



# *The Echoes of Nizami Qawwali*

*The Aura of Auliya*



DISCOVER INDIA PROGRAM

2015-2016

## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the work incorporated in this report entitled “The Echoes of Nizami Qawwali” submitted by the undersigned Research Team was carried out under my mentorship. Such material as has been obtained from other sources has been duly acknowledged.

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# Contents

1. Introduction.....	1
1.1 Historical, Geographical and Sociocultural Context.....	3
1.1.1 Historical Context.....	3
1.1.2 Geographical Context.....	3
1.1.3 Sociocultural Context.....	3
1.2 Research Statement.....	5
1.3 Aims and Objectives.....	6
1.4 Qawwali Kyun? (Rationale).....	8
1.5 Scope of Research.....	9
1.6 Qawwali Kaise? (Research Methodology) .....	10
1.6.1 Sources of Data Collection.....	10
1.6.2 Qualitative Research.....	11
1.6.3 Sampling.....	12
1.6.4 Instruments of Data Collection.....	15
1.6.5 Limitations of the Study.....	17
1.7 Themes and Limitations of Research.....	18
2. Review of Literature.....	20
2.1 Sufi Roots and the Origin of Qawwali.....	20
2.2 History and Context.....	22
2.3 Essential Elements of the Qawwali Occasion.....	23
2.4 Audience Participation and the Importance of the <i>Dargah</i> .....	25
2.5 Essence and Purpose of Qawwali.....	26
2.6 The Role of the Female Voice.....	28
2.7 Contemporary Adaptations in the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century.....	30
3. Qawwali ki Kaifiyat: The Distinct Nature of Qawwali.....	33
3.1 Sufi Roots and the Origin of Qawwali.....	33
3.2 History and Context.....	36
3.3 Dissection of the Qawwali Assembly.....	40
3.3.1 Essential Elements of a Qawwali Performance.....	40
3.3.1.1 Context of Qawwali.....	40
3.3.1.2 The Language of Qawwali.....	41
3.3.1.3 The Audience Component of Qawwali.....	42
3.3.1.4 The Structure of the Qawwali Performance.....	43
3.3.1.5 The Department Maintained in a Qawwali Assembly.....	44
3.3.2 Audience Participation and the Importance of the <i>Dargah</i> .....	48
3.3.2.1 The <i>Dargah</i> .....	48
3.3.2.2 Behaviour in the <i>Dargah</i> .....	48
3.3.2.3 The Audience.....	49
3.3.2.4 Contemporary Times.....	50
3.3.3 The Essence of Nizami Qawwali.....	52

3.3.3.1 Purpose of Qawwali.....	52
3.3.3.2 Purpose of the Qawwal.....	54
3.3.3.3 Importance of Language.....	55
3.3.3.4 What They Sing About.....	56
3.3.3.5 The Trance.....	59
3.3.4 The Role of the Female Voice.....	61
3.3.4.1 Involvement of Women in the Nizami Tradition.....	61
3.3.4.2 The Feminization of Qawwali.....	62
3.3.5 Traditions in Qawwali.....	64
3.3.5.1 Birthday Celebrations.....	64
3.3.5.2 <i>Urs</i> .....	68
3.3.5.3 <i>Basant</i> .....	69
4. Qawwali ki Kaifiyat: Contemporary Adaptations in the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century.....	73
4.1 Contemporary Adaptations of Practitioners of Qawwali.....	73
4.1.1 Pawan Naik.....	73
4.1.2 The Wadali Brothers.....	75
4.1.3 Dhruv Sangari.....	76
4.2 Contemporary Adaptations in Bollywood.....	77
4.2.1 <i>Khwaja Mere Khwaja</i> .....	78
4.2.2 <i>Kun Faya Kun</i> .....	80
4.3 Survival of Qawwali.....	80
5. Qawwali Khatam (Conclusion).....	83
Works Cited.....	I
Appendix.....	III
Glossary of Terms.....	VI

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## Abstract

The *dargah* (tomb) of Nizamuddin Auliya, the fourth of the four most prominent Chishti Sufi saints of India, has a history of great prestige and fame. Emanating from this *dargah* is Nizami Qawwali, a religious praxis that uses music as a vehicle on which to recite devotional poetry. It is distinct for its practice by the progeny of Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya and his mentee, renowned poet Amir Khusrau. Performances are undertaken by groups of singers known as Qawwals. They are accompanied by the *tabla*, the *dhol*, the harmonium and the clapping of hands. Qawwali is an invocation of the Divine and a means of spiritual advancement for the Sufi participant.

Historically, Qawwali was introduced to the Indian subcontinent by *Khwaja* Moinuddin Chishti. From then on, it blossomed to become one of the most prolific Sufi traditions of the country. It exists to serve the representation of mystical poetry by propagating the message of love, brotherhood and acceptance. Nizami Qawwali emphasizes these qualities and arouses mystical emotion in a spiritual gathering.

In recent years, Qawwali has escaped the *dargah* walls to be performed by non-Sufi practitioners and has thus dramatically expanded its audience. The wholly religious connotation has been extracted and it has evolved into a form of entertainment. It has a distinct nature that is evolving with time. In trying to understand this distinct nature of Nizami Qawwali and its contemporary adaptations, one hopes to ascertain where the practice draws the line between prayer and entertainment and more importantly, where Nizami Qawwali stands in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## List of Maps, Images, Figures & Tables

### Maps

- ⇒ *Map 1: Demarcating the location of Delhi in the Northern India*
- ⇒ *Map 2: Demarcating the exact location of the Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya Dargah in Delhi*

### Figures

- ⇒ *Figure 1: Themes obtained from information in interviews*
- ⇒ *Figure 2: Depicting the last three generations of the Nizami Qawwals*
- ⇒ *Figure 3: Depicting the order of lineage from Maulana Moinuddin to Amir Khusrau*

### Images:

- ⇒ *Image 1: An image of the dome of Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya Dargah on the day of the birthday celebration*
- ⇒ *Image 2: An Image of Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya Dargah*
- ⇒ *Image 3: The image is a depiction of a woman undergoing a mild state of trance at the birthday celebration of Nizamuddin Auliya*
- ⇒ *Image 4: An image of the Nizami Brothers*
- ⇒ *Image 5: Kneeling while sitting on the heels is described to be the ideal sitting position for the prayer ritual*
- ⇒ *Image 6: An image showing the Qawwal member wearing a safa khirqa and a galdouni*
- ⇒ *Image 7: The image is indicative of the lack of adherence of the Qawwals to external deportment*
- ⇒ *Image 8: Women are allowed to participate in the faith of the religion, but not be a part of the tradition*
- ⇒ *Image 9: 801<sup>st</sup> birthday celebrations of Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya*
- ⇒ *Image 10: An image of the langar*
- ⇒ *Image 11: An image of what used to be the Nizamuddin basti*
- ⇒ *Image 12: The sajjdanashin adorns the salient thematic colour of yellow, evoking the tradition of saffron in Basant*

### Tables:

- ⇒ *Table 1: Samples created resultant of the information obtained*
- ⇒ *Table 2: Information (divided based on themes) resultant of the information obtained*
- ⇒ *Table 3: Findings based on secondary sources*
- ⇒ *Table 4: Depicting the physical gestures denoting the various levels of ecstasy*

## 1. Introduction

The opening: a capturing, unwavering, introductory utterance. Then a layer of complexity: the soft, slowly magnifying sound of the harmonium, to merge with, complement, and enrich the powerful voice. Next, the *tabla*. The *dhol*. And the unique, resounding, very *human* sound of clapping to cap it off.

Every clap initiates a shiver, every slap of the hand against the *tabla* and *dhol*, a tremor, and every increase and shift in the pitch of the lead singer propels a vibration across the *dargah* that seems to suffuse through every person's core. Light cascades out from the shrine, tumbling over every head, illuminating the bright costumes of the performers seated directly across, unencumbered by people in their prayer to God. The shrine appears to glow from within, accentuating red *mauli* threads tied around the carved walls of the tomb, and encompassing the *dargah* in its warm, ruby luminescence.

More voices of the singers join in, sometimes in unison with the leader, and sometimes providing the base verses upon which he builds his masterpiece. Eyes start to close. Bodies begin to sway. The music, loud and inescapable, is a caress to the ears and mind. The experience of being taken into another world with hundred other people at the same time offers a sense of solace, solidarity and humility. The atmosphere surrounding each person is electric, each person entranced in the voices and sounds of the performers as the energy crackles through the room, lighting every soul on a different fire.

Such goes a performance of the beautiful and beguiling Qawwali music, of Persian origin, a subset of the *Sufi* music. It is important to understand this against a background comprising its historical, geographical and socio-cultural context.

**Image 1:** An image of the dome of the Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya Dargah on the day of the birthday celebration of Nizamuddin Auliya

**Source:** Discover India Program 2015-16



## **1.1 Historical, Geographical and Socio-Cultural Context**

### **1.1.1 Historical Context**

Qawwali is a form of extremely religious, devotional music, sung by elite “Qawwals”, or the singers, who only share their art and talents through lineage. It may be possible for anyone to *sing* Qawwali, they could learn the lyrics and tunes, but it takes certain practice, heritage, piety, and the ability to touch the spirit of the audience, to be a Qawwal. Qawwali reached India from Persia with the arrival of *Hazrat Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti*, who renounced his inheritance in lieu of a spiritual life. He travelled to India with the dream of spreading Islam here, and began his teachings in Ajmer. Thereon, its influence permeated all corners of India, and has widened to reach countries like Bangladesh and Uzbekistan (Jaffer).

### 1.1.2 Geographical Context

The Qawwali that has been studied through this research project is specifically Nizami Qawwali. Nizami Qawwali has its name from the 750-year-old heritage that it has been bequeathed with of the famous Sufi Saint, *Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya*. It is sung solely at the Nizamuddin *dargah*, nestled close to the heart of Delhi. Delhi is of extreme significance because it is here that Nizamuddin Auliya resided and made his mark. Nizami Qawwali's location, performers, and song content are what singles it out from other types of Qawwali that are sung in other shrines, a myriad of which are situated in Delhi. Nizamuddin *dargah*, like any other *dargah*, never bars its doors, be the person rich or poor, devotee or non-believer, Muslim or otherwise. Anybody is welcome to behold the beauty of the *dargah* – its carved and embellished dome, its lights twinkling at night, replacing the stars – and soak up the intoxicating vibe the Qawwals exude as they sing to their Saint every Thursday and Friday. (Ref appendix 2)

### 1.1.3 Socio-Cultural Context

Though it is gaining popularity around the world, it cannot be said that Qawwali is known and appreciated by most of Delhi's inhabitants. For those who are intimate with the music, the *dargah* is a wondrous place that is frequented often, but for those who are not, their familiarity goes as far as either simple acknowledgement or an absolute lack of awareness.

Sufis in Delhi often visit the *dargah*, or hold private *samas/mahfils*, to listen to traditional Qawwali at home (Dehlvi). Off late, youngsters are exposed to adaptations of Qawwali outside the *dargah*, such as Bollywood's "*Kun Faya Kun*" and "*Khwaja Mere Khwaja*".

## 1.2 Research Statement

The research was an endeavour “**To understand the distinct nature of Nizami Qawwali, and its contemporary adaptations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.**” An operational definition of terms in the research question is imperative to clarity in research:

### 1.2.1 Operational Definitions

- **Distinct nature:** The word “distinct”, as defined by Oxford dictionary, means “recognizably different in nature from something else of a similar type” (Oxforddictionaries.com). Pertaining to this, the research project attempts to raise questions related to the specific characteristics of Nizami Qawwali, its differences from similar forms of music, or in other words, other types of Qawwali.
- **Nizami Qawwali:** The focus is on Nizami Qawwali as it is sung in specific at Nizamuddin *Dargah* in Delhi. As mentioned in the previous point, research is to be carried out on how Nizami Qawwali differs from other Qawwali music in terms of who performs (**practitioners**), where they perform (**location**), and what their performance consists of (**elements or components**).
- **Contemporary adaptations:** Qawwali has long since surpassed the walls of the *dargah*, to enter different religions. It is uncertain whether these non-Islamic singers can be called Qawwals, as they do not descend from the rich heritage like the Qawwals that sing in the *dargah* do. Bollywood has taken Qawwali and changed it to suit its own requirements, adding a modern aspect to its musicality. Thus, when talking of contemporary adaptations, the aim is to include these different forms that Qawwali has taken outside the *dargah*, sometimes with an intention to entertain, and rarely, with the objective of praying to the Saint.
- **21<sup>st</sup> century:** The objective is to limit the contemporary adaptations and the way Nizami Qawwali is performed today in the *dargah*, to the year 2000 and subsequent years. It is important to understand the kind of adaptations Nizami Qawwali has undergone within the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **1.3 Aims and Objectives**

The aims and objectives of the research undertaken were as follows:

1. To underline the Islamic roots of Qawwali and its Sufi background
2. To highlight the themes discussed in Qawwali
3. To understand the importance of the female voice in Qawwali
4. To gauge the role of the audience in a Qawwali performance
5. To understand whether Qawwali can be a form of prayer as well entertainment

A further elaboration of these aims and objectives would lend clarity to the study:

#### **1. Underline the Islamic roots of Qawwali and its Sufi background**

Through secondary data, the ceaseless referrals and links to Islam and Sufism are seen (Sakata). Hence, the first of the aims is to emphasise upon the roots of Qawwali, and its associations with Islam and Sufism, because no attempt can be made to understand what it is now, without comprehending where it came from.

- 2. Highlight the themes discussed in Qawwali:** As Qawwali is a form of music, devotional music in specific, the lyrics must have a certain meaning. The second aim was to find out whether there are different topics in the lyrics of Qawwali, and whether what they sing about can be classified into various subsets depending perhaps on situation, context, and time.

#### **3. Understand the importance of the female voice in Qawwali**

Secondary research indicates to largely male singers performing the actual songs in the *dargah*. Thus, another objective was formulated to satisfy the curiosity concerning this seemingly male-dominated form of music. What was the role of women in Qawwali? What were the cultural beliefs governing the participation of women in this art form?

#### **4. Gauge the role of the audience in a Qawwali performance**

Though the Qawwals do not sing to the people around them, and although it appears to be a performance towards God, there will mostly always be some form of an

audience during their performance, consisting of an amalgamation of devotees, tourists, and poor people residing there. The goal is to try and gauge the nature and profile of the audience, whether they need to be religious devotees to legitimise the performance, the impact of the audience on the performer and hence the performance, the extent of their participation.

**5. Understand whether Qawwali can be a form of prayer as well as entertainment**

Before the research was taken on, it was uncertain about whether traditional Qawwali was only a form of prayer, or whether it could also be sung to entertain devotees at the *dargah*. Traditional Qawwali can also be sung outside the *dargah*. Would this alter the symbolic significance and imply that performers were not praying? Were the renditions we see in Bollywood, or sung by the Wadali Brothers, purely entertainment, and were those considered Qawwali?

#### **1.4 Rationale**

In choosing Nizami Qawwali as the topic of investigation, the researchers were faced with three main questions to answer: Why choose to research a form of music? Why choose Qawwali specifically? Why study in Delhi?

It was observed that in the past, forms of music had not received much attention as the focus of research. The researchers were keen on changing this. Music is an integral part of any culture, as much as art or dance, and in investigating the formative music forms of India, one hoped to acquire a deeper understanding of Indian culture. There was a consensus that though it varies in different parts of the country, music at its core is a reflection of the societies and communities that shape it.

Then, initial research showed the existence of a form of music called ‘Qawwali’ in areas of India that have had historically strong Islamic roots. Cities like Delhi, Hyderabad and Lucknow boast of great Qawwali music in its *dargahs*. It was a form of prayer, as much as *bhajans* to Hindus and hymns to Christians. To researchers who come from different cultural backgrounds, it was intriguing to understand the music of the Sufis. Delhi is *darul aulia* or ‘home of the Sufis.’

Finally, no mention of Qawwali is complete without mention of the great Nizamuddin Dargah, one of its pivotal centres. Nizamuddin Auliya patroned the art form throughout his life and today, Qawwali pays tribute to his legacy. Therefore, it was alarming to learn that despite this great prestige, the Nizami Qawwali of Delhi had received little to no academic attention. Resources on the topic were sparse. In travelling to Delhi, in understanding the distinct nature of Nizami Qawwali, the researchers endeavoured to bridge this gap in whatever little way possible.

## **1.5 Scope of the Research**

As mentioned in the rationale, a wide variety of literature is not available on the subject of Nizami Qawwali. In sources other than Regula Qureshi's extensive book on Nizami Qawwali, references are brief and non-descriptive, touching on only a few concepts such as the effects the Qawwali is supposed to have on the audience, the history and lineage of Qawwals, and simply neglecting some altogether. Regula Qureshi's book, *Sufi Music in India and Pakistan: Sound, Context and Meaning in Qawwali*, while offering a very in-depth recount and explanation of the elements of Qawwali, is only one source by one author, which is its limitation.

Hence, keeping the inadequacy of available literature in mind, the research needed to further explore the heritage and lineage of the performers at Nizamuddin Auliya *dargah*, how vital the name they carry truly is, and what it means for Nizami Qawwali. The research had to link Nizami Qawwali and Sufism, for many of the Sufi ideas are integral to Qawwali. There was negligible literature available on the *dargah* itself, the importance it holds, the audience and the extent of their participation in each performance, which needed to be addressed by primary research. Research had to ascertain the female role in Qawwali, as secondary data only pointed towards male performers, with neither any mention of females, nor an explication regarding their absence. If possible, research could also discover any traditions or celebrations related to Nizami Qawwali, being a 750-year-old rich tradition in itself. Whilst studying this form of devotion and art, this study will not concern itself with the intricacies of the poetic meter or the musical technicalities

## **1.6 Qawwali Kaise? (Research Methodology)**

Previous literature has yielded discourse on Qawwali to some extent. However, the researchers have realized that there is little about Nizami Qawwali in particular. Thus, the on-field study became increasingly important. Going to Nizamuddin Dargah and meeting the family, the descendants of *Hazrat* Nizamuddin Auliya himself, was crucial. Interacting with scholars who have built a respectable reputation at the dargah for their work with relation to Qawwali was critical. The collection of primary data became the spine of this research. Thus, the methodology adopted can be viewed from the following angles:

### **1.6.1 Sources of Data Collection**

The researchers have referred to primary and secondary sources of data. Notwithstanding the researchers' on-field study, it was pertinent to acquire secondary data in order to fully analyse what has (or has not) been discussed about Qawwali till date. This research is supported by secondary sources of data that include print and non-print material related to Nizami Qawwali:

- Books
- Journals (including e-journals)
- Periodicals
- Newspaper articles
- Audio visual materials (like video clippings, voice recordings and slides)

Moreover, the archives for the aforementioned were accessed at predominantly three locations in the city of Delhi:

- Daulat Ram College
- Jamia Milia University
- Sufi Kathak Organisation

The secondary sources of data brought to light that Qawwali was most prominent in regions of India like Delhi, Lucknow and Hyderabad that have had historically strong Islamic roots.

In probing further, the researchers came to an understanding that the Qawwali performed in Nizamuddin Dargah in Delhi was one of the epicentres of the art form. The family that performed there had been doing so for over 750 years. It is seminal, rooted in tradition and glorious in its blind faith; however, it became evident that this particular topic lacked scholarly research.

### 1.6.2 Qualitative Research

The study involved qualitative research. This means that it was aimed at gaining a deep understanding of a specific organization or event, rather than a surface description of a large sample of a population. The qualitative research conducted here was:

- I. Descriptive
- II. Exploratory
- III. Explanatory

The research conducted is **descriptive** as it encompassed a description of myriad ritualistic aspects of the music form, the primary themes depicted, and the skills and techniques used in the music form. The study looked at the symbolic significance of the distinct constituent elements in the music form, the patronage enjoyed, the livelihood of Qawwals and the innovations within the art form.

The **exploratory** aspect of the research concerned probing into the many changes undergone with regard to the innovations adapted into Qawwali over the last two generations, the symbolic significance of various elements in the music, the patronage of the music form, and the livelihood of the Qawwals.

The **explanatory** aspect arises consequent upon the absence of active scholarly documentation of Qawwali and thus requires documentation through explanation of the performances, performers and the like.

### 1.6.3 Sampling

Sampling is the process of methodically making selections that are to be later examined over the course of a certain study (Cohen). For the purpose of the qualitative research in this study, the researchers made a conscious decision to employ various types of non-probability sampling as a tool of data collection.

Nonprobability sampling was employed or used as the total universe was unknown. Convenience sampling is one subset. It made sampling an easier process as it allowed for sample size determination based on situations and availability. Through the use of snowball sampling used at the Nizamuddin Dargah, the researchers were put in contact with other scholarly endeavours related to Qawwali that became vital to our research.

**I. Scholars of Nizami Qawwali:** They were primarily professors of streams such as anthropology, Persian and history from Delhi University. They approached the subject of Qawwali through the lens of their respective fields. This resulted in new academic insights.

**II. Authors of books related to Nizami Qawwali:** They were erudite on topics such as *dargahs*, Sufism and mysticism. Along with the scholars mentioned above, the authors helped to understand the relevance of Qawwali in today's world through their publications.

**III. NGO's dedicated to the research and awareness of Nizami Qawwali:** The NGO's visited were integral in imparting the knowledge that Qawwali is becoming more and more commercialised, as seen by its integration into clubs and bars. Their work is dedicated to bringing some exposure to Nizami Qawwali in particular and creating discussions on Qawwali through seminars and other efforts.

**IV. Practitioners of Nizami Qawwali:** They allowed for a glimpse into the art form through the eyes of people who have grown up with it being an integral part of their lives. They included both Qawwals performing contemporary adaptations and members of the Nizami family at the dargah.

**V. Qawwals at the Nizamuddin Dargah:** As members of the family after whom this type of Qawwali is named, their insights proved invaluable in understanding how Qawwali has shaped their lives. Their inferences, opinions and beliefs were integral in creating an understanding about the distinct nature of Nizami Qawwali.

**VI. Local inhabitants and audience members at the Nizamuddin Dargah:** The locals and audience members that were interviewed were regulars at the dargah. This allowed the researchers to draw parallels between Qawwali as it has been performed over time. Moreover, some audience members had visited other dargahs as well, which allowed for some consultations about Qawwali performed in those other dargahs.

Overall, these sampling methods allowed for a full overview of Qawwali by approaching people from different walks of life with different perspectives. Each sample created a new dimension in the research.

**Table 1:** Samples created resultant of the information obtained

**Source:** Discover India Program 2015-2016

Samples	Interviewee
Scholars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Prof. Kumkum Srivastava – Professor at Janki Devi Memorial College</li><li>• Prof. Vinay Shrivastava – Professor at Hindu College</li><li>• Prof. Aleem Ashraf Khan – Professor at University of Delhi</li><li>• Prof. Saiyid Zaheer Hussain Khan – Professor at University of Delhi</li><li>• Ms. Shubha Mudgal – Popular singer of Hindustani classical music</li></ul>
Authors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ms. Sadia Dehlvi - “The Sufi Courtyard: Dargahs of Delhi” and “Sufism: Heart of Islam”</li><li>• Prof. Kumkum Srivastava – “The Wandering Qalandars”</li><li>• Ms. Mehru Jaffer – “The Book of Nizamuddin Auliya”</li><li>• Ms. Shemeem Abbas - “The Female Voice in the Sufi Ritual”</li></ul>
NGO’s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Sufi Kathak Organisation – Ms. Manjari Chaturvedi, Mr. Amit Mehra, Mr. Dinesh Khanna</li><li>• Ektara Organisation – Mr. Yousuf Saeed</li></ul>
Practitioners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dhruv Sangari</li><li>• Pawan Naik</li><li>• Wadali Brothers</li></ul>
Qawwals at dargah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Saqlain Nizami</li><li>• Ghulam Mohammed Nizami</li></ul>

#### **1.6.4 Instruments of Data Collection**

After identifying the samples from whom useful, crucial information could be collected, it was important to choose appropriate instruments of data collection. After careful consideration of the situations that would be faced on-field and the kind of research that was being conducted, it was decided that the instruments that would be used on field would be **naturalistic observation and semi-structured interviews.**

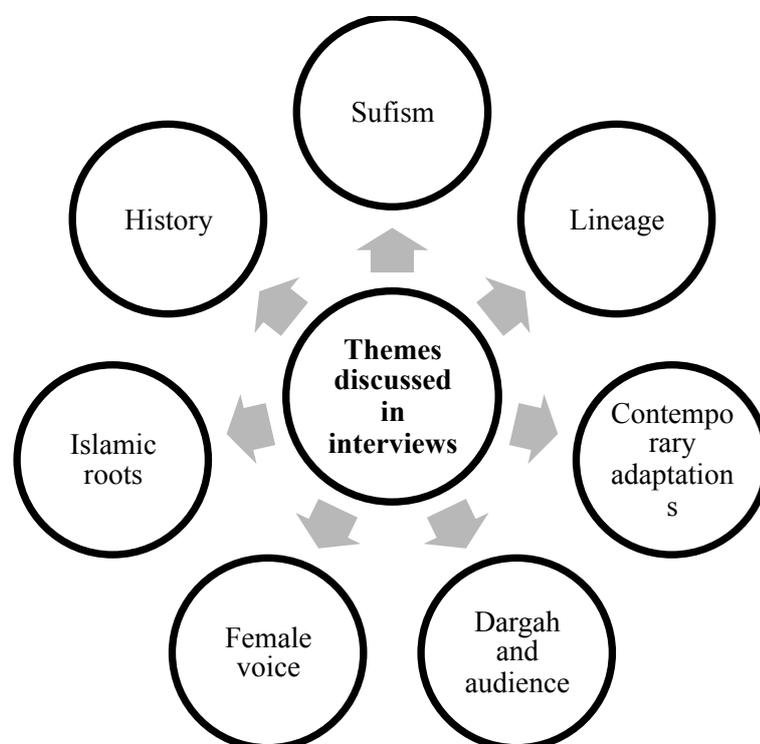
Naturalistic observation involves the documentation of situations using the researchers' five senses in order to systematically create descriptions for the use of their study (Kawulich). It was used to document the spontaneous behaviour of the audience and Qawwals at the *dargah*. This was particularly useful on the birthday of Nizamuddin Auliya when the dargah was visited by over 5,000 devotees. Even at odd hours of the night such as 5 am, the celebrations were in full fling. Observations allowed the researchers to notice details that may have been overlooked otherwise.

Semi-structured interviews allow researchers to engage in formal interviews with a certain interview schedule that allows for an ordered, previously decided list of questions. It also allows for the flexibility to stray from this schedule when appropriate if new information arises. It is useful for instances when there is not more than one opportunity for interviews (Cohen): This was faced by the researchers. Also, in meeting scholars and authors, it came to light that they were able to impart information that had been not considered earlier. In that situation, the interview schedule was not useful. This is when the flexibility of semi-structure interviews was most appropriate.

The interview structure involved six main themes. These themes feature in the following visual representation:

**Figure 1:** Themes obtained from information in interviews

**Source:** Discover India Program 2015-2016



**Table 2:** Information (divided based on themes) resultant of the information obtained

**Source:** Discover India Program 2015-2016

Themes	No. of Interviewees
History of Nizami Qawwali and Khandan	5
Purpose of Qawwali	2
Lack of Female Voice	3
Traditions of Qawwali	3
Essentials of Qawwali	2
<i>Dargah</i> and Audience Participation	3
Islamic Roots	2
Contemporary Adaptation	5

On arriving on-field, the researchers found that there was no dearth in personalities within the aforementioned samples from whom data could be collected. However, it was found that much of the information being provided was overlapping. It became repetitive in nature. This was especially with the scholars that were interviewed. Despite their diverse research streams, they appeared to reiterate information that the researchers were already privy to. Authors were well-versed on their own topics but were hesitant to approach other themes outside their comfort zone.

Fortunately, there was no communication barrier experienced on-field. The researchers spoke Hindi and in Delhi, this allowed for efficient communication. However, it would be incorrect to state that the dialect of Delhi Hindi that was encountered was wholly understood. Especially in areas surrounding the *dargah* (where the researchers spent a great deal of time) there was some delay in translations.

The most important limitation of the study came to light at the *dargah* itself when it was revealed that women are not allowed to enter the shrine area. Also, it was mandatory for women to cover their heads at all times while inside the *dargah* and the accompanying marketplace. Only the five men of the group were privy to the shrine experience and freedom to roam the *dargah*. This largely limited the naturalistic observation undertaken.

Furthermore, the research team is not well acquainted with some of the indigenous languages that Qawwali is sung in, namely, Urdu, Farsi and elements of Arabic. This lack of knowledge does not allow the researchers to delve into the intricacies of the poetic metric, which plays a large part determining the effectiveness of a Qawwali. In addition, the researchers' want for insight on the intricacies of music and its composition posed limitations when it came to understanding the role that the composition plays on the effect of the Qawwali. Without knowledge of these two aspects within the group, the researchers had to depend on the inferences provided by the scholars interviewed in this regard, and were only able to make judgements on the song on an emotional level.

## 1.7 Themes and Limitations of Research

As discussed in the previous chapter, the researchers were able to gather a great deal of primary data through a host of informed sources. Each source revealed an abundance of new information, but as was expected, there were plenty of overlaps. On returning from the on-field research, the researchers then began to collate the information that was amassed. The content from each source was scrutinised and analysed, and this yielded a lot of similarities across the responses. Based on these similarities, the researchers were able to form categories, which transitioned into the basic themes that are briefly mentioned in the previous chapter. These themes and their elaboration brought the researchers a step closer to fulfilling the aims and objectives and answering the research question.

Qawwali cannot be fully appreciated without a deep understanding of its history and origin. Qawwali is an embodiment of Sufi values, but does take a step away from Islam because of its nature: music, which Islam does not propagate. The lineage from which Nizami Qawwali descends is of utmost importance in firstly, its name, and secondly, its singers and the location it is performed in. It is what distinguishes it from other forms of Qawwali sung in Delhi. Hence, knowing about the history of Qawwali aids in understanding its distinct nature. Uncovering the role of the *dargah* and the relevance of the audience aided in answering the aim of gauging the audience's role in a performance. This is extremely pertinent to the research question because authentic Nizami Qawwali, as it is sung today, requires the *dargah* as the location in which its singers give *hazri*. The audience plays a huge role in the songs that are sung in the *dargah*, in the sense of the performers singing what they think the audience will enjoy most.

Secondary data did not yield information on whether females sung in traditional Qawwali. It was found that Qawwali does not have female singers, though the concept of femininity is present in an unusual way. The Qawwals take on a female persona while singing songs to their beloved, as evidenced in "Chhaap Tilak". Thus said, it is uncertain whether there is scope for females themselves to take on this role in Qawwali.

Understanding the Qawwali performance itself, and the elements that compose it, is naturally crucial to understanding its distinct nature. Qawwali does have certain rules and

characteristics that govern each performance. It also helps understand traditions which are very specific to Nizami Qawwali and hence contribute to its distinct nature.

In looking at the contemporary adaptations, one hopes to find out about whether Qawwali is a form of prayer or entertainment, and whether it depends on the context. These contemporary adaptations are what helps traditional Qawwali gain popularity and contribute to its survival in modern times. Although, having lasted the last 750 years of India's dramatic, dynamic and rich cultural and political history, the question whether Qawwali needs anything but its own beauty and spirituality to survive, may be posed.

Any analysis would be incomplete without taking into consideration certain limitations that may have affected the outcome of the research. These are important for their ability to impact the quality of the findings and the ability of the researcher to effectively answer the research question. To begin with, one recognizes that interactions with solely Saqlain and Ghulam Nizami offer just a glimpse into the Nizami Qawwali tradition that is embodied by more than two individuals of the Nizami family. It came about as a result of convenience sampling. Their insights were important, but do not represent the entire population of Nizami Qawwals. This is wholly recognized and understood.

Secondly, the on-field research had a wide scope of study and despite the researchers' best efforts, it was a difficult task to try to accommodate as many modern adaptations of Nizami Qawwali as possible. There are many practitioners who deserve academic attention but for the purpose of this study, one was only able to take the case study of three modern adaptations.

Finally, the last limitation of this study stems from the lack of a musical background amongst the researchers. This did not allow for the research to take on an ethnomusicological analysis of Qawwali performances. Instead, the scholars were able to put forth a new perspective by approaching the subject with fresh eyes.

To pave the way for the research, a review of available literature was undertaken, which will be looked at in the following chapter.

## **2. Review of Literature**

In this chapter, under the ambit of the statement: “To study the distinct nature of Nizami Qawwali and understand its contemporary adaptations”, the researchers identified some key themes, whilst perusing secondary literature which allowed the segregation of information into themes. Each of these themes has been explored and analysed in upcoming parts of the report. However, this review of literature seeks to identify and acknowledge the extent of their contribution to the study. This appreciation will especially be in light of the information that they yielded to the researchers, as well as the perspectives offered to shape the analysis. In doing so, it is crucial to be aware of and recognise the fact that Qawwali has been a solely oral tradition until recent times.

The life of an art form, it is said, is upheld collectively by the performer, researcher, documenter, and recorder (Chaturvedi). Nevertheless, in the case of Nizami Qawwali, the element of scholarly research and analysis has been almost absent or sparse. However, another actor has made hefty contributions to the upholding of the art form: the imitator or the adapter. Qawwali arouses a large amount of speculation among ethnomusicologists and other academics occupying similar fields of research. Nonetheless, very little comprehensive research on Qawwali in its traditional style has been carried out. It is perhaps the manifestation of Sufi mysticism that has evaded scholarly writing until recently in the Occident. Scholars in the Orient too, seem to have exoticized the tradition, perhaps as a result of the same as that in the former.

The following review will therefore provide a theme-wise overview of the content provided by the most beneficial secondary sources that the researchers consulted.

### **2.1 Manifestation of Sufi philosophy in Qawwali**

The Qawwali tradition was conceived by the Chishti Sufi order by adding the element of musical instruments to the assembly. At the heart of this practice, however, lies the intention to achieve ultimate nearness to *Allah*, or the acquisition of the knowledge that lies within (Qureshi, 1986). She highlights and contextualises the origin of the singer of Qawwali, who is known as the Qawwal, derived from the Arabic phrase “the one who says” or “the singer of

a verbal message”. The book talks about Sufi poetry as the source as the Qawwali texts. Since the inception of this movement, it engendered inspirational and pedagogic expression of ideas. Not only did it allow the saints to leave behind their memory, but also became the means for conveying Sufi mystic expression (Qureshi).

“Where there are Muslims, there are Sufis; and where there are Sufis, there is Qawwali.” In saying this, scholar Regula Qureshi furthers the idea of the descent of Sufism from Islam (Qureshi). Thus, while pledging the unity of God (*Allah*), and establishing the difference between the Creator and the created, Sufism also propagates the idea of a certain kinship of the believer with *Allah* (Qureshi).

The aim of the Sufis was to realise closeness with the inner truth of life, as opposed to that which was reflected by the activities of the other Islamic populous of the time. Even within Sufism, the various orders do not agree upon the manner of inclusion of music in the process of accomplishing oneness. It is true that even the great Khwaja Nizmuddin Auliya was undecided on the concept of inclusion of music into the recitation of classical Sufi poetry (Qureshi).

Mostly, classical Persian poetry delivered a plethora of proclamation of mystical love by means of stylised imagery which put at its core human love and emanating spiritual ardour. This spurred the section of the research that concerns itself with the understanding and analysis of the lyrics of the Qawwali songs. She describes the importance of the attachment and submission of the mystic to the spiritual guide in search of *wisal* (i.e. union with *Allah*) in order to benefit from the experience of the one who has attained spiritual superiority. This bond is vital to the notion of Sufi community. Nayyar concurs and further discusses the requirements for the mystic’s inward journey in search of the eternal *fanaa*. He quotes the great Sufi teacher, Al Ghazali, in saying that the most vital part of Sufism is the fact that it cannot be learned, but arrived at through “immediate experience and ecstasy and inward transformation”. Finding this out gave the researchers a further push in the direction of identifying the “distinct nature” of Nizami Qawwli, largely to understand the origin of the Qawwali tradition (Nayyar, 1988).

*The Book of Nizamuddin Auliya* explicates one of the possible origins of the word Sufi that is the Arabic word, *safa*, which means, “to clean” (Jaffer, 2012). Knowledge of this gave the researchers further insight into the philosophy of Sufism and that Qawwali occasion intends to cleanse the soul of the mystic of any ego. The knowledge of the history and evolution of Sufism was thus brought out through this reading and gave rise to the requirement for a separate section on the birth of Qawwali from Sufism in this research.

## **2.2 History of Nizamuddin Auliya and Origin of Qawwali**

Once again, the works of Qureshi and Nayyar proved to be very helpful in this regard. Qureshi brings to the fore the socio-political context of the time, wherein the Muslim rule had imposed a centralised agrarian bureaucracy under the feudal system. This text states the socio-political status of the time wherein the subjugation of the lower class local population, by the foreign Muslim elites was an accepted feature of society. Social mobility was rarely seen and could only be acquired through personal allegiance. These excerpts allowed the researchers to discern the reason for the reverence of Saints like Nizamuddin Auliya by people across the social hierarchy. From Singh’s *Interpreting Medieval India* one can infer that the Sufi Saints were against associating with the ruling elite because of the atrocities and social injustices committed under and by them. It includes a section on the Chishti silsila, but deals with it meagrely, although it does mention in passing the order of succession of the Chishti Saints. However, more relevant to the study are Jaffer’s works on Nizamuddin Auliya and Moinuddin Chishti. They provide a clear order of succession, as well as incidents of value from the Saints’ lives, allowing the researchers to understand further the Chishti ideology in the making, and the origin of Qawwali as well as its reason. In *The Book of Nizamuddin Auliya*, one learns of the Mongol tribes’ armies, and the Turkic warrior tribes, breathing fire into most parts of Asia during this time and trying to spread Islam. To understand the origin and reason for why the “distinct nature” of Qawwali is the way it is, it is essential to recognise the tumultuous times that he was moulded by. It is also important to keep in mind this historical background before going on field in order for one to be able to contextualise the art and, again, understand the socio-political dynamics at play at the time of the art’s inception.

Nizamuddin Auliya's parents had fled the wrath of the Mongol armies in Central Asia, who were trying to conquer with Islam (Jaffer, "Nizamuddin Auliya"). Throughout his life, Nizamuddin Auliya lived the life of an ascetic in the princely, political city of Delhi, surrounded by, and yet aloof from the power games of the elite. He considered meditation and mediation two of the most important skills in life and was self-taught. In his insightful opinion, poverty turned out to be protective against the larger issues that plague human life, such as envy, aroused by the acquisition of wealth.

Jaffer informs that Auliya therefore became a representative and a caretaker of the poor and the wrongfully persecuted. What is today his shrine and *dargah*, at the heart of Delhi, once used to be a settlement of poor people that he had provided for upon the land donated to him by Shamsuddin Sharabdar, a courtier in the *darbar* of the king and a devotee of Nizamuddin. It was in this accommodation that the *khwaja* occupied himself with the company of the poor and destitute, which eventually evolved into a place of asylum for all those who needed it and sought nearness to the Saint. This was eventually where the Saint was buried and now serves as the Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya *dargah*. Thus, the researchers were able to recognise the specific importance of the Nizamuddin shrine as well. This gave rise to the need to examine the importance of the shrine during the Qawwali occasion.

Qawwali as we know it today, as mentioned, has been influenced heavily by the culture of the time and place in which it emerged medieval India. A paper published as a result of the Conference of Music in the World of Islam, labelled 'Common Grounds Between *Bhajan* and *Qawwali*', brings to light attributes that are common to the two devotional practices. Since Qawwali grew in India as an Islamic ritual in a predominantly Hindu community, it allows the researchers to understand the similarities between the two devotional practices. These sources therefore provide the investigator with a sufficiently deep understanding of the origins of the many facets of the fascinating Qawwali occasion.

### **2.3 Essential Elements of the Qawwali Occasion**

Qureshi's work explores the intricacies of the Qawwali concept, occasion and setting in *Sufi Music of India and Pakistan: Sound, Context and Meaning in Qawwali*. The terms: *mahfil-e-sama* and *darbar-e-auliya*, i.e. the 'gathering for listening' and the 'royal court of Saints' are

discussed with respect to their effect on the listener in association with the medium of performance and the connection with the audience.

The *mahfil-e-sama* concentrates on the listener and on his potential to absorb spiritual benefits from the gathering, as opposed to paying attention to the music itself. There are two premises that pertain to the process of spiritual arousal in this regard: the first one propagates that the listening process “is a means for the Sufi devotee to activate emotion on the basis of his inner state;” the second assertion holds that the listener is emotionally fulfilled by virtue of his union with the spiritual hierarchy (Qureshi). In view of the first premise, it is utmost crucial that the listener be provided with a framework that allows for flexibility and freedom for self-expansion in order for the individual to be able to respond to the music intuitively.

On the grounds of the discussed premises, the Qawwali gathering as an assembly of spiritual superiors has come to be envisaged as a formal assembly led by the highest spiritual authority, also known as the ‘chief of assembly’ or *mir-e-mahfil*, and on the construct of the relative status of its participants.

The audience of a Qawwali gathering may range from a small group to a large crowd. A qawwali assembly for a small group is headed by a spiritual guide, whether or not affiliated with a major Saint, and that the gathering consists of his personal disciples. A large crowd on the other hand is headed by a recognized representative of a major Saint and includes not only the guide’s personal disciples but also other spiritual guides, individual devotees outside of the spiritual status bracket and representatives of other Saints.

The setting a Qawwali gathering constitutes certain prerequisites such as space, dimensions of time, personnel and occasion. There are three standard categories with reference to the factors of setting for Qawwali which are implemented in the *sama* in classical Sufism: the first category is *maqan* which refers to the Saint’s abode, the *dargah*; the second refers to *zaman*, or time which is defined in association with the times of Islamic prayer; the third prerequisite is *akhwan*, or participants.

An element of setting in the Qawwali assembly is the decorum observed within the occasion. This is inclusive of: seating order, participants’ posture and dress, and physical arrangements.

If the assembly is held within the dargah then the highest place is designated to the Saint presiding over the gathering. Outside the context of a dargah the most exalted representative takes his place on his *gaddi*, or throne, and controls the event. Deportment with the Qawwali occasion is demonstrated through sitting posture, which is a conveyance of respect for the Saintly representative. “The ideal sitting position described for prayer ritual is one of kneeling while sitting on the heels” — as showing feet is a sign of disrespect in Indo-Muslim culture — “preferably with the right foot crossed over the left one, arms dropped by the sides, head bowed — the classically devotional posture of submission in Islam” (Qureshi). Additionally, it is mandatory for participants to adhere to a certain external protocol in terms of their dress, wherein it corresponds to traditional norms of decency. A perfect example in this regard would be head covering which is a symbol of respect.

#### **2.4 Audience Participation and the Importance of the dargah**

Pertaining to the *dargah*, there are not too many secondary sources that elaborate upon its happenings. One source in particular, Regula Qureshi’s *Sufi Music of India and Pakistan: Sound, Context, and Meaning in Qawwali*, expands briefly on the audience’s experience in the *dargah*. She makes distinctions and categories concerning the levels of responses that the audience undergoes. The first level of response is when the devotee is in a stage of “mild arousal” (Qureshi), which is expressed in the form of swaying or a lifted upward-pointing arm. The second, more intense phase is when the Qawwali is felt on a deeper level, usually resulting in tears, shouting or agitation. The third and last stage is “ecstatic abandonment” (Qureshi), where the individual may get up, so that he can move without inhibition, and start to dance, called *raqs*. This *raqs* may not be limited to simply moving around, and could include yelling, falling, jumping and rolling.

It is the leader of the Qawwali performance’s responsibility to act as a “spiritual anchor for the feelings of everyone else” (Qureshi), in that he is only supposed to help devotees on the journey to oneness with their Lord, not enter into ecstasy himself. He may calm a devotee by placing a hand on his/her head or even embracing the devotee. The leader is also supposed to rise when he views someone in an ecstatic state, and make sure to repeat the words that took the devotee into the trance. The audience is meant to rise here with him. Once the person is led out of the trance, the Qawwal will then sit back down (Qureshi).

Qureshi also mentions the monetary offerings given to the performers by the audience, which they accept graciously, and touch towards their eyes each time as a sign of gratitude and respect. This is then distributed amongst each Qawwal at the end of the *hazri* (Qureshi).

*Image 2: An image of the Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya Dargah*

*Source: Discover India Program 2015-16*



## **2.5 Essence and Purpose of Qawwali**

Again, Regula Qureshi's book, *Sufi Music in India: Sound, Context and Meaning in Qawwali*, has best explained the purpose of Qawwali, as a tradition, and what it intends to do. The Qawwals' sense of purpose is explained and discussed. She also provides an exhaustive analysis of the importance of language and poetic meter in determining how effective the occasion will be with regard to the audience. She identifies the importance of the trance induced by Qawwali and thus contributes to understanding the reason for Qawwali in its traditional form and that which is at its depth. This aids the researchers in understanding the "distinct nature" of Qawwali.

**Image 3:** The image is a depiction of a woman undergoing a mild state of trance at the birthday celebration of Nizamuddin Auliya

**Source:** Discover India Program 2015-16



Gilbert Rouget's *Music and Trance: A Theory of the Relations Between Music and Possession*, published in talks about the *wajd* induced by Qawwali and the appropriate usage of this characteristic in order to induce inner contemplation and complete attention. To this extent, the researchers were able to understand the existence of the concept of a trance induced by listening to Qawwali. However, this could not prepare the researchers fully before observing the atmosphere at the *dargah* and the people's response to Qawwali. This is for the simple reason that there is only so much that one can understand from reading about a state of mind, which is so intense and can only be truly understood by seeing it or feeling even some level of it. Although this provided as a basis for what the researchers were to observe and witness during the time on field, Qureshi's observation of the trance provides more detailed insight with regard to the various levels. These are, in the following order:

- *Shariat*
- *Tariqat*
- *Haqiqat*
- *Ma'rifat*

'Common Grounds Between Bhajan and Qawwali' is a paper written by Pandit Laxmi Tewari, an expert on Hindustani classical music at the Conference of Music in the world of Islam. The purpose of this paper is to bring to light attributes that are common to the two forms of devotional music that cater to two different religious groups: Hindu and Muslim. The reason why the contents of this paper adds value to the research attempt is because another sub-aspect of the study involves the investigation into the birth of the Islamic devotional music in a predominantly Hindu community. In addition, this aspect pointed the researchers towards the importance and use of language in Sufi poetry and Qawwali and the fact that this aspect contributes heavily to making up the distinct nature of Nizami Qawwali.

'Reviewing Qawwali: Origin, Evolution And Its Dimensions', published in the Pakistan Association of Anthropology is authored by Shaheer Khan in 2015 and several authors, discusses the purpose of Qawwali and the manner in which it takes the listeners through a number of dimensions of ecstasy- almost like a route to reach the final ecstatic dimension. The purpose of the Qawwali is "to arouse enthusiasm and to alter his state of consciousness", according to this article. Throughout, the authors address the purpose of each aspect of the art form and the origin of the various aspects, historically. Thus, this source aids the research in that it captures and explains the methodology of Qawwali- knowledge that is integral to any further understanding of the art form.

## **2.6 The Role of the Female Voice**

Islam is characterized as a "male" centered religion, as posited by Western scholars, a typification that has sustained well into the twenty-first century. The female voice is certainly important in the discourse of Qawwali as it encodes elements of social justice and gender dynamics through the woman's voice, however, in the Islamic domain, the mosque is predominantly an "arena for male activity" (Abbas). In lieu, the Sufi shrine emerges as a sphere where the religious and spiritual participation of women is considered paramount. There, women's contribution is evident and they are notable participants in events.

A Pakistani singer of Sindhi descent and one of the most illustrious exponents of Sufi music, Abida Parvin comments on gender in Sufi poetry:

*“Male and female does not even come into it — what you call Allah is one — God is the mehver, the center of everything...it does not matter whether it is male or female, in fact we can really say that in the Sufi’s terminology, if someone is not a male he is called a female”* (Abbas).

It is important to note that notwithstanding the tenacious gender component of Sufi ritual discourse, the role of women has been paid no attention in scholarly work. This field has been ignored by Western male scholars because, as men, they cannot gain access to the female realm of participation. This is because “they cannot enter the culturally close-knit networks among women in the ritual participation at Sufi shrines” (Abbas, Risky Knowledge). Moreover, the scholars have been stymied resultant of their lack of knowledge of the indigenous languages which contributes to an ethnocentric view.

Women are only alluded to as spouses or sisters or mothers of the members of a Sufi *silsila*. A researcher of Amir Khusrau has scrutinized,

*“We do not know whether Khusrau had any sisters, for the eastern philosophers generally do not bother themselves about the female relatives of a person; they are considered to be either too insignificant to be mentioned or too sacred and inappropriate to be brought into the glaring and unholy light of publicity”* (Abbas, The Female Voice).

With a meticulous focus on the musicians’ speech samples, certain patterns arose, there were references to sisters and brothers, mothers and daughters, and generally to kin relationships with women. The musicians alluded to *pardah* — the mystic veil, to women’s work, such as husking, spinning, grinding, and weaving and the great cultural myths of heroic female lovers like Sassi, Hir and Sohni. These were upper class women who defied the mores of their community to claim their being, and the right to be accepted as intelligent women who could make choices-albeit the end for most of these women was tragic. The musicians’ paid homage to the Prophet Muhammad, his family, and his *azwaj* (wives) and ever recited the Prophet’s *hadith* (sayings) in addition to singing devotional poetry. These references solicited bridal imagery to narrate about the Prophet’s ascension — *mi’raj*, and the Prophet’s union with the deity, when the veil is raised or the state of *kasf* is fulfilled. The discourse of the musicians confronted the patriarchy and “the establishment through the device of the female

speaker; even in the metalanguage of the mystic ecstasy, the musicians spoke as females” (Gaur). In other words, the narrative of the poetry propagates ‘love’ as a bridge between the Almighty and the Qawwal, they sing about Hir and Ranjha — “the folk rebels who fought against the social and religious patriarchs,” (Gaur) who are employed as metaphors to remember the Prophet.

The narratives of the *Qawwals* are sung in a falsetto to impersonate a female voice; the male musicians play poetic devices, for instance, the semantic and syntactic structures of the languages to speak as though they were females. Predominantly, the seeds of romance in the oral praxis are sown through the aesthetics of female voices. It is inevitable that the charisma of the female voices in the musicians’ narratives lent the performance elegance.

## **2.7 Adaptations of Qawwali in Contemporary Times**

As far as contemporary adaptations of Nizami Qawwali go, one cannot ignore the increasing inclusion of this music form in Bollywood cinema. Prior to embarking on the on-field research, the researchers had a very limited knowledge of Qawwali, acquired mainly from Indian popular culture. Bollywood songs such as “*Khwaja Mere Khwaja*” and “*Kun Faya Kun*” are propagated to be two songs that give some insight into what Qawwali sounds like.

*Khwaja Mere Khwaja* is a popular Qawwali-style song written and performed for Bollywood film called *Jodhaa Akbar*, released in 2007, written by Kashif and composed and performed by A.R. Rahman. The purpose of the song in the film was to establish the state of affairs at the time, and display King Akbar’s lordly benevolence in comparison with other preceding kings. “*Khwaja Mere Khwaja*” can literally be translated to mean “Lord, My Lord”. Thus, one knows that the song is a devotional one – calling out to the Lord, the Saint.

Alternatively, in the Bollywood movie *Rockstar*, released in 2011, there is another song that attempts to depict Nizami Qawwali called “*Kun Faya Kun*”, sung by A. R. Rahman, Mohit Chauhan and Javed Ali. In the film, the song delineates the journey of the main character (Ranbir Kapoor) as he is thrown out of his house and finds refuge in Nizamuddin *dargah*, thereon finding his own path.

The researchers' very first exposure to Qawwali was through its adaptations in Bollywood culture, even before the investigation began. It was especially through two songs that featured in popular Indian films, namely, *Khwaja Mere Khwaja* from *Jodha Akbar* and *Kun Faya Kun* from *Rockstar*. Since this aspect of popular culture was the gateway to the research, for it was a depiction of Nizami Qawwali in the form of entertainment. The very fact that they are plain and devoid of inherent analysis makes them valuable, for they gave rise to the comparison aspect of the research between the traditional Nizami Qawwali, and the contemporary adaptations of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This is not to say that these songs are the only forms of adaptation of Qawwali. Qawwals are usually invited and beseeched to perform in social environments such as parties, concerts, clubs, and bars.

Hiromi Sataka's short article in the newspaper titled 'Qawwali: From Sufi Ritual to Commercial Pop' lent some perspective on this and the reasons surrounding it. However, most secondary sources proved to be insufficient when trying to explore this aspect.

**Table 3:** Findings based on secondary sources

**Source:** Discover India Program 2015-2016

Source	Findings
Sufi Music in India and Pakistan: <i>Sound, Context and Meaning in Qawwali</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sufi philosophy</li><li>• History of <i>gharana</i></li><li>• Nature and purpose of Qawwali</li><li>• Traditions at Nizamuddin Auliya</li><li>• Audience participation and importance of the <i>dargah</i></li></ul>
History and Origin of Qawwali	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sufi philosophy</li><li>• History of evolution of <i>sama</i></li><li>• Importance of audience and <i>dargah</i></li></ul>
The Female Voice in Sufi Rituals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reason for the absence of female performers in public <i>sama</i></li><li>• Significance of perspective from which poetry is written</li></ul>
The Book of Nizamuddin Auliya	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Personal history of Nizamuddin Auliya</li><li>• Teachings of Auliya</li><li>• Relationship of Auliya with Khusrau</li></ul>
Khwaja Mere Khwaja	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Depiction of Qawwali in Bollywood</li><li>• Use of language</li><li>• Extent of authenticity</li></ul>

### **3. The Distinct Nature of Qawwali**

As mentioned in the itemisation of the Research Question, this research aims to not only document but *understand* the distinct nature of Nizami Qawwali. For it to have survived over seven centuries in the ever-changing atmosphere of the Indian subcontinent is a grand feat. Moreover, its various modern adaptations are a good indicator of its sponge-like quality, forever evolving in order to survive. But before one can attempt to delve into the structure of the performance, its traditions and the like, there is a necessity to understand where Qawwali came from.

#### **3.1 Sufi Roots and the Origin of Qawwali**

*Zindagani hai sadaf qatra-e-nesa hai khudi,  
Voh sadaf kya ke jo qatre ko gauhar kar na sake.  
Ho agar khudnegaro, khudgaro, khudgeer khudi  
Yeh bhi mumkin hai ki tu maut se bhi mar na sake.  
-Diyar-e-Ishq, Rahat Fateh Ali Khan*

At the centre of an oyster lies a small drop of gelatin, which stimulates the creation of a pearl. Life, (the human body, in particular) according to the Sufi, is akin to the oyster, the *sadaf*. It is the hollow shell within which the *khudi*, (the Self) the gelatin, is intended to evolve into the pearl. Sufi Rahat Fateh Ali Khan questions the worth of that *sadaf* which is not able to give birth to the *gauhar* in *Diyar-e-Ishq*, (“In The Realm Of Love”) implying that the purpose of the *sadaf* is only fulfilled once the *qatra* metamorphoses into the *gauhar*. When the *khudi* is taken to such a height of perfection, it ceases to require the *sadaf* in its autonomy, for it has blended into the ether of the Divine. At this conjecture, even death of the *sadaf* cannot mark that of the *khudi* if it has achieved outward and inward perfection, thus concurring with the idea put forth by Qureshi.

Such is the philosophy of the Chishti Sufi order who value being in touch with the *khudi* over everything else, deriving from the teachings of the Quran which culminate in the concept of “knowing thyself” to know God (Sangari). Since *Allah* is everything, and the knowledge of everything is situated in the *khudi*, the direction of the Sufi journey is inward through prayer,

reflection and repetition. The seeker of the *muhabbat* of the Lord finds his direction under the great Saints, as well as his Sheikh.

Primary research uncovered further details about the Chishti Sufi order in addition to those provided by the authors' consulted secondarily. The Chishti Sufi order was born of the ideas and experiences of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti. He was the pioneer of the Chishti Sufi *silsila*, of which Qawwali is a result. Moinuddin's childhood was surrounded by political turbulence and familial hardship whereby he was orphaned at the age of fourteen. At this point, he began questioning the nature and way of life, through which, he learnt from a stranger that the flame "in the heart is one's best guide in the world". Inspired, he pondered further and the Chishtiya Sufi *tariqa* was born. Chishti travelled from the Greater Khorasan province of Iran to India in search of the elusive mystery of the Self for he was greatly intrigued by the Hindu philosophy of worshipping the supernatural, and thus introduced his Sufi *silsila* to Indian society. This man was the personification of love in the middle of hatred; one who crossed all the obstacles of his time without garnering anything but goodwill (Jaffer).

Thus, as Muslim armies plundered the lands of Central Asia, while the sultanate established itself in Delhi, a war broke out regarding the next "custodian of the world's wealth." As the warriors trundled people's land and slit their throats, the mystics wandered the world and countered the hate politics by way of love and song. The coming together of Hinduism and Islam in the Indian subcontinent is considered almost magical.

*Hazrat Usman-e-Harouni*, a great Sufi poet, once wrote:

*Nami danam keh aakhir choon dam-e-deedar mi raqsam*

*Magar nazm ba aan zouq keh pesh-e-yaar mi raqsam*

This signifies the Sufi's lack of knowledge during his lifetime, for he claims to know nothing throughout and exists through nonexistence. This is to say that the lifetime of the Sufi is dedicated to annihilating the ego of the Self through the inward search for knowledge and ultimate freedom. The devotee is therefore expected to spend his lifetime in his shell of life aspiring to cover the distance between himself and *Allah* (Sangari).

Even canonically, in the *Quran Sharif* (the Islamic holy book), it stands to signify a Divine command from *Allah*. According to classical scholars such as Dr. Najma Parveen Ahmed and

Professor Gopichand Narang, Qawwali existed as a cultural tradition in pre-Islamic Arabia (Sangari). Of course, the manner of its existence differed greatly from what it is today. It is said to have been practised in the *Pathan* area in modern-day Afghanistan or the Hijaz region of present-day Saudi Arabia. It included joyous dancing around a bonfire (Saeed). Poetry would be recited by a group of singers (with one lead singer) to the melody created by folk instruments such as the *duf*, and *tamboor*. Men and women alike participated in this ritual, which had secular themes, most often. The focus was essentially on the fact that it was a group form of music and revelry (Sangari).

Many are of the belief that “Sufism is nothing but Islam” as it was born from the “bosom” of Islamic tradition and way of life. While Islam was dogmatic, Sufism came to be known as a spiritual and philosophical facet of the same belief system (Srivastava, K).

Music was introduced to the religion after it travelled outside Arabia (Jaffer). Islam was inflexible in nature, and many consider Sufism to be its counterculture, in that it offers a philosophical and spiritual take on the way of life prescribed in the *Quran*. With the advent of Islam, it is believed that Prophet Mohammed wanted to cleanse the society and therefore labelled art as an “indulgence”. As a result, the more “practical” facets of life were given more importance, for it was considered as a sort of media and a criticism of a society in flux would have been detrimental to its growth (Srivastava, K).

According to classical scholars such as Dr. Najma Parveen Ahmed and Professor Gopichand Narang, Qawwali existed as a cultural tradition in pre-Islamic Arabia (Sangari). Many are of the belief that “Sufism is nothing but Islam” as it was born from the “bosom” of Islamic tradition and way of life. While Islam was dogmatic, Sufism came to be known as a spiritual and philosophical facet of the same belief system (Srivastava).

It is considered as a “counterculture” of Islam, or a response to the same, although it emerged from the very same doctrine (Mehra). *Suf*, in Arabic, refers to raw wool, what is known as *dari*. While the Mongol armies’ wrath raged in Central Asia and the Middle East of the modern day, the Owases- the quietists of Islamic society- who believed in the betterment of society through the amelioration of the Self and elimination of the ego, came to be known as the Sufis, or the wearers of the robes made of *suf*. This was an act of rebellion, as well as self-

punishment, as the ascetics wore these robes in the scorching heat of Arabia. It was the demonstration of renouncement of the worldly attachments and belongings. These made for their travel robes on their journey to the final *fanaa*; the annihilation of the ego (Srivastava). Despite the claims, one can see the proof for Sufism's connect with Islam, in the lyrics of the calls of the Qawwal at the *dargah*, whilst upholding the alleged tradition of the Prophet.

Finally, the crux of the concept of Chishti Sufism today, as discovered during discussions with scholars, resonates the ideology of *khalvat anjuman*, meaning solitude within society. One doesn't reject society but becomes responsible to one's people in order to share one's own knowledge and experience with everyone else that makes up the community. One is meant to serve them, which is why the Sufis furthered the idea of *khidmat-e-khalq*, *khidmat-e-khuda*, which translates to, "service of people is service of God".

### **3.2 History and Context**

The ideology of *khidma-e-khalq* and *khidmat-e-khuda* was expounded by *Hazrat* Sheikh Khwaja Syed Mohammed Nizamuddin Auliya. He was born into the 13<sup>th</sup> century- a time of great rediscovery. The Mongol tribes' armies, and the Turkic warrior tribes, trying to spread Islam breathed fire into most parts of Asia during this time. To understand the origin and reason for why the "distinct nature" of Qawwali is the way it is, it is essential to recognise the tumultuous times that he was moulded by (Jaffer).

The Delhi of the time of Nizamuddin Auliya's birth had been under the rule of the Ghori sultanate was already more than a couple of decades old, for the conquest occurred in 1192. Aibak (an employee and a warrior) took over from Ghazni in 1206, following his death, after having served in his stead for approximately 8 years, thus giving the Delhi Slave Sultanate its name. For the purpose of setting the stage for the comprehension of Nizamuddin Auliya's activities and ideas, it is important to note than Aibak was an Ilbari Turk. They were widely known as "fierce fanatics" or "wild debauchees", unafraid to unsheathe their blades. They had no tolerance for Hindu "idolators" or the Mongol "devil worshippers". This age of the meeting of two completely opposite ideologies was surrounded by fear, suspicion and uncertainty (Ibid).

Mehru Jaffer in her Book of Nizamuddin Auliya provided this historical context. It was a time of rebellion against the elites and the clergy, who had for so long subjugated the common people under the pretext of the Divine Right to power. For centuries, this curbed the people's ability to question their rulers, for the rulers were considered the mediators between God and themselves. It was a great rebellion against the interpretation that the Self cannot question the creator. Sufism, instead proclaimed that *Allah* resided with the *khudi*. As a great mystic and Sufi, *Hazrat* Nizamuddin Auliya engaged in conversation with his *khudi*, wherefore his ideas and teachings took root. He asked himself the question, 'where can I go from myself'. Upon recognising the existence of that which he searches within himself, he came to the conclusion that everything away from the Self is merely "this and that"- an illusion, or a dream (Jaffer).

Sufism therefore became a bloodless revolt against the oppressive establishment of the time. *Hazrat* Nizamuddin Auliya was born to an Indian mother and a Turk father in Badayoun. His parents had fled the wrath of the Mongol armies in Central Asia, who were trying to conquer with Islam. Throughout his life, *Hazrat* Nizamuddin Auliya lived the life of an ascetic in the princely, political city of Delhi, surrounded by, and yet aloof from the power games of the elite. He considered meditation and mediation two of the most important skills in life and was self-taught. In his insightful opinion, poverty turned out to be protective against the larger issues that plague human life, such as envy, aroused by the acquisition of wealth (Jaffer).

Thus, one can say with confidence that the Delhi *gharana* of the Qawwal *bachche*, put together by Auliya was the flower that pierced through the concrete; it was the perfume that pervaded through the stench of corpses, quartered at the hands of war. Qawwali, as a result of Sufism, symbolised the rebirth of love at a time of extreme hatred between communities and factions within the larger community (Dehlvi).

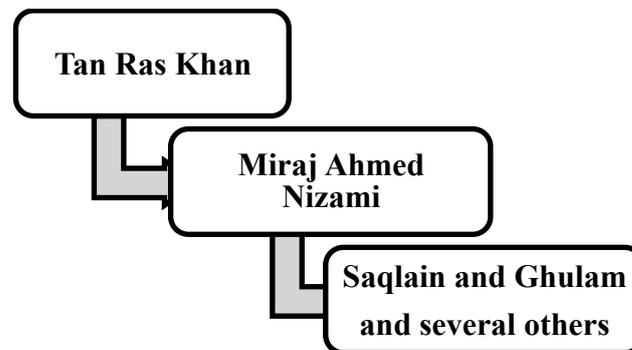
Qawwali is poetry that speaks to the soul, of the wrongdoings of society, and the soul's ability to right the wrong through perfection of the Self, and union with *Allah*. *Hazrat* Amir Khusrau was a genius, for he wrote similar poetry in the language of the local, common people. Otherwise, this poetry was only accessible to the elites who spoke Farsi. Nizamuddin Auliya and Amir Khusrau also interacted in *khari boli*, or the local language at the time (Jaffer). He used, and combined, Persian, Arabic, Hindvi, and local dialects that he was

exposed to during his travels as a court poet (Sangari). As a great musicologist, he was able to recognise the gelling of the sounds of various instruments into one beautiful chorus accompanying the Qawwal's urgent cry for his *Khwaja*, his *Nawaz* (Mudgal). He did this to add diversity to the *sama* of Nizamuddin Auliya (Dehli). Thus, understanding the history and lifestyle of the pioneers of this practice gives the researchers further insight to why the language used in Nizami Qawwali is the amalgam that it is.

The *Nizami* is literally the one following the *Nizam* (i.e. the creator). But the *Nizami* is also the follower of Nizamuddin Auliya (Saeed). Overtime, this practice, which was carried on by Auliya's Qawwal *bachche* in Delhi, became a Chishti Sufi tradition. It became hereditary; either transmitted from father to son, or from mentor to mentee; from *pir* to *mureed*. The Nizami Bandhu, which claims to have its home in the *dargah* of Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya, traces back to the first set of Qawwal *bachche* that he put together to sing for and from the people. This knowledge of ancestry seems to legitimise their purpose for them for the Nizami Brothers consider themselves the real mystical artists.

**Figure 2:** Depicting the last four generations of the Nizami Qawwals

**Source:** Discover India Program 2015-2016

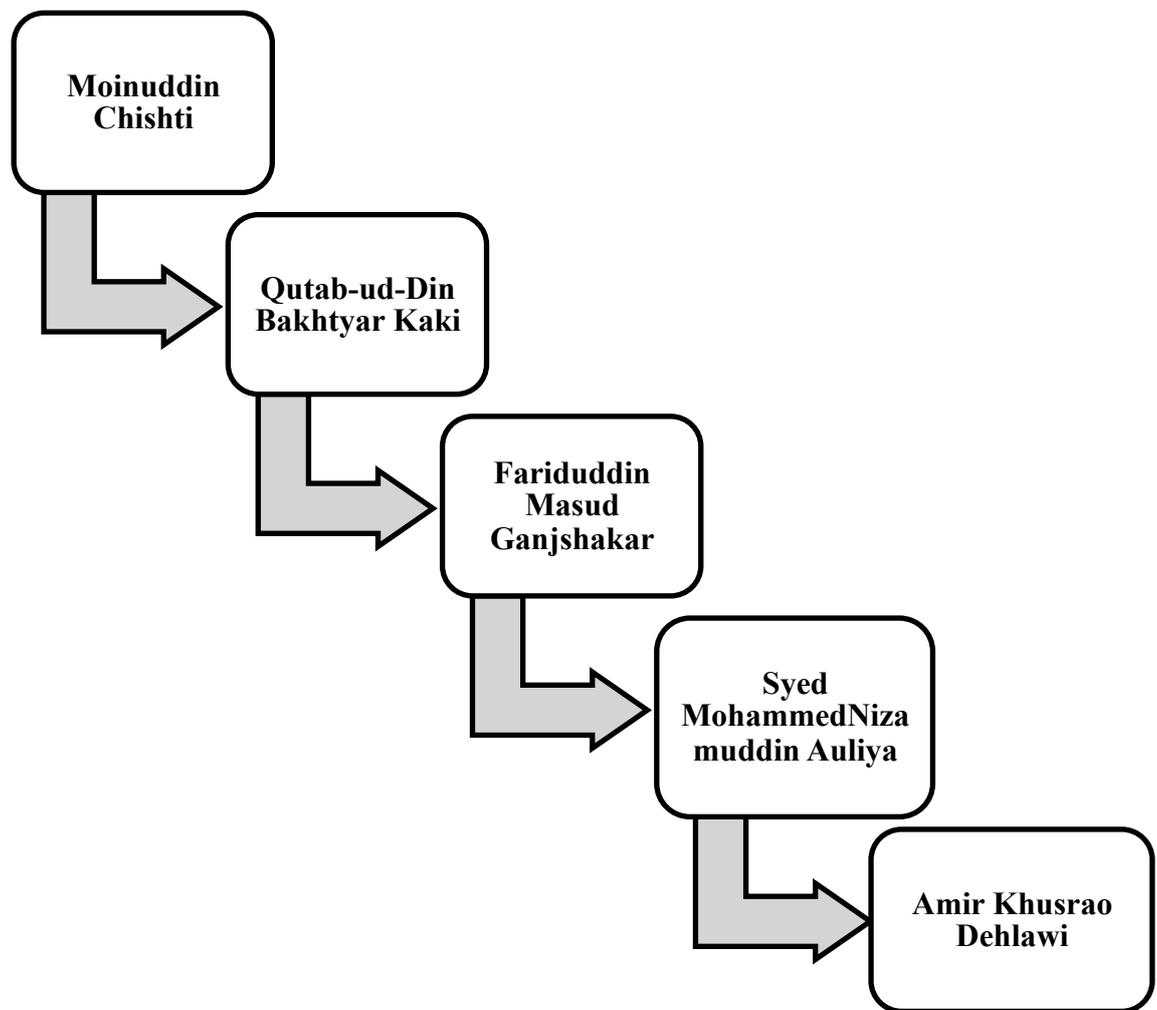


The *wisal* (union with *Allah*) can only be achieved through attachment and submission to the spiritual guide in order to benefit from the experience of the one who has attained spiritual superiority. This bond is vital to the notion of Sufi community the great Sufi teacher, Al Ghazali, states that the most indispensable part of Sufism is that it cannot be learned. Only the *tariqa* of attainment can be taught by the spiritual mentor. Otherwise, Sufism cannot be learned, but only be arrived at through “immediate experience and ecstasy and inward

transformation. This is why the *pir-mureed* relationship is vital to this practise. The same idea of the role of the mentor-mentee relationship is propagated by Nayyar in his text.

**Figure 3:** Depicting the order of lineage from Maulana Moinuddin to Amir Khusrau

**Source:** Discover India Program 2015-2016



Professor Kumkum Srivastava brought to light the fact that the biological successor may not always be the spiritual Sufi successor. He becomes the head of the *dargah* or the *sajjadanashin*. This lineage soon became an establishment of the Sufi functioning and all the sons received jobs in the *dargah* after a certain point. If they do not have their own children, their nephews are taken into account. It has now turned into a cyclical assignment of jobs due to the excessive claims of having descended from the family of *Hazrat* Nizamuddin Auliya.

### **3.3 A dissection of a Qawwali Performance**

Now that the history of Qawwali has been firmly established, from its historical origins to important personalities related to the art form, one is ready to probe into the structure of a Qawwali performance. It is a craft that appears guilefully simple in its execution. Like any performance art, it may appear to be spontaneous in nature to uninformed audiences and an untrained ear. However, scholars and regulars of Qawwali performances would have a keen sense of the various elements that go into each song. This section attempts to break down the Qawwali performance into its various smaller elements for further understanding and analysis.

#### **3.3.1 Essential Elements of a Qawwali Performance**

An integral segment of the research conducted was naturalistic observations, in saying this, the researchers believe that they hold the responsibility of documenting the Qawwali performance by dissecting its structure and attempting to gain an understanding of what goes into the performance. In addition, the researchers gauge and document, to the best of their ability, the mental processes of the Qawwal as he performs. This is in an effort to fulfill the aim of deciphering whether Qawwali is traditionally a form of prayer, or whether it is considered to be an outlet for entertainment purposes for the devotees at the *dargah*. Questions that arose prior to the on-field research inquired about the symbolic significance of Qawwali being sung outside the context of the *dargah*. These aspects have been answered through the following analysis.

##### **3.3.1.1 Context of Qawwali**

In the words of Qureshi, the proper setting for a Qawwali occasion is dependent upon certain prerequisites which constitute: *Zaman*, *maqan*, and *akhwan*. This information was ascertained and built upon through on-ground fieldwork in an interview conducted with Dr. Kumkum Srivastava. In addition to the previously mentioned prerequisites. She brings to light terminologies such as *Na't* and *manqabat*. The former talks of the praise of Prophet Mohammed whilst the latter is a praise of the Saint whose *dargah* is being patronized. She established in terms of *zaman*, that provided that *namaz*, or time of prayer is avoided, then

time for ritual commemorations are not restricted. Commemorative rituals are usually kept during the earlier part of the day. This being said, there is a preferred time for anniversary assemblies which is usually the night time when there is no threat of interruption or distraction. The evidence for the aforementioned was witnessed in the *dargah* by the researchers as the on-field study coincided with Nizamuddin Auliya's 801st birthday celebration. The celebration commenced at night and continued as late as early morning Prayer. The reason being was confirmed in an interview with the Nizami Brothers who described an aura of special spiritual mediation during this time. Moreover, Dr. K. Srivastava explained that the reason behind the relatively open-ended duration of the assembly is to allow for beneficial spiritual conclusion.

### **3.3.1.2\_The Language of Qawwali**

As established by Qureshi, the spiritual welfare of the participants is in the hands of the *mir-e-mahfil*, or 'chief of the assembly'. Typically, the *mir-e-mahfil* is also its most spiritually exalted member. For this reason, the premise of what constitutes the 'proper conditions' for a purposeful Qawwali occasion reside with him. Oftentimes assemblies are identified by their leader for the simple reason that the leader gives the assembly its character. An interview conducted with Manjari Chaturvedi highlighted that the leader's spiritual status has an affect upon the selection of what is sung, consequent upon the choice of the Qawwal to pander to the leader. The personal status of the leader affects the performance with respect to language, style of song and performance, content, and the rhythmic framework of the music. For instance, Dr. K. Srivastava elucidates that the status of the leader determines the finesse of the text, where Farsi is used to convey sophistication and dialect such as Hindi and Urdu are not held to the same regard. Where 'sophistication' is not of paramount priority, the assembly can be sung in the patois of Urdu or Hindi which allows for a facile rhythmic framework. An example illustrated by Dr. Vinay Srivastava denotes that in the 70's there was a group in Ajmer that was evicted from the assembly for singing in Urdu by the new *diwan*, administrative officer in an attempt to assert his status.

### 3.3.1.3 The Audience Component of Qawwali

Dhruv Sangari stated that a Qawwali assembly may compass of a small, homogeneous group, a large heterogeneous crowd, or an amalgamation of the two. As affirmed by Manjari Chaturvedi, in the latter, heterogeneous audience type, the status category of socio-economic standing, is in accordance with general social norms. Chaturvedi goes on to say that an important audience component are persons of high socio-economic standing or status, spiritual or worldly who are *khas* and *sharif*, special and noble. As fluently articulated by Yousuf Saeed, the devotees from this class have conventionally been alluded to as “the patrons of the Sufi divines”. There is a marriage of paired idioms that form an alliance between the ‘Saintly’ and the ‘wealthy,’ most eloquently expressed in the phraseology: *fuqara aur umara*, where *fuqara* is in reference to the Saintly mendicant, and *umara* stands for the wealthy leader. According to Saeed, the ‘Saintly’ status is of greater importance. An example of the aforementioned has been explained through interview conducted with the Nizami Brothers who state that at the Nizamuddin Auliya *Dargah* saintly representatives from Ajmer are oftentimes recognized with songs in praise of their Saint, *Khwaja Gareeb Nawaz*.

The *khas* and the *sharif* are differentiated from the *am* and *zalil*, persons who are termed as ‘common’ and ‘lowly’ consequent upon lacking the qualification of status and socio-economic power. Given this, then an assembly which is attended by a circle of special people is denoted as a *mahfil-e-khas*, indicating a limited number of listeners. In contra, a *mahfil-e-am*, is a ‘common assembly’ which is suggestive of a large audience. It is important to denote that when there is a gathering of a large crowd, the Qawwals cater to popular taste. At the *Dargah*, the Nizami Brothers stated that in such a case they would indulge in popular Urdu songs. This instance describes what Qureshi has crassly put forth as ‘partying singing’. She maintains that in the case of ‘partying singing,’ by adhering to the audience the Qawwali is able to generate more earnings. Another type of singing that occurs is ‘community singing;’ however, during an amalgamation of the two, the ritual singing is kept to a minimum so that it allows for more time for ‘party singing,’ again in an attempt to augment their earnings. In other words, as denoted by the Nizami Brothers, in an unfocused group the Qawwal gauges the occasion, the *maqam*, and audience requests, this culmination of factors aid the Qawwal’s process of song selection. Qureshi goes onto say that in another instance the Qawwal who has

performed previously can help ascertain the audience and the degree of success of the preceding song by taking an account of the monetary success, as well as the state of emotion the previous Qawwal took the crowd to. Sadia Dehlvi, on the other hand, vehemently refutes the use of vocabulary such as ‘audience’ to denote what is correctly referred to as devotees. In saying that however, Dehlvi says that this line is now blurring, especially at the Nizamuddin Auliya *Dargah*. She further contends that the assembly is not, or cannot, be governed by audience requests.

*Image 4: An image of the Nizami Brothers*

*Source: Discover India Program 2015-16*



#### **3.3.1.4 The Structure of the Qawwali Performance**

Once a Qawwal has ascertained the audience in terms of topic, language, style of song, he can begin with the Qawwali. The Nizami Brothers elucidate that the aim of the Qawwal is for clarity and that there is an amalgamation of individual and group singing, where every new line is introduced by the lead Qawwal. It is up to the Qawwal’s discretion what verse he perceives to be making the greatest impact. It is possible that the very first line itself can

achieve this; however, spiritual arousal under such circumstances are extremely rare. A situation of an ‘inserted verse’ arises when the Qawwal is forced to cater to the broader needs of the audience at the *dargah* as the leader of the audience may be displeased by a majority of appeals to the Saint. Sometimes, an insert inspires listeners to suggest verses that they want ‘inserted’. Arousal can be signified by strong swaying, head shaking and other rhythmic movements, and when listeners are aroused, the Qawwals strategically use intensifiers wherein there is extra emphasis on claps, clapping on half beats and increasing the tempo of the song in order to lead the listeners to the point of ecstasy.

Dr. K. Srivastava comments that Qawwali is structured in such a way so that the *ruba’i*, or introductory verse, allows for the Qawwal to commence slowly and gauge the audience — a prelude or *naghma*. *Naghma*, as explained by Dr. K. Srivastava, is used to focus the attention of the audience where external activity, which distracts is eliminated and internal distraction is removed. It allows for Qawwals to evaluate the audience for subtle indications of song preference. *Ruba’i*, on the other hand, is a ‘preview’ before the commencement of a song. Typically, *ruba’i* and *naghba* are set in the same language. If the introductory verse is not well accepted then the Qawwal moves on to the next introductory verse instead of the song as planned. In the case where an introductory verse is well received then the Qawwal is obligated to repeat the verse wherein he converts the verse from a mere chant to a song in musical meter. In the instance when a Qawwal cannot decide, he simply sings what appeals to him, in the given moment.

### **3.3.1.5 The Deportment Maintained in a Qawwali Assembly**

Qureshi’s work illustrates how the seating arrangement of the participants are in conjunction with their social or spiritual status. The *dargah* the leader ensures prominent seating for special listeners either at the front near the ‘throne’ and further explaining how it is extremely rare for listeners to be seated behind the performers, and occurring only if the *dargah* is crowded — as witnessed during the birthday celebration of Nizamuddin Auliya (Srivastava).

Participant observation at the Nizamuddin Auliya *Dargah* gave first-hand experience of the external decorums and deportments upheld within the assembly. The researchers noted that aspects that were deemed as mandatory by Qureshi, and collectively by the interviewees,

were not maintained to the expected degree. The researchers observed that ideal sitting position was not respected and that many a time, participants would sit in a manner in which their feet would be showing, described by Qureshi to be disrespectful in Indo-Muslim culture.

*Image 5: Kneeling while sitting on the heels is described to be the ideal sitting position for the prayer ritual*

*Source: Discover India Program 2015-16*



Moreover, it was found that head covering was not jointly adhered to. Amit Mehra describes the classical dress of Sufi Saints which consists of a safa, or turban, khirqa, or a long cloak and a galdaoni which is a long scarf.

**Image 6:** An image showing the Qawwal member wearing a safa, khirqa, and a galdaoni

**Source:** Discover India Program



However, Pavan Naik believed that there is no need for a fixed attire for singing and in fact stated that,

“Outer appearance such as the clothes, scarves or caps doesn’t matter, but what matters is if you are present internally and spiritually” (Naik).

Sangari expounds that acts such as moving about and changing positions are frowned upon because they are seen as attracting unwarranted attention. He also maintains that Qawwals too are expected to limit themselves to the confines of decent deportment — resisting the urge to gesticulate during their performance. However, neither of the aforementioned were witnessed at the *dargah*, where the participants would sway in a frenzy of ecstatic fervor and the Qawwals would expressively clap along with their song.

*Image 7: The Image is indicative of the lack of adherence by the Qawwals to external department*

*Source: Discover India Program 2015-16*



Qawwali is greatly context sensitive and is a multifaceted process by which the Qawwals perform. It requires a certain degree of competency from the Qawwal to able to evaluate the status of the audience and gratify the whims of an equally multifaceted audience. Although any verse can be a vehicle for spiritual blessing there is no consistent pattern and the Qawwal needs to able to assess the spiritual arousal of each listener, an element that is so highly individualized and utterly experiential that varies with time over performance. The flexibility of song choice is significantly limited when the level of arousal is generally low than when it is elevated. The Qawwal is responsible for the needs of the audience members which are essentially the same, to reach a state of ecstasy, however, their timings vary.

### **3.3.2 Audience Participation and the Importance of the *Dargah***

“The words that Amir Khusrao, Nizamuddin Auliya, and others wrote for their soul, for their peace of mind, are sung in Qawwali to show people the “path”. To show them where their hopes and dreams can lead them. This *dargah* we are in, is a place where people come with their wishes, and leave with them fulfilled.”

- Saqlain Nizami

#### **3.3.2.1 The *Dargah***

Nizamuddin *dargah* is an abode of positivity, tranquillity and therapy for every individual that visits its sacred walls. It is a spiritual place; one is privy to the throbbing atmosphere the moment one removes his/her shoes and steps inside. It is bustling with life and energy; one hears the splash of people washing their face, the loudspeaker reciting prayers, bare feet shuffling about, and the oscillating thrum of voices. Poor, bedraggled people sit spread across the floor around the shrine, hoping for generosity. They grapple to be the first to receive the *langar* that is handed out. Men and women seat themselves around the shrine, bowing to the tomb, but only males are allowed to go inside and observe the shrine, and add to the layers of colourful *chaddars*.

The significance of Nizamuddin *dargah* to traditional Nizami Qawwali cannot be stressed enough. This is because the name itself, Nizami, is given precisely because of the location. It is the place where *Hazrat* Nizamuddin first became the “*gareeb nawaz*”, or “caretaker of the poor”, and is unique in all its aspects: Qawwals, songs, and location. Performing inside the *dargah* is called “giving *hazri*”, or praying to their Lord. The Qawwals themselves never call it a performance when they sing inside the *dargah*, because that is when they are singing as a prayer, and not to “perform”. Songs sung outside the *dargah* may be called “performances”, because the atmosphere and intent is different (Dehlvi).

#### **3.3.2.2 Behaviour in the *Dargah***

When at the *dargah*, the Qawwals sit right opposite the entrance to the shrine, and leave at least ten metres between them and the tomb. The space created in front of them is left empty

so that they have an unobstructed interaction with the shrine, as their songs are sung to the Saint buried inside. It is also believed that the space allows *jinns*, or spirits (Muslims believe in *jinns*) to come and go freely, as it must be acknowledged that Nizamuddin Auliya also has admirers in a world that transcends tangible boundaries (Dehlvi). The space is crucial during every performance, and does not transpire without.

Where *dargah* etiquette is concerned, priests will make sure enthusiastic viewers do not begin to crowd around the open space, whether by standing or sitting, and also reprimand people for turning their backs to the *dargah*, because it is taken as a sign of disrespect. It is custom for both men and women to cover their heads in the *dargah*, though not obligatory. Courtesy to the shrine and to the sentiment of the devotees usually ensures that most people usually conform to the latter, but a lot of visitors defy this in modern times. It is a strict rule that none of the audience is allowed to dance, sing, or clap along with the Qawwals. This devalues and undermines the *hazri*, because it is traditionally not sung for entertainment purposes, and is not a concert (Dehlvi).

The primary data gathered on the *dargah* and the audience was considerably more than scholarly opinions. Not much has been described about the *dargahs* in secondary data, but on-field research opened a whole new dimension of information and details that were obtained through purely prolonged observation. The researchers were able to better understand the setting that Nizami Qawwali takes place in, the sort of people that visit, its atmosphere, and how that contributes to and ties the entire Qawwali experience together.

### **3.3.2.3 The Audience**

The Qawwali sung at the *dargah* is authentic, *asli*, Qawwali. It is dependent on the *Sufi* atmosphere that the *dargah* creates, which differs from *dargah* to *dargah*. The audience feels this environment that is created, which is an integral part of Qawwali nowadays. Traditionally, as mentioned above, Qawwali was sung solely for the purpose of praying. Requests from the audience were not taken, and the audience mostly consisted of devotees, not casual visitors.

This conventional Qawwali, consisting of prayers close to Nizamuddin Auliya and the *Chishti Sufi* Saints such as Khwaja sahib, Baba Farid, Khwaja Qutub, is meant to put the devotee into a spiritual trance, which the Qawwal then brings him back out of. The Qawwal does this by looking around the audience, gauging which note seems to be hitting home, and then repeating the note until a trance is induced. In this sense, it is the audience that influences the songs the Qawwal will sing. This influence differs from the requests people give to Qawwals to sing a specific song, which is more contemporary (Shrivastava, V). CNN Travel describes it as “a highly interactive art form in which the audience's display of emotion is part of the experience” (Dugar).

A trance need not be induced simply at the *dargah*. If an individual gets the feel of a perfect atmosphere, he may go into a trance even at a festival. The location, time of day, content of the poetry, and the rhythm could contribute to the swaying and the peace of mind that one experiences while listening (Nizami and Nizami).

The information derived from the secondary sources on the audience in the *dargah* does correlate to the observations made by the researchers on field. The researchers experienced the monetary offerings that was mentioned by Regula Qureshi first hand, were immediately able to correlate the secondary data read prior to the on-field research and novel primary data. The author mentions various levels of arousal that occur in a devotee, and the researchers were privy to all these. However, what the researchers did not witness was the Qawwals' special attention or recognition of people who went into ecstatic states, which is mentioned in Qureshi's book.

#### **3.3.2.4 Contemporary Times**

In the last few years, crowds visiting the *dargah* have augmented dramatically due to increase in population, awareness and mobility. Coming to the *dargah* has lost its religious intent in all but a few. People come to simply listen and enjoy the free performance, and not to become closer to the Divine (Nizami and Nizami). Some non-believers might feel the mesmerising effects of the Qawwali and then continue to visit the *dargah*, an example of how it can reach and touch anyone, which is what it used to be like in the days of Nizamuddin Auliya (Nizami and Nizami).

The crowd does not necessarily affect the quality of the performance; simply the intent and songs are altered to now start meeting the audience's preferences. Nowadays, Qawwals do not go prepared with a song list beforehand, but "sing what the public demands" (Nizami and Nizami). This occurs at even the *dargah*, where the audience is not meant to wield so much power over what is supposed to be a *hazri* (Nizami and Nizami). Qawwals try and please the audience as much as possible, potentially due to monetary offerings that are given by satisfied individuals while the performance is going on. Secondary data does not yield much information pertaining to the Nizami Qawwali of contemporary times, and how it is changing in the *dargah*, which was more emphasised on its primary research. However, synonymous with the latter information, the researchers experienced people who gave sizeable monetary offerings and specifically asked the Qawwals to bless them (through their songs) with material things in return. This depicts the commercialisation of Qawwali, and its rapidly reducing spiritual importance for the ones who visit the *dargah*.

Qawwals may also perform their songs outside the *dargah*, where they sometimes perform in music festivals or for college students. The Nizami Brothers recently performed for college students in collaboration with Dinesh Khanna, experienced photographer and director of the film on Nizami Qawwali's *Basant* celebration. Once again, here, the mood of the audience piloted the direction the performance took. An example of a *shayari* that the Nizami Brothers use to amuse the audience:

*Ramraj mein doodh mile, kishan raj mein ghee*

*Kalyug mein chai mili, phoonk phoonk ke pi*

"In the era of Ram, one got milk; in the era of Krishna, one got ghee

In contemporary times, we get tea, so blow on it and drink"

Obviously, this is not a prayer, and shows how Qawwals have adapted themselves to suit the times they are in (Nizami and Nizami).

It is important to note that Qawwali is a music that surpasses linguistic barriers. A member of the audience does not need to understand the lyrics to feel the power emanating from the words. The person need not be a devotee, Muslim, Sufi, musician, or even Indian for that matter for the song to reach in and capture his soul.

### **3.3.3 The Essence and Purpose of Nizami Qawwali**

Qawwali, it is said, is an expression of devotion to the Beloved so powerful, that it enters one through the ears, touches one directly in the heart and overpowers the body thereafter. The urgent, cracking voice of the Qawwal, although not objectively appealing to the ears, in the Qawwali context has the ability to induce a trance within the listener owing to the lyrics of the poetry, the musical element, or the spatial context in which it is sung and heard. When the researchers arrived at the *dargah*, all that had been read about came to life. However, no amount of reading could have prepared one for the sheer atmosphere of sanctity and devotion that surrounded the *dargah* despite the crowds of people occupying it at all times.

The secondary research had given the researchers an idea of the role of the Qawwal, the language in the poetry, importance of the music and the context of the occasion. The field-work, however, allowed for a comprehensive and thorough understanding of what the readings try to explain. In order to arrange these observations and findings in relation to previous research on the topic in a logical and comprehensive manner, this chapter will be further divided. This is in order to do each aspect justice in explaining its importance in relation to the “authentic spiritual song that transports the mystic toward union with God” (Qureshi).

#### **3.3.3.1 Purpose of Qawwali**

Qawwali, to the Sufis, is a medium, a vehicle, to make the audience more receptive to the content of the mystic poetry being sung by them, to the tunes created by the diverse set of instruments used by the Qawwals. It was found that not only was the content of the poetry conceived as a result of the meeting of the Indian and Central Asian symbols and ideas, but so also was the music that accompanies present day Nizami Qawwali. This mergence of music under the tutelage of *Hazrat* Amir Khusrau is considered a musical renaissance of sorts for it sees the integration of elements of South Asian music with that which was brought from Central Asia and what existed in the North (Sangari).

Khawaja Amir Khusrau, although mentioned and elaborated upon in the consulted scholarly writing, was emphasised and elucidated upon during interviews conducted on field. He was a great Saint, court poet for the Delhi Sultanate of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and a revered musicologist and linguist. Having travelled across the kingdom, he absorbed the cultural symbols and music aesthetic from all over. The music that accompanies Qawwali has been heavily inspired by the *Dhrupad* framework of *ragas* that make up an important part of South Indian music. With this, he introduced various instruments to the assembly of the devotional music, such as the *harmonium* and the *tabla*. From Central Asian regions, he brought the *daf* and *tamboor* and also the *sitar* to India. He combined all of these styles of music to form the kind of accompaniment that joins the recitation or singing of Sufi poetry today in the Nizami Chishti *sama*. The addition of music helps the listener exalt his mystical love; the music makes it an emotional and spiritual experience for listener (Saeed).

In Qureshi's work, there is explication of the reason behind absorption of aspects of Hindu *bhajans* into Qawwali. She explains that the reason for this was to spread the teachings of Islam, through Sufism to a larger, broader audience. Tewari too, points out the similarities between the Hindu devotional practice of *Bhajan* and Qawwali. During interactions with scholars such as Kumkum and Vinay Srivastava, another layer of this was unearthed. Music has been integral to the practice of Hinduism since its inception. Thus, followers of the faith identified with and were attached to the concept of calling out to their Lord and singing at their temple as a means of worship and achieving oneness with their *bhagwan*. In order to appeal to the largely Hindu audience that they were surrounded by in the Indian subcontinent, and to spread the teachings of their faith through non-violent means, the element of music was added to the Chishti Sufi *sama-e-mahfil*.

Thus, as mentioned by Nayyar and furthered by Amit Mehra, the intensity and strength of the Qawwali sound and content was and is intended to convey the religious message of the mystical realm of Sufism to the heterogeneous audience of the Indian subcontinent, and now globally (Mehra).

### 3.3.3.2 Purpose of the Qawwal

The literature solicited to understand the purpose of the Qawwal was extensive in explaining the literal, physical purpose at the *hazri* in terms of his hand actions, his seating position and other technicalities. On field, through observation one could see that these intricacies were not nearly the most important aspects of the role of the Qawwal during the *hazri*. In simple terms, the role of the Qawwal has evolved over time, culminating in his position as a spiritual storyteller for the mystics and the Sufis. He is the bridge upon which the Sufi walks, dances and dreams his way to his *wisal*, or union with the Beloved (Sangari).

The “performers” of Qawwali are said to excel at holding the attention of the diverse audience and making them receptive to the message of that which they sing (Nayyar). Qureshi, too, refers to the occasion as a performance throughout her writing. While this holds true, interactions with the Qawwals at the Nizamuddin Auliya shrine yielded that their singing cannot be classified as a performance at all. A performance usually refers to a show or a display of something to an audience. In the case of Nizami Qawwali, however, the Qawwals are clear on the fact that they are singing to nobody but *Allah*, their Beloved and the audience is secondary. They also made it a point to articulate that if anyone is important, in the sense of the audience, it is the mystic trying to attain oneness with his Beloved (Nizami Brothers). Their patriarch, Meraj Ahmed Nizami once said, when asked if he was a Sufi, that being a Sufi is a very “big thing”. He said he was just a Qawwal. That which Amir Khusrau, Nizamuddin Auliya wrote for their soul, for peace of mind is sung in Qawwali to show people the path to final submission to the Lord; to show them where their hopes and dreams can lead them (Chaturvedi).

Their job, secondarily, whilst making the *qaul* is to alter the listener’s state of consciousness in order to make them more pliable to the content of the poetry. He often dwells on a single phrase in the event that the phrase would need repetitive listening for the listener to understand it. He repeats and highlights various words and syllables to make sure the listener in the audience fully understands and internalises the various layers and meanings of the line (Khanna).

One such line is “*Kushtagane khanjare tasleem ra/Har zaman az ghaid jaane-deegarast*”, written by Ahmed Jam Dehlvi. *Tasleem* signifies total submission. The couplet means: those who have been fortunate enough to be slain by the sword of submission receive a new life with each moment, an indication of the smaller merging into the larger cosmology (Sangari). Such was the impact of these lines upon *Hazrat* Qutubuddin Bakhtyar Kaki that he passed away at the highest point of his trance, or became *fanaa* and achieved his *wisal*. He had passed into the realm of killing the ego and his *baqa* (his remnants) united with the Divine (Khan).

The researchers observed this technique of repetition as well whilst in attendance of the *hazri*, especially in lines such as “*naina milake mohse naina milake*”, from *Chhaap tilak*, a popular Qawwali by *Hazrat* Amir Khusrau, meaning “after having met my eyes” in a song about losing identity in the presence of the Beloved. The repetition of this line became almost cyclical as the Qawwals chanted it for the duration of about two minutes before resuming the rest of the poetic verse. This was successful in inducing, at very least, some level of ecstasy in the audience. This observation can be correlated to Nayyar’s observation of repetition to exhaust meaning from the sentence and transcend linguistic barriers and thus aid the audience to attain the indistinct stage of inner knowledge: *ma’rifat*.

Master Qawwals may be able to tug on the heartstrings of even those members of the assembly that do not understand the language.

### **3.3.3.3 Importance of Language**

As mentioned previously, *Hazrat* Amir Khusrau was a great linguist who was proficient in, and wrote in chaste Farsi, Hindi, Arabic, *Khari boli* (the language of the people) and *Braj Bhasha* (also the language of the people), as well as Urdu (Jaffer). Thus, a variety of languages, and even their mergence may be noted and heard in several of the Qawwalis sung at the *Hazrat* Nizamuddin Auliya shrine. Thus, most of the musically presented texts are those of Amir Khusrau, who wrote several in honour of his *pir* and those of Auliya’s as well (Chaturvedi).

As discussed earlier, and mentioned in the literature reviewed, the presence of religious music came from the Indian Sufis’ desire to spread the ideology in the Hindu environment.

Thus, with some prior knowledge of this influence, the researchers were able to relate this to one of the *hazris* given at the shrine one evening. The Qawwal sang “*Kirpa, Maharaja Moinuddin, kirpa*”, again, repetitively. This line has clear demarcations of Hindu influence, especially that of the *Bhajan* tradition. “*Kirpa*” is a term referring to the concept of Divine grace in Hinduism. “*Maharaja*” is the word used to describe an Indian prince, and has its origins in Sanskrit, the ancient language of the Vedas and the Hindus. It is thus interesting to see Maulana Moinuddin Chishti being assigned a Hindu title. This shows that the reach of Qawwali is secular and inclusive of all religions. Sufism thus breeds no faith or religion based hatred, and its attempt to absorb individuals from different religious backgrounds again reflects the history of Chishti Sufism and the atmosphere in which it was born. Hence, music and the inclusion of languages in *sama* shows the reach of Islam via Sufism.

This reach has now turned global as the knowledge and appeal of Qawwali has travelled to the West as well. The people there seldom are acquainted with the language that the Qawwals use. Yet, they seem to be “satisfied” with the performance. Thus, the message of Qawwali, in these secular spaces, too, transcends language and finds its way into the hearts of people through the sheer power of sound and energy. Through this, the Indian Sufi culture is not only reiterating itself in its own land during current times, but is also surpassing the barriers of borders and language and spreading the *muhabbat* of the *ilm* (Nizami Brothers). This could perhaps be due to the mastery of the Nizami Brothers themselves for they hold strong the belief that until the Qawwal himself doesn’t understand the meaning of the poetry, he will not be able to sing it effectively enough for the audience. This aspect of the language was not one that was sufficiently discussed in the discourse of the literature consulted.

#### **3.3.3.4 What They Sing About**

Sufi poetry written by great Saints and their *mureeds* is the source of the Qawwali repertoire (Qureshi). This point was made clear in the piece of literature by Qureshi in establishing the *pir-mureed* (the mentor-mentee) relationship, and the *mureed*’s love for his *pir*.

A Qawwali consists of:

- The *dhun*, or the melody

- The *bandish*, or a steady drone set in a specific *raga*
- The *tarz*, or the rhythm of the poetry (Sangari)

The Qawwal *bachche*, of Nizamuddin Auliya *dargah* have a stock of standard tunes that they have learnt in their educative and formative years. This is not to say that they are limited to these and do not keep themselves open to improvisation. Their poetic repertoire consists of a plethora of texts taught to them by their teacher that they pick and choose from depending upon the *zaman*, *maqam* and *akhwan*. The current resident Qawwals are Saqlain and Ghulam Nizami, who form the famous duo called ‘Nizami Brothers’. They are the direct descendants of the late, legendary Qawwal, Meraj Ahmed Nizami (Nizami Brothers). Having read the common Qawwali poetry and gaining a certain amount of understanding from Qureshi’s book, the researchers’ interaction with the Nizami Brothers was of value for they elaborated upon the texts of some of the songs.

Their repertoire constantly expands with the tunes and lyrics of songs released by the entertainment industry of current times, as they are always on the lookout to pick new tunes (Nizami Brothers). Their collection of songs also includes verses that may have been passed to them by devotees during Qawwali *hazris* in order to hear their own journeys and feelings to aid themselves to reach the exalted state of trance or *wajd* (Chaturvedi). Specifically at the Nizamuddin Auliya shrine, it was noticed and confirmed that their repository consists of:

- Songs associated with Nizamuddin Auliya, usually written by Amir Khusrau because they are the essence of the Qawwal *bachche* tradition
- General Sufi classics commonly known to Qawwals all over the subcontinent, such as poetry by Bulleh Shah (*Damadam Mast Qalandar*), Momim, Ahmed Jam Dehlvi etc.
- Personal repository that could have been handed down along generations or authored personally by the Qawwal
- Songs that have garnered popularity in the mainstream, popular culture set up

The most recent senior figure of the Qawwal *bachche*, Nizami household was most proficient with the first three. He did not consider the contemporary songs, created for entertainment purposes worth feature in the Nizami Qawwali occasion.

An example of a song from the Nizami lineage's personal repertoire is Meraj Ahmed's *Kachh Jagmag*. It has its roots in North Indian folk music. Its use of Sanskrit origin words reflects its taking of the Hindu devotional form, as well as folk idioms to address the great Saint Nizamuddin Auliya.

#### Man Kunto Maula

Arabic

*Man kunto Maula*

*Fa Ali-un-Maula*

Farsi

*Dar dil'dar dil dar dani*

*Hum tum Tanana nana tananana re*

*Yalali yalali yala yala re*

*Yalalali yalalali yala yala re*

The song quoted above is the song that the researcher's heard first upon arriving at the *dargah*. It is the simplest example of the mergence of languages in Sufi poetry. Despite its aesthetic appeal on a very emotional level, the researchers required the aid of the practitioners in order to understand the implications of this specific segment of the Qawwali event. It is considered the most fundamental Sufi song in India. The one Arabic line of the song translates to "whoever accepts me as master, Ali is his master too." It is one of Prophet Mohammed's sayings, and has been recorded. This proves as the most fervent argument against the concept that Islam and Sufism cannot associate. This one line is the main text of the hymn and is known as the *qaul*. This marks the beginning of the Qawwali occasion. Almost every *hazri* at Nizamuddin Auliya *dargah* begins with this as its *qaul*, for he calls to the Prophet and Ali. According to the Nizami Brothers, this song, with its scope for repetition and cyclical poetic framework, expresses the basic Sufi tenet of spiritual succession.

The same version of this song, including lyrics, tunes and tonality, is used the same way by all descendants of the Qawwal *bachche*.

## Tori surat ke balhari

*Tori surat ke balhari (Nizam)*

*Sab sakhain chundar mori malli*

*Dekh hansin narnari*

*Ab ke bahar chundar mori rand do*

*Rakh le laj hamari*

This piece of poetry, written by Amir Khusrau, talks about giving himself up to become one with his *pir*, as his bride. The opening line is standalone and is repeated at the discretion of the Qawwal during the course of the song. The purpose of this song, and this line is similar to that of the line “*naina milake mohse*” from *Chhaap Tilak*. Meraj Nizami’s version is the one that is sung most popularly (Nizami Brothers).

During various parts of the *hazri*, one could see in the devotees’ demeanour that the “flame” of mystical love, explained by Qureshi, was kindled. As the repetitions occur and the crescendo builds, the devotees’ longing for spiritual union intensifies. This longing is commonly described by the word: trance.

### **3.3.3.5 The Trance**

The trance, when explained simply, is a physical manifestation in the devotee of the mystical love unlocked and urged by the utterances in the *sama mahfil*. The culmination of this love is the state of being *fanaa*. One does not achieve this until one has acquired the fundamental *knowledge*. This is when the purpose of one’s outward shell ends, thus implying that it takes a lifetime of the Sufi- whatever be the duration- to discover this *ilm*.

Ghazali’s writings attribute the state of trance or *haal* to the entrance of the music into the heart, when the music is that of the “God Most High” (Nayyar). The *maqam* on the other hand is a state induced by the individual effort (Qureshi). Despite having read about these

stages, and their integration with Sufism, the researchers' observations of the *awhal* (sing. *haal*), were not able to discern between the trance actuated by God and that by the individual. Scholars mentioned the concept of *wahdat-al-wujud*, or all the unity of Being, as one that applies to the notion of the trance. It implies that *Allah* and his Creation are one, that is, the source and the Creation are the same. On this basis, all that exists comprises God's knowledge and will ultimately return to it, thus making the mergence with God possible at the *wisal*. The beginning and end of life is *Allah* (Srivastava, V). During an interview, Sangari compared the Divine unity to an ocean with everybody drowning inside it, i.e. immersing themselves into the realm of knowledge, removed from the reality of human life. The Divine unity can be equated with the wealth of knowledge, or the entirety of the *ilm*, which resides within the Self (Chaturvedi). Thus, the trance is perhaps the recognition of the drowning of the Soul, which is perpetual, due to the residence of the knowledge within one's external shell. The various levels of this recognition are the path, through which one annihilates the ego of the Self while passing through various stages of consciousness.

The trance, therefore, induced by the Qawwali is first the realisation of the Self, and then the consequent annihilation of the ego of the Self by way of travelling through one's own consciousness. The listener's ecstasy is thus exhibited through physical movements ranging from the simple rhythmic movement of the head to full body spasmodic convulsions. Based upon observation, the researchers attempted to simplify and tabulate the range of movements as depictions of the listener's level of spiritual arousal.

None of these physical manifestations are permitted in the Nizami *khanqa* unless it is a manifestation of ecstasy and not as a mere response to entertainment. However, through interaction with Professor Vinay Srivastava, a vital question was raised in relation to this: Where can one draw a line between that which is entertainment and that which is spiritual? When considered further, one stumbles upon the potential worthlessness of trying to establish a dichotomy dividing and differentiating between the two on the basis of comparing the individual elements of each assuming that the aspects of the two are distinct to begin with.

Thus, the power of the sound of Nizami Qawwali is so immense that it moves devotees to tears and convulsions due to their stages of ecstasy that make them realise their nearness with God. It welcomes minds from all walks of life and eventually reveals that which is sought by

all: the truth of life. While this concept sounds lofty and ambiguous, this is the true essence of Qawwali for this auditory beauty is almost like air thick with the postulations and ideas of mysticism- something that cannot be captured within the boundaries of a rigid definition.

**Table 4:** *Depicting the physical gestures denoting the various levels of ecstasy*

**Source:** *Discover India Program 2015-2016*

REACTION	ASSESSMENT OF STATE			
	Neutral	Mildly Aroused	Intensely Aroused	Ecstatic
Tapping fingers		✓		✓
Exclamation			✓	✓
Swaying				✓
Embracing				✓
Prostration			✓	✓
Raising arms		✓		✓
Moving about			✓	✓
Shouting			✓	✓
Weeping			✓	✓

### 3.3.4 The Role of the Female Voice

Preceding on-field research the researchers had an extremely limited understanding of the importance of the female voice in Qawwali as a result of a vast plethora of secondary research pertaining to a largely male dominated assembly. One of the primary objectives of the researchers was to explore the cultural beliefs that govern the participation of women in a Qawwali assembly; the answer for the question has been satisfied through the following analysis and comparison between pre-field and post-field findings.

### 3.3.4.1 The Involvement of Women in the Nizami Tradition

Qawwali is exclusively for male participation, the reason behind the nugatory role for women's involvement in rituals, in the words of Shubha Mudgal, is as a result of "the patriarchy of society" (Mudgal). Whereas the early Western studies of Islam were text-based the result of an on-the-ground research in an interview with scholar Yousuf Saeed sheds light on the fact that the female voice is only allowed to feature as part of the sphere of domestic life, such as that of a private or secular mahfil. Saeed contends that women are not permitted to sing in front of the Shrine because it is believed that a women singing in front of the devotees would be considered distracting. Professor Vinay Srivastava backs this judgement wherein; he states that women cannot be a part of the Qawwali assembly, and that they can only be a part of it in a family setting.

Through the course of fieldwork, the researchers were able to discern the following areas of female participation in Sufism and its rituals.

- Women as singers/ musicians/ participants of Sufi songs
- The falsetto impersonation of the female voice by male Qawwals

### 3.3.4.2 The Feminization of Qawwali

In Saiyid Jaffri's words, the feminization of Qawwali was androcentric in tradition. In line with Qureshi's work, Jaffri elaborates on the Qawwal's falsetto voice production to impersonate the female voice, he addresses the purpose of this feature to fulfill *mi'raj* and the Prophet's union with the deity. The disparity between the information attained through primary and secondary sources lies in the fact that although Qureshi mentions bridal imagery in reference to the state of *kasf* in a discussion of cultural myths such as that of Sassi, Hir and Sohni, whereas on-field research emphasizes bridal imagery in terms of the death of the Saint which is a symbol of his marriage with the Almighty. However, the union with the Almighty through the death of the Saint is a concept that is unique to the Indian context of Qawwali; moreover, the Qawwals do not sing under the falsetto of impersonation of the female voice. In talking of the subcontinent Dhruv Sangari mentions that after marriage, a woman foregoes

her identity in order to embrace that of her spouse, this can be paralleled with the concept of the ultimate union of the Saint through death.

Through the years men and women have conditioned themselves to have certain rules, qualities and beliefs which won't persist as time passes by (Naik). It will only be found in people who practice it with religious etiquette. However, women will perpetually have to face these restrictions since they are given by the Almighty. As a result of this, the involvement of women in Qawwali will be limited.

***Image 8:*** Women are allowed to participate in the faith of the religion but not be part of the tradition.

***Source:*** Discover India Program 2015-16



### 3.3.5 Qawwali Traditions

As Nizami Qawwali is distinct for its patronage by *Hazrat* Nizamuddin Auliya and its continuation by his progeny, it is understandable that the art form has certain traditions attached to the Sufi Saint himself. His birthday and death anniversary are marked as special occasions on the *dargah* calendar. Moreover, one story attached to the *Hazrat* and his *mureed*, Khusrau, has resulted in the acceptance of a Hindu tradition into the Sufi fold. In order to understand the distinct nature of Nizami Qawwali, it is important to know the various traditions attached to it. On the researchers' on-field trip, the following were the three primary traditions discussed solely by the various samples interviewed for they had not come up in any sources prior to the on-field study. There was a distinct lack of documentation of important Sufi festivals, especially at Nizamuddin *Dargah*.

#### 3.3.5.1 Birthday Celebrations

On arriving in Delhi and communicating with the Sufi Kathak Foundation, it was revealed that the researchers were fortunate enough to have been present in Delhi to celebrate *Hazrat* Nizamuddin Auliya's 801<sup>st</sup> birthday. With the exception of some newspaper articles, a brief review of secondary sources showed that there has been little documentation of the *Auliya's* birthday celebrations. This made documenting the events of the night crucial for the researchers. They were cordially invited to join the festivities with the founder of the organisation, Mrs. Manjari Chaturvedi and the events of the night (from 8:00 pm of 8<sup>th</sup> December to 5:00 am of 9<sup>th</sup> December) were recorded for research purposes.

**Image 9:** 801st Birthday celebration of *Hazrat* Nizamuddin Auliya

**Source:** *Discover India Program 2015-16*



On the night of 8<sup>th</sup> December, one visited the *dargah* to find it packed with devotees. This did not come as a surprise but the sheer numbers were astounding. It has been estimated that there were at least 1,000 devotees present in the *dargah* at any one point of time and over 5,000 devotees who visited over the course of the night. There were numerous personalities who attended the celebrations as well. Some include Arun Jaitley (current Finance Minister of India), Sardar Singh (current captain of the Indian Hockey Team) and Siddharth Mahadevan, practising musician and son of Shankar Mahadevan.

Before entering the shrine area, the *dargah* area includes a *langar* that serves food for the festivities.

**Image 10:** An image of the langar

**Source:** Discover India Program



Having made the acquaintance of Faisal Nizami, a senior administrator, the researchers were invited to join him inside. It was observed that entry into the *langar* appeared limited. Senior members of the *dargah* administration, their friends and family and other acquaintances alone were given entry. Additionally, there were very few women inside. This starkly contrasted the views of some scholars, such as Ms. Sadia Dehlvi, who stated that the *dargah* and the *langar* were open to one and all.

Following the warm welcome, the researchers entered the shrine area to find it beautifully decorated. There was a network of tinsel created as a roof all across. This was further illuminated by bright lights all around surrounding the moon above. An element of calmness radiated through the *dargah* despite the chaos of the bustling crowds. To the left, strategically placed right behind the performing Qawwals, was a large banner of Venky's, a popular Asian poultry company. The researchers were informed by officials that Venky's had graciously agreed to sponsor the night's festivities. It was intriguing that even the birthday celebrations had been commercialized, allowing for the highest bidder to 'sponsor' the events.

There was also a great deal of news coverage of the night. Placed all around the practising Qawwals were cameras that filmed everything. The researchers were told that it was a live

feed of the birthday celebrations on certain local news channels. This cemented the relevance of the night to Delhites that it was a prominent event deserving of news coverage all night long. However, the researchers themselves faced problems in filming. They were required to sign a 'Non-Objection Certificate' and all footage was to be shared with the *dargah* administration. Footage of women at the *dargah* needed to be deleted immediately if any objections were to arise. All of this highlighted a certain censorship by the *dargah* administration in their portrayal of themselves and the Sufi Saint.

There were a total of eight Qawwal 'groups' that performed at Nizamuddin *Dargah* on the birthday night. Each had a certain time slot within which they were allowed to give *hazri*. It was observed that each group paid homage to different songs and rarely were songs repeated. Over the duration of twelve hours, the groups gave *hazri* to not just Nizamuddin *Auliya* himself, but his predecessors as well. With each new group, the tempo of the music increased, the pace of the *tabla* and clapping gradually increasing over time till it reached its peak with '*Baba Farid Ke Laal*', a Qawwali dedicated to Nizamuddin *Auliya* that marked the beginning of the *chaddar* ceremony. While the song went on, the *sajjadanashin* began to change the *chaddars* inside the shrine. Each layer was gradually removed, folded and kept aside. Then, new *chaddars* were placed on the shrine. The birthday celebrations marked one of two important events in the calendar that the *chaddars* are replaced in the shrine. Throughout the process of changing the *chaddars*, the Qawwali must keep going. There are no pauses. This is the moment when all of the eight Qawwal groups come together and perform as one unit, marking the most glorious moment of the night when a brotherhood is created and the core values of Sufism are best epitomised. The researchers left the *dargah* the next morning in a daze, wholly energised by the experience at the *dargah* and the power of Qawwali in creating a network between every devotee present for the birthday celebrations.

### 3.3.5.2 *Urs*

In most cultures around the world, death is met with periods of grieving. It is an occasion of deep bereavement. The word evokes a mental picture of great sadness, a loss in the family, the demise of a human being whose soul has passed on. Words of consolation are exchanged. A time period of mourning is observed. Death, in most cultures, is a solemn occurrence.

This is not the case with the Sufis. In Sufi culture, death is accepted with great enthusiasm. It is one of the most important days for the Saint and his followers. When a Sufi Saint passes away, it is believed to be his union with his beloved, Allah. It is termed *wisal*. (Chaturvedi) This 'union' is often misinterpreted in many ways as a sort of 'marriage', but the death does not contain any romantic connotations. It is a wholly spiritual endeavour by the Sufi Saint to spend his whole life in the path of the Divine to earn the right to be one with the Lord when his time comes. He is freed of all earthly confinements only by death.

The Saints' followers celebrate this freedom by a death celebration called '*Urs*'. According to the Islamic calendar, Nizamuddin *Auliya's Urs* ceremony falls between February and April every year. It is a much-awaited occasion. Followers throng the *dargah* and Qawwali is performed all night long, much like the Saint's birthday ceremony. The *sajjadanashin* or the *existing Sheikh of the silsila* conducts the *Urs* ceremonies. The festivities span over 3-4 days. Devotees travel from other parts of the country to celebrate this momentous day at the *dargah*, marking a pilgrimage of sorts for Sufis. The *dargah* of Moinuddin Chishti in Ajmer is believed to attract 4, 00,000 devotees every year. (Chaturvedi)

The *Urs* was significant to the researchers for its marriage imagery between the Sufi Saint and the Lord. The Sufi Saint was described as a bride, finally ready for a union with Allah. It was reminiscent of the evocation of the female voice in Qawwali music. The celebration of *Urs* indicates the role of the feminine in Islamic tradition, albeit covert in nature. It was notable that much had been written about the *Urs* at the revered Ajmer Sharif, but little on Nizamuddin *dargah* and almost nothing on other *dargahs* around the country. Much of the information obtained came from the personal experiences of the interviewees.

### 3.3.5.3 *Basant*

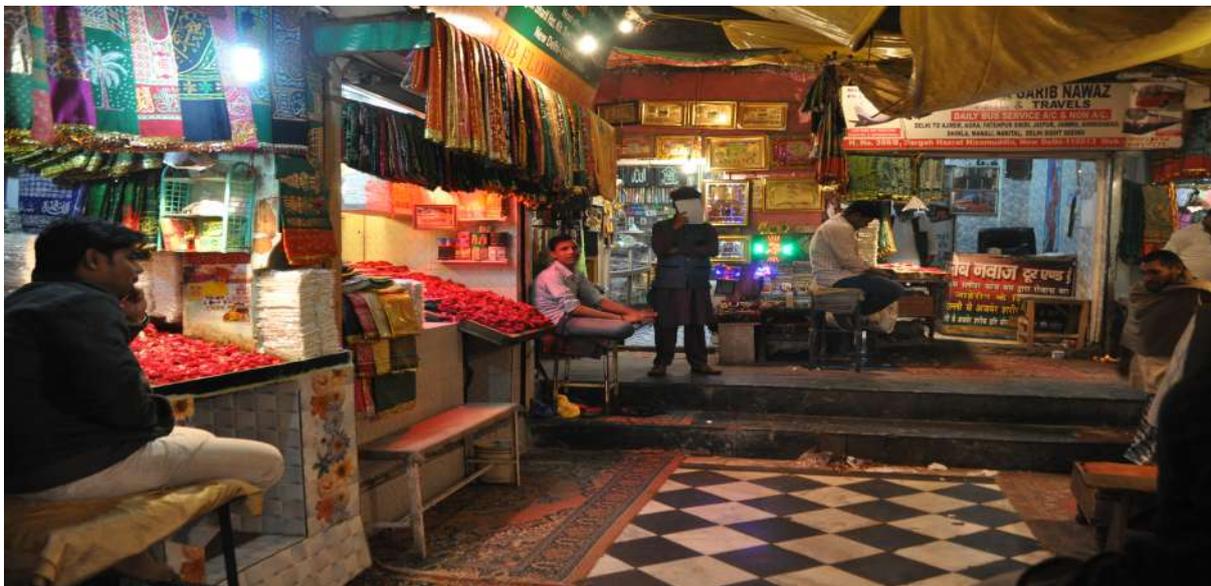
As one watches the Qawwals perform, fingers softly stroking the keys of the harmonium, a dozen voices merging into one unanimous *qaul*, the importance of the *dargah* in creating just the right atmosphere for the Qawwali performance can be easily inferred. The *dargah* is as integral to their *hazri* as their *hazri* is to the *dargah*. A symbiotic relationship has been created over 750 years, intangible and unexplainable. Looking in front at the shrine, at their beloved placed inside, it is difficult to imagine the Qawwals performing anywhere else.

And yet, they do.

Only once every year, the Qawwals of Nizamuddin *Dargah* give up the courtyard of the *dargah* to perform in Nizamuddin *Basti*, commemorating the one occasion in the year that they are allowed to perform outside the shrine area. It is called '*Basant*' and to the people affiliated with the *dargah*, it is one among a handful of important events in their religious calendar.

**Image 11:** *An image of the Nizamuddin Basti*

**Source:** *Discover India Program*



*Basant* is performed in numerous Chishti Sufi shrines all over the country, but it is special to Nizamuddin *Dargah* for the intriguing tale attached to this particular Sufi Saint. It is believed that, when *Hazrat* Nizamuddin's nephew Taquiuddin Nooh passed away, he delved into a period of mourning. There was little that could cheer him up. Overcome by grief, he retreated to his *basti*, paying little attention to anything or anyone else. This deeply affected his *mureed*, Amir Khusrau, who resolved to bring a smile to his *pir's* face. One day, Khusrau saw a procession of women singing devotional songs outside the *basti*. They were on their way to the Kalkaji *mandir* some distance away. They wore bright yellow garments and carried multitudes of marigolds (Dehlvi).

On enquiry, they told him that it was to please their deity. Their devotion to the goddess inspired Khusrau. He put on a yellow *ghaghra* and *chunari*, carried marigold flowers and sung *basant* (spring) songs to Nizamuddin Auliya. His master was deeply pleased by this and burst into laughter. This ended Nizamuddin's period of mourning and began the tradition of *Basant*, one of the blatant celebrations of the special *pir-mureed* relationship shared by the *Auliya* and Khusrau (Lidhoo).

Historical evidence of *Basant* shows that it used to begin in the *dargah* of Fatah Khan in Qadam Sharif before moving on the second day to the *dargah* of Qutub Sahah in Mehrauli, then the *dargah* of *Hazrat* Chiragh Delhi in what is Greater Kailash today. It was on the third day that the festivities moved to Nizamuddin *Dargah* (Lidhoo). At Nizamuddin *Dargah*, the tradition involves a procession through the *basti* towards the *dargah*. The Qawwals must carry their instruments. The procession begins after *asr* (afternoon prayers) opposite the grave of Ghalib, a great Mughal poet. The next stop is the grave of the *Auliya's* nephew. The procession ends at the shrine. The Qawwals and fellow devotees enter with yellow sheets held over their heads and the *sajjadanashin* leads the ceremonial prayers. The yellow sheets and flowers are then placed on the Saint's grave. Afterwards, the procession visits the grave of Amir Khusrau, located in the same vicinity. Women may be a part of the procession itself, but they are not allowed inside the shrine. They may watch the festivities from the courtyard of the *dargah*. *Basant* celebrations end with Qawwali performances in the courtyard, which generally goes on anywhere between one to three hours (Safvi).

Colour is a salient theme in Qawwali and *Basant* epitomizes this fact. It is the idea that the devotee is merely a blank cloth and it is their beloved, the Lord, who dyes them. It symbolizes complete surrender to the master. In wearing yellow garments, the Qawwals ask the Lord to take them into his fold and give them colour, accept them as the blank cloth they are and dye them according to his will. It is one of numerous examples of their unwavering faith in the divine (Saeed).

**Image 12:** *The sajjadanashin adorns the salient thematic color of yellow, evoking the tradition of saffron in Basant*

**Source:** *Discover India Program 2015-16*



One of Amir Khusrau's famous works, "Aaj Rang He" is deeply symbolic of this. It is most prominently performed at the *dargah* during *Basant*. It was written on returning to his mother from an encounter with the *Auliya*. Through the metaphor of colour, Khusrau discusses his love for his *pir* and his surrender to the master:

“Aaj Rang He”

*Aaj rang hay hey man rang hay rib  
Moray mehboob kay ghar rang hai ri  
Sajan milaavra, sajan milaavra,  
Sajan milaavra moray aangan ko  
Aaj rang hai.....  
Mohay pir paayo Nizamudin aulia  
Nizamudin aulia mohay pir payoo  
Des bades mein dhoondh phiree hoon  
Toraa rang man bhayo ri.....,  
Jag ujiyaaro, jagat ujiyaaro,  
Main to aiso rang aur nahin dekhi ray  
Main to jab dekhun moray sung hai,  
Aaj rang hai hey maan rang hai ri.*

Translation

What a glow everywhere I see, Oh mother, what a glow;  
I've found the beloved, yes I found him,  
In my courtyard;  
I have found my pir Nizamuddin Aulia.  
I roamed around the entire world,  
looking for an ideal beloved;  
And finally this face has enchanted my heart.  
The whole world has been opened for me,  
Never seen a glow like this before.  
Whenever I see now, he is with me,  
Oh beloved, please dye me in yourself;  
Dye me in the colour of the spring, beloved;  
What a glow, Oh, what a glow. (Aaj Rang Hai)

The exact date of *Basant* differs from year to year. For the year 2016, *Basant* falls on the date of February 12<sup>th</sup>. It coincides with the Hindu tradition of *Basant Panchami*, a celebration of the arrival of spring. This is an example of the integration of Hindu traditions into Sufism. As

a philosophy, it is always moulding, accepting new traditions into its order. A ritual intended for the goddess Kalkaji has been interpreted differently by the Sufis and been implemented according to their long-lasting tradition of respect for the master.

#### **4. Contemporary Adaptations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

At the inception of this research endeavour, one attempted to study the distinct nature of Nizami Qawwali while attempting to avoid viewing it through the lens of its modern adaptations that one had been previously exposed to. A bias lingered in the background during naturalistic observations which the researchers made a conscious effort to overcome. It was difficult to listen to Qawwali without relating the music to the Qawwali heard in pop culture today. During content analysis post-field, it became clear that the tables had turned. With exposure to Nizami Qawwal and its enchanting atmosphere over the *dargah*, the researchers realized that the contemporary adaptations of the music tradition was worth a second look, this time with a different perspective.

##### **4.1 Contemporary Adaptations of Practitioners of Qawwali**

After being exposed to the Nizami Qawwals of the namesake *dargah* in Delhi, the researchers endeavoured to make a comparison between these Qawwals and practitioners from other regions, faiths and backgrounds. This was done by drawing parallels between the two. In interviewing these non-traditional practitioners, one hoped to understand the evolution of Qawwali into a form of music practised outside the *dargah*. Additionally, the interviews attempted to understand that one, significant quality of Qawwali that captured the interest of non-Sufi musicians.

#### 4.1.1 Pawan Naik

Pawan Naik is a Maharashtrian practitioner of Qawwali, based in Ahmednagar in Western India. Inspired to pursue music by his parents at a young age, Naik was inducted into the practice and study of classical music and found himself in the realm of Qawwali. With the help of his teachers, he acquired knowledge of the basics of Hindustani classical music, such as *le*, *taal*, and *ras*. Through his studies at Pune University in Maharashtra, Naik developed an interest in Sufism and its musical ritual. This was sparked by a comparative study done on the Qawwali of Gwalior, Agra and Jaipur. His interest in Qawwali sparked slowly, while listening to it with friends, and acquainting himself with various aspects of Sufism and the Sufi ritual. His knowledge of Hindustani classical and intrigue with Sufism led him to study the difference between the two and began his Qawwali journey.

Naik learnt to play the *tabla* in order to be able to recreate and bring alive his compositions, for he is of the belief that the rhythm is the heartbeat of the composition. Having studied *shabd pradhan gayaki*, although in the style of Hindustani classical music, he understood the value of lyrics and pronunciation of the song more than the melody- an important aspect of Qawwali, as mentioned previously. According to him, the most important thing about Qawwali is the purity of mind, heart and soul of the Sufi that it represents.

Through the interaction with him, Naik's genuine love and reverence for the Sufi philosophy was apparent. For the survival of Qawwali, or for it to even exist, contextual understanding of the texts and the philosophy is integral (Sangari). It is this knowledge of the historical context around which Sufism was born which is what is lost on people today who are exposed to Qawwali through mainstream media for solely entertainment purposes (Sangari).

Naik has well and truly absorbed the spirit of humility and humanity that is propagated by Sufism and has thus begun to write poetry as a textual source for his Qawwali practice. His poetry seems to be secular for it incorporates elements from the Hindu faith as well, thus furthering the tradition, started by Hafiz Amir Khusrau, of using local cultural symbols. It is also written in a mix of Hindi and Marathi.

*Ant tu, swaas tu, drushya tu, nirakar saakar nirakar*

*Dhan dhan gaau, man man mandir, hech tujhe ekgaan (x4)*

*Ek tu hi nirakar, ek tu hi saakar (x2)*

*Paach tatva he, aale mirun hi, Panch-mukaatn aaz*

*Chara-charatun bharun urla Ishwara cha naad*

*Ek aandhi tu, ek sparsh tu, ek drushya tu, ek randh tu*

*Ek tu hi nirakar, ek tu hi saakar (x2)*

*Dhan dhan gaau, man man mandir, hech tujhe ekgaan (x8)*

In Hinduism *Panch-tantva* refers to the five forms of Shiva – *Dharti* (Earth), *Agni* (Fire), *Jal* (Water), *Akash* (Sky), *Vaayu* (Wind).

He performs at the local *dargah* in Ahmednagar, and even though he is not of Islamic descent, the devotees have accepted him as one who understands them and their faith. (Naik).

#### **4.1.2 Wadali Brothers**

It has been reiterated by the samples interviewed that the essence, and soul of Qawwali lies at the heart of Sufism. The Wadali Brothers are a duo originating from Punjab, India who call themselves Sufi practitioners. They also perform music in the genres of *gurbani*, *kafi*, *ghazal* and *bhajan*. They are fifth generation Sufi singers. Despite their family heritage in the musical tradition, both had been reluctant to become singers. Puranchand, the elder brother, worked in an *akhara* until he was forced by his father, Thakur Das, into music. His younger brother, Pyarelal, worked in the local theatre troupe till he, too, was required to join the field of music. He was trained by his older brother, who he considers his *guru*.

At the beginning of the interview, the brothers were quick to establish that they do not consider themselves Qawwals. On enquiry, they stated that they do not want to be associated with the term ‘Qawwali’. Although not overtly mentioned, there was a sense that they had a certain displeasure with Qawwali as a music form, subtly hinting that its practitioners were uncivilized and were mere entertainers who performed for money. They much preferred to be called ‘Sufi singers’. This affirmed a common perception that the researchers stumbled upon: that Qawwali had lost its religious connotation today. It was just seen as a moneymaking scheme.

The Wadali Brothers extended to a claim that “nobody” sings Sufi music today. They emphasized that the name of the Saint is taken in vain in modern times. This was reflective of

the *hazri* and religious quality of Qawwali. Despite hailing from a different social background altogether, they understood the religious element of the music that they perform. There is a sense of contextualisation that has taken place, wherein they do not merely mimic an art form that may not be traditionally theirs. There is a conscious effort to understand the context of the music first. However, as research shows, this is the essence of Qawwali as well. Therefore, there seemed to be a disconnect between Sufism and Qawwali in the brothers' minds. This was affirmed by their statement, "Sufi and Qawwali are two different art forms" (Wadali Brothers).

In terms of lyrics of the art form, they seemed to have a rigid definition of the mystic spiritualism that they follow as a way of life. They do not consider contemporary writings legitimate. According to the Wadali Brothers, the writings of Baba Farid, Amir Khusrau, and Bulleh Shah are genuine reflections of Sufi poetry. The researchers see the disconnect again, for there are many overlaps between the poetry of Qawwali and the poetry of the 'Sufi music' practised by the brothers. Due to a misconception of the Qawwals of today, the Wadali Brothers are reluctant to be associated with the term.

Their most eye-opening input came from the discussion about the tangible link between entertainment and music forms. They insisted that nowadays, almost all music has become just entertainment. Even religious practices intended as prayer have begun to pander to audience preferences, losing its spiritual essence in the process. It was pointed out that while there had been fewer singers and more listeners in their early years, they had now noticed that there were fewer listeners and more singers. The audience for spiritual music is rapidly depleting, in their opinion (Wadali Brothers).

In viewing the brothers as an adaptation of Nizami Qawwali, one initially notes the absence of the *dargah* as the location. But as discussed earlier, it is not just the location but the *niyat* that plays an important factor and the Wadali Brothers appear to have understood the importance of contextualizing the spiritual nature of the songs that they perform. When the intention to pray exists, it cannot be said that their songs are not of a spiritual nature. They also perform the poetry of great poets of yesteryears, which discuss themes such as the *pir-mureed* relationship, love for the Divine, etc. In that context, there are many similarities that

can be drawn between the Wadali Brothers and practising Qawwals, despite their reluctance to use their label. It would not be out of place to consider them a modern adaptation.

#### 4.1.3 Dhruv Sangari

When the researchers first decided to explore the topic of Nizami Qawwali, Dhruv Sangari was a name that was repeatedly highlighted in both scholarly discussions and musical performances. He is both a scholar and a practitioner of Qawwali. Also known as ‘Bilal Chishty’, he is trained in both Hindustani classical music and the tabla, having developed an interest in Sufism at a young age and deciding to pursue Qawwali.

Out of the numerous contemporary adaptations analysed, Dhruv Sangari proves to be one of the most appropriate adaptations yet. One of the reasons from this arises from the fact that, despite his differing background, he has been welcomed into the fold of the *Qawwal bachche* at Nizamuddin *Dargah*. He has been trained in Qawwali under the great Meraj Ahmed Nizami, the patriarch of the Nizami family. Thus, his performances have a more authentic quality and it is befitting to analyse his work in Nizami Qawwali. There is a deep understanding of the context and meaning of Qawwali in his performances. It is blatant through both conversation and observation that he has internalized the core values of Sufism and allowed this to be exemplified by his work. The lyrics and the themes of the poetry that he performs, comes from a position of deep respect for the tradition.

Despite his non-Sufi background, Sangari does not view the musical tradition through the lens of an outsider. He does not view it as a mere performance. To him, Qawwali is a *hazri* as well. It is his *qaul* to his beloved. The setting of a *dargah* becomes irrelevant, because his *niyat* going into performances comes from a place of true spirituality. When he does not intend to use Qawwali as mere prayer, such as performances with his band ‘Rooh’, the intention is made clear. He has the stark ability to distinguish between prayer and performance. Although he does not bear the heritage of being a Nizami, his integration into the fold of Nizami Qawwali is not without reason.

## **4.2 Contemporary Adaptations in Bollywood**

Prior to embarking on the on-field research, the researchers had a very limited knowledge of Qawwali, acquired mainly from Indian popular culture. Bollywood songs such as “*Khwaja Mere Khwaja*” and “*Kun Faya Kun*” are propagated to be two songs that give some insight into what Qawwali sounds like. However, on listening to authentic Qawwali at Nizamuddin *dargah*, the researchers were immediately able to differentiate the characteristics associated with traditional Qawwali and Qawwali adapted to suit popular Indian cultural expectation.

### **4.2.1 Khwaja Mere Khwaja**

On listening to authentic Qawwali at Nizamuddin *dargah*, the researchers were immediately able to differentiate the characteristics associated with traditional Qawwali and Qawwali adapted to suit popular Indian cultural expectation.

If one looks at the content, and some aspects of the song, it can be said that they do adhere to the Nizami Qawwali standard in that they call out to the Saint and the Lord. The song includes references to the *pir*, which is essential in Nizami Qawwali as the *pir-mureed* relationship is one that is revered by Sufis. The song also calls to Moinuddin Chishti and Nizamuddin Auliya, two of the most prominent Sufi Saints and the pioneers of the Chishti Sufi *sama*. The video makes use of a harmonium and employs clapping in the assembly of Qawwals that are giving the *hazri*, which are characteristics synonymous with conventional Qawwali.

Nonetheless, there are a host of differences that set apart traditional Qawwali from the contemporary adaptation depicted in Bollywood. Firstly, the beginning of the song begins with three singers, as depicted in the video, whereas in conventional Nizami Qawwali the lead Qawwal will begin the note and continue to sing, until the harmonium and the other Qawwals join in. Nizami Qawwali is authenticated when it is sung at the *dargah*, in front of the shrine, to the Saint. In the movie, the song is sung in a desert setting to the King Akbar, which makes its legitimacy, according to location of Nizami Qawwali, negligible. The musical instruments used in the video are the *daf* and two other string instruments, which are not used in Qawwali sung in the Nizamuddin Auliya *dargah*.

They also do a clapping sequence in the middle of the song, and although clapping is a huge part of Qawwali, it is not in the form of a dance. Both these are portrayed in the picture.

Furthermore, while singing, two of the performers use the “*taan*” technique of vocalisation used in Indian classical music, which is rapid repetition of a vowel sound. The researchers did not find use of this during their time spent at the *dargah*. The lyric “*Dil mein samaja*” after “*Khwaja mere khwaja*” is also debatable, because it means “Lord, My lord / Please enter my heart”. This goes against the Sufi tradition, as God is supposed to be already present in the Sufi’s mind/heart/soul, and does not need beckoning (Dhruv Sangari).

The most striking difference is the “whirling dervish” technique that is used in the video, where the singers get up and start twirling, as depicted in the image. King Akbar also gets up mid-performance and joins in the group. The “whirling dervish” technique is more associated with other *silsilas*, or lineages, such as the Qalandars, and not in Chishti Sufism and Nizami Qawwali.

At no point is the audience permitted to get up and join the performance in Nizami Qawwali either, no matter their status, because everybody is considered equal in the eyes of the Lord, and thus no one can disturb the *hazri* being given to him.

*Image 13: Depiction of musical instruments used to accompany the poetry*



*Image 14: Depiction of Sufis whirling in ecstasy*



### 4.2.2 Kun Faya Kun

After visiting Nizamuddin Auliya *dargah*, the researchers were able to point out aspects in the video of *Kun Faya Kun* that could not be applied to authentic *dargah* etiquette. Firstly, the video shows people part of the audience clapping along with the Qawwals, which was a strict prohibition when the researchers went. It also depicts the main character playing the guitar when the Qawwals give *hazri* and even singing with them later on. Furthermore, where the setting is concerned, there are mats laid on the floor for the audience to sit on, which are negligible in number when compared to the real experience of the *dargah*. The *dargah* in the video is decorated and spotlessly neat, whereas the authentic *dargah* that the researchers experience is not so. It has a very raw, inclusive, earthy vibe that does not come through in the video. Even so, it can be said that “*Kun Faya Kun*”, though not an exact replica of the atmosphere in the *dargah*, other than the above points, represents quite accurately the essence of Nizami Qawwali.

### 4.3 Survival

An important aspect of researching a musical form is attempting to understand it as a reflection of a particular culture for it is an essential feature of any communal identity. Because it is easily accessible and has the ability to evoke a strong emotional reaction, it is more than just a medium of leisure. Music can be considered an indicator of a culture’s musical sense in terms of rhythm and instrumentation. In looking at the language employed, there is an inference that can be made about the region from which the musical form originates. However, it is not limited by language. Musical traditions can affect listeners from other cultures as well. It would be incorrect to view it as static. In fact, any form of art or devotion is a living organism, which constantly accepts and rejects influences based on various factors, perpetually shaping into something new.

Qawwali is one such living organism, for there is a clear evolution in the tradition from its Persian origins to its current existence in the Indian subcontinent. Nizami Qawwali is deeply rooted in the tradition of its patron saint, Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya. It emerged as a religious practice intended to invoke the Divine and seek the *ilm*, the truth of life. Just like *bhajans* in Hinduism, it was intended as a form of prayer. To view it simply as a form of entertainment would be disrespectful to the seven-century-old tradition. As uncovered on field, there are

many questions that can be raised about the evolution of Qawwali. There is the lingering question of whether its evolution has resulted in degradation, in some shape or form, or whether adaptation was necessary in order to survive. The common theme in the primary data was this: the tradition could not remain stationary.

Traditionalists are of the opinion that Qawwali is losing its essence. Their opinion was backed by numerous arguments. Firstly, current practitioners are not limited to Sufis alone. Musicians from other backgrounds have accepted and personalized the art form. Then, the art form is observed outside the *dargah* environment. It has made its way to restaurants, clubs and bars in urban areas. Finally, modern compositions of Qawwali do not necessarily have a religious connotation. Some merely fulfil the aim of entertaining the listeners. All of these changes have caused great debate, for there is the argument that Qawwali performed outside the *dargah*, not invoking the Lord, cannot even be termed 'Qawwali'. There is an impending belief that there is a certain meaning and history behind the practice and one must contextualize it in order to wholly understand its essence. Not all practitioners take the pains to contextualize the practise. This being said, modern musicians such as Dhruv Sangari may be deemed 'appropriate' adaptations for his ability to understand the roots of Qawwali and respect its religious roots.

Moreover, as evidenced through the interview with the Nizami brothers, the researchers found that the Qawwals of the *dargah* themselves perform outside, such as weddings and other functions. The context of the musical tradition is thoroughly fluid. It would be ludicrous to state that, because they perform outside the *dargah*, the Nizami Qawwals themselves are not 'Qawwals'. The mere location of the performance cannot be the dominating factor in this argument. While the *maqam*, or the setting, is important for the full effect of Qawwali to be felt, it is the *niyat* (intention or soulfulness) going into the performance that largely partakes in the argument of whether Qawwali can be categorized as prayer or a form of entertainment. The predominant reason for these concerns, the researchers realize, is the fact that it is these modern adaptations that become the 'norm' for new audiences of Qawwali and this is misleading in many ways. There is a fear that the modern adaptations will be accepted by popular culture and the traditional Qawwali rejected, resulting in the survival of nothing more than a morphed version of a wholly religious practice. While the Qawwals themselves are adapting, accepting performances outside the *dargah* and increasing their repertoire to

include more popular songs, scholars fear that a lack in ‘authentic’ Qawwali will result in its diminishment. While the fears are not invalid, the researchers do believe that it is a restrictive point of view, for in a world of rapid change, it is unfair to imagine audiences modernizing but expecting the Qawwals of the *dargah* to remain backward. In order to keep with the times, there is necessary adaptation that must take place.

Hereby, the question, ‘what is *asli* Qawwali’ arises. The word *asli* is translated to mean ‘real’. One found that *asli* Qawwali can take place wherever the name of the Lord is taken for the simple incantation, in the genuine spirit, can result in the atmosphere creating itself (Nizami Brothers).

Another issue brought to light by scholars stems from the culture of globalisation that is essentially the adoption of Western style distribution of the music (Srivastava, V). Although Sufi poetry, which is sung as Qawwali, is attributed to a single saint most times, several poems have been authored collectively over time with additions and subtractions made by succeeding Qawwals and saints. Thus, they attribute these compositions to the collective realm, or the *wahdat-al-wujud*. However, in recent times, songs such as *Damadam Mast Qalandar* and *Bhar Do Jholi Meri* are being featured in Bollywood films under the name of a contemporary poet or composer. While it can be argued that this contributes to, and helps with the spread of the Sufi message, it must be noted that this sort of adaptation decontextualises the music, thus taking away from the essence to an extent.

Nevertheless, this is not the full extent of the predicament of the Qawwals. The contemporary musicians reap the monetary benefits that come with the success of the film or the rendition of the song (Sangari). However, there is no credit, and nor are the earnings shared with the Qawwals of the current generation, who have descended from the original composers of these lyrics. This distraction has resulted in the Qawwals being pushed into poverty in some *khanqas*. With relation to Nizami Qawwali in specific, one finds that it is not a dying art (Dehlvi). It is flourishing in practice. Nizamuddin *dargah* itself boasts of great prestige. It is patroned by one of the most prominent Sufi saints. It has become a staple in Delhi culture. Over the years, it has cemented its place as one of the most prolific Sufi *dargahs* of Asia and the Middle East. It is considered only second to the *dargah* of Moinuddin Chishti at Ajmer. The Nizami Qawwals thrive in this setting. Yet, the monetary collections do not seem to be

sufficient, for the Qawwals to perhaps, be able to lead a more satisfactory life. The researchers had to pay a hefty sum in order to be able to receive the time and attention of the Qawwals. This is not to say that this is unjustified, but, it could possibly be a result of the diminishing opportunities. Unlike other Qawwals from lesser-known *dargahs* (such as Salim Chishti *dargah* in Fatehpur Sikri) the Nizami Qawwals have employed the prestige of their location wisely to establish themselves in the field of Sufi music (Mehra).

Finally, one must acknowledge that the survival of the Qawwals and Qawwali is a large quandary. Although the Qawwals earn money at the *hazri* and *urs* events, these collections are often scanty. They travel nomadically, from *dargah* to *dargah*, in an attempt to keep the Sufi tradition and themselves alive. However, they are unable to follow the prescribed rules of *zaman*, *maqan*, and *akhwan*, the traditional rules that supposedly determine a successful Qawwali assembly if they are to survive in the contemporary sense, for this would require them to perform at recreational spaces. In order to avoid this breach of practice, Qawwals tend to have businesses on the side based on their other abilities (Mehra). Saqlain Nizami attended hotel management school and worked in the hospitality industry for an interim of a few years before returning to the practise of Qawwali (Nizami Brothers).

The traditionalists' take on the situation, while valid, seems to view the issue very singularly. One may say that it comes from their idea of Sufism and Qawwali as a medieval, pure tradition that must remain static. Notwithstanding, it is selfish to expect the Qawwals and the tradition to exist within a time vacuum within the *dargah* when all other traditions appear to be overstepping the seams that divide them. With the rapid cultural assimilation taking place globally, it is impossible to remain static.

Of course, for any tradition that deals with humanity as a whole at such depths, it is imperative to stay true to one's roots whilst adjusting oneself to the influences of the day. A banyan tree grows from roots beneath the ground and extends roots that hang to the earth from its branches as well. Comparing Sufism to the roots, and the trunk to the Qawwali tradition, one realises that with the loss of roots, the tradition is bound to die out eventually. However, if the trunk remains connected with the original roots, then the new roots (the aesthetic aspects of Qawwali music) which stem from the branches can flourish in the true spirit of the tradition and act as the source for new beginnings.

## **5. Qawwali Khatam**

In a land like India, it is no surprise that there is great diversity in the kinds of traditions practised by various communities. These traditions draw their roots from numerous religious practices. There is a largely soothing quality about this communal affair. As Dinesh Khanna points out, these traditions are daily reminders of the possibility in having faith in the faith of individuals. Although one does not necessarily share the same beliefs, it is almost impossible to ignore the grandeur and importance of these traditions in their lives. In times of difficulty, in times of struggles, it is utterly human to turn to the divine for intervention. India is a country that pays great respect to religion and in discovering Qawwali, in understanding its role as a prayer for Sufis, the researchers endeavoured to unveil just one layer of the religious experience.

While determining a research question, it came to light that most of the researchers were familiar with the term 'Qawwali'. It was an exotic art form performed in *dargahs*, praising the Lord and had also been incorporated into Bollywood. No one knew the intricacies. A little bit of research proved most of these beliefs false. It was not 'exotic', it was very Indian in its roots. Moinuddin Chishti brought Qawwali to India in Ajmer (Rajasthan). All of his successors continued the tradition -Bakhtiyar Kaki in Delhi; Baba Farid in Punjab and Nizamuddin Auliya in Delhi once again. It did not praise the Lord alone, it was a music form that praised the Sufi saints and great yesteryear masters. It had been incorporated into Bollywood but has its own distinct nature as well.

First, the researchers made a conscious effort to employ appropriate research methods in order to arrive at the information sought. Certain samples were created that were identified as integral to the research and numerous efforts were made to contact important figures within these samples. Most were successful attempts. An interview schedule was determined and an academic plan enforced. On-field, certain tools of data collection assured the accumulation of valuable information. The research was divided into main 'themes' highlighted and through the course of this report, the themes are explained in detail and analysed accordingly. Post-field, the information was collated and probed further. Content analysis was undertaken. The content of the various interviews was divided according to the themes identified and the use of secondary sources aided this.

Through the use of the information acquired under these themes, the researchers were able to fulfil their aims and objectives satisfactorily. Using both primary and secondary data, the researchers accumulated a host of information pertaining to the Islamic roots and Sufi background of Qawwali. It was found that the essence of Sufism is achieving spiritual perfection, by way of making an inward journey to the soul and annihilation of the ego. This links to the Qawwali occasion due to its aim of guiding devotees along this journey into a trance, which is synonymous with the spiritual perfection that Sufism entails. Qawwali descends from and is intertwined deeply with Islam, arising as a practicing form of the religion, with an added spiritual, mystical and philosophical nuance. It emerged as a form of creative protest against the violence being perpetuated by the Muslim armies, namely Turks and Mongols. This is the environment in which Moinuddin Chisti began his teachings and moved to India, where the heritage of Nizami Qawwali came into being through Nizamuddin Auliya.

The researchers were able to derive the themes discussed in the songs of Qawwali, thus attaining the second aim. Themes are mostly related to the *pir-mureed* relationship, their Merciful and Beneficent Lord Allah, considered to be the Beloved of *Sufis*, Prophet Mohammad and his son-in-law Ali.

The third aim was also achieved through observation and interaction with practitioners and scholars. The audience, traditionally, is not supposed to have an effect on the *hazri* that is given by the performers, but research revealed that the audience, even in the *dargah*, plays a impactful role in determining the songs sung. When outside the *dargah*, in festivals, concerts and weddings, Nizami Qawwali is massively influenced by the audience.

The female voice in Qawwali was much better comprehended after the on-field research was conducted. Tradition dictates that females are not present in the Qawwali assembly, and there is no indication that the same will be permitted in the *dargah* even in contemporary or future times. The only feminine representations in Qawwali are when the Qawwals take on a female persona while giving *hazri* and callign to the Lord, their Beloved. Furthermore, the death of *Sufi* saints, such as Nizamuddin Auliya and Amir Khusrau, marks their marriage, as a bride, to their groom, the Lord.

Finally, after conducting extensive research through the use of the variety of sources, the researchers were able to come to a conclusion pertaining to what exactly the “distinct nature” of Qawwali is, whether it is a form of prayer and entertainment, and the extent to which it was determined on the context, hence fulfilling the last aim. Qawwali may be heard in a variety of ways, at the *dargah*, at private *samas*, concerts, festivals, weddings, clubs, in Bollywood cinema, and by non-Islam practitioners. Each location offers a different variation of Nizami Qawwali, and the researchers have, using the information amassed, culminated characteristics concerning what may be called authentic Nizami Qawwali.

The researchers experienced Nizami Qawwali sung in the *dargah* on two occasions, and on each occasion it can be said that the song was a form of prayer, as the Qawwals, the Nizami Brothers, were singing it right opposite the shrine, to the Saint. Their lyrics, intensity, and fervour all indicated a passionate *hazri*, one that connected them, and helped their audience connect, to the Lord. This form of Nizami Qawwali is Nizami Qawwali in the truest form it can be found today, most raw and genuine. Although there are Nizami Qawwali practitioners of the same descent in cities like Hyderabad and Karachi, the fact that this is sung in Nizamuddin Auliya *dargah* itself makes it distinctive Nizami Qawwali. Despite that, even inside the *dargah*, upon questioning, the Qawwals themselves said that they do pander to the audience’s expectations and approval. This might be to raise their esteem in the audience’s eyes as singers that give the audience the experience they want, and to increase the monetary offerings that are given. This aspect slightly taints the purity of what is supposed to be a prayer to the Lord, as it incorporates a factor as unremarkable as audience desires.

Qawwals may also sing outside the *dargah*, and it may be confidently said that this is usually not with the intent of giving a *hazri*, and is to entertain or raise awareness of Qawwali to youth or otherwise. It may be sung at a college, festival, wedding etc.; the Nizami Brothers have travelled the world to showcase their practice. This veers away from authentic Qawwali that prays to the Saint and has the intent of sending devotees into a trance to achieve oneness with the Divine. Though one aspect of Nizami Qawwali is fulfilled, that is, the descendent of Nizamuddin Auliya are performing, neither is it sung as a prayer, or praise to the Lord, nor is it in the *dargah*. The exception to this may be when Qawwali is sung outside the *dargah* in private *samas* or *mehfils* that are held by individuals like Sadia Dehlvi, who are devotees and

*Sufis*. Here, Qawwali sung is not looked at as a form of entertainment, because purist devotees scorn and do not appreciate its commercial aspect. Though the location is not the *dargah*, it can be said that these *samas* are authentic Qawwali because they are giving *hazri*.

When Nizami Qawwali features outside the *dargah*, with someone other than the descendants singing it, it may be called a contemporary adaptation of Qawwali, not true Nizami Qawwali, because this form of Qawwali did not transpire until contemporary times. However, it may be argued that a person such as Pawan Naik could be called a Qawwal because he sings Qawwali with only a spiritual intent, and does not perform to entertain. Nevertheless, he is not a descendent of Nizamuddin Auliya, or a Muslim, and does not sing in the *dargah*. Thus, he counts as a modern adaptation of what Qawwali has become, but an adaptation that has stayed true to the essence of Qawwali, which is to pray to the Lord.

Dhruv Sangari is a mixture of entertainment and traditional Nizami Qawwali. He is respectful of the tradition and rich heritage of Nizami Qawwali, and a true *Sufi* devotee. However, he also performs for the sake of entertainment in major festivals all over the world.

Taking the example of the Wadali Brothers, they do not sing true Qawwali because their intent is purely entertainment, having no desire to elevate their audience into a trance. As they are Hindu, and not descendants of Nizamuddin Auliya, hence not fitting into any of the other criteria, they may be called a modern adaptation. Bollywood adaptations are too, solely for entertainment purposes, and thus absolutely cannot be classified under the distinct nature of genuine Nizami Qawwali, and are adaptations of Qawwali, in that they take a few aspects of Qawwali and merge it with their own style and intent.

Taking all the factors and themes of Nizami Qawwali into account, and the aforementioned points, it may be said that what truly matters is the intent behind a performance. If the intent is giving a *hazri*, the characteristics such as location and performers are comparatively less important, even if they differ from the *dargah* and descendants of Nizamuddin Auliya. Fundamentally, the performance may still be called authentic Qawwali. Having said that, if the intent is not to give a *hazri*, and the location and performers still differ, they then increase in importance because none of the characteristics then fit into the structure of authentic Nizami Qawwali, and may be called a contemporary adaptation.

It may be asked that if the contemporary adaptations do not fit into the structure of traditional Nizami Qawwali, why they are linked to Nizami Qawwali at all. The answer is that they do incorporate some aspects of Nizami Qawwali, have similarities to it and are inspired by it. Hence it can be said that Nizami Qawwali, as well as retaining its inherent traditions, is also morphing into a more modified, adaptive form, that could be, under a large umbrella, if not called Qawwali, at least be linked to it.

One can say thus say that the contemporary adaptations are aiding traditional Qawwali's popularity, which is displayed in increased crowds at the *dargah* off late and a more widespread knowledge of the art form, whether nationally or worldwide. Although Nizami Qawwali *has* survived on its own for 750 years in India, surpassing all political, cultural and social changes, it can be seen that traditional Qawwali even its truest, purest form, sung at the *dargah* in front of the shrine, cannot escape the expectations and influence of the contemporary audience. Maybe contemporary adaptations do not need to be looked at in a negative light; for even traditional Qawwali was contemporary at one time, and it too absorbed different elements to continue lasting. Contemporary adaptations may simply amalgamate with and supplement the traditional Qawwali sung in modern times, encouraging the beautiful art form to adapt to its surroundings, and thus flourish indefinitely.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Interview Schedule

#### **Introduction**

1. Can you tell us a little about yourself?
2. Can you tell us about what you do?
3. What sparked your interest in Qawwali?
4. How are you involved in Qawwali?

#### **Islamic background**

1. How far does listening to Qawwali give the listener an insight into Islamic culture?
2. Which characteristic of Qawwali made it gain popularity beyond the Muslim community?
3. Where do you think Qawwali draws the line between a religious practice and a form of art?
4. Are there any significant occasions during the year when Qawwali is performed?
5. Do you agree with the opinion that the beauty of Qawwali is lost to non-Hindi, non-Punjabi, non-Urdu speaking audiences?
6. Or do you think that the beauty of Qawwali transcends linguistic barriers?
7. Being an art form traditionally passed on from father to son, do you think the exclusivity of Qawwali adds value to the art?
8. Should artists from other communities be welcomed into the world of Qawwali?
9. Is Qawwali practised by a specific strata of Muslim society?

#### **Nizami Qawwali – themes, structure, family involvement**

1. Has Qawwali evolved from its traditional form?
2. If yes, to what extent has it evolved?
3. If yes, why has it evolved?
4. What are your views on Qawwali in the world today?
5. Is Qawwali gaining importance?
6. Do you agree with the integration of Qawwali into Bollywood?
7. Do you think Bollywood helps with the popularity of Qawwali or makes it lose its essence?
8. What are the themes and symbols most seen in Qawwali?
9. What is the role of the female voice in Qawwali?
10. Is the female voice important in this art form?
11. If it were up to you, would you increase the popularity of Qawwali? Why or why not?
12. What is the structure of a Qawwali performance from the beginning *sama* to the final *fanaa*?
13. Is this structure rigid or spontaneous?
14. Is there a rehearsal before a performance?
15. Are there any rituals practised before or after a performance?
16. Do you agree that Qawwali as an art form differs between Qawwali performing families?
17. Do you think that each Qawwali-practising family personalizes Qawwali and makes it their own?
18. What are the life lessons from listening and performing Qawwali?
19. Do Qawwals add their own lyrics?
20. What are the important things to notice in a Qawwali performance?
21. Are there any particular clothing for Qawwali performances?
22. Is there a difference in the quality of lyrics written for Qawwali then and now?

**Audience participation**

1. What is the role of the audience in a performance?
2. What is the take-away from the experience?
3. Have you ever gone into a trance due to the music? Can you describe your experience?
4. Is a Qawwali performance considered incomplete if it doesn't end with people in a trance?
5. Was the concept of muqabla and jugalbandi brought about because of audiences?
6. Are these meant to be an entertainment factor in the performance?
7. How has the advancement of mass media affected the audience's perception of Qawwali?

**Nizami and mainstream Qawwali**

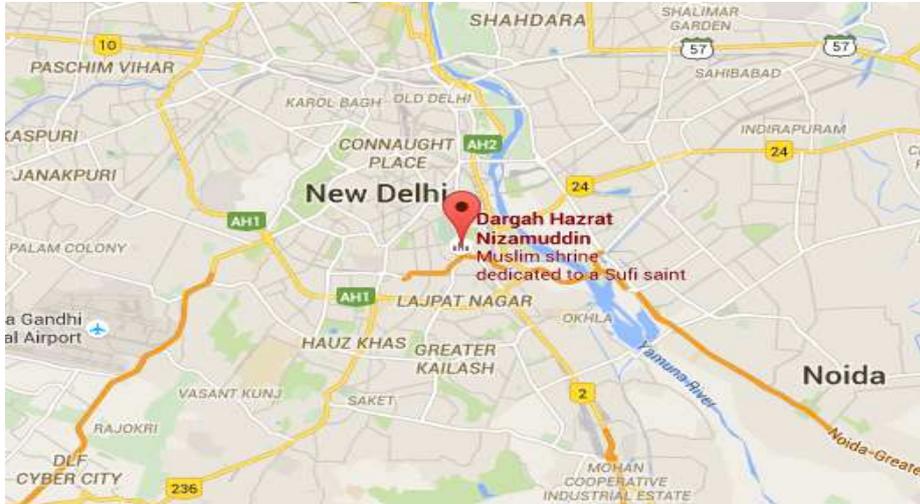
1. What is the economic background of Qawwals?
2. How do they make a living?
3. Is it their primary occupation?
4. What is the opinion between Nizami Qawwals of its modern adaptations?
5. Do Nizami Qawwals only perform for spiritual purposes?

**External factors**

1. How has Qawwali being represented internationally?
2. Does it face competition from its own adaptations?

Appendix 2: Images

*Map 1: Map depicting the Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya Dargah in Delhi*



*Map 2: Map depicting the location of Delhi on a map of India*



## Glossary of Terms

1. *Adab* – Islamic etiquette, a code of conduct
2. *Akhara*- A place that provides a range of facilities designed to improve and maintain physical fitness and health.
3. *Akhwan*- Participant
4. Ali – Head of all Sufi lineages; historic son-in-law of Prophet Muhammed
5. *Allah*- God
6. *Am*- Person termed as common
7. Amir Khusrau- Great Sufi poet; beloved disciple of Nizamuddin Auliya
8. *Auliya*- Favourites of God; can refer to an individual or a collective
9. *Azwaj*- Wives
10. Baba Farid- Term of reference for the saint Fariduddin Ganj-e-Shakar; spiritual guide of Nizamuddin Auliya
11. *Bandish*- A steady drone set in a specific *raga*
12. *Barkat* – Divine blessing
13. *Basant* – Important annual ritual of the Nizamuddin Dargah
14. *Basti* – A physical settlement
15. *Behoshi* – A state of unconsciousness
16. *Baqa*- That which is left of the Self after death, usually the outer body
17. *Ba-wuzu*- Ritually pure through performing spiritual ablutions
18. *Bekhud* – Emotion of feeling beside oneself
19. *Bhagwan*- Hindi/Sanskrit word referring to God
20. *Bhajan*- Hindu devotional music
21. *Braj bhasha*- Language spoken in the North-Western part of the Indian subcontinent by the common people
22. *Bulleh Shah*- Punjabi Sufi poet
23. *Buzurg*- Senior spiritual guide or saint
24. *Chaddar*- A large piece of cloth used for multiple purposes; also, piece of clothing for Islamic women
25. *Chilla*- Fasting and prayer for the duration of forty days; also, location where a saint practised *chilla*
26. *Chishti*- Order of spiritual affiliation
27. *Daf*- Large, Persian frame drum
28. *Darbar*- ‘Court’ of king/saint
29. *Dargah*- Shrine built around tomb of Sufi saint
30. *Dari*- Raw wool
31. *Darul aulia*- Home of the Sufis
32. *Delhi gharana*- Clan of spiritual artists
33. *Dhol*- Double-headed drum staple to the Indian subcontinent
34. *Dhun*- The melody
35. *Du’a* – Prayer which is non-ritual in nature
36. *Fanaa*- Annihilation of the ego
37. *Fateha*- Routine recitation of opening chapter of the Quran
38. *Fuqara*- Sainly mendicant
39. *Gaddi*- Throne
40. *Gauhar*- Pearl
41. *Gharana* – Artistic ancestry
42. *Ghazal*- Poetry of North African and Middle Eastern origin
43. *Gurbani* - Hymns from the Guru Granth Sahib
44. *Guru*- Teacher
45. *Haal*- State of ecstasy and spiritual elation
46. *Hadith*- Sayings, usually of the Prophet Mohammed
47. *Hafiz*- Knower of the *Quran*
48. *Hamd*- Song praising God
49. *Haq*- The ultimate truth
50. *Harmonium*- Pump organ with keys
51. *Hazrat* – Term of reference for spiritual authority
52. *Hazri*- Being at hand or within call, state of being present
53. *Ilm*- Knowledge
54. *Ishq*- Emotion of love
55. *Jhumna*- Act of swaying; to be moved

56. *Kafi*- Form of Sufi poetry practiced in Sindh and Punjab. Popular poets include Bulleh Shah and Baba Farid
57. *Kasf*- Raising of the veil
58. *Khalifa*- Head of a spiritual lineage
59. *Khalvat anjuman*- Solitude within society
60. *Khandan*- Family
61. *Khanqa-dargah*
62. *Khas*- Special
63. *Khidmat-e-khalq*- Service to the people of the community
64. *Khidmat-e-khuda*- Service of the Lord
65. *Khuda*- God
66. *Khudi*- The Self
67. *Khwaja*- Lord
68. *Kripa*- Divine grace or mercy
69. *Lungar*- The area in which free food is served to dargah devotees; also, the free food itself
70. *Mahfil-e-am*- Common assembly
71. *Mahfi;-e-khas*- Special assembly
72. *Mahfil-e-sama*- Sufi term for Qawwali assembly
73. *Maharaja*- Indian prince or king
74. *Manqabat* – Song praising saints
75. *Maqan*- Space prescribed for effective Qawwali
76. *Ma'rifat*- The fourth of the four stages of ecstasy in Sufism
77. *Maulana*- Respected religious scholars
78. *Mauli*- The distinct, red threads used as prayer offerings at Nizamuddin Dargah tied around the carved walls of the shrine
79. *Mehver*- Center of Everything
80. *Mi'raj*- Ascension of Prophet Mohammed to heaven for a conference with God
81. *Mir-e-mahfil*- Leader of the Qawwali assembly
82. *Moinuddin Chishti*- Founder of the Chishti Sufi order
83. *Muhabbat*- Love of the Divine
84. *Mureed*- Disciple in a close teacher-student relationship in Sufism
85. *Namaz*- Muslim ritual prayer
86. *Nawaz*- Prince, kind, loving, generous
87. *Naina*- Eyes
88. *Na't*- Song praising the Prophet
89. *Nawaz*- Lord
90. *Nisbat*- Strong connection to a Sufi figure
91. *Niyat*- Soulfulness, purity of intention
92. *Nizami*- Title indicating link to Nizamuddin Auliya (either by family or spiritual descent)
93. Nizamuddin Auliya- Sufi saint, leader of the Chishti order
94. *Panchmi*- The fifth day
95. *Pathan*- Term used to describe the most common ethnic group in Afghanistan
96. *Pir* – Guide/teacher in a close teacher-student relationship in Sufism
97. *Qafia*- Rhyming, rhythmic syllables
98. *Qaul* – A call to spiritual authority, especially to Prophet Muhammed
99. *Qawwal*- Qawwali performer, most commonly linked to a particular shrine or Sufi order
100. *Qawwal Bachche*- Qawwals claiming lineage from the sister of Nizamuddin Auliya; view themselves as 'true' Qawwals
101. *Qawwali*- Indo-Pakistani Sufi music performed with the intention of spiritual arousal
102. *Quran Sharif*- Islamic Holy Book
103. *Raga*- Musical mode consisting musical notes, used in Indian classical music and Qawwali
104. *Sadaf*- Shell of an oyster
105. *Sajda*- Bowing during namaz
106. *Sajdanashin*- Holder of the prayer carpet at the *dargah*, head of *dargah*
107. *Sama*- Performing Sufi music; also, listening to Sufi music
108. *Silsila*- Chain of Spiritual affiliation
109. *Sunnewale*- Audience
110. *Tabla*- A two-piece percussion instrument said to have been invented by Amir Khusrau
111. *Tambour*- A type of drum

112. *Tariqa*- Method of performing;  
particular school/order of Sufism
113. *Tarz*- Rhythm of the poetry
114. *Umara*- Wealthy leader
115. *Urs*- Celebration of saint's union  
("marriage") with God through death
116. *Wahdat-al-wujud*- Unity of Being
117. *Wajd*- A state of ecstasy
118. *Wisal*- Union with *Allah*
119. *Zalil*- Person termed as lowly
120. *Zaman*- Time prescribed for  
effective Qawwali
121. *Zikr*- Rhythmic repetition of God's  
name or praise of God

*“Ab unse mulakaat mumkin nahi lagti  
Unki tasveer se hi khud ko milaa leta hai  
Manaa zindagi me na ban paaye wo sanam tere  
Faqat khawabon me toh unhe apna banaa hi lete hai...”*