of their performance: slow or medium-speed songs ( *barā* 'large' *khyāl*) and fast songs ( *choṭā* 'small' *khyāl*). The performance of a *khyāl* usually consists of a *barā khyāl* followed without break by a *choṭā khyāl*, usually in the same raga but a different tala. However, a principle of the performance of *khyāl* is that the basic speed of the tala gradually increases. By the end of a *choṭā khyāl*, the singing is often spectacularly fast.

The point where the composition occurs in the vocal performance differs radically between *khyāl* and *dhrupad*: except in performances by singers of the Agra *gharānā* 'musical lineage', no lengthy unmetered *ālāp* precedes the singing of a *khyāl* composition. Instead, singers introduce the pitches of the raga using vocables, and they rarely rise above the fifth pitch (Pa) of the middle octave. The melody of this brief, unmetered introduction, which only occasionally lasts as long as five minutes, is often merely an anticipation of the melody of the composition. After the introduction, the singer immediately renders the first phrase of the song to set the tempo for the drummer. From that moment on, the performance is "in tala" (metered). The drummer does not wait long on stage before entering the performance.

The manner in which singers present the composition in the performance of a *barā khyāl* differs from artist to artist. Before settling down to lengthy improvisation on the text of the *sthāī*, a singer may present the *sthāī* and the *an.tarā* together or with improvisation between them. The singer may choose not to perform the *an.tarā* at all. Presentation of the *barā khyāl* composition usually takes no more than four minutes, but the whole performance lasts anywhere from twenty to forty minutes. If a *choṭā khyāl* follows the *barā khyāl*, this section lasts only about three to five of the total minutes. Here, the singer presents and reiterates the composition much more straightforwardly.

#### Page Image

A composition is not a fixed work, and artists do not have to perform it in a specific manner. Singers have transmitted songs orally for generations with the understanding that in performance other singers will not reproduce the songs exactly. Two renditions of the same song can be so different as to share only the raga and the text. The vocalist chooses whether to perform a *barā khyāl* in an initially slow or medium speed (the actual speed is relative), and occasionally selects a tala different from that usually performed with the composition.

The texts of *khyāl* treat more or less the same set of topics as the texts of *dhrupad*, but they are generally spoken of as light, rather than ponderous. They are rich in symbolism and imagery. They may express views on life or religious devotion, either Hindu or Muslim. Some concern the Hindu Lord Krishna, whereas others express the synthesis of religious cultures that marks North Indian music, as does the following example. (The first reference to God is the Indian Muslim form of address, " *Allāh sāhab*," but the second reference, to "the beauty of the Supreme Lord," is Hindu.)

*Allāh sāhab*, the all-graceful God, is sitting on his throne.

One feels wonderful beholding the beauty of the Supreme Lord.

The first line of this text is the *sthāī*, and the second is the *an.tarā*.

Khyāl texts may describe seasons or shower praise on patrons; they may lavish attention on divine or human love, in sorrow (due to the absence of a loved one) or in joy (over union with a lover). Most texts, whether sung by a man or a woman, speak from the woman's point of view:

Oh my mother, my anklets are jingling, so I know my husband has come.

It has been four days since he came; all my heart's sadness has gone.

As in *dhrupad*, the texts of *khyāl* become vehicles for improvisation rather than deeply meaningful entities to be explored expressively. Singers sometimes place so little stress on the text that the words can be hard to understand; or they may use the words solely for rhythmic articulation.

### ***Khyāl* improvisation**

*Khyāl* further contrasts with *dhrupad* in having a greater variety of improvisational types from which an artist can choose. This trait explains the name *khyāl*, glossable as 'imagination'. Six types of improvisation are usually associated with the genre: *bolālāp*, *nom-tom*, *bolbānt*, two kinds of *tān* (*ākār* and *boltān*), and *sargam*. The first two occur only in *barā khyāl*, but the other four occur in both *barā* and *choṭā khyāl*.

A singer draws on these improvisational choices in structuring the performance of a *khyāl*. The order in which the singer performs different types of improvisation, following the initial presentation of the composition, is characteristic of Hindustani classical music in general: attention first to melody, then to rhythm, then to speed. When adhering strictly to these principles, a singer will perform *khyāl* in the following order of events: composition, *bolālāp*, *bolbānt*, *boltān*, *tān*. In practice, however, as the tempo begins to accelerate, singers introduce improvised passages of any type in any order, according to their imagination and creativity. Furthermore, an artist may use *sargam* at any point in the improvisation of *khyāl*.

The use of improvisation differs in the two types of *khyāl* performance, *barā* and *choṭā*. In the slower one, *barā khyāl*, an artist usually covers the range of improvisational possibilities, ideally giving full attention to all musical elements—melody, rhythm, and speed. In *choṭā khyāl*, the artist satisfies the melodic aspect mostly by

Page Image repeating the composition many times, employing improvisation to emphasize rhythm and speed. To fulfill the ideal of giving attention to all three musical elements, vocalists rarely perform *choṭā khyāl* as an independent piece; artists might even replace it with a highly rhythmic genre, *tarānā* (discussed below).

### ***Initial improvised section using text (bolālāp)***

After presenting a *khyāl* composition in an exceptionally slow tempo, an artist proceeds to a formal, lengthy, improvised section (*ālāp*). For this, the singer employs text (*bol*) as introduced in the composition, hence the term *bolālāp*. The purpose of the improvised section, as in *dhrupad*, is for the singer to reveal the raga by establishing its mood and showing its traits, gradually but systematically. The melodic line in figure 5 shows a singer's exploration of tones from the initial phrase (*mukhrā*) of the *sthāī*. The text of this example is translated "You came early in the morning and uttered a blessing." It repeats "came early" (*bhore hī āye*) in an ascending melody suggestive of the rising sun and of the singer's rising in the early morning.

Unlike that in *dhrupad*, the *ālāp* in *khyāl* is metered, for the drummer continues playing the *tala* after the presentation of the composition. Most vocalists downplay the meter, however, by seeking a rhythmically free, floating melody. They slur consonants in the text so as not to constrict the rhythm,

except when they intend to do so. Because the tempo is so slow, the drummer plays not only the rhythmic pattern ( *ṭhekā*) of the tala, but subdivisions of the tala count as well (see the bracketed beats,



FIGURE 5: "Bho re ā bho re hī ā bho-re, bho- sung Dipal (Agra) ghar in slow tempo barā khyāl rāg l twelve beat

Transcription by Bonnie C. Wade, from All India Radio broadcast, New Delhi, 1969. (Bracketed indicate subdivisions of a beat.)

## Page Image

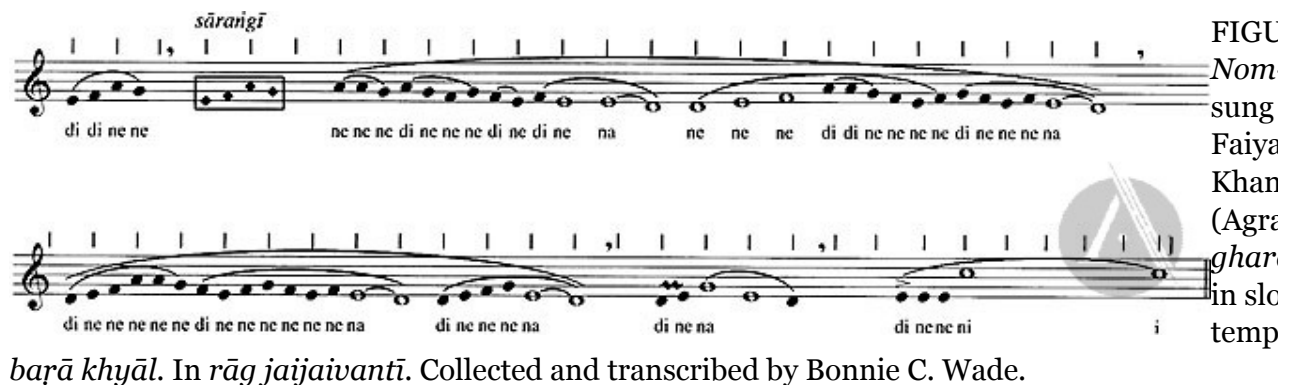


FIGURE 6: Nom sung Faiya Khan (Agra) ghar in slow tempo barā khyāl. In rāg jaijāvantī. Collected and transcribed by Bonnie C. Wade.

each with four subdivisions, in figure 5). The performers emphasize the tala only at the cadences of improvised sections, using the *mukhṛā* as a cadential formula or perhaps additional text immediately before the cadential *bhore hī* text, as in figure 5.

If the performance of a *barā khyāl* begins in medium speed, the melodic improvisation may be less exhaustive; to some extent, however, the artist will still explore the tonal registers and the raga.

## Rhythmic improvisation

Highly rhythmic improvisation sung on vocables ( *nom-tom*) draws attention to rhythm through the repetition of tones or syllables, through particular ornamentation, or by other means. *Nom-tom* refers to a passage consisting of emphatic ornamentation on each successive tone with repeated

tones, which give the music a rhythmic punch. This kind of singing "with *zor*" (forcefully) would be typical in *khyāl*, in contrast to the presentation of a whole section of systematic *nom-tom* as in *dhrupad*. Shifting rhythmic combinations are characteristic of *nom-tom* (figure 6). After the repetition of the initial phrase by the *sāran.gī* (boxed in figure 6), the vocal melody has a grouping of three notes sung to the vocables *ne ne ne*, then a group of four (*di ne ne ne*), then of two (*di ne*), and then a longer grouping.

Bolbānt is a type of improvisation that uses the text (*bol*) for rhythmic play. Though *bolbānt* predominates in *dhrupad*, few singers of *khyāl* exploit it beyond fairly simple patterns of syncopation, with one syllable per tone. Only singers with particularly good control of tala cultivate daring rhythmic play (*laykārī*). In figure 7, *bolbānt* on the text *sagarī raina men. jāge* 'awake the whole night' imparts a feeling of restlessness.

### **Fast melodic improvisation (tān)**

Fast, virtuosic melodic figures (*tān*) are the hallmark of the vocal style of *khyāl*. Such melodic improvisation varies in shape, range, and numerous other ways. *Tān* may be clear "like a string of pearls" or ornamented so heavily that the tones are indistinguishable from one another. A *tān* can be entirely descending or entirely ascending, or it can have the shape of a roller coaster, constantly covering a range of tones. It may contain a series of tones sustained by a fast vibrato, creating an illusion of speed with ornamentation rather than with real melodic motion. It may even employ musical elements not characteristic of the raga, moving slightly "out of the raga."

A vocalist may sing fast melodic patterns on vowels (*ākār tān*) unattached to any word. In figure 8, following the *mukhrā* textual phrase *bāje jha* 'make your anklets jingle', the singer imitates this sound with three such melodic patterns. Singers can also use the vowels of textual syllables (*bol*), thereby creating *boltān*. In figure 9, quick melodic patterns on *o* of the name *Udho* and *u* of *tum* 'you' keep the text intact. As in this example, a singer may improvise a *boltān* that employs textual syllables for rhythmic interest without turning the improvisation into a *bolbānt*. Some

Page Image



The image shows a musical score for a piece titled "Sagaraine men. jāge, bolbā as su Faiya Khan (Agra ghar in fast tempo choṭṭ khyā rāg". The score is written on five staves of music. The first staff begins with a tempo marking "♩ = 52". The lyrics are written below the notes. The score includes various musical notations such as rests, eighth notes, and triplets. A large, stylized letter 'A' is visible in the background of the score.

FIGURE 10

"Sagaraine men. jāge, bolbā as su Faiya Khan (Agra ghar in fast tempo choṭṭ khyā rāg

*jaijāvantī*, sixteen-beat *tintāl*. Collected and transcribed by Bonnie C. Wade.

singers become known for singing fast melodic patterns, perhaps a *tān* of a certain shape, whereas others dislike them and sing only a minimal number.

### Sol-fa syllables (sargam)

*Sargam* is the term for Indian sol-fa syllables (Sa, Re, Ga, Ma, Pa, Dha, Ni), based on the names of the first four syllables. *Sargam* in *khyāl* refers to improvised passages using the sol-fa syllables. Vocalists use these passages in different contexts. Most artists employ them when doubling or quadrupling the speed of the singing in relation to the *tala* counts. Singers also use *sargam* in rhythmic improvisation ( *bolbānt*), and a few artists mix the syllables with the words of the composition in such passages. Figure 10 demonstrates the mixture of these possibilities. Some singers render slow, expressive passages using *sargam* syllables.

The use of sol-fa syllables in vocal music is an ancient Indian practice, cultivated widely in some South Indian vocal genres. In Hindustani music, some traditional singers of *khyāl* adamantly refuse to include *sargam* in their performances, considering them a technique for practice rather than performance.

### Stylistic schools of performance

All singers of *khyāl* foster the general traits as described above, but individuals and groups of musicians have cultivated distinct ways of performing. These family traditions or stylistic schools ( *gharānā*) promote styles that have become increasingly important, as the traditional system of teaching and learning has given way to broader musical education.

Most singers of *khyāl* belong to the *gharānā* system, the organization of musicians and musical

knowledge that developed through the history of this genre in particular

Page Image

FIGURE 1  
"Bāje an āk tātā, sung Kishor Amoi (Alla Khan ghar'

in medium-tempo *barā khyāl*. In *rāg jaunpurī*, sixteen-beat *tintāl*. Transcription by Bonnie C. Wade, from Amonkar 1967.

particular. The social and musical conditions under which *khyāl* evolved spawned the styles of *gharānā*, conditions (including the diverse vocal genres) that preceded it, the different family musical traditions fostered within it, and the system of patronage of Hindustan court singers, reaching from Gwalior in present-day Madhya Pradesh to Patiala in northwestern Punjab (Wade 1984). The Agra *gharānā*, for instance, owes its heavily *dhrupad*-like style (with full-blown *ālāp* preceding the composition) to the fact that the early members of the group were singers of *dhrupad*; even when this stylistic school became noted for *khyāl*, its singers continued to perform both genres. In so doing, these singers have continually asserted their claim both to the musical tradition of highest cultural value and to the highest rank in the social sphere of musicians. Fully comfortable in their standing in the tradition, several Agra singers have been composers of original *khyāl* songs.

The same factors—cultural value, social status among musicians, and musical value—are significant in the development of the Kirana *gharānā* style of *khyāl*. Its founders belonged to a family of accompanists on the *sāran.gī*, performers accorded low social status among musicians. Since they accompanied singers of *khyāl*, they had access to soloists' musical knowledge, which proved to be their means of elevating their status—culturally, socially, and musically. Two famous Kirana singers, Abdul Karim Khan and Abdul Wahid Khan (1976), chose to emphasize melody and raga from among the musical options available in *khyāl*—the aspects of Hindustani music accorded the highest musical value. Furthermore, in the light of the hierarchy of

FIGU  
"Udh  
tum l  
boltā  
sung

ho U- dho tu- ma ho u- dho tu- ma ho tu- ma ho u- dho, tu- ma ho  
tu tu- ma tu- ma ho , nī- ka- ta ke vā- sī je su- ri- yān  
ba- se kā- sī. u- dho tu- ma ho u- dho tu- ma ho u- dho tu- ma ho tu- ma ho

Vinayakrao Patwardhan (of the Gwalior *gharānā*) in slow-tempo *barā khyāl*. In *rāg anandī kēd* twelve-beat *ektāl*. Transcription by Bonnie C. Wade, from Patwardhan 1976. Each pair of brackets indicates one beat.

Page Image

FIGU  
10  
"Gun  
Jāga,  
sarg  
passē  
as su  
Abdu  
Wahi  
Khan  
(Kira  
ghar  
in slo  
temp  
baqā  
In

jū- ga ga Ga Re Sa Ni Pa Ni Sa Re Ga Ga Ga Re Sa Ni Pa Ni Re Ni  
Re Ni Sa Sa gu- mā- nī, Ni Re Re Sa Sa gu- mā- nī gu- mā- nī gu- mā-  
mā- nī, Ni Re Re Sa Sa Sa Dha Ni Re Re Sa Ni Sa Dha, Dha Ni Pa Ma Pa Dha Dha Ni Re Re Sa Ni  
Sa Ga Ni Sa Ga Sa Sa Ni Sa Dha Dha Ni Re Sa Sa Re Ni Ni Sa Re Dha Dha Ni Ga Re Sa Ni Sa Ni Sa Ga Sa Ni Sa  
Dha Ni Ni Pa Ma Pa Dha

*rāgmultānī*, sixteen-beat *tīntāl*. Transcription by Bonnie C. Wade, from Khan 1976.

musical values, Kirana singers within the *gharānā* system use traditional musical material—compositions and ragas—as if to assert their place within tradition rather than to call attention to any departure from it.

With the present shift away from *gharānā* affiliation and toward emphasis on individual artistry, and with singers feeling free to combine aspects of several styles to create their own style, *khyāl* continues as a flexible yet vital genre of Hindustani classical music.

### **Tarānā**

Occasionally vocalists complement the performance of *barā khyāl* with a genre called *tarānā*, which has a South Indian counterpart, *tillāna* [see KARNATAK VOCAL AND INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC]. As *tarānā* requires skill in rhythmic manipulation ( *laykāri*) and the ability to sing syllables rapidly, few *khyāl* singers perform this lively, fast-tempo genre.

#### Page Image

The text of the composition most clearly distinguishes *tarānā* from *chotā khyāl*. *Tarānā* uses mostly vocables, particularly phrases such as *u dana dīm*, *dīradīra*, and *tom ta na na*, which permit crisp and quick rhythmic enunciation. Occasionally a *tarānā* includes a Persian-language couplet, revealing its historical link to Indo-Muslim culture and music, notably Sufi songs of qawwali singers and songs accompanying North Indian *kathak* dance.

*Tarānā* syllables derive from three other sources. Vocalists employ *sargam* syllables for rhythmic improvisation. They also use dance-movement syllables from the *kathak* tradition and percussion-stroke syllables for tabla accompaniment to *kathak* and *khyāl*, all of which they render melodically in the sparkling *tarānā* style.

### **LIGHT CLASSICAL GENRES**

In the 1800s, vocal genres burgeoned in the northern part of the subcontinent. These genres have remained important. Cultivated at first in particular locales and for particular audiences, they spread throughout the northern regions, and in the twentieth century they entered the musical mainstream. Without exception, these new genres— *thumrī*, *dādrā*, and *ghazal*—are considered light classical, contrasting with the more serious *khyāl* and *dhrupad*. History has repeated itself, for the early singers of *khyāl* had to struggle to earn respect in the world of classical music when singers of *dhrupad* denounced *khyāl* as light music.

Why were (and are) these genres considered light? One suggested reason is that the talas that composers use for them are simpler and less weighty than those used for *khyāl* and *dhrupad* compositions. Another suggestion concerns the texts, which are altogether romantic, emphasizing the explicit, tantalizing, sensual language of love, rather than the devotional expression of Radha's love for Krishna found in *khyāl* and *dhrupad* texts. Furthermore, these light genres have been associated with women and were the core repertoire of courtesan singers until film songs became dominant. By far the most important difference between classical and light classical music, however, concerns the most valued of all aspects of South Asian classical music: raga. These genres are light largely because their singers are less rigorous in adhering to the raga than they are when performing *khyāl* or *dhrupad*.

### **THUMRĪ**

*Thumrī* is the best-known example of the light classical vocal genres because it is performed in diverse contexts. These include classical-music concerts, which often conclude with a light piece;

*kathak* dance performances, in which *ṭhumrī* is the basis for interpretive dance; and vocal concerts devoted almost exclusively to *ṭhumrī*. This genre is also a full-fledged instrumental genre. Like compositions in other light classical genres, a *ṭhumrī* is not always composed in a specific raga. Even when it is, improvisers may depart from the raga.

### History of the genre

The history of *ṭhumrī* is similar to those of *dhrupad* and *khyāl* (Manuel 1986). Cultivated for some time as folk-style music and in songs accompanying courtesan dancers, *ṭhumrī* developed as the music for the emerging *kathak* style of dance from about 1770 to 1870. Contemporary popular accounts most frequently associated the genre with the ruler of the princely state of Oudh (Avadh), Nawab Wajid Ali Shah of Lucknow (r. 1847-1856), who elevated *ṭhumrī* to a court genre by lavishing personal patronage on excellent musicians who performed and refined it. These singers were exclusively women. The prevalent musical type was *bandīś ṭhumrī*—light, lively songs, emphasizing ingenious rhythmic manipulation of the text in fast tempo. *Sāran.gī* and tabla players accompanied the singer-dancers.

#### Page Image

After 1857, the British moved the nawab from Lucknow to Calcutta, but primarily female musicians continued to cultivate the genre in Lucknow and in nearby Banaras. The social context in which *ṭhumrī* flourished was a refined world of pleasure, where wealthy landowners sought company, sexual favors, and entertainment from female vocalists, who were often quite well trained. Many Western and Indian writers have described this context as disreputable prostitution, but it gave skilled and cultured courtesans the chance to earn high cultural status performing for private gatherings of connoisseurs, either in their salons or in the homes of their noble or landowner patrons.

Toward the end of the 1800s, as South Asia was reorganized under the British raj, a new middle class emerged consisting largely of civil servants, lawyers, teachers, doctors, and certain merchants and landlords. This class extended the source of patronage for classical music beyond the courts of those few princely states whose rulers continued to care about the traditional arts. In the realm of light classical music, however, *t.humrī* remained the domain of an increasingly stigmatized courtesan society, whose sensuous fine arts were scorned by those who adopted the values of Western education. After the democratization of landownership in the 1950s, patrons of *ṭhumrī* singers could no longer support their lifestyle, and courtesans sank to a low social position. The rubric *singing girl* took on entirely negative connotations, and male singers—including performers of *khyāl*—took over the artistic singing of *ṭhumrī*. By then, *khyāl* had effectively absorbed the fast and lively *bandīś ṭhumrī* in the form of the short, fast *choṭā khyāl* section. Also, some players of *sāran.gī*, whose musical education had been in the courtesans' salons, had become prominent singers of *khyāl*: in this way *t.humrī* became a part of most *khyāl* singers' repertoires. It also came to exist apart from dance, and a more classicized form, *bol banāo ṭhumrī*, developed.

The new *ṭhumrī*, which remains the *ṭhumrī* heard today, featured a slower tempo and an emphasis on a leisurely, meaningful rendering of the feelings expressed in the text—an important difference between *ṭhumrī* and *khyāl*. The two styles of *ṭhumrī* correspond to—and emerged from—the two dance styles of *kathak*: the fast, rhythmic style of pure dance (*nritta*) and the slow, declamatory style of expressive dance (*nritya*). *Ṭhumrī* continues to be associated with women, if only through its textual "voice." A full performing ensemble will still probably include a *sāran.gī* player and certainly a string drone and a tabla, but the singer is likely to provide accompaniment on a harmonium. The recent addition of harmonium to the *khyāl* ensemble shows the influence of the *ṭhumrī* ensemble.

### Texts of *ṭhumrī*

Not surprisingly, *ṭhumrī* texts are romantic. Some refer to Krishna and his amorous pranks, or to the beloved, who may or may not be Krishna. Other texts are unequivocally romantic, and they contain no allegorical suggestions. Pangs of longing, the desperation of separation, a mind distracted by unrequited love—such emotions, as expressed in these texts, create an immediate and intensely personal impact: "I've been smitten by the scimitar of love; my lover has left, how can I go on? We've played the game of love together. I lost, and she won" (Manuel 1989:117).

### ***Ṭhumrī* in performance**

Like all other Hindustani vocal forms, *ṭhumrī* compositions are short. Each consists of a *sthāī* and one or more *an.tarā*, usually with the same registral contrast of middle octave and upper octave, as with *khyāl*. In examples that have more than one *an.tarā*, the performer sings the additional text to approximately the same melody. *Ṭhumrī* compositions in ragas are likely to use one of a fairly discrete set—*khamāj*, *pīlū*,

Page Image *bhairavī*, and *kāfī* especially. These preferred ragas feature two pitches; varying the same tone within the scale, mostly a raised pitch in the ascending scale and a lowered pitch in descent (pitches 7 and flat 7 in *khamāj*, for example). Even if the raga does not have this trait, singers will exploit this sort of melodic play.

*Ṭhumrī* compositions also employ a certain group of talas—*jat*, *dīpcandī*, *pañābī*, *kaharvā*, and *dādrā*. Singers use tala flexibly, for different performers may sing the same composition in different talas, and the same singer may even do so on different occasions.

Clearly the most important aspect of a *t.humrī* composition is the text, and the most important aspect of its performance is the exploitation of the emotional meaning conveyed by the words. Because of this emphasis, there is a greater sense of repertoire in *t.humrī* than in *khyāl* or *dhrupad*, and listeners and artists tend to have favorite compositions. They refer to *t.humrī* compositions by the first line of the text, whereas they identify *dhrupad* and *khyāl* by the raga. Also of great importance, and characteristic of the genre, is the declamatory rhythmic style resulting from the emphasis on the text.

A brief rendition of "Nāhak lāe gavana morā" 'Unjustly they've brought me to my village' by the illustrious singer Girija Devi shows how the performance of a *ṭhumrī* (figure 11 shows the *sthāī* only) is structured. The song is in *rāg bhairavī* and *dīpcandī tāl* of fourteen counts (a cycle of 3 + 4 + 3 + 4 beats).

Nāhak lāe gavan(va) morā,

Ab to saiyaṇ videśva chā (morā).

Kahtī chabīle sovat ras bhas bhāe;

Bīt jāti jobanva morā.

Unjustly they've brought me to my village,

And now my lover has gone away.

His heart has settled with his other wife;

My full breasts are aging.

To set the speed of the tala counts, the singer improvises briefly on the syllables *a*, *a*, *ena*, then begins the *sthāī* section with the words "nāhak lāe gavanva." As in all Hindustani vocal music, final consonants and even some internal consonants of words often become full syllables, as in "nāhaka" for "nāhak" and "gavanava" for "gavanva." The player of the tabla joins the phrase on count 1 of the

first cycle of the tala, on the syllable *va* of *gavan*. The first musical phrase (sung to "nāhak lāe gavanva") constitutes the cadential phrase (*mukhrā*), which the singer performs at the end of every musical unit using the *sthāī* text. Both melody and text repeat. During repetitions, a performer will improvise slight melodic variations, and will separate, link, or repeat units of text for emotional effect, displaying expressive artistry, as in the treatment of the words *nāhak* 'unjustly' and *gavana* 'village'. At will, a performer can add a vocable such as *re* without disturbing the meaning.

*Thumrī* singing features characteristic vocal passages or ornamentation, such as a dynamic swell on the highest tone of a word and quick, light trills. Singers also employ rapid melodic passages (*tān*). During a performance, the *sāran.gī* and tabla players may offer brief solos. Those of the *sāran.gī* in particular are short, lasting only the remainder of one tala after the cadential phrase, as in the eighth tala cycle of figure 11.

The tabla solo, however, is a distinctive event called *laggī*, a *thumrī*-dance feature

Page Image

♩ = 48

*mukhrā*

A a e- na Nā- ha- ka lā- e ga-

tabla enters

1 X 2 O 3 5 3

va- na. ga- va- na- va mo- rā re. Nā- ha- ka lā- e ga-

2 X 2 O 3

va- na A- ba to sai- yān vi- de- śa- va

3 X 2 O 3

a chā- e mo- rā e (e- ra) Nā- ha- ka lā- e ga-

4 X 2 O 3 6

va ga- va- na- va mo-

5 X 2 O 3

rā. Nā- ha- ka lā- e ga- va- na- va mo- rā. Nā- ha- ka lā- e ga-

FIGURE 11 Thumrī "Nāh lāe gavanva morā sung Girijā Devī. rāg bhair four-beat dīpc tāl. A

transcription by Peter Manuel (Manuel 1989). Published by permission of Motilal Banarsidass a Peter Manuel.

that persists in vocal *ṭhumrī*. In what may seem an entirely abrupt manner, the tabla launches into a splash of virtuosity, playing at double or quadruple the speed of the established tala counts, in an eight- or sixteen-count tala. Either the singing stops during this section and the harmonium or *sāran.gī* repeats the melody of the first section, or the vocalist sings that melody, effectively fulfilling the role of marking beats. However, the vocalist might instead sing rather drifting melodic passages, which contrast strangely with the ferocity of the tabla, or she may even sing a few rapid passages that would have seemed out of place in the slower vocal improvisation. Basically, the *laggī* gives the tabla relief from the tedious role of keeping the tala. An extended performance

Page Image

FIGURE 11 (continued)

continued) The *ṭhumrī* "Nāhak lāe gavana morā," as sung by Girija Devi. In *rāg bhairavī*, four-beat *dīpcandī tāl*. After a transcription by Peter Manuel (Manuel 1989). Published by permission of Motilal Banarsidass and Peter Manuel.

may include several *laggī*, providing contrast with the slow, soulful, text-oriented singing. The performance may end climactically with a *laggī* polished off with the drummed cadence called *tihāī*, a quick rhythmic pattern played three times and ending on count 1. This leads back to the leisurely pace of the *ṭhumrī* song that is then concluded.

## DĀDRĀ

*Dādrā* is the name of a six-count tala that is common in *ṭhumrī* compositions. A group of other light classical songs composed in *dādra*, *kaharvā* (eight counts), or a few other talas, and performed in medium tempo or faster with an emphasis on rhythm, have acquired the name *dādrā*. In present-day



concerts, singers sometimes follow the performance of a *ṭhumrī* with that of a *dādrā*, thereby accelerating the pace of the music, as in the *baṛā* and *choṭā khyāl* sequence.

Like the texts of *ṭhumrī*, the texts of *dādrā* are about the pangs and joys of love, and in performance the singer emphasizes them. But this genre differs from *ṭhumrī* in several ways other than tempo. *Dādrā* admits considerable flexibility in structural terms; melodies may be precomposed or improvised. Many are simply light classical renditions of folk songs in local Hindi dialects, Braj Bhasha and Bhojpuri. *Dādrā* is more likely than *ṭhumrī* to have more than one stanza, and a Hindi text may contain stanzas in Urdu, the Persianized form of Hindi that is the official language of Pakistan and used widely in India.

## GHAZAL

One other light classical form, ghazal, is popular throughout much of North India. Distinctively, the texts of ghazals are all in Urdu, and they are associated specifically with Indo-Islamic culture.

Page Image

### History of the genre

Growing from Persian roots, the ghazal poetic form has been cultivated in South Asia for several centuries as an art song. Ghazals by the revered thirteenth-century Indo-Muslim poet Amir Khusrau have remained in the repertoire (Manuel 1988-1989). Like *ṭhumrī*, ghazals flourished in nineteenth-century Lucknow and were performed largely for private musical entertainment by courtesans, often accompanied by dancing. The light classical ghazal was brought to a peak in the mid-twentieth century by Begum Akhtar (d. 1974), a vocalist whose recordings are still widely available. Nowadays, ghazals serve as film music, and a form of the genre is widely distributed on recordings.

### Ghazal texts

It is the music rather than the poetry that gives ghazals the designation light classical (Qureshi 1990). Whereas the texts of *dhrupad*, *khyāl*, and *ṭhumrī* are prose-poems of a flexible nature, the texts of ghazals are true poetry that is performed to light classical Hindustani music. When set to a raga, the text will be a light one, expressing amorous sentiments. In Indo-Muslim culture, respect for and cultivation of the poetic word derives ultimately from the supremacy of the word of God as revealed in the Qur'ān. Reinforced by Sufi tradition since the 1200s, poetry has been the medium of choice for intensely expressive communication. As an art, poetry is characterized by high formal and aesthetic standards. The texts of ghazals feature poetic meter, rhythmic patterns, and a set structure. The prevailing theme is unfulfilled love, as in the text of figure 12, by the great poet Ghalib (1797–1869); in that emphasis, ghazals do not differ greatly from other Hindustani vocal forms. But the texts contain many symbolic references and exploit metaphors that enrich the language and resonate deeply with Indo-Muslim culture.

The nuclear structural unit of ghazal is the couplet. Each couplet is thematically complete and self-contained in meaning. The first line of each couplet is completed or answered by the second line. All second lines in a poem rhyme, providing a close link from beginning to end. In addition, the first line of the first couplet of a poem ends in that same rhyme, resulting in the scheme *aa, ba, ca, da*. The first couplets of "Yeh na thī hamārī qismat" (pronounced *qisumat* in performance; see figure 12) demonstrate this structure (translated by Aditya Behl):

Yeh na thī hamārī qismat keh viṣāl-e yār hotā;

Agar aur jīte rehte yahī intizār hotā.

Koī mere dil se puche, tere tīr-e nīm-kash ko.

Yeh kḥalish kalāṇ se hotī jo jigar ke pār hotā?

It was not out good fortune to enjoy union with the beloved;

If we had continued to live, there would still be this waiting.

Someone should ask about the arrow in my heart, half-buried, sent by you.

Why would there be this torment, if it had passed all the way through?

Each text is set to one of several meters, consisting of patterns of long and short syllables. When it comes to adjusting the poetic meter to the musical tala, considerable variety of interpretation can theoretically result, as singers allocate different musical lengths to long syllables at the beginnings of phrases and to short syllables at the ends of phrases. In practice, however, performers favor certain adjustments of poetic meters, and usually perform ghazals in simpler talas such as *kaharvā* or *dhumālī* of

Page Image

FIGURE 12: Musical setting of the poem "Ye n hamā qism sung Begu Akhtar".

Yeh na thī ha- mā- rī qi- su-mat

Yeh na thī ha- mā- rī qi- su-mat

keh vi- şā- l-e yā- ra ho- tā

A- gar au- ra jī- te re-ha-te

A- gar au- ra jī- te re-ha-te

ya- hi i- (n)- ti-zā-r h(u)- o- tā.

Yeh na thī ha- mā- rī qi- su-mat

Transcription by Rajna Klaser, from Akhtar and Rafi 1968.

eight counts (see figure 12) and *dādrā* of six counts; less often used are *rūpak tāl* of seven counts and *jhaptāl* of ten counts.

### Musical setting

Melodically, the setting of the poem is straightforward. Both lines of the initial couplet are set to a *sthāi*-register line of melody. Contrast is then achieved by melodic setting in the higher *an.tarā*

range. To set off all the nonrhyming lines from the rhyming lines, the first line of each successive couplet is typically sung to an *an.tarā*-range melody, then the second, rhyming line returns to the *sthāī* range.

Page Image

### Ghazal in performance

Performers sing the text of ghazals at a pace slower than that of speech, and they take care to maintain the integrity of the poem, whose mood the music activates. Though improvising less than in *ṭhumrī*, for example, a singer molds phrases melodically and rhythmically and even draws on facial miming and gestures to enhance the expression and to engage the audience in a dialogue. Since the poem often addresses or refers to a beloved other, and since the singer, as in *ṭhumrī*, is traditionally female in front of a male audience, the listener becomes the character of the beloved in the poem, addressed by the singer in an almost intimate manner.

The ensemble that performs ghazals consists of a tabla and either a *sāran.gī* and a harmonium or (sometimes) two harmoniums. As in *ṭhumrī*, the tabla has the opportunity to play brief solos in *laggī* sections. In the performance of "Yeh na thī hamārī qismat" (first couplet notated in figure 12), a *laggī* section follows each successive couplet.

In several musical ways, the pop and film-music versions of ghazals differ from the light classical genre and impart an entirely different effect. What remains is the fundamental basis of all ghazals: the poetic meter and the Urdu language. Distributed with raging success to a predominantly Hindu mass audience, ghazals show that music can overcome the central cleavage of Indian society, that between Hindu and Muslim cultures.

### REFERENCES

- Akhtar, Begum, and Mohammed Rafi. 1968. *Ghalib—Portrait of a Genius: A Ghalib Centenary Presentation*. Gramophone Company of India EMI ECSD 2404. LP disk, reissued as compact disc.
- Amonkar, Kishori. 1967. *Kishori Amonkar*. Gramophone Company of India ECLP 2326. LP disk.
- Dagar Brothers. 1988. *Dagar Brothers: Raga Miyan ki Todi*. Jecklin Disco JD628-2. Compact disc.
- Khan, Abdul Wahid. 1976. *Great Master, Great Music: Ustad Abdul Wahid Khan*. Gramophone Company of India ECLP 2541. LP disk.
- Manuel, Peter. 1986. "The Evolution of Modern Thumri." *Ethnomusicology* 30(3):470-490.
- , 1988-1989. "A Historical Survey of the Urdu Gazal-Song in India." *Asian Music* 20(1):93-113.
- , 1989. *Ṭhumrī in Historical and Stylistic Perspectives*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Meer, Wim Van Der. 1980. *Hindustani Music in the Twentieth Century*. New Delhi: Allied Publishers.
- Patwardhan, Vinayakrao. 1976. *In Memoriam: Pt.[Pandit] Vinayakrao Patwardhan*. Gramophone Company of India ECLP 2766. LP disk.
- Powers, Harold. 1979. "Classical Music, Cultural Roots, and Colonial Rule: An Indic Musicologist Looks at the Muslim World." *Asian Music* 12(1):5-39.
- , 1980. "India, Subcontinent of." In *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie. London: Macmillan.
- Prajanananda, Swami. 1981. *A Historical Study of Indian Music*. Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal.

Qureshi, Regula. 1990. "Musical Gesture and Extra-Musical Meaning: Words and Music in the Urdu Ghazal." *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 43(3):457-497.

Rowell, Lewis. 1992. *Music and Musical Thought*

Page Image in *Early India*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Srivastava, Indurama. 1980 [1977]. *Dhrupada: A Study of Its Origin, Historical Development, Structure and Present State*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

Wade, Bonnie C. 1973. "Chīz in Khyāl: The Traditional Composition in the Improvised Performance." *Ethnomusicology* 17(3):443-459.

-----, 1984. *Khyal: Creativity within North India's Classical Music Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

-----, 1987 [1979]. *Music in India: The Classical Traditions*. New Delhi: Manohar Publications.

Widdess, Richard. 1981. "Aspects of Form in North Indian Ālāp and Dhrupad." In *Music and Tradition: Essays on Asian and Other Musics Presented to Lawrence Picken*, ed. D. R. Widdess and R. F. Wolpert, 143-181. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

## Hindustani Instrumental Music

Page Image

- **Gat Forms and Styles**
- **Improvisation**
- **Performance Contexts and Program Design**
- **Performers**

Instrumental music within the North Indian classical tradition ranges from the manipulation of improvisational models to the repetition of relatively unchanging compositions. In contrast to the South Indian tradition, it is possible to think of classical instrumental music in the North as a somewhat autonomous repertoire independent of the vocal tradition. Why this is so can only be speculated on, for the historical record relating to North Indian instrumental traditions is far from complete. In the North Indian situation, however, sitar music may sound autonomous in comparison with Hindustani vocal music, but in reality practically all the elements of sitar performance practice have vocal sources or counterparts.

Particular Hindustani classical instruments can be linked with particular musical styles through genres, idioms, and musical functions. The repertoires of wind instruments such as the *bān.surī* 'bamboo flute' and the *śahnāī* 'double-reed instrument' share stylistic features that differ in some ways from those of repertoires of stringed instruments such as the sitar or sarod. Instruments such as the *bn* 'fretted stick zither' whose development was associated with the Mughal courts and, in particular, the *dhrupad* vocal genre, for example, are confined to a musical idiom directly related to *dhrupad*. More obvious are the different musical functions of instruments, which affect the characteristic playing styles: the *tānpūrā* serves specifically as a drone instrument; the tabla usually serves as percussive accompaniment; and the harmonium is used almost exclusively to provide accompaniment for vocal music. Genre, idiom, and musical function thus play a prominent role in North Indian instrumental music styles.

The predominant instrumental style of the twentieth century is that associated with the sitar and sarod, the two most popular Hindustani musical instruments. Of the two the sitar is older, dating