

SUFI TRADITIONS AND MUSICAL IDENTITY: HOW QAWWALI PRESERVED SUFISM ACROSS THE MUSLIM WORLD

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22765944>

Keywords

Qawwali, Sufi Identity, Chishti Order, Sama, Dargah Culture, Desacralization, Coke Studio

Article History

Received: 01 June 2026

Accepted: 23 August 2026

Published: 15 September 2026

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Abstract

This manuscript examines the role of Qawwali as an important tool to sustain the spiritual identity and devotional values of the Sufi community in the face of challenges from secularization, globalization and commercialization in the modern era. Historically, Qawwali was an esoteric practice of divine communion (Wisal), spiritual remembrance (Zikr) and discipleship (Piri-Muridi) framed by shrine culture (Dargah) and annual festivals (Urs) started in the 13th century Chishti festival (Sama) tradition of South Asia. Based on Victor Turner's Ritual Theory, this study adopts the method of a qualitative thematic literature review, a method that is systematic in conducting scholarly literature research from 20 academic databases which were sorted by years and were related to the study, namely JSTOR, Scopus, Google Scholar and Web of Science in which the research data is in the field of Sufi Theology, Shrine Rituals, Ethnomusicology, and Media Adaptation. The paper traces the history of Qawwali from its classical background which has been institutionalized by Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti and Amir Khusrau to the present day and global settings like Coke Studio and cinema. The findings show that there exists a conflict between the spirit and the desacralization of the genre, as global crossover artists such as Ustad Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan made Sufi music accessible to audiences around the world, but at the same time, the aestheticization of performance of the Sufi genre through the process of commercialization can cause semantic dilution. Despite this, Qawwali is highly resilient, reformulating basic theological concepts to promote social inclusion, provide refuge and comfort for the marginalized, and provide a forum for socio-political critique. In the light of these findings, it is suggested that empirical field studies of regional Khanqahi/ Sama Qawwali need to be conducted to document oral traditions that have not yet been recorded, and a framework for the preservation of Khanqahi Qawwali in the archives needs to be developed to preserve traditional performance ethics (Sama rules) against the backdrop of the quick pace at which the field is being commercialized.

INTRODUCTION

Background

Since religion has been taken as a code that have emotional impact every life area of a follower, religiosity is the degree of affiliation for the followers towards religion (Bukhari, 2006). By providing a philosophy of leading life, every religion tends to limit the lifestyles of its followers in the circle of its dos and don'ts including selection of entertainment resources and provides different interpretations of entertainment bonds. Similarly, followers' choice of entertainment is influenced by the driving force of religiosity (Asari, 2005).

Sufism

From the Arabic root word *Tasawwuf*, the Sufi's emphasis is one of purification of the soul and gaining insight into the spiritual world, which is the process of improving oneself (Chittick, 1989). This is the process of self-transformation and self-realization (Algar, 2005) which is often referred to. The Sufi's spiritual way is essentially a journey of the seeker towards the ultimate goal of the Sufism, which is 'worship'. Its path is intrinsically related with mysticism. Sufism is a spiritual and contemplative approach to Islam which focuses on the esoteric and inner dimension of the religion's experiences (Algar, 2005). Sufism has its roots in early centuries of Islam and has become a wide-ranging and complex movement in which a variety of practices and beliefs are found. Bilqies (2014) mentions Sufism as part of three main attitudes of the religion, which are *Islam*, *Iman*, and *Ihsan*. Sufism is seen as the accomplishment of the final stage, *Ihsan*, where there is such a realization of the religious truths, which amounts almost to their direct vision as a gift from God. The principle of Sufism is to seek a direct and personal experience of the divine, which Sufi's call "union with God" or "spiritual awakening" (Chittick, 1989). Sufi's use several ways to make this mystical bond, such as prayer, meditation, chanting or contemplation (Schimmel, 1975). They are based on the ideals of self-control, modesty and the love of God and neighbor (Algar, 2005).

Sufi Shrines (Darbars, Mazar, Ziyaratgah, Dargah, And Khangah)

Khanqah is a Persian term which emerged during the ninth to twelfth centuries in Islamic world. *Khanqah* is the name of the lodges of the Sufis. The terms *Sufi shrine*, *Darbar*, *Mazar*, *Ziyaratgah*, *Dargah* and *Vehra* are used interchangeably. It is headed by a *Pir* (1) who himself is a part of the hierarchy of the brotherhood. In addition to the tomb itself there are shrines with a mosque, *Dervishes* lodges and *Langarkhana* and *madrasa*. These *Darbars*, inextricably associated with Sufism, play an important role in the social organization of urban life (Jaffer, 2016). In the case of *Darbars* in Pakistan, state institutions are directly involved in their management. The Waqf Properties Ordinance 1959 established a special department, Auqaf and Religious Affairs, which took control of the management and finances of almost 90 per cent of all *Darbars* in Pakistan (Auqaf Punjab, 2023). In terms of size and visitors, there are a number of differences in Chishti *Darbars* even within the Chishti order in the four provinces, but for the sake of discussion, we focus on the Chishti *Darbars* in Punjab.

Historical context of Piri-Muridi

The word *Piri-Muridi* has its origin in Persian and Urdu languages. The Arabic word *Bayat* is used as a synonym of the English word. The idea of *Bayat* is Sunnah of all Prophethood and of the last Prophet (SWS) in particular used to take *Bayat* from *Sahabas* (friends of Holy Prophet). Once, holy prophet would receive pledges from them, to be good in their actions, and not commit any bad deeds and evils in society. After the *Wisal* (death) of the Holy Prophet (PBUH), as there was no formal prophet to come to take these pledges, thereby, this role was taken by *Wali Ullah's* (Holy men) who used to take such pledges in the form of *Bayat*. In the framework, the terms *Sufi*, *Wali*, *Murshid* are basically synonymous. In particular, in the Indo-Pak region these 'holy men' are called *Pir*. "Only such person should take other person in *Bayat* who has the ability to envisage latent realities. He has got the

power to foresee the past and the future life of an individual. Apart from possessing universal knowledge he should be capable of resolving the issues and problems of his followers at the moment of crisis both in this life and the life hereafter as well as ensuring the Prophet's Mercy in both the worlds." (Meher Ali Shah) (Irshad, 2012)

Chishti Lineage

The culture of *Piri-Muridi* (Saint-Disciples) is thought to have been present in the south Asian region for a long time. But this informal association was institutionalized and converted into *Silsila* (Sufi Orders) in the 11th century (Chittik, 2000). As a result, the different Saints (*Pir*) came to be associated with one of the four recognized *Sufi* orders/chains (Chittik, 2000; Hassalani, 2009; Khanam, 2006). The first order was called *Qadria*, which was founded by Shiekh Abdul Qadir Jelani (1071-1166 AD). *Suherwardia* is a second order that was founded by Abdul Najeel Suherwardi (1098 - 1168 AD). The third order is *Naqshbandia*, founded by Khwaja Baha Ud Din Naqashbandi (1381-1398 AD) and the fourth one is *Chisthia* founded by Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti (1143-1236) (Aziz, 2001; Chittik, 2000; Khanam, 2006). Each one of these have their own specific *Tariqat* (lit paths) with their own religious rites and rituals, saintly lineage and leadership structure (Choudhary, 2010).

Concept of Gaddi/Sajjada Nashini

In order to ensure the continuity of the spread of spirituality *Gaddi/Sajjada Nashini* is the concept in which the *Pir* who is in possession of the spiritual power of a certain area can pass on that power to his successor, so that spreading spirituality continues. In some cases, the *Pir's* son, grandson or nephew becomes the *Pir's* successor after his death. But, in practice, the automatic transfer of *Gaddi* is there mostly on the basis of the blood relation of the *Pir* considered to be authentic and appropriate. In some cases, the *Murid* who is not blood relation of the *Pir* worships the *Pir's* successor and acts towards him in the same

fashion. Even the scholars of *Deoband*, *Shia* and *Ahlayhadith* sect were against the *Gaddi Nashini* concept. This concept is mostly liked and honored in *Brelwi* sect (Bhatti, 2019).

Muridan

Murid is that who took the *Bayat* on *Pir's* hand. More than ten years' age, male or female can become the part of *Muridan*. *Pirs* give the following instructions at the time of *Bayat*: (1) 10 times Recitation of *Darood Sharif* after every *Namaz*, (2) 10 times recitation of 1st *Kalima* after every *Namaz*. Each of the *Muridans* has a particular attachment with their *Pir*. Most of them don't adhere to the above mentioned instructions of *Pirs*, but they are very dedicated to *Khanqah* and saints. However, as the society has developed the connection of *Muridans* with *khanqah* will also gradually diminish. They come from the different parts of the country and visit the *khanqah* regularly on special occasions at different *Urs* and on Fridays. Most of the *Muridan* visit there for religious guidance, their worldly needs (*Dua* for jobs, diseases) and their normal visit. Persons from all sections of the society join the *khanqah*. *Murids* of the *khanqah* are politicians, poets, writers, bureaucrats, doctors, judges, businessmen, farmers and labourous. (Mushtaq, 2017).

Ijtimas (Urs)

Urs is a special festival on which the devotees often undertake mass pilgrimage to saint's shrines. In Indo-Pakistan, the word *Urs* is used, *Mausim* in *Maghrib*, *Mulid* in Egypt etc. for Saint's festivals. *Urs* means "Mystic nuptial", and it refers to the day of the death of the saint and his union with God (Frembgen, 2008). In the *Murids*, there is a formal reverence to a holy man, which takes the form of an annual event at *Pir's* death. It is celebrated in various ways and each *Pir* celebrates it in his own unique fashion, as does each *Silsalah* or Order of *Pirs*. The common activities at *Urs* among different shrines include *Qawwali* (spiritual recitation) reciting *Naat*, *Darood Sharif*, Holy Quran and *Dhamal* (spiritual dance). The stalls of many eatables and religious items are also set up. To pay

reverence to *Pir* on his *Wisal* is the underlying motive of celebrating *Urs*. The term *Wisal* is used for *Pir*'s death which means meeting with God. So *Pir* is not dead, it's dead *Pir*. Instead, it is thought to be *Wisal* (meeting) with God and therefore, it is deemed an event of joy and happiness. His death day is celebrated every year, under the name of *Urs*. The religious scholars have mixed view about the concept of *Urs*. The scholars of *Deoband* and *Ahlay hadith* sect considered it totally against Islamic Sharia (Principles) and declared it as a great *Shirk* (associating someone with God). The *Brelwi* scholars, both in religion and university, were largely inclined towards the concept of *Urs*. The religious scholars claim it to be a religious activity, being proven from the Holy Prophet's life. Moreover, they consider religious gatherings of any sort as sacred, as in gatherings of people, there are always some personalities which are close to God and by virtue of them all the people in gatherings may get the desired benefit. Blessings (*Baraka*) are always a part of this gathering, that is, *Urs*, when it is a large gathering (Mushtaq, 2000).

The Sufi Music - Samaa

Sama literally means "listening" or "music" (Lawrence, 1983). Term "*Sama*" is considered as a form of musical concert which is organized to bring about a state of ecstasy (*wajad*) in *Sufis* (John, 1938). According to Bruce Lawrence, "hearing chanted verse (with or without accompanying instruments) in the company of others, also seeking to participate in the dynamic dialogue between the human lover and Divine beloved" (Lawrence, 1983). *Chishti Sufis* believe that *Sama* is an ecstatic hub and in practice *Sama* is the quest of *Sufis* is, the "union with Allah" which should be joined with severe discipline of the sensual self (Carl, 1999). For *Sama*, it is seen as a time when the reason for people's gathering is to implement the ideals of Islamic mysticism by listening to music (Qureshi, 1992). Some *Ulama* are not in favor of the practice of *Sama*. They discuss it contrary to the Islamic tradition, since Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) did not use to practise such a thing in his times (Hassanali, 2010). According

to some theologians, there are four types of *Sama*; 1-*Halal* (lawful) 2-*Mubah* (permitted) 3-*Makrooh* (disapproved) 4. *Haram* (forbidden); If *Sama* is held for the sake of Allah and longing for Allah and not longing for the created it is lawful. If *Sama* is done primarily in the hope of Allah and a small desire for the creation, then it is allowed. *Sama* has a lot of desire for the created and a little of Allah is disapproved. The fourth type of *Sama* in which there is no yearning for Allah and is all longing for created is forbidden (Ernst, 1985). So, to the *Sufi*, *Sama/Qawwali* is a method of worship and feast for the soul, to the performer it is the genre of music with its distinctive characteristics of worship and to the observer it is music in context par excellence (Qureshi, 2006).

Qawwali feast for the soul

Term *Qawwali* is derived from the Arabic verb "*Qala*", which mean "to say". *Qawwali* is a term which is related to the religious musical form and not related to music per se, but to recitation of the holy text. It is different from the verb referring to singing (*gana*). The term "*Qawwali parhna*" (recite *Qawwali*) is used for the performance of *Qawwali*, instead of "*Qawwali gana*" (sing *Qawwali*). Poems are referred to as *kalam* instead of (Poetry) *shair* (Viitamäki, 2008). *Qawwali*, the religious version of the music is played. To the early *Sufis* of Islam *Qawwali* performance has a religious function (Qureshi, 1995). Early *Sufis* of Islam started to recite Quranic verses accompanied by music to fill their heart with mystical love and arouse their emotions (Hassanali, 2010). To *Sufis*, music is the rhythm to *Zikr*. Later, there were other forms of *Sufi* poetry, accompanied by musical tunes, which was added to *Samaand* and it was claimed that this was the practice of the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) and his companions (Subhan, 2009). By listening *Sufi* poetry, a *Sufi* want to activate his link with his mentor and with saints departed and then ultimately to Almighty Allah (Qureshi, 1995). The music and poetry take regional forms according to the different local traditions. *Sufi* literature was developed by the *Sufi* poets in various forms such as quatrain (*Rubai*), (*Ghazal*) couplets in rhythms,

poems, (*Qasida*) praise, (*Masnawi*) epic couplet. This style of music along with Sufi poetry was used to convey Sufi teachings (Hassanali, 2010). Later on, *Sama* or music became used as a means to achieve ecstasy *Wajad*. Spiritually advanced Sufis individually or collectively fall in state of ecstasy and rise up to dance *Raqs*. Nizamud-Din Auliya says that “when a Sufi claps his hands, all the sins of his hands are wiped off; and when he shouts all his evil desires are destroyed” (Syed, 2017). *Sama* was chiefly practiced on *Urs* occasion to celebrate the death of a saint. However, the practice of *Sama* has been tamed and secularized as a musical festival – indeed, in these festivals dancing-girls perform their dance in the name of the saint (Subhan, 2009).

a large body of poems, with tunes for singing and metric patterns for drumming, usually on the barrel-shaped dholak. They are sung by a group of qawwāls, one or two of whom stand as soloists, and they are accompanied melodically by the portable harmonium which has now replaced the indigenous sarangi or sitar. The stress on the rhythm is increased by the singers' handclapping. These are extended singing, the musical meter is well articulated, and the structuring process is flexible, depending on the needs of the samā' listeners in the context of their spiritual needs (Ibid.).

Forms of Qawwali

In light of above, it can be classified into three types of *Qawwali*, in terms of its social and cultural dimension and impact on the society and culture of Pakistan: (1) *Sama Qawwali*, 2. Recorded *Qawwali* of Recording Industry 3. Concert *Qawwali*.

Sama: Qawwali

It is also known as *Khanqahi Qawwali* as it is connected with the Sufi lodges. In this kind of *Qawwali* meditative and ecstatic technique is applied to attain a state of spirituality. This is the form of *Qawwali* which is played on shrines,

Dargahs and around them. Apart from performing on common days (especially on Thursday) and especial occasions (*Urs* festivals) this form of *Qawwali* is sung during the performance of different kind of rituals. Poetry of *Qawwali* is diverse, but in the context of the theme of *Qawwali* mystical love is predominant. Instead of the *Qawwal's* focus, the focus in *Sama Qawwali* is *Mir-e-Mehfil*. (Viitamäki, 2008).

Recorded Qawwali of Recording Industry

Qawwali become the part of recording industry in 1920-1930 in south Asia. In early 20th century musical instruments such as *Tabla* and harmonium were used, addition of further instruments in 1930s. The textual content of *Qawwali* attracted an important change in *Sama Qawwali*. Urdu was given a significant role in the written *Qawwali* in the 19th century. Urdu language which was used in recording was simpler than language of Urdu poetry. Not only the language but the content of the poem also got change. The poems that are recorded were mostly praising the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W). Nowadays it's easily available recorded in the form of CD by the shops near the *Dargahs*. Narrative poems, with didactic content technique, were used in which verses from different sources were inserted in the main poem (Ibid.) due to which whole song sometimes lost its original structure. Following the partition of India the use of *Qawwali* was employed to propagate the ideologies of the new states of India. *Qawwali* earned fame as a music in Pakistan. The recorded *Qawwali* was influenced by film music since the 1960s. Although its idiom is like the non-religious musical form of popular recorded *Qawwali* but major difference is that of lyrics (Syed, 2017).

Concert Qawwali

From 1940, *Qawwali* become the part of non-religious festivals and concerts. Since 1960s, the Concert *Qawwali* took the religious character. Innovators of this tradition were Ghulam Farid Sabri and Maqbool Farid Sabri who got popularity nationally and internationally. Qureshi called this

form of *Qawwali* as serious popular religious *Qawwali*. They blended the traits of the traditional *Qawwali* with popular *Qawwali* and Hindustani *Qawwali*. They never lost any balance between text message and spontaneous texts (Qureshi, 1995). Since 1980s stage *Qawwali* was dominated by Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan. He went so far as to address even that unpoetically public, who didn't know the *Qawwali*. There is a lack of balance between the message of the text and musical improvisation in his *Qawwali* (Viitamäki, 2008). This is not possible in Sama *Qawwali* as it disturbs the attention and concentration of the audience. The first thing that is emphasized in the Concert *Qawwali* is to obtain happiness and entertainment, not ecstasy. The attributes of *Qawwal* is different from Sama's *Qawwal*. In concert *Qawwali* the focus is on singer who is characterized as an artist and the concentration is on the musical traits like quality of voice and artistry of the singer etc. (Ibid.)

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Ritual Theory Ritual

Turner's (1969) work on theory emphasizes the role of ritual in the construction of social organization, reinforcement of shared beliefs, and nurturing a sense of social solidarity. Rituals are symbolic actions which create a liminal state of being a state outside of normal reality, a state in which new relationships can be established (Turner, 1969). This paradigm can be helpful to understand the non-religious actions within the shrine, as the actions performed here can have some aspects of ritual. The study tries to explore the symbolic meaning and community cohesion that emerge through what may seem to be mundane, but are actually sacred, events like music concerts and community gatherings (Feldman, 2012). The study will examine the possibility of the atmosphere of the shrine as a liminal space in which the social hierarchy is temporarily suspended and people connect and experience a sense of community (Bano, 2017). This study will examine the impact of engaging in collective rituals and customs, such as attending and belonging (Asan, 2013).

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Although *Qawwali* has a long tradition of developing into a sacred *Chishti* devotional art, it has undergone a complete metamorphosis to become a globalised and commercialised art is a serious challenge to the preservation of traditional Sufi identity. Although there is literature outlining the theological foundations of *Sufism* and the history of South Asian musical traditions, there is a lack of research on how *Qawwali* serves as a tool of perpetuation of core Sufi spiritual values in the face of processes of deserialization, secularization and cross-cultural hybridity in modern times. If this relationship is not understood properly, *Sufi* traditions may get diluted by the commercialization and appropriation of their spirit in the global arena.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To explore the development of *Qawwali* from the ritual of *Chishti Sama* to the present day global *Qawwali*.
- To understand the continuity of the fundamental *Sufi* spiritual ideas in the different cultural and geographical settings where *Qawwali* has existed throughout the ages.
- The effects of globalization, commercialization and media on the spiritual authenticity and cultural identity of *Qawwali* was assessed.
- To examine the socio-political functions of *Qawwali*; to promote social cohesion, intercultural communication and countering socio-political marginalization in the South Asian region and its global diaspora.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This review paper aims to bring the literature on *Sufi* music practices together, and show how *Qawwali* can be considered a dynamic keeper of the *Sufi* identity. This paper will seek to create a comprehensive framework that connects the past, sacred contexts (*Sama*), and contemporary adaptations of *Sufism* in the global arena, by critically examining the historical processes and contexts, sacred ritual practices, and contemporary adaptations of *Sufism*. Finally, this study provides

an insight into the dynamics between spiritual protection and commercialization on the global stage in the context of sacred traditions.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To examine the preservation of *Sufi* identity in different socio-cultural contexts, this review paper has adopted a qualitative thematic approach to literature review method. Systematic searches were conducted in 20 academic databases including JSTOR, Scopus, Google Scholar and Web of Science. Some search query terms were "Qawwali", "Sufi identity", "Chishti Sama", "musicology" and "globalization of devotional music. The sources were chosen because of their relevance to *Sufi* theology, South Asian musical tradition, shrine culture (*Dargahs*) and music adaptations in the world today. The non-peer-reviewed commentaries, unverifiable web sources and off-topic sources were omitted. Thematic synthesis was used to analyze literature collected.

RESULTS

Through a systematic synthesis of the collected literature, four core thematic frameworks were constructed to structure the analysis: the historical and theological evolution of *Sama*, the socio-spatial dynamics of shrine culture, the global spread and re-contextualization of *Qawwali*, and the tensions surrounding modern commercialization.

Theme 1: Historical & Theological Evolution

In Islam, *Sufi* Music appears as *Qawwali* in South Asia in a certain stream of the faith, which is composed and performed to engage the listener's attention with the Spiritual Master, as a guide and exemplar (Newell, 2007). *Sufi* music has continued to adapt and survive through the centuries. With the expansion of Islam around the world, new Islamic knowledge and practices were introduced in the 13th century, which sparked a new era in *Sufi* music (Sufism in Western Contexts, 2023). *Sama* was an eighth century Iranian/Iraqi (Persian) discovery, which was frequently referenced in 10th century *Sufi* manuals. Maulana Jallaludin Rumi (1207-1273, founder of Malviya *Sufi* order)

created a form of *Dervish* whirling with *Daff* beat (Simon, 2005), with the aid of Saadi Sherazi (1200-1292), a Persian poet. The *Sufis* of *Chishti* Order (Subhan, 2009) are mainly known for celebrating *Sama*. *Chishti* practice of *Sama* was started by Khawaja Moinuddin Chishti. He institutionalized *Sama's*, because he wanted to deliver his message of Islam to the Hindus, who were lovers of music and he used *Samas* as a means to bring them together (Viitamäki, 2008). Then, the practice of *Chishti Sama* was continued by Shaikh Syed Muhammad Nizammuddin Auliya (1238-1325) who was known by the title of Sultan-ul-Mushaikh in Indian subcontinent and Mehboob-e Illahi in Pakistan. He spread the faith of Islam to India in the form of *Sufi* music called *Qawwali*. Amir Khusrau was a *Sufi* saint and a disciple of Nizamuddin Auliya (Qureshi, 1995). He was associated to the court of the sultan Ala ul-Din Khilji (1296-1316) at Delhi and he had the sagacity and command over the Indian and Persian classical music. The latest form of *Qawwali* was invented by Amir Khusrau in the subcontinent (Rasheed 2001). It has been reported that Amir Khusrau introduced *Qawwali* from Persia but there is no reference to *Qawwali* in Persian literature. Hence, it is assumed that it was '*Sama*' which was later identified as '*Qawwali*' in Indian *Sufi* literature (Anuradha, 2012).

Qawwali is a devotional music style of the South Asian region that shares a number of similarities with the other light classical music styles of the region (Newell, 2007). The lead singer is performing harmonium and *Tabla* is being performed by the other members of the party "punctuated by hand claps provided by the other members of the party" (Newell, 2007). In this party, 9-12 people are involved. The length of a typical *Qawwali* song can vary from 15 minutes to 30 minutes and even beyond that (Newell, 2007). *Qawwali* is written mostly in two languages Persian and Urdu. *Chishti* "*Sama*" has been composed in Persian poetry since the 11th century while Urdu language was adopted as a language of poetry in the 18th century (Viitamäki, 2008). In Urdu this tradition began late, hence Urdu has embraced

many aspects and depictions of this genre. Hence, the traditional rules of classical northern Indian music are present in the genre of Qawwali (Viitamäki, 2008). Amir Khusrau was the inventor of various musical instruments, such as *Tabla*, *Harmonium* and *Sitar* (Rajnish, 2019). With reference to Abdul Alim Jaa'far Khan (1931-1975) it is related that the composition of many Ragas like Kafi and Shahnai, are attributed to Khusrau (Viitamäki, 2008), which are still performed in Qawwali and he is considered as the founder of this art form (Fitzpatrick, 2014). A typical modern-day Qawwali group features a lead singer (*qawwal*) who is supported by one or two singers, a harmonium, a *Dholak* (double-headed finger drum) and *Tabla*, along with more or less energetic hand claps (Cho, 1997).

The world tour of Sufi music practices brings into focus the development and history of Sufi in different settings. Sufi music was re-contextualized in Turkey, and became a sub-genre of 'World Music'. This change is also reflected in the Ney (reed-flute) which has become a familiar signifier of Sufism in Turkish musical expressions (Banu, Senay 2015). In India, early practice of Sama is popularly known as Qawwali and the singers are known as Qawwal (Subhan, 2009). Like other musical genres, such as *Bhakti*, Sufi music is suited for being adapted into Bollywood music videos, and is used in this way to promote religious moderation (Mufti, Rasyid, 2022). Poetic Urdu/Farsi lyrics and classical Hindi/Punjabi are used, and the music speaks in allegorical terms of the devotee's union with the divine (Bhaskar and Allen, 2009). A strong tradition of Sufi music also prevails in Pakistan. A common practice of Sama is found at religious festivals, shrines and religious occasions celebrated by mass (Bukhari, 2006).

Theme 2: Socio-Spatial Dynamics

In South Asian history Sufi shrines have always been the center of religious and social life of the region (Ali, 2016; Schimmel, 1975). The purpose of these sacred places is to create a spiritual environment that will be more accepting and welcoming of other views and beliefs (Masud et al.,

2019). The most popular manifestation or mystical life in Islam is the *Sama*. This is termed as Sufi music. It is a great mystical tradition which has attained immense sacred status all over the sub-continent. In the Indian sub-continent, the Sufi community is responsible for maintaining this musical tradition for centuries and it is still the main custom of Sufism (Tehmina, 2016).

Mostly Qawwali is held on the shrines. The party will sing the Qawwali at a *Dargah*, with its back to the entrance of the shrine (Newell, 2007). As Sufis passed on the next generation, the gathering of Sama became a part of the collective spiritual body of the shrine. No one said that there would be no *Urs* (celebration) without Qawwali (songs). In fact, Chishtiya order made Qawwali an integral component of Sama. Tanvir Jamaal Chishti declares ecstasy as an important thing in Sama and it can be achieved through a high level of love-a form of communion with Allah. He has also discussed three demands for Sama which were discussed by the esoteric Sufis in different periods of early Islamic Sufism and these are; time, place and company (Jamal, 2015).

The shrines have a significant role, particularly the music (Qawwali) performed by the music artists who sing spiritual rhymes. The artists sing Sufi and folk poetry which is an important source of expression of emotions and is adored and valued by people (Raj & Harman, 2006). Earlier Quranic verses and poetry in praise of Allah and Muhammad were the content of Sama. Later, Sufi Kalam was also used in the content of Sama. It was used for religious purpose to get into trance, it was done on shrines and Sufi lodges and in Mahafil. Qawwali's impact on society and culture can be analyzed through the aims of present day status of Qawwali. With the understanding of the healing properties of Qawwali, the medical fraternity has now recommended that mentally disturbed patients go to Qawwali functions (Nayyar, 1988).

According to Hakim et al., (2024) the *Urs* is an important function that includes prayers, recitations, devotional songs and assemblies of the followers. This is a time to reflect spiritually, to renew one's faith, and to celebrate the life and

teachings of the saint together. The *Urs* helps to unite, to devote and to strengthen the cultural and spiritual heritage of the shrine. These rituals are not only acts of devotion but also foster a sense of community and cultural identity among the devotees. There have been instances of Hindus who have attended *Sama* gatherings in India. In general, Sufis have been able to be flexible with people of other faiths coming to *Sama*. The founder of the *Qadriyya* Order Shaykh Abdul Qadir Jilani even did not reject *Sama* and supported the group of people using it for enhancing their spirituality (Wahid, 2013).

Pakistan is a country where the *Sufi* music and *Sufi* dance exist side by side (Schimmel, 1975). People who believe that the *Sufi* music and *Sufi* raqs give them satisfaction, relief them from social stress and their domestic problems they move to *Sufi* shrines (Levin, 2008). When people want peace, they go to *Sufi* shrines, because they are under stress and depression due to domestic and social problems. (Husain et al., 2007). Followers of *Sufi* shrines engage in religious activities and services which include the various traditions such as reading of Quran, prayers, *Langar*, *Qawwali*, *Dhamal*, Drumming and *Sufiyana Kalam* (Abbas, 2010; Wolf, 2006). According to per Bano (2017) some women in Pakistan, especially those from spousal abuse or other social compulsion could seek refuge in *Sufi* shrines. Her research uncovered the significance of the welcoming environment of the shrine rituals in how they make women feel capable and connected to the religious community. Similarly, Malik (2018) explores the importance of *Sufi* shrines to religious minorities in Pakistan and how they offer a sense of security and community for those facing discrimination. *Sufi* shrines have been demonstrated to have a value in social inclusion, community cohesion and a sense of belonging for underserved communities.

Theme 3: Global Spread & Re-contextualization

Sufi music has been explored in the West, and has manifested in a wide variety of forms, such as the incorporation of *Sufi* music into Western

esotericism, the performance of *Sufi* music by female whirling dervishes, and the creation of *Sufi* cafes. *Sufi* music has also been embraced and integrated into other genres of music in the West, highlighting how it has been able to transcend the boundaries of time and culture (Blain, Auer, 2020). Dominating perceptions of *Qawwali* either place it within the wider *Islamic-Sufi* musical sphere extending from Syria to Indonesia (Frembgen, 2008), or in the long historical continuum of a tradition that dates back to Nizamuddin's shrine in Delhi, which is seventy centuries old (Qureshi, 1995).

The development of *Sufi* tradition has been closely connected to the social, political and economic development of the region in Khwārazm. *Sufi* communities that are rooted locally or regionally- and internationally-connected have been particularly important in the development of *Sufi* music within this specific geographical context (Devin, DeWeese, 2016). In diasporic settings, during the counter movements against Muslim populations in the aftermath of 9/11 in the United States and 7/7 in the United Kingdom, it was suggested that *Sufism* is an “acceptable” form of Islam as compared to an idealized Western secular style of governance. This story evolved around the opposition to a “freedom” agenda, the anti-modernist and anti-Wahhabi / Salafi side of Islam and the iconography of tolerance and multicultural grace, *Sufism* (Schmidle, 2008).

The *Sufi* sublime is a montage of multiple genres, including Rumi's poetry, *Qawwali*, and other *Sufi* music's, and yoga, as a way of personalized spiritualism, a type of utilitarian montage that has become the hallmark of the modernist spirit of neoliberalism. The idea has a clear use value in its circulation: salient is the certainty that the category of the “sacred” is at stake in opposition to the secular and that these two categories co-constitute each other (Kapchan, 2008). In the same way, in India Bollywood films have the resources for representing “Good Muslims” through *Qawwali*, but these can be very different from the sonic form of *Qawwali* and are utilized on-screen for their representational power, as sites of political and

social negotiation. Like Bollywood *Qawwali*, musical versions in the West also pick up some of the meanings, which in total constitute what I call the *Sufi* sublime (Vajpeyi, 2009). Gilani (2012) delves into the phenomenon of *Qawwali* music performances in Pakistani *Sufi* shrines, drawing attention to the fact that this devotional style of music encourages cultural exchange and goes beyond religious bounds.

The non-Muslim listeners, particularly those in the Hindi, Urdu, Panjabi language area have a definite but rudimentary understanding of the devotional music genre of *Qawwali* and its distinctly Muslim identity emanating from religious practice, and also in the secular domain in the Indian sense of what I prefer to call spiritual cosmopolitanism (Qureshi, 1999). Tape. Carl Ernst and Bruce. The Lawrence note, the *Qawwali* adapts to the political, ideological and technological shifts in the modern world. As such, while it was designed to be a devotional work, the *Qawwali* soon embraces political shades and speaks in terms of justice and against oppression (Qamar-ul Huda, 2007).

Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan (NFAK) was a great introduction to the *Sufi* Music, which is based on the *Qawwali* tradition. His music was a blend of diverse musical cultures, both East and West (Sonia, Gaind-Krishnan, 2020). In postmodernism the artistic evolution of NFAK has seen a desacralization and profanation of *Qawwali*, as a result of a variety of audience interpretations (Jacoviello, Stefano, 2011). NFAK's work helped raise the worldwide profile of *Sufi* music (Senay, Banu, 2015). In 1997, an article published in Time Magazine, titled, "Pure and Powerful", discussed how NFAK's music was appreciated by the likes of Pearl Jam (a famous rock band) as well as the legendary Peter Gabriel who signed NFAK for his 'Real World' label and helped his songs reach many non-Asian audiences (Sayed, 2022). Other than the contemporary artists of NFAK such as Abida Parveen, who is more inclined towards spiritual depth and contemplation. NFAK have collaborated with western musicians and been featured in festivals around the world, while Aziz Mian share emotive expressions with NFAK,

he does not have the global reach of NFAK. His innovative style in *Sufi* music is juxtaposed with the traditional/classical *Qawwali* style led by the Sabri Brothers.

Theme 4: Tensions of Modernity

The spread of *Qawwali* around the world highlights the challenges of intercultural translation and the potential loss of original meanings and is a testament to the continued importance of the *Chishti Sufi* lineage in the evolution of world music (Pierre-Alain, Baud, 1996).

Since first hearing *Qawwali* in the 1990s, as an element of Real World Studios' efforts, (Erlmann, 1996); Stokes, 2003) and then remixed into transcendental dance tracks spun by deejays such as Cheb i Sabbah in the desi (people of South Asian) club scene (Qureshi, 2000) in San Francisco of the same era, I have been sitting with the following questions: how does *Qawwali* mean to transnational, diasporic audiences? How does it create an impression on the listener, even as they may not grasp the particular depth of semantic content, couched in the texts of *Qawwali* songs? (Qureshi, 1986) are they impacted instead on some other level of listening affectively, bodily, immediately? But what about the moral and/or religious attitude of the singers and the listeners who listen to this *Sufi* music? Once lifted from its originary context, what aesthetic and ethical possibilities are there for a music such as *Qawwali*? Inhering in its sound, there is a certain driving force; I wonder aloud, in this paper, what transformations can the music endure while still retaining its capacity to affect the listener?

The challenge for the music professor is just to how far one could extend *Qawwali*'s definition as a music of religion, although it is not evident from the context of performance or the sometimes vague lyrics. However, in breaking down sites of performance into either sacred and secular, Sakata (1994) has concluded that it is not possible to determine from the context which performance might correspond to the distinction made by Qureshi (1986) between religious and commercial *Qawwali*. Commercial pressures may influence

artistic decisions, impacting the integrity of Sufi music and its traditional roots. Criticism of Authenticity and Preservation of Tradition: Mainstreaming is criticized since it might be commercialised and result in loss of the finer detail within the traditional compositions. In the name of commercial success, adaptations are more market friendly, which has led to concerns that spiritual depth is being lost (Jacoviello, Stefano, 2011).

Authenticity is the sticking point, as there are concerns that centuries-old traditions may be watered down or altered to fit into the current entertainment hallmarks. Nusrat's *Qawwali* has remained spiritually intact, despite the commercialization, and has created a bond between tradition and modernity (Sonia, Gaiind-Krishnan, 2020). The commercialization of Sufi music presents problems, such as that of NFAK. While his music crosses borders, the interests of commerce can overwhelm the spiritual and cultural meaning of Sufi traditions and transform the original significance of the music. (Baud, Pierre-Alain, 1996) *Sufism* in the commercial sphere is now seen globally in music, and there are cases of cultural appropriation, questions regarding the ethical and cultural aspects have been raised. NFAK's music is subject to interpretations which can lead to the loss of authenticity in Sufi musical traditions (Baud, Pierre Alain, 1996). In spite of the commercialization, NFAK's *Qawwali* managed to retain its spiritual identity, while it gained a foothold in other secular and popular areas (Sakata, 1994). In the modern period, many *Qawwal's*, considered traditional stylists, use their performances to critiques oppressive state structures (Abbas, 2007). NFAK's legacy highlights how Sufi music continues to impact the world today, transcending cultural and linguistic barriers and inspiring many people to appreciate its heritage (Jacoviello, Stefano, 2011).

At the present moment, *Qawwali* does not have a religious role and it's gaining popularity in home decorations, occasions, musical performances, commercial recordings and movies. With the advent of the broadcasting and recording industry,

Qawwali has been changed into a popular entertainment art form from the religious one (Fitzpatrick, 2014). The aim of the present day *Qawwali* is to get pleasure and enjoyment and as a genre of music it is considered as source of entertainment. From the last fifty years *Qawwali* as a genre of music, has separated itself from its religious context. In non-religious context it is used in two ways; as an art form and as a dialogue. The mystical imagery of *Qawwali* was used for secular purposes such as Sabri brothers used concept of "Wine" in their *Qawwali* for secular purpose. The Indian and the Pakistani film industries tapped into the potential of *Qawwali* and have used it as a means of entertainment. Secularization was followed by an evolution of *Qawwali* which became dialogue in stage shows. A set of male and female groups were used in stage or concert *Qawwali*, each one using this type of *Qawwali* for humorous exchange. Dialogue *Qawwali* has now entered into the entertainment programs and activities of the schools and colleges. Today, people view *Qawwali*, not only as devotional music, but a source of entertainment. There are several events of *Qawwali* organized every year attended and enjoyed by all and sundry. The traditional *Qawwali* was for an audience and the *Qawwal* had a format of his own. Eye contact with audience, explanation and spiritual stories were considered essential for devotional *Qawwali* but now this communication is missing in *Qawwali* (POQ-fm91, 2010). Sufi rock was invented by Pakistani band Junoon, as they fused the contemporary hard rock and traditional folk with Sufi poetry (Ibid). Coke Studio's first session was launched in the Pakistan in 2008 and it got high esteem in musical world. Coke Studio added a new dimension to *Qawwali* by introducing new age music in *Qawwali* as this new folk *Qawwali* is linked to our roots. Various artists are combining western and eastern melodies in folk *Qawwali* and making it the part of folk music of Pakistan such as Atif Aslam sung the *Qawwali*, "*Taj Dare Hram*" earlier sung by the Sabri brothers. This version is totally different from the previous version in

respect of music and musical instruments (Coke Studio Pakistan, 2017).

Moreover, the nature of the 'sacred' can be quite distinct from the context in which it was drawn from. The Sufi sublime is a version of this tendency, and not only an escape mechanism, but also a life-affirming infusion of affect that provide the promise of sonic translation, "the belief that music can translate affect across cultural and linguistic divides." (Kapchan, 2008).

CONCLUSION

On the basis of thematic analysis this study shows that *Qawwali* is a flexible, adaptable keeper of the Sufi spirit in the evolving historical, geographical and spatial contexts. *Qawwali* has always been being the connecting link between the sacred and the social from its inception in early Persian *Sama* till its institutionalization in the *Chishti* order of South Asia. It is a transformative ritual in the physical and ritual environment of the shrine (*Dargah*), which temporarily dissolves socio-economic, gender and sectarian barriers and consolidates collective identity for the psychological and spiritual comfort in the shared sacred aesthetics.

The recording of *Qawwali* from the localized shrine rituals (*Khanqahi Sama*) to concert halls, screen media and fusion projects around the world, however, has transformed its performance dynamics and the ways in which it engages its audience. The spread of Sufi poetry to other continents and the adaptation of the genre in modern forms from Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan's cross-genre music to newer media such as the Coke Studio have brought the genre to the international audience; at the same time, they have also raised questions about authenticity, sacrality and intention. With the introduction of *Qawwali* in mainstream commercial markets, the relationship of the spiritual guide (*Mir-e-Mehfil*) and the listener may evolve from the spiritual to the aesthetic, thereby risking the loss of its originally theological background (*Ishq*, *Zikr* and *Wisal*).

In conclusion, the evolution of *Qawwali* demonstrates a singular and double identity: as a traditional devotional art deeply entrenched in

Islamic mysticism and at the same time as a fluid, secularized vehicle of global cultural diplomacy. The literature presents a more nuanced view of *Qawwali*, seeing the potential for affective resonance that is intrinsic to the music and nearly language and location independent. The genre still has the power to produce spiritual contemplation, social critique, and a cosmopolitan and inclusive representation of Sufi culture to the modern world, even outside of its context within a shrine.

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