

"MAJOR"
 "THE STYCES OF VOCAL MUSIC"
HINDUSTANI VOCAL STYLES:
DHRUPAD/DHAMAR, KHYAL,
TARANA, THUMRI
INDIAN MUSIC STUDY GROUP

Tape Program:

**1. ZAHIRUDDIN & WASIFUDDIN DAGAR:
 EXCERPTS FROM PERFORMANCE OF RAGA LALIT**

For well over two centuries, the family name of Dagar has been associated with **Dhrupad** singing. In the twentieth century, there have been many famous singers from this family; among them are:

The Elder Brothers — The late Moinuddin Dagar and his younger brother Aminuddin;
 The Younger Brothers — Fayazuddin and the late Zahiruddin Dagar;
Ustad Rahimuddin Dagar; Ustad Fariduddin Dagar;
 The Late Ustad Zia Moihuddin Dagar — famous player of the Rudra Veena.

Here Zahiruddin Dagar and his nephew Wasifuddin sing Raga Lalit, a popular but difficult raga meant for performance in the morning.

The first excerpt is the **alap proper**, a slow, timeless section, with long held tones and an austere, devotional atmosphere. This is followed by the **Dugan Alap**, or **Jor**, where a slow but steady pulse is introduced.

The next sample is from the **Chaugun alap**, or **Jhala**, where the pulse is doubled to create a fast and repetitive texture. The Dagers specialize in alap, and this is one of the high points of their performances and recordings.

Last is the composition, with **Pakhawaj** player Mohan Shyam Sharma. The lyrics are "about the Devi whose beauty is extolled through descriptions of her glorious colour, shapely limbs, beautiful eyes and noble brow"



FAYAZUDDIN &
 ZAHIRUDDIN
 DAGAR, with
 SHANKAR RAO
 SHINDE,
 PAKHAWAJ

Recording Source: India Today "Maestro's Choice" Cassette A-91011

2. PANDIT SIYA RAM TEWARI:
RAGA DARBARI KANADA.

Siya Ram Tewari comes from a musical family in Bihar state. He is known for his strong and powerful voice and for his deep devotional fervor. He represents a different style of Dhrupad singing from the Dagar style).

The first excerpt presents the opening of his alap, in the profound evening raga Darbari Kanada. He sings devotional lyrics in Sanskrit, an occasional feature of this style. The atmosphere is timeless, slow and austere. Next is the Dugan, developing the raga's features. Then the Chaugun or Jhala, which moves directly into a Dhrupad composition. Here his vigorous style comes into its own — he's won numerous awards in India for Dhrupad singing, and has been given the title "Laya Samrat," which means "Emperor of Tempo!"



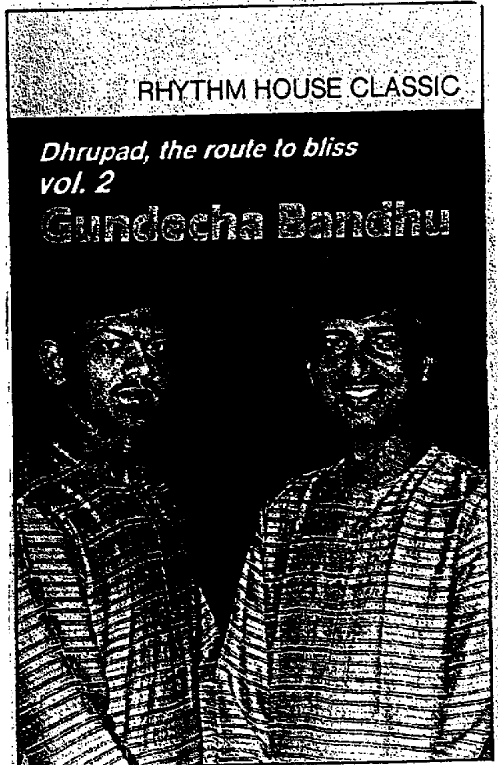
Recording: EMI/HMV LP, Number unknown

3. GUNDECHA BROTHERS:
RAGA SOHINI.

Umakant & Ramakant Gundecha were born in 1959 and 1962 respectively. They had their musical training first with the vocalist Fariduddin Dagar. They continued studying with the great Rudra Veena maestro, Zia Moihuddin Dagar (who died a year ago).

We begin with a very short alap movement, and proceed to a song in a quick 10-beat rhythm played by Shrikant Misra on Pakhawaj. The raga is Sohini, a popular melody meant for the night-time, with prominence given to the notes of the upper register. Their improvisation manipulates the song text in a variety of ways, always returning to the Sum. This complete performance is much shorter than the normal Dhrupad rendition — the Gundecha brothers are known for "conciseness of presentation."

Recording: Rhythm House Cassette,
No. 240-398



4. PANDIT BHIMSEN JOSHI:
RAGA KOMAL-RE-ASAVARI TODI (EXCERPTS)

Bhimsen Joshi is one of India's most famous Khyal singers. He sings in the Kirana style, which emphasizes pure intonation and a relaxed, alap-oriented style. But in the khyal context, to be alap-oriented means that alap-style melodies are sung within the rhythmic structure of the song. Originally from Karnataka state, Bhimsen Joshi now makes his home in Pune. He is seventy years old, and still a very popular performer.

This recording was made when he was 46. The raga is an unusual compound, bringing together elements of two popular ragas: Komal-Re-Asavari (sometimes called Komal Asavari or simply Asavari) and Todi. Both of these are meant for performance in the morning, and this is likewise a morning raga.

The first excerpt shows the initial alap, only a few seconds long, before the entrance of the tabla. He sings the khyal composition in a "floating," rhythmically free style. The tempo is very much slower than in dhrupad performances, and the drumming is quite restrained in comparison with the exuberant thundering of the pakhawaj.

The next two excerpts present successive stages in the development of the raga during the khyal performance. The melodic range has expanded, the rate at which notes move has increased, leading to a series of fast taan passages. Even here, when he is singing very quickly, Bhimsen Joshi maintains a relaxed relationship with the tabla — he doesn't "dig in" to the rhythm, but "floats" above it.

Finally we hear the "chhota khyal." This is a fast piece meant to serve as a vehicle for a few minutes of virtuoso improvisation. Bhimsen's taans and rhythmic skill (called "layakari") are displayed to advantage in this up-tempo finale, which concludes with a tihai - a phrase repeated three times and coming to the sum.



Recording Source: EMI Odeon LP, No. SMOAE-5010

5. VEENA SAHASRABUDDHE:
KHYAL IN RAGA BAHAR

Veena Sahasrabuddhe is based in Pune, and sings in the Gwalior style, specializing in uncomplicated, concise renditions of the khyals, and clear enunciation of the song texts. Born in 1948, she had early training in the rhythmic dance form called Kathak before learning vocal music from her father, her elder brother, and several famous artists in New Delhi, Benares, and Bombay. With an M.A. in Sanskrit and a Ph.D. in music, she is a lecturer in music at Pune's branch of the S.N.D.T. Women's University, and her concerts are always well attended.

Raga Bahar is meant for performance in the spring, and the words describe the changing of seasons. This is a model performance: all the elements are in proportion, and her clear voice has exquisite pitch and focus.



Recording : Rhythm House Cassette
No. 240 400, "Ritu Chakra, Vol. 2"

6. PT. D. V. PALUSKAR:
RAGA KAMOD

D.V. Paluskar was the son of a charismatic vocalist, Vishnu Digambar Paluskar. The elder Paluskar was a pivotal figure in North Indian music; a popular performer of his time, he founded one of the first music colleges, which now has branches in almost every major city of North India. His son, however, studied primarily with his father's disciples — Dad being on tour most of the time.

Dattatreya Vishnu Paluskar was a highly respected figure when he died in 1955, at thirty-four. His death was a great loss, for Paluskar's presentations were models of clarity and intelligence in Khyal singing. This performance of the evening raga Kamod was recorded by All India Radio and released many years later. Paluskar sings with clarity and fervor; his recordings are still popular in India today, almost forty years after his death.



Recording: EMI LP No. EALP 1366



7. USTAD HAFIZ AHMED KHAN:
TARANA IN RAGA SHAHANA

Hafiz Ahmed Khan represents a little-known school of khyal singing, the Rampur tradition. He is fond of very fast taranas like this one in the evening raga Shahana. The song includes lines in Persian; the improvisation blends sargam, taans, and tarana syllables in a vivid mix. He acquired much of his tarana repertoire from one of his teachers, Nissar Hussein Khan, who was known for being able to outlast any tabla player around.

Recording Source: EMI LP, Number Unknown

8. VEENA SAHASRABUDDHE: TARANA IN SOHINI

Among Veena Sahasrabuddhe's multiple talents is her skill at singing taranas. This short item in the raga Sohini (see the Gundecha Bandhu's recording earlier on the tape) includes tarana syllables, sargams, and a complex composed sequence of tabla syllables.

Recording: Rhythm House Cassette No. 240-400, "Ritu Chakra Vol. 2"

9. PANDIT BHIMSEN JOSHI: TARANA IN RAGA
YAMAN

Bhimsen Joshi, the leading singer of the Kirana tradition, doesn't sing taranas very much. In general, Kirana singers don't go in for rhythmic music, working more with alap-style singing. They almost never sing drum licks, or a lot of fast syllabic material. This performance is an exception, with fast and powerful taans along with rhythmic syllables in a rapid twelve-beat cycle.

Source: Private Concert, Poonam Hotel, Pune, India — July 1986.

9. SMT. GIRIJA DEVI:
THUMRI IN MISRA
KHAMAJ

Girija Devi is a highly regarded singer of thumris. Although trained in khyal, her popularity comes from her renditions of thumris, dadras, bhajans and other light classical forms.

We hear an excerpt from her performance in the thumri raga Mishra Khamaj. "Misra" means "mixed;" she sometimes suggests the melodic movements of other ragas in her improvisation.

Source: Magnasound Cassette
No. C4HV0063



11. AJOY CHAKRABORTY: THUMRI IN RAGA DESH

Ajoy Chakraborty is from Calcutta. He's widely known as a khyal singer in the virtuosic Patiala tradition. Singers from this school, however, devote just as much attention to their renditions of **thumri**. Chakraborty's voice is tremendously pliable; he sings rapid taan passages with real ease and grace.

Desh is another raga which is very popular for **thumris**, being romantic and lyrical in character.

Source: HMV Cassette STC 02B 6253



12. PRABHA ATRE: THUMRI IN MISRA KHAMAJ

Prabha Atre (showcased last week with a performance of Raga Kalavati) is also a sensitive and lyrical singer of **thumri**. Here she sings "Kaun Gali Gayo Shyam" ("down which alleyway has Krishna gone?") with beautiful intonation and phrasing.

Source: EMI Odeon Lp No. ECSD 2490

13. BADE GHULAM ALI KHAN: THUMRI IN BHAIRAVI

The prefix "Bade" means "great" in the sense of "HUGE," and Bade Ghulam Ali Khan weighed over 300 pounds. His voice was unbelievably flexible and expressive, and he was recognized as one of India's greatest vocalists until his death in 1967.

Here he sings a famous **thumri** in the raga **Bhairavi**. The text goes "Baju Band, Khule Khule Ja," which translates as "my bracelets have fallen off." Not very romantic at first impact — but in the context of the song, the meaning is this: the lady is unable to eat, being sick with longing for her lover. Her wrists have thus become emaciated, and she has lost her bracelets. This is a very popular **thumri**, which Bade Ghulam Ali Khan sang often and beautifully.

Source: EMI LP, Number unknown.



FORMS OF HINDUSTANI MUSIC:

Vocal

Nom-Tom or Alap/Dugan/Chaugun

Dhrupad/Dhamar

Khyal/Tarana

Thumri/Ghazal

Bhajan/Quawwali

Tappa

Dadra

Vocal Forms:

in the following discussion, remember that many Hindustani vocal terms refer both to a type of song and a style of singing. "Khyal" can refer to a song, as in "I will now sing a Khyal in Raga _____," but also to a style, as in "I enjoy listening to Khyal." The word "Alap" has a triple existence:

- a — any type of languid, non-rhythmic singing, whether accompanied by drums or not;
- b — the first section of a raga rendition, the part which is not accompanied by drums;
- c — the first, slowest part of (b).

Dhrupad & Dhamar are the oldest extant classical forms of North Indian Music, dating back to the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries. They are stylistically almost identical; '**Dhamar**' refers to a particular 14-beat rhythmic structure in which **Dhrupad**-style songs are often performed. Along with a few other rare genres such as '**Sadra**,' **Dhrupad/Dhamar** is performed to the accompaniment of the **Pakhawaj**, a barrel-shaped, double-headed drum with a deep and resonant tone.

Dhrupad & Dhamar performances are rather long, often building one raga for one-and-a-half or two hours. Most of this time is taken up with an extensive introductory movement. This has three main sections, known as **Alap**, **Dugan** and **Chaugun** but collectively called **Alap** or **Nom-Tom**. The first of these, sometimes called the **Alap Proper**, is extremely slow, dwelling at great length on the quality of each interval against the drone. There is a meditative, unhurried quality, a sense of sober, restrained progression. The second section of alap, the **Dugan (Double) Alap**, continues an orderly progression of intervals, but introduces a more-or-less regular pulse. This section is also called **Jor**. We'll hear long slides and subtle inflections, but few elaborate ornaments. The third section, **Chaugun (Quadruple) Alap**, doubles the pulse, creating a vibrant, repetitive texture. Here the deep aspirated inflections called **Gamak** are often heard, along with a unique, instantly recognizable texture of repeated syllables like "Ta na na na, De Re na na, Noom Ta Na Na Na." This is also known as **Jhala**.

After the **Nom-Tom** the musicians perform a composition, usually referred to simply as a **Dhrupad** or a **Dhamar**. The music's tone is sober, austere and dignified. **Dhrupad/Dhamar** songs are usually rather long; most have four composed sections, called **Asthai**, **Antara**, **Sanchara** and **Abhog** (no need to remember those names, they're just there to impress you). Variations are usually confined to the first two, the **Asthai** and the **Antara**. The vocalist improvises almost exclusively in rhythmic variation, singing the composition at different levels of speed, or with different phrasing and accents, while the **Pakhawaj** plays vigorous cross rhythms. Fast melodic passages are not heard; nor are light ornaments and trills.

Dhrupad/Dhamar songs are mostly on Hindu themes, extolling the qualities of deities like **Krishna**, **Rama** or **Shiva**. Nevertheless, many of the most famous singers of **Dhrupad** are Muslims, particularly the **Dagar** family, which has been almost entirely responsible for the revival of the form. However, there is more interest in **Dhrupad** in the West today than in India, where **Dhrupad** performances are scantily attended. All but a few music listeners consider it boring and esoteric; it occupies a niche analogous to "Early Music" in Western classical programming and tastes.

Khyal is younger than **Dhrupad**, having its origin in the 17th and 18th centuries. The word '**Khyal**' literally means 'imagination;' the style offers enormous freedom for melodic and rhythmic variation. **Khyal** is accompanied not by the heavy, booming **Pakhawaj** but by the lighter **Tabla** drums, along with melodic accompaniment from a bowed instrument or small harmonium. In the past century, **Khyal** has undergone a true renaissance, with hundreds of gifted singers taking their place on the concert platforms of India. Oddly, this virtuoso tradition is almost unknown in the West.

Khyal texts are on a wide variety of subjects, ranging from Hindu and Muslim devotional themes to songs about love, rain-clouds, unfaithful lovers, flower-filled gardens, and more. In **Khyal** performances, the text plays a less important role than in **Dhrupad** (although, curiously, **khyal** singers often criticize **dhrupad** for distorting the song texts). Many artists don't sing the compositions completely or do so with unclear enunciation — and by and large, audiences neither notice or mind. A typical **Khyal** presentation of a raga would start with a short **Alap**, then a very slow composition (called a '**Bada Khyal**' or 'Big Khyal'), then a medium or fast composition (called '**Chhota Khyal**' or 'Little Khyal'). Sometimes a third, even faster piece in the same raga is presented as well.

As the tempo accelerates, the vocalist improvises over a wide range of rhythmic, melodic and textual possibilities. There may be improvisation in '**sargam**' syllables (Indian solfège), where the vocalist sings the name of each note, creating an effect like 'scat' singing. The melodic material is varied continually, with rhythmic shifts and syncopations, text variation, many different kinds of ornaments, and rapid melismatic runs called '**taans**.' The overall air is one of enormous freedom of expression. Another feature which distinguishes **khyal** from **dhrupad** is that in the former, the **tabla** do not play cross-rhythms while the singer is improvising. Instead, the drums repeat a fixed rhythmic pattern over and over. Only when the singer repeats the **khyal** composition will the **tabla** player indulge in solo flights.

Although many **khyal** singers use **dhrupad**-like rhythmic variations (singing the song at double or triple speed, repeating short parts several times, singing percussive offbeats or syncopations), **dhrupad** singers never sing **alap**, **sargam** or **taans** during the composition. **Khyal** singers often sing passages in **alap** style, even in the context of a rapid drum accompaniment.

Also part of a **Khyal** singer's repertoire are rhythmic songs, called **taranas**, which have no text but a series of meaningless syllables like '**Ta Na De Re Nom**.' **Taranas** often incorporate syllables drawn from the spoken language of drum strokes; some include sequences in **sargam** or occasionally poetic couplets in Persian. In a **Khyal** performance, the final piece in a given raga is often a **Tarana** in a very fast tempo. Improvisation in **taranas** is very close to scat-singing, with a lot of syllabic sequences mingled with **taan** patterns and variations on the composed material.

Thumri is a romantic song, often sung as a closing item — a sort of musical 'dessert.' Here, text and enunciation are crucial. Some artists sing fast passages in the manner of **Khyal**, but generally the mood of **Thumri** is languid, erotic and lyrical. **Thumris** are sung in medium tempo, with little attention paid to **raga** development in the classical sense. Instead, the words of the song are presented with subtle nuances of interpretation and phrasing. The texts are usually on romantic themes. Certain medium tempo rhythms are used exclusively for **Thumri** singing; this style often features a short interlude of virtuoso drumming in an 8-beat rhythm, close to the end of a performance.

Ghazals are romantic songs in **Urdu**, which is the language of Muslims in the Indian subcontinent. Derived from Persian, written using the Arabic alphabet, Urdu is poetic and complex; a **ghazal** singer is judged as much for his or her handling of the text as for musical virtues. In India and Pakistan, some **ghazal** singers are superstars, commanding astronomical performance fees.

Bhajans are religious songs. The word means 'repetition of the name of God.' **Bhajans** range from the folk singer's incantation of a holy formula to elaborate composed pieces in strict ragas, sung in a classical manner. Some commonly heard types of **bhajans** are: folk songs about Hindu deities; popular singers backed by Indian orchestras; classical singers rendering a devotional piece with classical accompaniment. Contemporary **bhajans** are often accompanied by **tabla**, **harmonium** and small percussion instruments.

To the Western ear, **bhajans**, unless sung by a choral group or with ensemble accompaniment, are very similar to **thumris** and other light forms. Where the **thumri** is erotic, **bhajans** are devotional. The names of **Krishna**, **Rama**, **Shiva** or other deities are frequently repeated. Some **Khyals** also have devotional texts, but **bhajans** don't usually support improvisation in the manner of **Khyal**.

Quawwali singing is not really a classical form, but **quawwali** singers often receive classical training. It is a devotional form of Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi Muslims. Lyrics praising Allah are sung first by a charismatic lead vocalist (like Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan) and then repeated by a chorus. **Quawwali** is a high-energy, ecstatic genre with its own rules of performance and its own standards of excellence. Many classical vocalists admire good **quawwali** singers, but they would never sing **quawwalisongs** on stage.

Tappa is an infrequently performed genre which features heavy ornamentation and long, fast melismatic passages; it derives from songs of Punjabi camel-drivers, but is now exclusively a classical form.

Dadra is a light, lilting song, usually on a romantic theme. It's generally sung in the six-beat rhythm called '**Dadra**,' for which it is named. However, similar songs in other short rhythmic cycles are also referred to as **Dadras**.

Vocal Styles: Cheat Sheet

Remember that Hindustani music is full of exceptions and special cases!

MALE OR FEMALE SINGER?

If female, probably either Khyal or Thumri — very few female Dhrupad singers perform in India; no recordings are available.

TABLA OR PAKHAWAJ?

If Pakhawaj, then Dhrupad/Dhamar.

LONG SECTION WITHOUT PERCUSSION ACCOMPANIMENT?

If yes, then probably Dhrupad/Dhamar. There is one style of Khyal singing which starts the khyal with a full Dhrupad-style alap. If the singer appears to be singing Dhrupad alap, but there is a tabla on stage or on the recording, the artist is singing khyal of the Agra style.

SYLLABLES LIKE "TA NA NA NA"?

If sung without percussion, then Dhrupad/Dhamar;
If sung with percussion, then Tarana.

TABLA ACCOMPANIMENT IS VERY SLOW?

If yes, then Khyal.

TABLA ACCOMPANIMENT IS MEDIUM TEMPO?

If yes, then:

- a — is the music lyrical or abstract?
- b — improvisation mostly with words or without?
- c — vocal tone delicate or heavy?
In each of these cases, the first suggests Thumri, the second Khyal.
- d — Words are Ta na na / Deem Dira Toom / Ya Li Ya La?
The form is Tarana.

TABLA ACCOMPANIMENT IS VERY FAST?

If yes, probably khyal or tarana.

Instrumental Forms:

Alap, Jor & Jhala are derived from the **Dhrupad** vocal tradition. This form is presented without percussive accompaniment, and consists of a gradual development of the raga's melodic material — first in a very slow movement without a clear pulse (**Alap**), then with a moderate pulse (**Jor**), then with a fast pulse (**Jhala**). The three terms collectively make up a "Complete Alap." This sequence may make up a complete raga performance, or may be followed by one or more **Gat-s**.

A **Gat** is a composition set to a particular rhythmic cycle, which serves as a springboard for improvisation. It is analogous to the song forms of the **Khyal** style, although certain instruments, such as the **Rudra Veena** and **Surbahar**, perform instrumental adaptations of **Dhrupad** compositions. Thus a description of a performance might be something like "Pandit Ravi Shankar will now perform Raga Malkauns, Alap, Jor, Jhala, a medium-tempo Gat in 10-beat rhythm and a fast Gat in 16 beats."

Instrumental Thumri is an instrumental adaptation of the **Thumri** vocal form. It is essentially romantic in flavor. Often the raga chosen is given the prefix "mīsrā," meaning "mixed." This means that notes and passages foreign to the raga in its pure form can be added at the discretion of the performer.

Dhun is an air or tune, analogous to the **Dadra**.

Tabla / Pakhawaj solos are accompanied by melodic instruments which repeat a short fixed melody over and over again, outlining the rhythmic structure in use. These solos rely heavily on memorized compositions which have structural characteristics known only to specialists. In many cases the artists will include in the solo a section of recitation, in which the syllables corresponding to particular drum strokes will be spoken aloud.