

Performative Gender And Religions In South Asia

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Lecture 62

Bhakti, Sufi, and Cinema V

Good morning and welcome back to the lecture series on performative gender and religions in South Asia. So, we are discussing the influence of Sufi in the contemporary Indian cinema as well as in contemporary Indian music, contemporary Indian life. We are talking about the new traditional Sufi music. The traditional qawwals or qawwāli singers that have been attached to Nizamuddin Auliya's Dargah, they are called the qawwal-bachhe, which literally means children of qawwals, and they belong to the extended Nizami family. They trace their lineage to Amir Khusrow and we see the syncretic nature of these qawwal bachhe or these qawwāli singers from the Nizami family as they have been participating in so many of the Hindu-based Basant Panchami celebrations as well as performing in various Hindu festivals and Hindu weddings. So in the Indian context the qawwāli have had a lot of interface with other communities, especially the Hindu community.

In terms of style and structure there are no distinctively Muslim aspects in qawwāli performances because they freely or loosely use melodies that are based on Hindustani ragas as well as tunes that are associated with Hindu occasions. The qawwal bachhe, for example, sing songs that are set to the standard melody of raag kaafi in Diphchandi Taal, making frequent references to the holy festival and the text, the lyrics of Nizamuddin Aulia himself playing Holi. It reminds us of Abida Parveen's rendition of "Chhap Tilak Sab Chhini," where at one point she says that "khelo re Chishtiya Holi khelo Khwaja Nizamuddin ke bhes me aayo." She says that Khwaja Nizamuddin ke bhes me Chishti will come and you know, put rung on me; he will put color on me.

So the theme of Holi keeps coming back again and again in the Sufi qawwalis. So this is a very significant video where we see that in Saint Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia's shrine; Sufi Basant festival is being celebrated. Basant Panchami is being celebrated in Nizamuddin Aulia's shrine. Everyone is wearing the Basanti color and they are clapping together, they are singing together, they are celebrating the onset of spring which is at the heart of the

Basant Panchami philosophy, you know welcoming the spring right, through Holi and through Basant Panchami. The Hindus do that and the Sufis have adopted this culture. So Hindu devotees and visitors are commonly estimated to constitute around one third of the attendees in Khwaja Muinuddin Chisti's shrines especially during the Ur's festivals when qawwāli is featured.

Further, the Sufiana qawwāli has traditionally accommodated Hindu performers. The most celebrated of these in the recent memory was the Shankar Shambhu qawwāl who despite being Hindu, this duo qawwāli despite being Hindu performed regularly at the Ur's and Shambhu qawwāl would sing many memorable qawwāli in Urdu about the Chishti saints. We have already discussed one such qawwāli, the lyrics of one such qawwāli in our previous lecture on Sufi Poetics. More recently, we see that other singers from Hindu backgrounds in Delhi which include singers like Prabha Bharti and Dhruv Sangari, you know, participating in different qawwāli performances. So singers like Prabha Bharti and Dhruv Sangari are part and parcel of the different Sufi performances.

Further, we see that Delhi's shrine of Hazrat Inayat Khan which was built by the Dutch devotees you know hosts so many people from different cultures. Western visitors continue to constitute the bulk of the clientele at the shrine and we see that it hosts the party of veteran qawwal-baccha Meraj Ahmad Khan on Friday evenings. So it is the site of multiculturalism where western tourists come, where the different qawwal-bacchas sing, and even Hindu people from different communities go visit there, sit there, enjoy the qawwāli. Sufi performers have also been presented by various NGOs as well as the state run Indian Council on Cultural Relations (ICCR) and the youth oriented SPIC-MACAY whose full form is Society for the Preservation of Indian Classical Music, which are responsible for broadening its formerly exclusive classical offerings and now it has gone on to include the more multicultural qawwāli. So we see that NGO run enterprises as well as ICCR and SPIC-MACAY are responsible for preserving and in fact opening up this forum and you know, not letting it remain an exclusive affair.

The audience has widened, the participants have widened, it has become a site of multiculturalism, a multi-communal, multi-ethnic, multicultural platform. Songs including Kailash Kher's "Allah Kare", Rishi Kapoor's "Disco qawwāli", "Parda hai Parda," and then "Mere sath chalte chalte" from the film Humko Deewana Kar Gaye, one of the more recent movies. All these songs from different decades, from different era of Bollywood circulate independently of the films from where they come and they are played in different discotheques. They have become part of the modern generation spirit and they

are also widely used as ringtones. So many of these songs that become very popular with the youth are used as their phone ringtones.

Next, we see the series of Rekha Bhardwaj are in a more purely pop vein, especially her song *Ishqa Ishqa* (Love Love), in which she intones Sufi tinged lyrics in her soprano. So *Ishqa Ishqa* is a song that has been you know, sung and performed in a very.. with a very strong Sufi intonation. It is accompanied by a video of Sufi Kathak by Manjari Chaturvedi. So Sufi rock is now a familiar category on the contemporary music scene represented variously by a Delhi group like Indian Ocean, Pakistani group like Junoon, film and Indie pop singer like Himesh Reshamiya as well as assorted recordings by the light classical vocalists such as Shafqat Ali Khan's album, *Sublime Sufi*. So Sufi rock is a familiar category on the contemporary music scene represented variously by the Delhi group like Indian Ocean, Pakistani group like Junoon, film and indie pop singers like Himesh Reshamiya as well as the assorted recordings by light classical vocalists such as Shafqat Ali Khan's album, *Sublime Sufi*.

So the new traditional Sufi music include performances by vocalists such as Zila Khan, who is the daughter of late sitarist Vilayat Khan. Zila Khan is the daughter of late sitarist Vilayat Khan and she specializes in ensemble orchestration of familiar qawwālis including "Man Kunto Maula" and Amir Khusrau's "Chhāp Tilak." She is known mainly for her renditions of "Man Kunto Maula" and Amir Khusrau's "Chhāp Tilak." So Zila Khan has successfully capitalized on her family name, the background she comes from, her husky voice, and she has also attained considerable support from record company Music Today and impresario Muzaffar Ali to establish her presence on the music scene. So there are a number of things to the advantage of star kids like Zila Khan.

She is the daughter of a very famous musician and then she also draws support from music companies from impresario like Muzaffar Ali. Her brother Shujaat Khan has released two CDs, one being *Sufi Songs*, the other being *Hazaron Khwahishen* (Thousands of Desires) in which Shujaat sings the same Sufi evergreens while accompanying himself on sitar. So we see as I have been telling in my previous lecture, since the 1940s the beginning of the golden age or the golden era of Hindi cinema the Sufi song, the Sufi themes have been replete in Bollywood films. So qawwali has been a prominent feature in Bollywood films. This is a performance of "Man Kunto Maula" by Zila Khan.

We see that a very androgynous presence of course and the rapture, the movements that remind us of traditional Sufi codes, the playing of instruments. So the free style of Sufi music is being celebrated through her rendition of Man Kunto Maula. Like Zila Khan, Rekha Bhardwaj and Shafqat Ali Khan, singers such as Rekha Surya who formerly sang light classical Thumri and Ghazal have now shifted their repertoire to Sufi songs. So a lot of singers who previously used to sing Thumri and Ghazal have now shifted to proper Sufi repertoire. In cosmopolitan Delhi with its huge Punjabi population, Punjabi Sufi music in both a new traditional and idiosyncratically modern forms has come to constitute a substantial part of the recent Sufi music activity.

New traditional singers of Punjabi *sufiâna kalâm* like the Wadali brothers and Abida Parveen have become, you know, fixtures, have become stars of high profile Sufi music stage shows. Also we see that Sikh singer-songwriter Rabbi Shergill or Rabbi Shergill has attained a considerable fame in the genre of Sufi music with his, especially with his song Bulla Ki Jaana Mai Kaun. This is a snippet from Coke Studio. We see Abida Parveen singing Chaap Tilak, right? And Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan also accompanying her. So a Pakistani Sufi rock group called Junoon was founded in 1990 and it hails from the cities of Tappan, New York and Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.

So singers and musicians come from all these different places. It is very multicultural in terms of its, the members that constitute Junoon. Salman Ahmad, the group's founder, lead guitarist and songwriter is the director. He was shortly joined by pianist Nusrat Hussain, bassist Brian O'Connell and singer Ali Azmat.

They were pioneers. So Junoon singers were pioneers of Sufi rock with a distinctive sound and they were successful, in fact very famous in the early 1990s. Members of this group were signed to the major recording company EMI records and in 1991 they issued their self-titled debut album under the name Junoon. After the release of their second album, the band started to develop a cult following. Junoon did not gain a large following until the release of their third album called Inqilaab in 1996. This album combined rock guitars and bluesy vocals with eastern elements like the use of tablas, raag inspired melodies, traditional Pakistani folk music as well as eastern inspired poetry.

So this is a snippet from the song Sayonee which became, you know, almost larger than life. It became so popular in the 1990s decade. The youth would hum to the tune of

Sayonee. It became so popular and Junoon reached out to the audience almost through this song Sayonee. And it actually criticizes Islamic fundamentalism, Islamic extremism.

It is very, you know, it is very egalitarian. It appeals to humanity, to humanitarian values. It criticizes any act of terrorism, right? So it criticizes any act of terrorism. The band Junoon released the critically praised Azadi album in 1997 which marked Junoon's album debut in India. Other albums by Junoon include Parvaaz in 1999, Andaz in 2001 and Dewaar in 2003.

In 2016 Junoon released their eighth studio album Door in the honor of their 25th anniversary. Junoon artists use loud guitar riffs to contrast with the tranquility of Sufi poetry by Rumi, by Shah Hussain as well as Bulleh Shah and Iqbal. So world peace and contemporary challenges have been the important themes that the members of Junoon band have explored through their music. Several South Asian Sufi musicians in Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan's wake have performed at international events and some of these events have been held in India itself, such as the third international Sufi festival that was held in 2005, the Indo-Iranian Sufi concert in 2000 and a four-day festival of World Sufi Music, which was presented by the ICCR in 2003 in New Delhi. So we would like to conclude our lecture today with this wonderful song composed and sung by Kailash Kher, "Teri Diwani".

I will read the Hindi first and then the English translation. Preet ki lat mohe aisi laagi

Ho gayi main matwaari

Bal-bal jaaun apne piyaa ko..

Hae main jaaun vaari vaari

Mohe sudh budhnaa rahi tan man ki

Yeh toh jaane duniya saari..

Bebas aur laachar phirun main

Haari main dil haari

Tere naam se jee lun

Tere naam se mar jaaun

Teri jaan ke sadke mein

Kuchh aisa kar jaun

Tune kya kar dala

Mar gayi main mit gayi main

Hoji haanji ho gayi main

Teri deewani.

So, this part when translated to English- "I am addicted to love in such a way that I have become totally passionate. My love for my beloved is such that I will sacrifice my life for my love. I have lost senses of my body and my soul. The entire world knows about this.

I just keep wandering helplessly as I have lost my heart. I live with your name and I will die with it too. I will do all it takes to attain your life and your love. What have you done to me? I am dying.

I am completely lost. Oh yes, that is true. I have become your crazy lover."

Ishq junoon jab hadh se badh jaaye

Haste haste aashiq suli chadh jaaye

Ishq ka jaadu sar chadh kar bole

Khub lagaa lo pehre raste rab khole

Yahi ishq di marzi hai

Yahi rab di marzi hai

Tere bin jeena kaisa

Haan Khudgarzi hai

Tune kya kar dala

mar gayi main mit gayi main ...

Teri deewani, deewani

Hae main rang rangeeli deewani

Hae main albeli, main mastani

Gaaun bajaun sabko rijhaun

Hae main din dharam se begaani ...

When translated to English, "When the passion of love crosses the limits, then lovers can kill themselves with a smile. When the magic of love overflows, then God will open the gates no matter how much you protect it. This is the will of love and the will of God.

Living life without you is selfishness. What have you done to me? I am dying. I am completely lost. Oh yes, that is true.

I have become your crazy lover. I have become a colorful lover. I have become an intoxicated lover. I will sing and play music to entertain everyone. I am totally unaware of religion and God." In other words, I am celebrating religion and God through love, through this colorful, crazy, intoxicating love, the rapturous love, this ecstatic experience of love without further explanation because we have already spent so many words explaining Sufi course and Sufi symbols.

I would like to conclude my lecture today with this wonderful video from the song "Teri Diwani" by Kailash Kher. Look at the dance of love, the dance of madness, the lovers in separation, the longing lovers, longing to unite. So happy in, you know, even in separation. The journey itself gives them some kind of ecstatic happiness, the journey, the path that they traverse to reach each other, right? This longing gives them happiness and this dance of madness, the dance of joy, dance of rapture and ecstasy, celebrating love and through love, celebrating the body, celebrating God, knowledge of God, celebrating religion, celebrating humanity, right? With this we come to the end of our lecture and the end of this module. Thank you so much. Thank you.