

# THE SAVIOR OF GHAZAL: BROADCASTING POETRY TO THE MASSES

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## ABSTRACT

*The ghazal, a poetic and musical form originating in Arabia and flourishing in Persia and the Indian subcontinent, has traditionally been associated with elite literary circles. The emergence of broadcasting media, particularly radio, television, recorded music, and digital platforms, transformed the accessibility of ghazal, enabling its transition from exclusive gatherings to mass audiences. This study investigates the role of broadcasting technologies in preserving, popularizing, and revitalizing the ghazal tradition. Through historical and qualitative analysis, the paper argues that broadcasting media served as the principal catalyst in democratizing ghazal appreciation and ensuring its survival in contemporary society. The findings contribute to scholarship on music dissemination, cultural preservation, and media studies.*

**Keywords:** Ghazal, Broadcasting, Radio, Mass Media, Cultural Preservation, Poetry, Indian Music

## 1. Introduction

The ghazal represents one of the most influential poetic and musical traditions in South Asia. Originating in seventh-century Arabia and subsequently developing in Persian literary culture, it became deeply embedded in the cultural life of the Indian subcontinent. Despite its artistic significance, the ghazal historically remained confined to courts, literary salons, and elite audiences. The advent of broadcasting technologies fundamentally altered this landscape. Radio stations, television networks, gramophone records, and later digital media introduced ghazal performances to millions of listeners. Artists such as Begum Akhtar, Mehdi Hassan, Jagjit Singh, and Ghulam Ali became household names through broadcast exposure.

### Research Gap

While existing studies discuss the historical evolution of ghazal and the contributions of individual performers, limited research has systematically examined broadcasting as the primary mechanism responsible for transforming ghazal from an elite art form into a mass cultural phenomenon.

### Research Question

How did broadcasting media contribute to the preservation, popularization, and democratization of ghazal among mass audiences?

### Hypothesis

Broadcasting media played a decisive role in expanding the reach of ghazal, transforming it from an elite literary tradition into a widely consumed cultural form.

## 2. Literature Review

Scholars have traced the origins of ghazal to Arabia and its development through Persian literary traditions before its adoption in South Asia. Studies emphasize its thematic focus on love, spirituality, separation, and philosophical reflection.

Research on the migration of ghazal into the Indian subcontinent highlights linguistic adaptation into Urdu, Hindi, Gujarati, Punjabi, and other regional languages. Existing literature also documents the contributions of iconic performers in popularizing the genre.

However, three significant gaps remain:

- Insufficient focus on broadcasting institutions as cultural intermediaries.
- Limited examination of radio and television archives as tools of preservation.
- Lack of integrated analysis connecting media expansion with audience democratization.

This study addresses these gaps by positioning broadcasting as the central force behind the modern survival of ghazal.

### 3. Methodology

#### Research Design

A qualitative historical research design was adopted.

#### Data Sources

- Archival records of radio and television broadcasts.
- Published literature on ghazal history.
- Interviews and biographies of ghazal artists.
- Secondary media reports and cultural studies.

#### Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring patterns regarding dissemination, accessibility, preservation, and audience engagement.

#### Validity and Reliability

Triangulation of historical documents, scholarly publications, and archival materials enhanced reliability. Multiple sources were consulted to reduce interpretative bias.

#### Ethical Considerations

All data were collected from publicly available academic and archival sources with appropriate citation and acknowledgment.

### 4. Results

Table 1. Impact of Broadcasting Media on Ghazal Dissemination

Medium	Period	Major Contribution
Radio	1930s–1980s	National reach and regular exposure
Gramophone Records	1940s–1970s	Preservation of performances
Television	1970s–2000s	Visual engagement and celebrity culture
Digital Platforms	2000s–Present	Global accessibility and archival preservation

#### Key Findings

- Radio significantly expanded audience reach beyond urban literary circles.
- Recorded media preserved performances for future generations.
- Television increased the popularity of ghazal singers through visual presentation.
- Digital platforms have enabled global access to classical and contemporary ghazals.
- Broadcasting reduced barriers related to literacy, geography, and social status.

### 5. Discussion

The findings support the hypothesis that broadcasting media acted as the principal mechanism for democratizing ghazal culture. Earlier scholarship focused primarily on literary evolution; however, this study demonstrates that technological mediation was equally important.

From a theoretical perspective, broadcasting functioned as a cultural bridge connecting elite artistic traditions with popular audiences. Practically, media institutions contributed to cultural preservation by creating extensive audio-visual archives.

The success of artists such as Jagjit Singh illustrates how broadcast exposure reshaped listener demographics and encouraged younger audiences to engage with ghazal traditions.

### 6. Conclusion

Broadcasting media emerged as the "savior" of ghazal by preserving performances, expanding audiences, and ensuring cultural continuity. Radio, television, recorded music, and digital platforms collectively transformed ghazal from a niche literary form into a globally recognized cultural expression.

The study contributes to musicology, media studies, and cultural heritage research by demonstrating that technological dissemination is a critical factor in the survival of traditional art forms. Future research may employ quantitative audience surveys and digital analytics to further examine contemporary patterns of ghazal consumption.

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