

THE KHAYAL

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This is the age of the KHAYAL in Hindustani classical music. How changing human tastes, vogues, and fashions are! Musical tastes are no exception. Our farsighted music-scholars and ancestors made provision for such changes since ancient times. The author of "*Sangeet Ratnākara*" must have taken this into account when he defined "*Desi*" (or secular) music thus :—

"Dese dese janaanaam yadruchya hridayaranjakam" (That is secular music which pleases the tastes of the people of different places or regions).

Until a few decades ago, the general belief was that the KHAYAL being an Arabic word, the very style must have been a contribution of Amir Khusrau, since he enriched various aspects of Hindustani music prolifically. "Khayal" is an Arabic word meaning "an idea", "thought", or "imagination". There is no doubt that the Khayal was evolved as a reaction against the austerity, and rigidity of the Dhrupad style. In Dhrupad (or Dhruvpad), the word-contents are lofty, and their development inside the strict *tala* circle without flippant embellishments is of prime importance. The singer has to have a powerful voice and absolute control over breath and *tala*. It allows for no flights of fancy, nor does it afford any scope for the full range of embellishments that a trained voice is capable of. Hence people must have got bored of its ponderous pace, its austerity, and its lack of ornamentation. DHRUPAD gradually lost its popularity and had to give way to KHAYAL—"a classico—romantic form" combining the classicism of Dhrupad with the romanticism of the THUMRI, and allowing for absolute freedom of improvisation and flights of fancy within the bounds of the chosen Raga and Tala. The Khayal-singer can give full reign to his "khayal", "fancy", or "imagination", and has scope for many vocal embellishments. The same Khayal is interpreted and elaborated differently by each singer. Herein lies the fresh charm of these oft-repeated and sometimes centuries-old Khayals.

Whereas Dhrupad is "*Sāhitya-pradhān*", Khayal is considered

"Gaayakipradhan", and hence, the latter is more appealing. In fact, Khayal has got elements that appeal to varied tastes. "It embodies the gravity of the Dhruv pads, the romanticism of the Thumri, and the lyricism of the lighter forms like Dadra and even Ghazal. It thus has something interesting and attractive to offer to almost every variety of listener". (M.R. Gautam—"The Musical Heritage of India").

It is now believed by many that the seeds of the Khayal existed in very ancient types of musical compositions such as the 5 types mentioned by Sarangadeva in his "*Sangeet Ratnākara*":—"Shudda", "Bhinna", "Gaudi", "Vesari", and "Saadhharani". Certain ornamentations like "Khatke", "murkis", "meends" etc. existed in a rudimentary form in "Saadhharani", and these have been incorporated into the Khayal. Even more convincing is the opinion of an erudite music-scholar like Thakur Jaideva Singh who has arrived at the conclusion that the Khayal actually sprouted from the ancient "Roopakaalapti"—form mentioned in the "*Sangeet Ratnākara*". Maintaining the purity of the raga, the *bols* and *tala*, the introduction and gradual unfolding of *alaaps*, and the frequent return to the *Mukhda* (the first line of the song that is repeated after each elaboration) are said to be features common to "Roopakaalapti" and the Khayal style. "*The Sthāyi Bhanjani*" and "*Roopak Bhanjani*" (corresponding to '*Bol alaps*' and '*Bol taans*') are also common features, the only difference being that the Khayal allows more freedom in these aspects.

If the name "Khayal" was given by Amir Khusrau, some early form of it must have existed in his time. But among his bewilderingly varied types of compositions, one hardly comes across a single Khayal! The natural conclusion is that he might not have composed any, although he might have rechristened the ancient "Roopakaalapti" by the Arabic word "Khayal". Those who credit Amir Khusrau with the evolution of the Khayal, feel that he might have experimented with a new form on the basis of the "QAWWALI" which was introduced into India by him. "*The Qawwal-Bachche Gharana*" of Khayal strengthens this view. But the time was not yet ripe for the emergence of the Khayal because the highly classical "Prabandhas" were still greatly favoured. "The Ain-I-Akbari" mentions a few Khayals (Kheal) and Taranas as "delightful mixtures of Persian and Hindu styles".

The next short-lived spurt of popularity of the Khayal was during the reigns of the SHIRKI rulers of Jaunpur in the 15th/16th centuries. They were great patrons of music. Sultan Ibrahim Shah Shirki, and later on, Sultan Hussain Shirki are believed to have remoulded the "Chutkula-Prabandhas" into Madhyalaya Khayals. But perhaps, popular tastes were not yet ready to welcome the new form.

By the 18th century, however, people must have got quite bored of the

ponderous Dhrupad style. The credit for the efflorescence of the Khayal-form goes to SADARANG (Niyamat Khan), and ADARANG (Feroz Khan) who flourished under the regime of Mohamad Shah Rangeele. Sadarang was a wizard on the Been, and he was a Vainik descended from Tansen through the lineage of the latter's daughter Saraswati. Although he was a highly respected musician in the magnificent darbar of Mohamad Shah Rangeele, a tradition that irked his pride was that in spite of his mastery over the Veena, he always had to sit behind the Dhrupad-singer of the Court, as the Veena was only an instrument of accompaniment! There is also a story that he infuriated the Emperor by refusing to play a duet with some Sarangi maestro because he considered it *infra dig* for a Vainik belonging to Tansen's lineage to perform with a Sarangiya. The Emperor, in his rage, dismissed Niyamat Khan from his Court and banished him from Delhi. It is believed that Niyamat Khan lived incognito in Lucknow for many years, hiding from the enraged emperor. It was during this period of exile that he evolved the Khayal style which was destined to make him immortal in the field of Hindustani music. In Lucknow, he chose two young boys, Bahadur and Dulla Khans (sons of a Dhrupadiya who died prematurely) as his disciples, and trained them in the new Khayal style. It is indeed strange that although Niyamat (Sadarang) is today famous as the originator, propagator, and prolific composer of hundreds of Khayals which are popular to this day, he never sang them himself, nor did he teach them to any members of his own family! This must have been due to the snobbish attitude of the Dhrupadiyas and Vainiks of those times who looked down upon any other forms of classical music. The two 'Miyān brothers' (Bahadur & Dulla) became extremely popular for their Khayal-singing, and before long, they got a chance to present their art before the Emperor Mohammad Shah Rangeele. The latter was so fascinated by the beauty of the new compositions and their embellishments that he was eager to meet their Ustad. At last, Niyamat Khan's identity was disclosed and the Emperor welcomed him back into his court. From then on, Niyamat who had assumed the pseudonym "SADARANG" became a great favourite of the royal patron. He was asked to train up a large number of disciples including even some of the young ladies of the royal household in the art of Khayal-singing. In most of his compositions, we find Sadarang's name coupled with that of Mohammad Shah Rangeele or as "*Mohammad Shah Sadārangeele*".

The Dhrupad *taals* were set aside, and the slow or "vilambit" khayals were set in talas like Ektal Vilambit, Tilwada, Jhoomra, Adachautal, Roopak and so on. The medium tempo or "madhyalaya", and fast ("drut") khayals are generally set in Trital, Ektal, Jhaptal, etc. The lofty, philosophical themes of the Dhrupads were also pushed away in favour of romantic, erotic, and lyrical Sahitya which appealed to the pleasure-loving royal patron and his courtiers.

Another unforgettable Khayal composer who vied with Sadarang in

the prolific composition of Khayals was ADARANG (Feroz Khan) who was a close relative (son, or son-in-law, or nephew?) of SADARANG. Adarang's Khayals are exquisite compositions with philosophical word-contents. Numerous Khayals of Sadarang inspired Adarang to compose their "*Jugalbandis*" (pairs with same framework and notations, but different wordings). The trends set by *Sadarang* and *Adarang* were followed by numerous other composers such as "*Maharang*" (Bhoopat Khan, son of Niyamat Khan), "*Maharang*", *Har-rang*, *Krishnadas* and others. Coming to more recent times, we have had a large number of accomplished "*Vagye-yakars*" who have been excellent performing artistes, or scholars, or both. Among them may be mentioned the names of Daraspiya (Mehboob Khan), Vinodpiya (Tasadduq Hussain), Prempiya (Ustad Faiyaz Khan, Pranpiya (Ustad Vilayat Hussain Khan), Pdt. Bhatkhande (Chatur). "*Sujan*" (Dr. Ratanjankar), Sabrang (Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan), Pdt. Govind Narayan Natu, Inayat Hussain Khan, Pdt. Niwruddinbuwa Saranaik, Dr. Kumar Gandharwa, Pdt. Jagannathbuwa, Sri S.A. Mahdkar (*Sughar*), Sri M.V. Kalvint and many others.

Many of the old Khayals had perhaps been composed by persons who did not pay much attention to the dignity of the word-contents. They were either not well-versed enough in the language, or perhaps the themes were suitable for those times. Several of those Khayals were built around mundane themes like the rivalries of co-wives, the dragon-like attitude of the mother-in-law or sister-in-law who proved impediments to the meeting of the lovers, and so on. What could the poor love-sick girl do except curse her jingling anklets which alerted the formidable "in-laws" and gave them a chance to scold and abuse her? In the hedonistic Court-environments of those times, such songs must have been topical and popular. But when our music stepped out of these exclusive darbars and "mehfils" right into the glare of public Concerts, Akashwani, and Doordarshan, the themes began to sound anachronistic, embarrassing, and even indecent sometimes. Hence today's talented composers (Vagye-yakars) of Khayals have paid special attention to the Sahitya. The *bandishes* of scholarly musicians like Pdt. Bhatkhande, Dr. Ratanjankar, Dr. Kumar Gandharva, Pdt. G.N. Natu and others are a delight to sing because they combine dignified and meaningful word-contents with beautiful swara-combinations, so that one can unhesitatingly sing them before any type of audience.

The slow (Vilambit) Khayals are elaborated in a serious, serene, and contemplative mood, and the atmosphere is one of sublime tranquility, philosophical calm, and dignified unhappiness. Most Khayals consist of two stanzas known as the "*Sthayi*" (or *Asthayi*) and "*Antara*", while a few have four stanzas (*Asthayi*, *Antara*, *Sanchari*, and *Abhog*) as in the Dhru-pads. The *Sthayi* commences with the opening phrase or the face of the song aptly known as the "*Mukhda*". It is the burden of the song and it is couched in the most typical note-combination of the particular Raga.

Therefore, it is usually possible to identify the Raga as soon as one hears the "Mukhada" of the Khayal. After each round of elaboration, the singer returns to the Mukhada which contains the dominant note of the raga usually coinciding with the "Sam", the point of stress or "the merging-point of melody and rhythm". After the leisurely elaboration of the "Sthayi", the musician goes on to the "Antara" which contains the higher notes of the Raga. The gradual passing on from "Asthayi" to "Antara" is an unobtrusive process; by the time the singer takes up the "Antara", his (her) voice is warmed up and ready to tackle the higher notes with ease. The fast or drut or "Chota" khayal is rendered in a more relaxed and playful mood. The singer descends from the sublime and contemplative mood of the slow Khayal, and creates a lighter mood with a profusion of quick *taans*, *bol* patterns and a few cross-rhythms, or quick sallies with the Tabla-accompanist.

The Khayal-singer has to undergo long years of voice-exercises, and initiation into the complicated world of Ragas and Talas before he (or she) can become a singer of any worth. Even then, a merely technically correct rendering of the khayal with a few vocal gymnastics thrown in cannot have any appeal. The singer has to reveal originality and creativity, and the singing has to be suffused with "rasa", or emotional "flavour". The highest form of classical music is that which is at once intellectually satisfying, and emotionally appealing. As one critic wrote:—"The Indian singer has to be a poet also."

Each performance is a daring flight on the wings of creativity. The word-contents are brief and they reflect a mood. The framework of the song is like the bone frame-work; the raga and rasa are the flesh and blood and life that have to be created through the artiste's improvisational skill. Only then can the Khayal become alive, and kindle responses in the listener who is the "*rasika*". "Khatkas", "murkis", "gamaks", "meends", "sargams", "brackets", "bol-tans" "zamzama" etc. are only a few of the many embellishments that the Khayal-singer uses to adorn his singing. In a valuable article entitled:—"Khayal Gaayan Ki Sthool Niyam", Pdt. Vishnu Narain Bhatkande has described the minutest details to be followed in the step-by-step elaboration of the vilambit and drut Khayals.

The subject-matter of Khayals is varied. They may be in praise of Gods or royal patrons; they may centre around divine or human love; they may be devotional, philosophical, or seasonal. With the aid of these word-contents and within the framework of the Raga and the tala, the khayal-exponent has to pour emotional colouring into his song. Without this "rasa-siddhi", his music will descend to a mere vocal display without any appeal. The chosen raga should be pleasing, and the rendering of the sahitya should result in aesthetic pleasure too, beside intellectual appeal. It is the lack of emotional appeal in the art of many performing musicians

which often makes classical music mechanical and lifeless. A cultivated voice, sound training, creative talents, rich imagination, aesthetic sense,—all these and more are needed to make a good khayal-singer.

The language of Khayal also shows great variety ranging from tough (clisht) Hindi, Sanskritised Hindi, Persianised Hindi, Brijabhasha, Rajasthani, Punjabi, and so on. The singer must understand the meaning thoroughly before trying to interpret it for others.

A factor that has added spice and variety to Khayals is the existence of the numerous GHARANAS. When artistes were jealously nurtured in isolation by their possessive royal patrons, each family of Ustads carefully preserved the specialities of their style and handed them down orally to their own family-members exclusively. Each Gharana (*Ghar*—or family) developed its own typical style of voice-production, styles of elaboration, different types of *taans*, and stress on different aspects such as *swaras*, *bols*, or *tala*. Thus have emerged many interesting Gharanas, and their numbers seems to be swelling with the passage of time. In olden days the tendency was to stick to one gharana strictly. But today's musicians are not really fanatical sticklers to their gharanas, because they get plenty of opportunities to hear one another in various parts of the country. Each gharana merits a chapter by itself.

The "QAWWAL-BACHCHE GHARANA" is considered the oldest of these. *Savant* and *Bula*, two brothers (one deaf and the other dumb) who suddenly emerged as great musicians through the blessings of a great Muslim saint (Hazrat Khwaza-e-Khazgan) were believed to be the earliest exponents of this gharana. In fact, the famous *Gwalior Gharana* is considered an offshoot of this gharana. The other well-known Khayal gharanas are *Agra*, *Atrauli*, *Kirana*, *Jaipur*, *Delhi*, *Patiala*, *Sahaswan*, *Bhindi-Bazar*, *Saharanpur*, *Shamchaurasi*, and so on. Each Gharana has produced a galaxy of luminaries—too numerous to be even listed in a brief chapter like this. From time to time outstanding exponents of each have given a new re-orientation to their respective gharanas, enriched them, and taken them to unprecedented heights of popularity.

The Khayal style itself has changed considerably since the last century or so. In February 1966, Sri S.C. Chakravarty had written:—"During the last 200 years or so, many experiments have been made in the musical development of Khayal which by its very nature allows for such experiments—As far as I remember, khayal was simpler in structure using more or less the embellishments which are associated with the Dhrupad-variety. Khayal has all along been keeping its doors open to incorporating idioms from its contemporary forms of music whether old or newly born...". Elements of Thumri ("even the Lachak of Thumri"), and folk elements have also been incorporated into the Khayal now !

Sri Chakravarty had given a warning in the following words:—
 “Changes which are not anarchical are a good sign of real progress...
 But, in the case of Khayal, they are interfering with the very foundation of
 the style and the form, and, if unchecked, are likely to lead to disaster”.

Great instrumentalists also have been considerably influenced by the Khayal style. In his article on “Influence of Khayal on Instrumental Music”, the accomplished Sitar artiste Sri Bimal Mukherji wrote:—“The *Masidkhani gat* is the result of the Khayal technique as applied to instrumental music”. Many leading instrumental maestros of today like Ustad Vilayat Khan (Sitar), Ustad Amjad Ali Khan (Sarod), Violin Samrat M.S. Gopalakrishnan, Dr. Rajam, Prof Jog and others take pride in declaring that they have enriched their “Baaaj” by incorporating the “Gayaki ang” of Khayal and Thumri. Even the Beenkars of old who were staunch supporters of the Dhrupad style “were the first to come to grips with the khayal style of music and successfully remodelled their entire style of play on the basis of rolling *meends* and *gamak taans*” (Bimal Mukherji). Many of the other types of taans typical of the Khayal such as “Sapaat”, “Vakra”, “Halak”, and “Gamak” taans have also been incorporated into instrumental music.

All this proves the all-pervading influence of the Khayal style in Hindustani music today. It has replaced the Dhrupad very successfully and in a very sweeping manner. The Dhrupad is struggling for survival, not too hopefully. It seems, the KHAYAL is going to hold sway for a long time to come.