

# THE SIGNIFICANCE OF GHAZAL WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO CONTEMPORARY GHAZAL SINGERS

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## Abstract

In Indian music, the concept of Rasa Sidhant has always played a pivotal role in the establishment of any genre of music. Whether it is a Classical, Semi Classical or light music the notion of rasa is applicable in every form. Classical music, as the name suggests, is an art form which is bound by certain rules and regulations, it is quite systematic and based on ancient principles. On the other side, especially the light music which includes singing forms like Ghazal do not follow such strict rules and regulations rather they work on a simple concept of melodic arrangements which attracts the masses or the larger audience with more zeal and enthusiasm, hence gets accepted by the audience quite easily. In short it can be clearly said that ghazal (Ghazal is a poetic-cum-musical form of Hindustani light music, with persian and Urdu poetic influences) in its musical form can be considered as a music between classical and accessible music.

Since pre-historic times it has been proved that change is the law of nature, things keep on changing with the passage of time, same way numerous changes have also been observed in the Ghazal presentation. The poets of the present time have expanded their scope by constantly modifying and improving the Ghazal genre. This new learning was welcomed by the audience and the singers. Due to this amendment, the sense of interest in this change has surely established this genre to a new level. Talking about the Ghazal singers many of them have contributed in bringing up the changes in the traditional singing style of Ghazal to its modern form. This change is not only the result of contemporary singing but also due to the updated use of vocabulary and modern instruments. This research paper will discuss all such gems associated either with the musical or lyrical part of this art form. A humble attempt has been made to collect the information of all such legends who have contributed as per their best knowledge.

Key Words: Traditional Singing, Rasa Sidhant, Ghazal

## INTRODUCTION

Classical music, as the name suggests, is an art form which is essentially based on ancient principles. Therefore, it is quite systematic as it is bound by certain rules and regulations. On the other side, semi classical or especially the light music which includes singing forms like *Ghazal* do not follow such strict rules and regulations. They rather work on a simple concept of melodic arrangements which attracts the masses or the larger audience with more zeal and enthusiasm. Hence, it gets accepted by the audience quite easily. In short it can be clearly said that *ghazal*<sup>1</sup> (Ghazal is a poetic-cum-musical form of Hindustani light music, with persian and Urdu poetic

<sup>1</sup> Origin and Evolution of Indian Classical Music, Cyber Tech Publications, New Delhi, 2012, Page-129.

influences) in its musical form can be considered as a music between classical and accessible music.

As mentioned above, *ghazal* gayakee has its own identity and essence but on the other side, it is based on either a specific *Raga*<sup>1</sup> (A *Raga* contains different series of notes within the octave, which form each other by the prominence of certain fixed notes and by the sequence of particular notes) or a mixture of *ragas*, a proper rhythmic pattern i.e. *tala* and also contains musical elements or ornamentations like *alaps*, *taans*, *meend*, *gamak*, *murki*, *khatka*<sup>2</sup> etc. In this situation, while rendering a *ghazal*, the vocalist easily introduces those elements of classical music to the listeners which are beyond the understanding of a common listener in terms of singing viz *Dhrupad*<sup>3</sup> (*Dhrupad* is derived from the word *dhruv* which literally means fixed and *pada* literally verse/text), *Khayal* (*Khyal* is a traditional type of song from the northern part of the Indian subcontinent, with instrumental accompaniment and typically it has two main stanzas.) whose meaning are quite unknown to a common audience still they enjoy with such musical elements.

As said above, the musical composition of *Ghazal* is based on one or multiple *ragas* and when the audience listens to a *ghazal*, most of them unconsciously become aware of the nature of that *raga*. The nature of *raga* contains the mood or the musical ecstasy in which the *ghazal* is composed. Thus the nature of the *raga* marks its identity in the heart and mind of the listeners through the medium of *ghazal* and unintentionally, a feeling of knowing such *raga* more deeply arises in the mind of the listeners. *Ghazal* is such a perfect style of music that while being easy, it has in itself the gems of classical music and attracts even a common listener.

*Ghazal* has been said to be a medium of expression to narrate the condition of beauty and love. Some scholars believe that the word *Ghazal* is derived from the word "Ghazal" which means "deer" (This animal symbolizes harmony, happiness, peace and longevity). Based on this, *Ghazal* has also been called a poetic expression of love business. *Ghazal* is basically a poetic style of Persian language and consists of romantic songs.

The literal meaning of *Ghazal* is "expression of feelings of love". The first major poet of *Ghazal* in Persian was "Rudaki"<sup>4</sup> who paid utmost attention to this style and gave it a proud place in Iran about a thousand years ago. "The atmosphere of the *Ghazal* is

<sup>1</sup> Music of India, Herbert A. Popley. Y.M.C.A Publishing House, New Delhi, 1966, Page-40.

<sup>2</sup> Bharti Sangeet Vibhin Pripek, Rishpal Singh, Sangam Publication Samana, 2014, Pages-5-10

<sup>3</sup> Origin and Evolution of Indian Classical Music, Cyber Tech Publications, New Delhi, 2012, Page-63

<sup>4</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rudaki>

woven into an enchanting weave of light and shadows. The feelings of Ghazal come from the depths of the heart. There is such a fascinating feeling of losing and gaining in it that the reader and the listener cannot remain without being impressed". Although the language of Ghazal remains in Urdu and Persian, with the change of time, it has become a custom to recite Ghazal in Urdu mixed with Hindi language. Ghazal first became popular in Iran and Turkistan. Later it came to India with the Turkish invaders and became very popular in India due to its uniqueness. Khilji and Amir Khusrau had an important contribution in establishing the Ghazal in India. Later, poets like Mir, Ghalib, Iqbal, Firaq, Ahmed Faraz, Faiz among others brought significant contributions in giving a new dimension to Ghazal. With the passage of time, the lyrical and musical aspect of ghazal kept on changing with a result that some found this change a pleasant one while the others shown disinterest in the same.

Debating on which Ghazal can be labeled as the best one, it can be best answered as such, "There is not any universal parameter which defines the intensity or greatness of a ghazal" In fact, this art form actually creates such an aesthetic delight, a bliss or that sort of feeling which touches the heart of a listener directly. The range of Ghazal is infinite. Hardly any poet, singer or musician of Indian subcontinent might have left who got himself or herself spared from its influence.

Since pre-historic times it has been proved that change is the law of nature and that things keep on changing with the passage of time. In the same way, numerous changes have also been observed in the Ghazal presentation. The poets of the present time have expanded their scope by constantly modifying and improving the Ghazal genre. This new learning was welcomed by the audience and the singers. Due to this amendment, the sense of interest in this change has surely established this genre to a new level.

Talking about the Ghazal writers or singers, many of them have contributed in bringing up the changes in the traditional singing style of Ghazal to its modern form. This change is not only the result of contemporary singing but also due to the updated use of vocabulary and modern instruments. This research paper will discuss all such gems associated either with the musical or lyrical part of this art form. A humble attempt has been made to collect the information of all such legends who have contributed as per their best knowledge.

To begin with, the people who understands the traditional Ghazal singing considers K.L. Sehgal as among the best Ghazal singers, who have contributed a lot to bring this genre to the audience of all classes. Although there were many other melodious ghazal singers in his time too, all the fame and recognition was credited to

K.L.Sehgal. K. L. Sehgal used to compose ghazals on the basis of classical music. He was a master in creating musical compositions and always followed a specific Raga to develop his idea. He sang most of the ghazals written by the famous poets like Janab Mirza Ghalib, Jauk, to name a few, their vocabulary is still considered to be a complex or difficult one. Along with film music, he brought the ghazals of great poets like Ghalib to the masses through non-film accessible music. At a time when ghazals were considered the property of female singers, Sehgal broke this tradition and made a man's voice useful and effective for ghazals. In this way, the Ghazal came out of the courts and the courts of the emperors and reached the common man's house. Sehgal mostly used harmonium and tabla in his singing. This period was known as the era of KL Sehgal.

Simultaneously with this period, another period of Ghazal came into light and the lady behind it was the famous melody queen named Akhtari Bai Faizabadi, better known as Begum Akhtar. Begum Akhtar, with her sweet and melodious voice, had a different style in her expression-oriented singing. The flow of words, decoration of notes and elements of classical music were present in her singing. Her specialty was the *Khuli Ghazal singing*, in which when the *antara* is taken after the first two couplets without the rhythm. In the second line of the antra, the tabla player again strikes a chord with the laggi. An example of this open ghazal singing is "Deewana banana hai to deewana bana de"<sup>1</sup>. Like Sehgal, she also used traditional instruments like harmonium, tabla and sarangi. Begum Akhtar's singing was adopted as a role model by women ghazal singers in India and Pakistan. Among them, the names of Farida Khanum and Iqbal Bano are particularly noteworthy.

Farida Khanum: The name of Farida Khanam has been on the rise in the field of Ghazal singing for almost five decades. Farida Khanum is the name that can be taken as an example in the emotional expression of Urdu Ghazals, Nazms. She is known as Mallika-e-Ghazal in Hind O Pak due to her strong hold on Ghazal singing. In her open voice, her singing style is also based on classical ragas and that creates an ethereal atmosphere.

Among the male singers, after Sehgal it was master Madan who adopted the style of Sehgal Sahab. He also used musical instruments like clarinet along with traditional instruments in his Ghazal singing which later became a modern trend. He also used a combination of musical instruments in ghazals and due to which a new trend was in Ghazal marked its existence. His ghazal "Dosto mujhe maaf kro" is a living example of this. After this, ghazal singers like Talat Mahmud, Abida Praveen, Rajkumar Rizvi,

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1 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4MLvJ3eGYRI>

Madhurani Faizabadi etc. made full use of the instrument in singing. Ghazals first came on record and then on tape. When the ghazal reached the gatherings, there was a special difference and change in the delivery of ghazal. This era can be also be called as the era of Mehndi Hasan Sahab

In the singing of Mehndi Hassan, the voice delivery and quality of voice both were amazing. Talking about some scholars, they consider Mehndi Hasan as the king of Ghazals in the field of Ghazal singing. “Shola Tha Jal Bujha Hoon”<sup>1</sup> is one of his best Ghazals. In his singing, Mehndi Hasan beautifully introduced western instrumental like the Spanish guitar, violin, synthesizer, centaur and flute which later made their way into the musical ensemble. Along with him, Parvez Mehndi also achieved a great position in Ghazals. Despite Mehndi Hassan's influence on his singing, he had a distinct feature of his own that he used to do justice to words, as words like sentiments. Parvez Mehndi, Ustad Hussain Baksh and Ustad Ghulam Ali Sahab of Pakistan. These high quality ghazal singers brought ghazal very close to classical music.

After Mehndi Hassan, the famous Ghazal singer Ghulam Ali earned a lot of name in the world of Ghazals. He gave new dimensions of notes to reveal the spirit of the words of the Ghazal. While he gave importance to classical ghazals, he also impressed the ordinary listener with simple tunes and simple words. His ghazals like *Chupke Chupke*, *Hum Tere Shahar Mein*, *Hungama Hai Keyon Barpa*<sup>2</sup> etc. are on the lips of the listeners today.

Another name in the world of Ghazal gayakeeis Ustad Hussain Baksh Gollu who used so much of quick and speedy Murkis or musical ornaments into his ghazals that it added more precision in the performance and was greatly appreciated by the scholars and musical connoisseurs . He made extreme use of twelve swaras, murchhana, alap, taans and murkis in his singing.

Due to this continuous progress in Ghazal singing, it gave other budding singers to establish themselves. The modern Ghazal singers includes names like Pankaj Udhas, Anoop Jalota, Jagjit Singh, A. Hariharan, Ahmed Hussain, Mohammad Hussain, Chandan Das, Roop Kumar Rathod and female singers like Madhurani, Noor Jahan, Pinaj Masani, Lata Mangeshkar, Asha Bhosle etc. All of them gave a new dimension to Ghazal Gayakee which lead to a drastic increase in the number of ghazal followers continuously. All these names took this musical genre to a common man. There was an era when ghazals were performed on an open stage with minimal instruments, but

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L-q2sqvHik8>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8dUU1K7WGM8>

with the passage of time it changed a lot. Nowadays, along with the Indian musical instruments, the influence of new foreign instruments can also be clearly seen in the Ghazal performance.

The famous Ghazal singer Jagjit Singh has contributed a lot in giving a new and modern mood to the Ghazals. During his time, a different form of Ghazal came in front of the audience. He made Ghazal more accessible to an ordinary man in simple vocabulary and easy tunes by embellishing them with musical instruments. The ghazals sung by him were quite appreciated by both musically rich and literate audience. The credit of making Ghazals simple and beautiful by the use of new techniques goes to Jagjit Singh. His popularity included not only his simple melodies, but also the use of recording techniques played an important part. He beautifully mixed western instruments and the created some new rhythmic patterns. This new change was not meant to use unnecessarily aalap tānas in ghazals. The use of simple terminology proved to be helpful in making Ghazals popular in every household. Taking this change forward, modern ghazal singers filled new colors in ghazals with their own characteristics. One of them is the name of Chandan Das ji. His specialty is that before each of his Ghazals, he reads a *Sheyar* related to the Ghazal in his own special style which further enhances the beauty of the presentation of Ghazal. Chandan Das keeps the method of reading a sheyar and its description in such a way that the sheyars rob the gatherings only after reading it. He also used a lot of modern instruments in his singing.

With the passage of time, new voices came in Ghazal singing, in which Pankaj Udhas also gained popularity. His simple ghazals and simple vocal composition also captivated the audience. The use of western and modern instruments became a characteristic of Pankaj Udhas's Ghazal singing too. Another such person who is considered to be a living legend is A. Hariharan who is one of the most respected Ghazal singers of modern era. The specialty of his singing is the flavor of both northern and southern classical music systems. Hariharan composed such ghazals whose tunes were based on classical music as well as influenced by western harmonies and that can be termed as fusion.

Along with these ghazal singers, modern poets have also contributed greatly in making the vocabulary of ghazals simple and popular among all classes. Among these poets, Qateel Shifai, Dilip Tahir, Shakeel Badayuni, Javed Akhtar and Gulzar are prominent.



## CONCLUSION

Looking at the present form in the traditional Ghazal singing style, there have been many changes over time. Whether it is about vocabulary, instruments or presentation. All these changes have produced a positive impact in the promotion and propagation of ghazal. These changes have simplified the Ghazal style and made it more popular among the masses. The ample use of Western and Hindustani instruments by Ghazal singers brought a positive change in the nature of Ghazal. With no doubt, as every coin has two sides, in the same way, there are few things which can be noticed in modern day ghazal rendition as well. One such change is the excessive use of some western instruments has damaged the sentimental aspect of Ghazal somewhere. On the other side this change is much appreciated by the contemporary audience. To conclude, it can be said that whatever changes have taken place in the Ghazal gayakee so far, they have brought a positive change in the promotion and propagation of ghazal. Percussion instruments have also helped in adding more expressions into this art form. Adopting this approach, modern day ghazal singers have used a lot of musical instruments including Indian and western to amplify the beauty of their ghazal performance, which is quite commendable. As far as vocabulary is concerned, Ghazals were mostly Urdu-oriented and complex in the earlier times. With the passage of time, easing the language of poetry and with the addition of more Hindi words by modern poets has been a positive change, which helped in bringing this form from a limited audience to the modern youth also.

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