

Portrayal of Qawwali in Asian Cinema: Comparative Analysis of Bollywood and Lollywood Movies

Aqdas Ali Qureshi Hashmi, Ph.D. Scholar

Department of Media and Communication Studies,

International Islamic University Islamabad

Email: aqdas.phdmc47@student.iiu.edu.pk

Abstract

This research consists of examining Qawwali in Bollywood and Lollywood movies. Research studies the evolutionary journey of Qawwali in Bollywood and Lollywood and examines the similarities and differences in the presentation of Qawwali in these two cinemas. For this purpose, Qawwalis have been taken from both the cinemas. The formed frames and their sub-indicators have been analyzed by the method of content analysis and it has been observed since then what changes have taken place at the level of presentation, poetry and musical instruments in Qawwali. Meaning theory of media portrayal is integrated with the research. After examining the frames and their respective indicators from the Qawwalis of the both cinema, the research concludes that Indian movies continue to inculcate the music genre Qawwali, while Pakistani movies do not, due to a lack of priorities, cultural reluctance and innovation in the industry.

Keywords:

Qawwali, Performing Arts, Media and Meanings, Bollywood, Lollywood

Introduction

In the Indian subcontinent as well as all over the world, *Qawwali* art is extremely valuable. Originating from the Arabic word "Qaul," which means "to speak" or "to narrate," is the word *Qawwali* (Kugle, 2007). *Qawwali* thus alludes to a phrase that is repeated constantly. But in India and the subcontinent, the word "*Qawwali*" started to refer to a particular kind of music. The following was pointed out by Gaiind-Krishnan (2020) in his paper "*Qawwali* Routes: Notes on Sufi Music's Transformation in Diaspora":

Songs of a particular style known as Qawwalis are recited in praise of Allah, the Prophet (SAWW), Sufism, and the Saints' Manqabat. Music is required for this; without musical instruments, it is unmanageable to sing this genus".

Sufi shrines in this region have long been centers of *Qawwali* practice. *Samaa* ceremonies were prevalent even before that, and it was customary for some religious scholars to oppose and consider music to be un-Islamic. However, it is believed to have originated from *Hazrat Amir Khosrow*, a special disciple of *Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya*, a well-known Sufi, poet, and musician of his time. Memoirs of the subcontinent's *Chishti Mashaikhs* specifically mention *Mehfil e Samaa* (Newell, 2007).

Music can also be heard in the region from the old religious texts. Here, "*Bhajan*" featured music. Renowned Indian musician Tan Sen, a *ratana* (jewel) of Akbar, learned music from the renowned Sufi *Hazrat Muhammad Ghaus Gwaliori* of Gwalior while growing up in his monastery. Qureshi (2003) states that Tan Sen's tomb remains beside

him even now. Such occasions suffice to demonstrate the Sufis in this area had a particular love for music and contributed significantly to national music, particularly *Qawwali*. Its invention and popularity are due to Sufis. Sufis from Central Asia are also particularly interested in music and even before their arrival in India, they had a passion for music.

There are a large number of such *Qawwalis* whose popularity is beyond the confines of time and space. Over time, Qawwali gained so much popularity that it was sung at public gatherings and dispersed from shrines to the general public. It was now widely used by the general public and was no longer only found in monasteries and shrines (Hodgson, 2013). It has become a trend to include music in different forms in movies; *Qawwali* became the part of movies after the arrival of cinema.

Literature Review

Qawwali is a popular music genre of the Indian subcontinent which has become globalized over time. There have been many research studies on *Qawwali* in which its various aspects have been comprehended. No work has come up regarding the presentation of *Qawwali* in movies. The purpose of this paper is to look at the presentation of *Qawwali* in movies.

In movies, *Qawwali* subjects have been diverse, ranging from romantic themes to religious demonstrations, including *Hamd, Naat, and Manaqib*. The genre experienced a resurgence in the 2000s with the success of artists like *Sabri Brothers, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan* and *AR Rehman*. *Filmi Qawwalis*, as a subgenre, not only preserves the centuries-old Sufi heritage but also present it in a modern, popular, and secular light. *Qawwali's* journey from Sufi shrines to global recognition, its integration into cinema, and its ability

to transcend linguistic and cultural barriers underscore its enduring significance in the world of music and culture (Rao, 2007). Below is a review of a few studies that have looked at *Qawwali* from different contexts.

Sarrazin (2013) asserts, “Unlike the traditional *Qawwali*, the film version is considered to possess the twin effects of entertainment and religious evocation”. This is featured in A. R. Rahman's "*Arziyan*," which was included in the 2009 film *Delhi-6*. "*Arziyan*" combines true *Sufi* themes found in traditional *Qawwali* with contemporary aspects seen in filmi *Qawwali*. While the song's text is not directly based on a traditional *Sufi* poem, it is thematically similar. The singer's love for the Lord is expressed via the spiritual lyrics. The phrase *maula*, which means Lord or Master in Arabic, is repeated and emphasized to produce repeated supplication and appeal to the divine.

Viitamäki (2011) explored the aesthetics of *Qawwali* lyrics. He terms it as a wine which has intoxicating impact on the listeners. Furthermore, he postulates that this wine has been brought from Medina because Muslim community has a deep association with Medina as it has a special significance for them. The paper is significant in the sense that it has explored the influence of various progresses on *Qawwali* lines through the analysis of wine similes and the transformation it has been undergoing. The impact of wine is metaphoric which in other words conveys metaphoric and implied meaning in religious context. The author indicates that the message disseminated in the *Qawwali* lyrics is conveyed through implicature. This is the key distinction between the general sense of wine intoxication and the intoxication implied in a *Qawwali* lyrics.

Another study conducted by Rajan (2018) defines the women's status in Sufism and especially in practicing *Qawwali* According to Islam's concept of woman and gender

classification and regarding the presence and participation of women at shrines. According to this Sufism provides an agency for women to work within traditional places of formal performance according to their spiritual motivations. However, the agency turns dialectical when it depicts slavery. Despite portraying women as both pious and spiritually authoritative, Qawwali performances are depriving them of their agency. This study mainly looks at the representation of women in the shrines and in the voices of *Qawwali*.

The famous *Qawwali* "*Khawaja Ka Deewana*," which was performed by the Sabri Brothers, Haji Ghulam Farid Sabri (1930–1994) and Haji Maqbool Ahmed, was translated in another study by Dywer (2017) and was titled "I'm crazy about the Lord." Khawaja Moinuddin Chishti of Ajmer is the "Lord" mentioned herein. Referred to as the "lover of the poor" or "*Gharib Nawaz*" Though they may offer their blessing or spiritual power, those who support poverty have a blinding suspicion of the poor and sick. How frequently he appears in Indian films and how he fulfills the role of a devotee in non-Islamic films is astounding. There is a mention of the Khwaja and his shrine visits by almost all Muslim devotees, including the well-known "*Khawaja Ka Deewana*," which *Qawwali* dedicated. For that reason, this study discusses the symbolic use of *Qawwali*, how the emotions of the devotees are stimulated by making certain sentences a part of *Qawwali*.

All the above cited works indicate that *Qawwali* has been focused upon in various dimensions but changes in the form, function and content of *Qawwali* in Bollywood and Lollywood have not been explored cross-culturally.

Theoretical Framework

According to Arvidsson (2006) Melvin DeFleur and Timothy Plax proposed the Meaning Theory of Media Portrayal theory. In 1980, DeFleur and Plax collaborated on a study paper titled "Human Communication as a Bio-Social Process," which they presented at the International Communication Association in Acapulco, Mexico. They have made significant contributions to the communications sector. The meaning theory of communication, which was created by Timothy Plax and Defleur, addresses how messages are influenced by the media and how this affects social behavior. Interpreting meanings is done through communication. People develop, interpret, and hold onto a sense of meaning through media content. Individuals interpret information from the media according to their own sense of meaning. Media content is created based on messages and is subsequently understood within those messages. The audience should be able to accurately perceive whatever content is presented through media (Lovejoy et al., 2014).

Lomborg (2015) while arguing about meaning in media postulates that the link between readers/viewers/listeners and the message is referred to as meaning in communication terminology. This theory holds that human behavior is a product of inner understandings. The way a person interprets symbols, pictures, or events they see in the media shapes their understanding, and this process can only take place when there are common cultural understandings of the material presented in the media. Our meanings are shaped, altered, and stabilized as a result of our engagement in a range of communication processes. The media's content has the ability to mold meaning and develop comparable meanings among vast groups of people.

The media creates meanings and connotations in a special presentation of various forms, symbols and objects. The fine arts certainly have symbols, codes, gestures, implications within them which are transmitting meaning to the hearts and minds of the viewers according to their perception (Hadley, 2017). Movies also use various forms of art like painting, dance, music, and poetry to convey certain meanings. The repetition of poetry in *Qawwali* and the presentation of specific concepts to the audience in the form of *Qawwali* is also a process of conveying a specific meaning. Therefore, the same theory has been applied in this research.

This is guided through the following research questions;

- How *Qawwali* is portrayed in Bollywood and Lollywood Movies?
- What commonalities and differences are found on the basis of visuals and lyrics in the portrayal of *Qawwali* in Bollywood and Lollywood Movies?

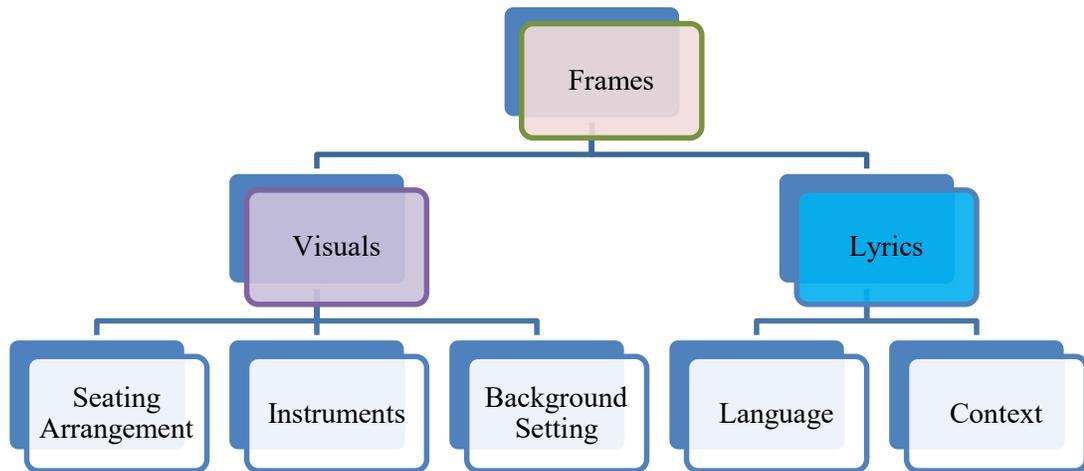
Method and Material

The researcher employed a qualitative method based on content analysis to evaluate and draw conclusions from the obtained sample. In modern research, the content analysis technique is extensively employed when examining data acquired from the media and political process. So the researcher have adopted qualitative content analysis and desired to explain descriptively beyond the numbers. In this regard thematic analysis is being applied for examination of the established frames and their respective indicators.

After watching the *Qawwalis*, two frames namely “Visuals and lyrics” are identified. Three and two indicators are found for each frame i.e. seating arrangement,

instruments, background setting, language and context respectively. So these are the units of analysis for this study.

Figure 1: Units of Analysis in the Frames of Qawwali



Research studies the evolutionary journey of *Qawwali* over the last five decades in Bollywood and Lollywood. It examines the similarities and differences in the presentation of *Qawwali* in these two cinemas. For this purpose, ten *Qawwalis* have been taken from both the cinemas.

Table 1: List of 10 Qawwalis in Last five Decades

Cinema				
Bollywood			Lollywood	
S.No	Movie Name & Year	Qawwali Name	Movie Name	Qawwali Name
1	<i>Adhikar (1971)</i>	<i>Jeena to hai usi ka</i>	<i>Nasheman</i>	<i>Ab chor k dar</i>

			(1976)	<i>tera</i>
2	<i>Kachy dhaagy</i> (1999)	<i>Is shan e karam ka</i>	<i>Badmash thug</i> (1991)	<i>Meri touba touba</i>
3	<i>Ye dill ashqana</i> (2002)	<i>Allah Allah tarif</i> <i>teri</i>	<i>Main ne pyar</i> <i>kia</i> (1995)	<i>Akhiyann nu shok</i> <i>deedar da</i>
4	<i>Veer</i> <i>zaara</i> (2004)	<i>Aya tere dar par</i> <i>deevana</i>	<i>Jannat ki talash</i> (1999)	<i>Othy jaa k mur na</i> <i>awan</i>
5	<i>Bajrangi</i> <i>Bhaijaan</i> (2015)	<i>Bhar do jholi meri</i>	<i>Alamdard</i> (2017)	<i>Tere alam to na</i> <i>Ghazi</i>

Purposive Non-probability sampling is used to select movies in this study. The reason behind taking this technique is this study being qualitative and the need to select those specific movies which contained *Qawwalis*. Data was collected from Bolly and Lollywood movies which was approached from digital website that is YouTube. There are many other movies in which *Qawwali* music is included but the main reason for taking these five movies from each cinema as a sample is that these movies contained *Qawwalis* that are well acknowledged in terms of their ratings and music production.

Results and Discussion

The analysis of *Qawwalis* from Bollywood movies reveals a rich tapestry of cultural and thematic diversity. The study is organized into two main components: Visuals and Lyrics. The Visuals are further categorized into seating arrangement, instruments, and background setting, while lyrics are examined in terms of language and

context. The detailed examination of specific *Qawwalis* from various movies showcases the dynamic nature of this musical tradition. Each *Qawwali* is a unique artistic expression, encompassing distinct seating arrangements, instrumentations, background settings, languages, and contextual themes. From the celebratory atmosphere of a child's birthday party in "*Jeena to hai usi ka*" to the spiritual ambiance of a shrine in "*Aya tere dar par deevana*," the *Qawwalis* span a wide range of settings and emotions.

Furthermore, the lyrical content reflects the societal and philosophical contexts of the respective films. Themes of love, social relations, spirituality, and human emotions are eloquently portrayed in Urdu and Punjabi languages, enhancing the depth and resonance of each *Qawwali*. In essence, the exploration underscores the cultural significance of *Qawwalis* in the cinematic realm, illustrating their ability to convey diverse emotions, messages, and cultural nuances. Through the examination of these *Qawwalis*, one gains insight into the intricate interplay of music, visuals, and language, contributing to the rich artistic heritage of Bollywood cinema.

The exploration of *Qawwalis* from Lollywood movies unravels a captivating mosaic of cultural and thematic diversity, echoing the rich heritage of Pakistani cinema. This analysis is structured around two key components: Visuals and Lyrics, delving into the intricate details of each *Qawwali's* unique presentation. The Visuals of these *Qawwalis* showcase a variety of settings, from the vibrant ambiance of a private gathering in "*Ab chor k dar tera*" to the spiritual solemnity of a Sufi shrine in "*Meri touba touba*." Each *Qawwali's* seating arrangement, instruments, and background setting contribute to its distinct character, reflecting the cultural nuances embedded in the narratives of the respective movies.

Examining the Lyrics unveils the poetic richness and thematic essence of these *Qawwalis*. Whether expressing spiritual devotion, praising the Prophet Mohammad SAWW, or narrating tales of love and repentance, the *Qawwalis* traverse a spectrum of emotions and cultural contexts. The linguistic diversity, with *Qawwalis* presented in Punjabi and Urdu, adds depth to their cultural resonance.

From the competitive and humorous tone of "*Akhiyan nu shok deedar da*" to the spiritual depth of "*Othy jaa k mur na awan*," each *Qawwali* contributes to the narrative fabric of its film. The contextual significance, whether within a jail setting or the sacred environs of a shrine, further enhances the cultural and emotional impact of these musical expressions. In essence, the *Qawwalis* from Lollywood movies exemplify the vibrant tapestry of Pakistani cinematic artistry, offering a unique lens into the cultural, spiritual, and emotional dimensions embedded in the nation's storytelling tradition. Through the interplay of music, visuals, and language, these *Qawwalis* contribute significantly to the cultural heritage of Pakistan, captivating audiences with their diverse narratives and emotional resonance.

Conclusion

A comprehensive exploration of *Qawwali* in both Indian and Pakistani cinemas divulges a nuanced distinction in their treatment of this musical genre. In Indian movies, *Qawwali* is accorded a level playing field among other musical genres, receiving meticulous attention to presentation, incorporating both traditional and modern instruments through advanced editing techniques. This underscores the recognition of *Qawwali* as a vital expression of culture, emotions, and narrative elements within the Indian cinematic landscape. The investigation brings to light the integration of *Qawwali*

as a regular musical track in Indian films, produced in contemporary studios with the infusion of modern instruments. This practice reflects a deliberate effort to position *Qawwali* on par with other song genres, emphasizing its cultural significance and adaptability to evolving musical landscapes.

On the contrary, Pakistani films, until the nineties, predominantly portrayed *qawwali* in a more traditional light. The depiction often adhered to conventional settings, with *qawwali* performances captured in the customary manner using traditional instruments. Unlike the Indian counterpart, Pakistani cinema has historically showcased *qawwali* in a more traditional and unaltered form, preserving its authenticity as an integral part of the cultural and cinematic heritage. In essence, while Indian cinema embraces *qawwali* as a dynamic and evolving genre, seamlessly integrating it into the contemporary music scene, Pakistani cinema has, to a large extent, maintained a traditional approach, valuing *qawwali* for its historical and cultural roots. This comparative analysis underscores the diverse cinematic interpretations of *qawwali*, reflecting the distinct cultural contexts and cinematic practices of these two nations.

Recommendations

1. *Qawwali* is an ancient, significant, positive and credible reference to the subcontinent that represents the religious, cultural and spiritual aspects of the region throughout the world. Its use as a genre of music in movies is very important and necessary because movies are reflecting different issues of any country in the world. Therefore, filmmakers should give it a prominent place in the movie.

2. Researchers in the media sciences need to be aware of different areas of the arts, including music, as the performing arts are part of the media, thus expanding the scope of research in the media sciences.

3. Such literary and cultural research should come to the fore so that artists and performers also know what is the social significance of these genres, especially *Qawwali*, as well as its importance in research and writing so that they can take this art in a better way in the future and to create innovation and rarity in it.

4. The media sciences departments of the universities should also play their role in promoting such research among the students so that the cultural beauty of the country is maintained, and the quality of research may be raised.

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