

INDIAN CLASSICAL MUSIC & SUFISM: GROWTH & INFLUENCES

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Abstract

In the realm of Indian classical music and its world, the Sufism influence is an evident in certain genres of music across the world. The word "Sufi" is thought to have originated from the Arabic word "suf," which means wool and refers to the clothing worn by the first adherents of this faith. One of the key elements connecting Sufism and Indian classical music is the concept of 'Sama,' which means 'Holy listening' in Arabic. Sama is a Sufi ritual involving the devotional listening of music. The confluence of Sufism and Indian classical music can be traced back to the medieval period when Sufi saints, poets, and musicians played a significant role in shaping the cultural landscape of the Indian subcontinent.

Many classical musicians draw inspiration from these poetic expressions and incorporate them into their performances. Notable Sufi poets like Rumi, Kabir, and Bulleh Shah and many more have left an indelible mark on both Sufi and classical music traditions. The music of Sufis is sublime. Furthermore, Indian classical music has a quiet and introspective quality that is in line with the spiritual essence found in Sufism. Therefore, in reference of finding, proposed research paper traces the interrelation and influences between Sufism & Indian Classical Music in context of harmonious relationship along origin & development of Sufism flowing in Indian Classical music from ages.

Research Methodology: Legitimacy of secondary resources required to study.

Keywords: Indian Classical Music, Sufism, Sufi Saints, Spirituality.

INTRODUCTION

“Devotion” in India is a profound and integral aspect that transcends mere every devotee’s expression from every part of religion in India; and when we speak about the great Indian treasure such as Indian Classical Music; it becomes a spiritual journey for both the performer and the listener as well. Rooted in ancient traditions and deeply connected to the culture & of every religion in India, Classical Music in India goes beyond the boundaries of not only entertainment but also beyond the devotions and enlightenment, as an aiming to evoke a sense of divine connection. The idea of "Nada Brahma" or "Sound as the Divine," is fundamental to Indian classical music. It is believed that one can communicate with the divine and transcend the physical realm via sound. As a result, musicians see their work and performances as a kind of worship. Similar to the path of devotion, learning an instrument or voice technique becomes a spiritual discipline. The pieces themselves frequently deal with themes of devotion, divine love, and the desire for a more profound spiritual experience. These compositions, whether they are Carnatic or Hindustani kritis or *khayal*, are rich in philosophical and spiritual depth. The music's calming and repetitive quality facilitates a connection with the holy by allowing both the performer and the listener to enter a contemplative state.

ORIGIN & EVOLUTION

Basically ‘*Tassawwuf*’ - another name for ‘Sufism’, is a mystical and contemplative part of Islam that creates a strong emphasis on spiritual intimacy and the internal enlightenment of God within. Sufism's beginnings are inextricably linked to the early stages of Islam religion.

Accordingly ‘Sufism or Tasawwuff’¹ variously defined as "Islamicmysticism"². Where, "the inward dimension of Islam"³. And Martin Lings again states that ""the phenomenon of mysticism within Islam". Characterised beliefs, customs, and philosophies that date back to the earliest periods of Islamic history and stand for "the main manifestation and the most important and central crystallization of" mystical practice in Islam as according to Saiyyad Husaain Nasir.⁴ In its same reference Massington, L. states as “Practitioners of Sufism have been referred to as "Sufis”⁵.

In the past, Sufi have frequently belonged to vary "orders", where groups gathered around a grand master known as a ‘Vali’, who can be traced directly back to the Islamic prophet Muhammad through a line of succeeding teachers. These groups gather in zawiyas, khanqahs, or tekke for spiritual sessions (*majlis*)⁶. They usually strive for perfection of

worship as detailed in holy 'Hadith' and it says "Ihsan is to worship Allah as if you see Him; if you can't see Him, surely He sees you"⁷.

With one significant exception, all Sufi orders may trace the majority of their original principles from Muhammad through his son-in-law and cousin, Ali. While Sunni Islam was and is practiced by the vast majority of Sufis, both pre-modern and modern, In the late medieval era, some Sufi practices also emerged within the framework of Shia Islam. Sufis adhered to many schools of Islamic theology and jurisprudence and scrupulously observed Islamic law, even though they disapproved of dry legalism. Sufis' missionary and educational endeavours were crucial to the development of Muslim societies.⁸

And in the same reference Sir William Chittik writes as "In a broad sense, Sufism can be described as the interiorization, and intensification of Islamic faith and practice."⁹ Edward Sell suggests that the word "Sufi" is most likely derived from the Arabic word "Wool," from which material the clothes worn by eastern ascetics used to be made. However, even though the Sufi movement in India gained prominence in the 14th century, its roots can be found in the time before the Turkish rule was established. In general, there are two sections to the Sufi movement: the first spans from prehistoric times until the start of the 9th century, and the second portion begins in the 9th century and continues till today. Sufism had no system in the first century and had its own monastic orders and organization in the second.

SUFISM'S VOYAGE ACROSS INDIA

The history of Sufism in India is a complex and multidimensional tale spanning several centuries, marked by the mystical Islamic traditions' intricate blending with the subcontinent's rich cultural and spiritual fabric. Sufism, which has its roots in the inner aspects of Islam, places a strong emphasis on turning within to seek a closer relationship with God via disciplines like meditation, dhikr (God-remembering), and the quest for spiritual understanding. Famous for their asceticism and dedication to God, Hasan al-Basri (642–728) and Rabia al-Basri (714–801)¹⁰ were important personalities in the early development of Sufism. However, Sufism rose to popularity and notable Sufi gurus emerged during the Golden Age of Islam (8th to 14th centuries)¹¹.

Famous early Sufis include Bayazid Bastami (804–874)¹², renowned for his intense mystical experiences, and Junayd al-Baghdadi (830–910)¹³, who stressed the value of spiritual instruction. The eminent Persian theologian and mystic Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (1058–1111)¹⁴ is frequently credited with authoring "The Book of Guidance"¹⁵ (Al-Hidayah), the basic text of Sufi philosophy. Al-Ghazali's writings had a significant impact on the integration of Sufism and conventional Islamic philosophy.

QAWWALI AS MUSIC : A RADIANT FORM OF SACRED MUSIC –

Since the Indus Civilization first emerged, some 3500 BC¹⁶. A significant pastoral, agricultural, and commercial hub linking the Far East and the Middle East has been the Indian Subcontinent. Since ancient times, Hinduism has grown significantly in the area. In India, music has always been associated with civilization. The Sanskrit term for mythological theatre and musical art, which encompasses all dance, instrumental, and vocal genres in Sangeet. The spiritual discourse in Qawwali praises the saints and exalts God's love while recounting the Prophet's idioms. This is carried out in line with Islamic mysticism's Sufi heritage.

Throughout history, from Ameer-e-Khusrou to the Mughals, Qawwali and Qawwals have remained hidden from us. We read about Raza and Kabir, two well-known Qawwals, during the reign of Shah Jahan. Kabir studied under Sher Mohammad, who was regarded as one of the greatest spiritual musicians. The mystic music of Hazrat Baha-ud-din Zakarya Suharwardi Multani was another area of expertise. Certain works were also written during the Mughal era in support of Sama and Qawwali. In 1650 AD¹⁷, Abdul Jalil Bin Abdul Rehman penned a book titled "Dar-Jawaaz-e-Sama." We find compelling reasons in Sher Khan Lodhi's work Meerath-ul-Khyaal in support of mystic music. From this point on, academics can follow the chronological evolution of Qawwal families and notable Qawwals.

Persian and Arabic components were first introduced into South Asian music by Hazrat Amir Khusraw (1253–1325)⁴, a well-known Sufi saint who was an adept in both Indian and Persian music at the court of Ala' al-Din Khilji, Sultan of Delhi (1296–1316). Two musical genres that are particularly significant are Tarana and Qaul, which is thought to be the source of Qawwali, a type of Muslim religious song. The great Sufi Masters of the Chishtiya and Suhrawardia Orders of South Asia were aficionados of the Qawwali, and it is stated that Saint Hazrat Qutubuddin Bakhtiar Kaki passed

away in 1236 while in a musical trance brought on by a Qawwali. Nevertheless, there is evidence that Qawwali existed before Hazrat Amir Khusrau¹⁸.

He allegedly had his birth in Sijistan. He was influenced at an early age by a number of holy men, such as Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilli and Ibrahim Qahandazi. He relocated to Delhi and rose to prominence as a revered saint. Later, he became weary of Delhi and moved to the quiet, peaceful city of Ajmer, Rajasthan, where he spent the rest of his days. Amir Khusrau is sometimes (and mistakenly) credited as the inventor of Qawwali because of his significance to its growth. It is said that he combined different musical components from India, Turkey, and greater Persia. The odd combination of Indian rags and Persian maqams is still present today. The evolution of the Hindu sacred song known as bhajan and the Qawwali up to the later period of the Mogul empire are very similar. There are similarities between social contexts and musical form. The degree of cross-cultural influence is so tremendous that even today, both Muslims and Hindus respect musicians and saints like Kabir (c. 1440–1518)¹⁹. The Qawwali tradition has seen many highs and lows. One very difficult period was under Aurangzeb's rule. Aurangzeb is renowned for his extreme interpretation of Islam. This monarch did not think highly of the liberal traditions of the Sufis. He was quite concerned about the fundamentalist ban on music.

The sound of qawwali is highly distinctive. The harmonium's drone, repetitive hand clapping, and "sweeping melodies" are instantly recognizable. It frequently appears in Indian movies, nightclubs, and social events. Qawwali music originated with Sufi poetry and zikr, or the recitation of God's name, to induce meditation. The poetry are thought to serve as a conduit to God and Sufi saints. The foundation of the qawwali repertory are poems by Khusrau. Because of the Mahfil-e-Sama ("Assembly for Listening") tradition, which is still the principal ceremony, Qawwali music has survived. Sama, or music listening, is a way to express mystical love and the need to unite with God and the Sufi saints. Traditionally, qawwali musicians have played at saints' shrines during memorial services. They are instructed and guided by a religious figure known as a sheik. Long and with a structure and organization akin to northern Indian music, qawwali songs are common. They have a lyrical singing line backed by beats and drones. Songs in the style of qawwali often consist of "solo verses punctuated by choral refrain and instrumental interludes." Qawwali tunes additionally have "a steady, accelerating beat, a refrain that is repeated with increased passion" and "a voice that rises to joyful inspired affirmations of faith."

The majority of traditional qawwali songs are either in Persian or Braj Bhasha, an archaic form of Hindi that is spoken by Khusrou. A lot of the new music is in Urdu or Punjabi. Many qawwali lyrics appear to be about unrequited love at first glance. Upon closer inspection, they seem to be about yearning for God. Talk about how the music intoxicates them with divine love is shared by both musicians and listeners. Girahs, or extra verses spontaneously added to songs in the middle, are a common way to expand songs. To keep a song interesting, talented vocalists might use girahs in surprising ways from a repertory of girahs. The utterance method known as tarana is performed "using phrases derived from esoteric Sufi tradition."²⁰ A 'party' is a gathering where qawwali music is played. A minimum of one percussionist, backup vocalists who typically play the harmonium, and a lead vocalist known as a *mohri* are typically included. All the members of the group participate in the singing, and the youngest ones give the hand claps that are rhythmic. Qawwali is both a type of music and a performance by a vocalist. As is customary with Sufi traditions, only men attend traditional performances. Qawwali was traditionally sung at Sufi shrines on significant religious holidays. These days, it is played in concerts in the West and at events known as "mahfils" in Pakistan and India.

ISLAM & INDIAN CLASSICAL MUSIC –

Sufism, the mystical branch of Islam, has had a profound influence on Indian classical music, particularly in the expression of devotional and spiritual themes. In Indian classical music, Sufi influences can be seen primarily in two forms: through the poetry of Sufi saints and through the incorporation of Sufi musical elements.

Having received musical training, Amir Khusrau worked with Pandit Gopal Nayak to develop qawwali with the aid of Indian classical music, ultimately shaping the current style of Sufi music on the subcontinent. Mythology states that Khusrau introduced the qawwali from Persia.²¹

Sufi Poetry & Music: Through their literary writings, Sufi saints such as Amir Khusrou, Bulleh Shah, and Kabir have made a substantial contribution to Indian classical music. Over the years, artists have set these words, which frequently

depict themes of divine love, unity, and spiritual transcendence, to classical ragas and melodies. Depending on the cultural setting, these pieces are referred to as Qawwalis, Kafis, or Bhajans. Both classical musicians and Sufi singers include these in their repertoire.

Musical Components: Repetitive melodies, rhythmic patterns, and improvisation are features of Sufi music that help listeners into a trance-like condition and facilitate spiritual experiences. These components have been accepted by Indian classical musicians, who use them in their performances. Sufi chants are repetitive, for example, while Hindustani classical music uses repeated phrases, or taans, in a similar way. In addition, Indian classical music's emphasis on improvisation enables performers to dive deeply into the music's spiritual core, much like Sufi practitioners do.

IMPACTS & INFLUENCES OF SUFISM IN INDIAN CLASSICAL MUSIC –

The Indian classical music genre prevalent in the northern Indian subcontinent is known as Hindustani classical music. It is a custom that dates back to the twelfth century CE and has evolved from Vedic ritual chanting.²²

The impact of Sufism on Indian classical music is profound and multifaceted, shaping not only the musical compositions but also the philosophical and spiritual dimensions of the art form. Here are some key impacts:

Spiritual Depth: Sufism places a strong emphasis on the inward, spiritual aspects of faith and the pursuit of divine unity. This emphasis on spirituality has added a depth of philosophical and emotional relevance to Indian classical music. In their performances, musicians frequently incorporate Sufi themes of love, longing, and mysticism, which facilitates listeners' spiritual connections.

Lyrical Content: The lyrical content of Indian classical music has been enhanced by Sufi poetry, which explores themes of divine love, unity, and spiritual transcendence. Compositions inspired by the poetry of Sufi saints such as Kabir, Bulleh Shah, and Amir Khusrau are a staple of classical musicians' repertoire. These pieces not only offer plenty of fodder for musical development, but they also share with the listener deep spiritual lessons.

Melodic Influence: Emotional melodies and recurring themes are hallmarks of Sufi music, which is intended to evoke spiritual experiences in listeners. These melodic aspects have been assimilated by Indian classical music and incorporated into its own repertoire. Hindustani classical music, for instance, uses repeated phrases (taans) and melodic patterns that are similar to the repetition of Sufi chants, thus adding to the music's spiritual quality.

Techniques for Improvisation: Improvisation is a common feature in Sufi music, giving performers the freedom to express themselves and instantaneously commune with the divine. This emphasis on improvisation is also present in Indian classical music, giving performers the chance to fully explore the spiritual core of the piece when performing live. Improvisational methods like raga, tanam, and pallavi in Carnatic music, and alaap, jor, and jhala in Hindustani classical music, enable performers to delve deeply into the spiritual undertones of the raga and establish a strong connection with the listener.

Cross-Cultural Exchange: Throughout history, Sufism has served as a conduit for communication and understanding between various cultures and religions. Similar to how Sufism influenced Indian classical music, it too included components from other cultural and religious backgrounds, creating a complex tapestry of musical traditions. Indian classical music has been enhanced by this blending of musical genres, creating a lively and colourful art form that is universal.

Often referred to as the founder of contemporary Hindustani classical and Sufi music, Amir Khusrau (1253–1325) was the most important musician of the Delhi Sultanate era. Composer of Persian, Turkish, Arabic, and Braj Bhasha music, he is recognized for organizing various facets of Hindustani music. He invented the genre known as qawwali, which blends Persian beat and melody on a structure akin to dhrupad. During his lifetime, he is also credited with creating new musical instruments like the tabla and sitar and integrating them into the system.

CONCLUSION

Tasawwuf, or Sufism, is seen as an esoteric aspect of human existence. The Qur'an was regarded by Sufis as the basis of their faith. Their mystic approach to understanding the Holy Qur'an undoubtedly helps them to rise above the

ignoble and real issues that Islam has become entangled in due to a class of hypocrites. Sufism, or Tasawwuf, presents an interpretation of the Qur'an that is founded on human intellect and humanism, both of which have a magnanimity to it.

In general, the fusion of Indian classical music with Sufi mysticism has produced a complex tapestry of devotional expressions in which music serves as a medium for achieving spiritual elevation and oneness with the almighty. Indian classical music has been a conduit for the everlasting messages of love, unity, and transcendence promoted by Sufi philosophy since it skilfully combines Sufi poetry with melodic elements.

Sufism has had a profound overall influence on Indian classical music, giving it a spirit of intercultural dialogue, spiritual depth, lyrical richness, melodic intricacy, and improvisational freedom. Sufism and Indian music go hand in hand, with Sufism inspiring and enhancing Indian music culture.

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