



Indian Vocal Music ~ The Gayaki

Vocal music is probably the most ancient form of music. It occupies a considerable part of the Natya Shastra. The Samaveda is the oldest musical text in India which is written in a crude musical notation. However, the contemporary musical forms are based on very well defined structures such as a primary theme, a secondary theme and a structures framework. Indian vocal music has many genres, some of which are old whereas others are new. Examples of vocal forms are as follows: ~

Kheyal	Bhajan	Tarana
Dhrupad	Dhammar	Dadra
Ghazal	Geet	Thumri
Kawali	Kirtan or Dhun	Shabad
Lakshangeet	Film Songs	Folk Music
Swarnamalika	Tappa	

❖ Kheyal

Kheyal has a special place in Indian music and it is probably the most improvised of all the vocal styles. The two major movements of kheyal are an extremely slow one known as the “Drut” or the “Chotta Kheyal”. The vilambit section is usually played in ektaal of 12 beats whereas the fast one is played in drut teentaal or drut ektaal.

❖ Tarana

Tarana is based on the use of meaningless syllables in a very fast rendition. It is found all over in India. In Carnatic music, it is called “Thillana” which is commonly used in dances.

❖ Dadra

Dadra is a light musical style that is similar to “Thumri”. However it is much looser than thumri and is more flexible. The taals used are dadra of 6 beats, keherwa of 8 beats or any other light taal. This form is commonly performed in light raags such as “Mand”, “Pilu” or “Pahadi”.

❖ Thumri

Thumri is common style of light classical music. The text is romantic and devotional in nature and usually revolves around a girl’s love for Lord Krishna. It also has a greater

flexibility with the raag. It uses keherwa of 8 beats, addha taal of 16 beats or dipchahdi of 14 beats. Thumri became popular during the 19th century.

❖ Kawali

Kawali is a very old traditional form of Islamic devotional song found in India and Pakistan. The word kawali is derived from the Arabic work “kwaol” which means “axiom” or “dictum”. A kawwal is the one who sings the kawali.