

Appreciating Hindustani Music
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Lecture 4
Hindustani Music is Raga Sangeet

Hindustani Music is about presentation of ragas and it is called Raga Sangeet. But we saw that ragas are not only used in classical music, but also in other genres such as folk, film, music, bhajans or religious music and many other genres.

In fact, folk music is often the source of ragas that are used that are you know then been taken into the classical traditions. So, then why is it that Hindustani music is called raga sangeet? Since ragas are used in other genres as well?

So, there is a very good reason- just that in the other genres raga ragas are tools whereas, in Hindustani music it is all about ragas. The presentation of a Hindustani concert is a presentation of the raga using compositions, whereas a film song might use a raga, but its intent is different. The focus is not the raga. The focus is the the song itself the lyrics the context in which it is used in the film and so on.

The the a music director who sets a film song in a particular raga is not even obliged to retain the raga throughout the song and in fact, very often he does not. For example, there is a very beautiful composition beautiful song film song in the in the Hindi film called Mera Saaya, which was in just released sometime in the mid 20th century.

It is a Hindi film and in this there is a song tu jahan jahan chalega, mera saaya saath hoga. The link to the song is given in the description box and do listen to it. The song goes like this. I am not going to sing exactly the way it is been sung in the film, but [Music]. This is the Sthayi or the first part of the film song and this is closely modeled on bandish composition in or khayal in the raag Nand. In fact, that first part of the song is classic Nand. The khayal composition goes like this. [Music].

It is almost as if the music director is quoting the bandish. Nand is a relatively new raga and it is quite popular among khayal and khayal musicians and instrumentalists. It is not that much performed in the dhrupad tradition. So, Nand is actually a fairly complex raga. In a sense it is complex patterns, it is not linear, the phrases are also quite complex. I will just demonstrate it to you (Refer Time: 04:57).

[Music] there is a ga there. [Music]. That is wrong. [Music]. So, this film song is perhaps one of the most celebrated uses of a classical raga in a film song because, precisely because, Nand is not an easy raga to handle and, but you know that is what it is. Nand is being used in the film song. In fact, in the later part of the song Nand is abandoned, Nand is not maintained.

The rest of the song is not in Nand and that is perfectly ok. A film song is not obliged to remain faithful to any one raga that is not the point or that is not the intent of a film song. That is the intent of khayal or dhrupad or instrumental music, Hindustani music. In this film song Nand has been repurposed.

In fact, in fact the very famous composition that is sang has been quoted in a way and its been used in a very creative way by the musician in the film, the music director. So, the raga is a tool and it serves a particular purpose.

Whereas if you have a Nand performance in khayal, Nand is itself the whole point. The whole point of the presentation is to present it with fidelity to its grammar with fidelity to its structure and in a way that evokes the the ragas presence. To evoke a mood some say- you can say you know that ragas you present it in such a way that you evoke a mood. And this is very commonly said of ragas that they evoke moods and we will consider this idea later.

Now, what is raga, what is its presentation involved, what does it mean to present a raga in the khayal or the dhrupad or the instrumental idiom? Now, we will consider these questions throughout this course. Let us listen to a bit of Nand in the khayal idiom. [Music].