Abstract

Qawwali known as Sama’s the religious and classical practice of Music. It is sung in religious as well as social and cultural ceremonies in Muslim society. Qawwali has now become the part of our culture. Among several components of culture, folk songs are considered as an important component and one of the genres of folk songs is Qawwali, which was started earlier as religious practice by Sufis and it was chanted on shrines and in religious ceremonies but with the passage of time it became a cultural activity and nowadays it is chanted in social ceremonies as folk songs. Available literature about Qawwali provides information about its origin and its journey from ritual to entertainment but there is no scholarly work available about the impact of Qawwali on society and culture of Pakistan as a genus of folk music. So the aim of the present paper is to understand the brief history of Qawwali in religious perspective and to highlight its emergence as social and cultural activity as form of folk music and analyze its impact on Pakistani society and culture as a variety of folk music to show that Qawwali as category of folk music has deeply influenced the society and culture of Pakistan and is largely practiced in social and cultural events.

Key words: Qawali, Sama, Zikir, Society, Religious
Introduction

Qawwali is the famous religious practice all over South Asia where there Muslims live. Where there are Muslims; there are Sufis and where there are Sufis, there is Qawwali.¹ This is a mystical practice which was started by Sufis. Sufism is the mystical movement in Islam and the Muslim, who dedicates himself to the mystical movement of Sufism, is known as Sufi. The etymology of the word Sufi is soof which means “wool.”² The Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) was a Sufi throughout his life.³ Sufism’ with this nomenclature was introduced in 2nd century A.H. Prior to this, word ‘ascetic’ was used for Sufis. Sufism was earlier developed as an individual ascetic movement and later became a legitimate part of Islam in 12th century. Sufi orders developed and spread till fifteenth century. Four Sufi orders become popular in Indian subcontinent i.e Chishti, Suharwardi, Qadri and Naqashbandi ⁴. The Sufis belonging to these orders formulated several practices among which prominent are Zikr and Sama. Zikr is the form of remembrance in which the Sufi remembers Allah by chanting the names of Allah. Through Zikr Sufi wants to get closeness to Allah.³ Some Sufis propagated Zikr with rhythm which is known as Sama. There is diversity within these Sufi practices. For example Naqashbandi propagate loud Zikr instead of silent Zikr of Suharwardi order. Chishti Sufis favour Sama but other Sufi orders criticize it. By the end of the 11th century, there arouse the tradition of Sama.

Sama

Sama literally means ‘listening’ or ‘music’.⁶ Term ‘Sama’ is considered as a form of musical concert which is organized to bring about a state of ecstasy (wajad) in Sufis.⁷ Bruce Lawrence defined Sama as “hearing chanted verse (with or without accompanying instruments in the company of others, also seeking to participate in the dynamic dialogue between the human lover and Divine beloved”).⁸ Sama should not be considered as inner experience only rather it is the form of religious activity in which musical performance is involved and
this takes place under strict conditions. Chishti Sufis consider Sama as ecstatic hub and in practice of Sama, the quest of Sufis is the ‘union with Allah’ that must be combined with severe discipline of the sensual self. Sama is considered as an occasion in which the purpose of people’s gathering is to realize the ideals of Islamic mysticism through the ritual of listening to music or Sama. The practice of Sama is controversial among certain Ulama. They deliberate it contrary to Islamic tradition as it was not practiced during the period of the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W). According to some theologians, there are four types of Sama; 1- Halal (lawful) 2- Mubah (permitted) 3- Makrooh (disapproved) 4. Haram (forbidden); If Sama is held for the sake of Allah and longing for Allah and not longing for the created it is lawful. If Sama is conducted mainly longing for Allah and only little desiring for the created then it is permitted. Sama held much desiring for created and little for Allah is disapproved. The fourth type of Sama in which there is no yearning for Allah and is all longing for created is forbidden. So, to the Sufi, Sama/Qawwali is a method of worship and feast for the soul, to the performer it is the genre of music with its distinctive characteristics of worship and to the observer it is music in context par excellence.

From Sama to Qawwali: Contextual History

The origin of Sama probably can be traced back to the birth of the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W). Several scholars discussed the diverse spiritual effects of music but Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (1059-1111) a great theologian and Sufi, in Kitab Adab al-Samawa al-Wajd, the (Book of the Right Usages of Audition and Trance) refined and codified the principles of Sama. Three things and rules are necessary for Sama gatherings; time, place and people. It is necessary that Sama should not be held during prayer or at the time of worship. It should neither be held on streets where people usually travel and pass through nor in dark places. It should be held in the company of people who are aware of the good conduct and value of Sama. Imam Ghazali (1058-1111) formulated ten rules of etiquette to attend Sama gathering.
Sama originated in eighth century Iraq and Iran (Persia) and was widely mentioned in Sufi manuals of 10th century. A dance form of whirling Dervaishon Daff beat was developed by Maulana Jallaludin Rumi (1207-1273, founder of Malviya Sufi order) with the help of SaadiSherazi (1200-1292, Persian poet). This is known as Sama. There are similarities between the early practice of Sama by Jalaluddin Rumi and the Chishti approach to music.

The Chishti Sufi order was developed in 940 A.D. This order traces their lineage to the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) through Hazrat Ali (R.A). The order was started by Abu Isahaq Chishti(died 940) in Chishti but introduced in Indian subcontinent by KhawajaMoinuddinChishti (1141-1236) in thirteenth century. Sama is chiefly celebrated by the Sufis belonging to the Chishti Order. Chishti practice of Sama was started by Khawaja Moinuddin Chishti. He institutionalized Sama because he wanted to preach Islam to Hindus who were music lovers and he used Sama as a mean to attract them together.

Then Shaikh Syed Muhammad Nizammuddin Auliya (1238-1325) known with the title of Sultan-ul-Mushaikh, Mehboob-e-Illahi in Indian subcontinent, continued the practice of Chishti Sama. He preached Islam through the Sufi musical form of Qawwali in India. Amir Khusrau (1253-1325) was a Sufi saint and disciple of Nizamuddin Auliya. He was associated to the court of the sultan Ala’ul-Din Khilji (1296-1316) at Delhi and he had the sagacity and command over the Indian and Persian classical music. The latest form of Qawwali was invented by Amir Khusrau in the subcontinent. It is related that Amir Khusrau brought Qawwali from Persia but in Persian literature no reference is found related to Qawwali. So, it is assumed that it was Sama which was later recognized as Qawwali in Indian Sufi literature. The history of Qawwali is closely associated to the pre-thirteenth century Sufi practice of Sama. Early practice of Sama is popularly known as Qawwali in India, and the singers, as Qawwal.
**Qawwals as Religious Practice**

Term *Qawwali* is derived from the Arabic verb ‘Qala’, which mean ‘to say’. The term *Qawwali* is a concept related to the religious musical form and is connected to recitation of holy text rather than to music. It is different from the verb referring to singing(*gana*). Expression ‘Qawwali parhna’ (to recite *Qawwali*) is used for *Qawwali* performance rather than using ‘Qawwali gana’ (to sing *Qawwali*). Poems are referred to as *kalam* instead of *shair*.

*Qawwali* is the religious form of the music. To the early Sufis of Islam *Qawwali* performance has a religious function. Early Sufis of Islam started to recite Quranic verses accompanied by music to fill their heart with mystical love and arouse their emotions. To the Sufis, music provides rhythm to *Zikr*.

At a later stage, recitations of Sufi poetry with musical compositions were also included in *Sama* and this tradition was attributed to the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) and his companions. By listening Sufi poetry, a Sufi wants to activate his link with his mentor and with saints departed and then ultimately to Almighty Allah. The music and poetry take regional forms according to the different local traditions. Sufi literature was created by Sufi poets in several genres like *quatrains* (*Rubai*), *Ghazal* rhythmic couplets, poems (*Qasida*) praise, *Masnavi* epic couplet. This form of music combined with Sufi poetry was used to communicate Sufi teachings. At some later stage, *Sama* or music was adopted to bring about ecstasy *Wajad*. Spiritually advanced Sufis individually or collectively fall in state of ecstasy and rise up to dance *Raqs*. According to Nizamud-Din Auliya, “in a state of ecstasy, When a Sufi claps his hands, all the sins of his hands are removed, and when he shouts all his evil desires are destroyed.”

*Sama* was chiefly practiced on *Urs* occasion to celebrate the death of a saint. But now the practice of *Sama* has been reduced into a secular type of musical festival indeed, and in these festivals dancing-girls perform their dance in honour of the saint.
Emergence of Qawwali as Social and Cultural Practice

What is culture and music?
The term ‘culture’ is an English word which is derived from Latin word ‘cult’ which means tilling or refining or worship. Geertz defines culture as a “framework of beliefs, expressive symbols and values in terms of which individuals define their feelings and make their judgments.” Culture is simply defined as a way of the life of the people. Different aspects of the culture include Art, music, literature, architecture, science, philosophy, religion, customs, traditions, festivals, ways of living etc. Culture is developed through historical process and it is passed forward from one generation to next generation. So the culture which is inherited from predecessor is known as cultural heritage.

Music as a part of culture has significant value in Pakistani society and culture too. Thomas fuller defined music that “it is nothing else but wild sounds civilized into time and tune.” William Shakespeare demarcated it as “the food of soul” music related to rhythm to express the sounds. Actually music is a combination of sounds, instruments and human activity.

Musicologists have classified music into several genres like art music, traditional music, popular music and folk music etc. Folk music, as an important genre of music, is essential part of culture. Several definitions are narrated to define folk music. It is related that music which is collectively accepted and is essentially popular is known as folk music. For some it is composed by the people and not for the people. The most authentic definition of folk music is described as the process of oral transmission, the product of evolution and is dependent on the circumstances of continuity, variation and selection. Folk music includes different ideas, culture, values, norms as well as the cultural traditions and literature. Folk songs are usually sung by people at working in fields, in ceremonies like marriages, fairs, festivals and on shrines. These songs are different from region to region but central themes are almost same. Folk music is considered as an important part of culture of any region of the world.
History of Music in Indian Subcontinent and Pakistan

History of Music in Pakistan can be traced back from over 5000 years. Development and history of the music in the Pakistan is linked with Indus Valley Civilization and invasion of the Aryans. Pakistani music was evolved as a result of Hindu-Muslim cultural interaction. Hindus were music lovers. They have rich musical heritage but its history is obscure. Indian music began with the beginning of religious life of the Aryans. They chanted Ashloks verses and Mantars which were known as Dhurpad. Only high caste Brahman had the monopoly over the Dhurpad. Low caste Hindus were not allowed to listen this religious music. The Muslims and low caste Hindus shaped folk music. This music influenced Muslim Sufis. They learned local language and melodies to spread the message of Islam to Hindu music lovers. They composed mystical songs by using local tunes. These Sufis were aware of the Persian and Arabic music. So, with the fusion of local language and melodies, new forms of music such as Tarana, Khayal, Thumri, Dadra, etc. evolved. Music was patronized by Muslim rulers and in Muslim rule, Indian Persian and Arabic modes of music were combined. In thirteenth century Amir Khusrau, a renowned Muslim musician and poet engaged the musical possibilities and introduced Qawwali, Tarana, Saazgiri and Saparda in Indian music. He invented so many musical instruments including Tabla, Harmonium and Sitar. With reference to Abdul Alim Jaa`far Khan (1931-1975) it is related that the composition of many Ragas like Kafi and Shahnai, are attributed to Khusrau which are still performed in Qawwali and he is considered as the founder of this art from.

Qawwali as Genre of Art and Folk Music

Qawwali is recognized as musical genre in Indian subcontinent. As a genre of music it is the song of devotion and supplication throughout South Asia especially in India and Pakistan. These songs are written in Urdu, Hindi, Persian Punjabi and Sindhi. These songs are sung by Qawwals in Qawwal group. One or two persons lead the Qawwali song. To induce trance passages
are repeated. **Harmonium** and **Dholak** are used as musical instruments and hand clapping adds vigor to the drum beat. **Qawwali** is started with prelude on harmonium and then introductory verses are sung without drum and main song started with drum beat and rhythmic hand clapping and then it is joined by the whole group of **Qawwals**. **Tablais** now used in modern professional **Qawwali** while traditional **Qawwals** are still stuck to **Dholak** only.

**Qawwali** is mostly the mixture of different languages.\(^{30}\)Earlier Sufi literature was in Persian language later, Amir Khusrau introduced Purbi and Brajbhasha in Sufi literature. A traditional **Qawwal** starts **Qawwali** in Persian language then moves to Punjabi or Urdu and then eastern languages i.e. Hindi and Purbi. This transition from west to east makes a bridge between languages and cultural regions. When language became a barrier to connect the audience then **Qawwals** focused on musical form and rhythm to induce trance. Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, a legend **Qawwal** from Pakistan, is the best example of it. He induced trance in western audience who were unaware of the content of **Qawwali**. If the audience could not understand the content and lyrics of **Qawwali**, then use of rhythm is the basic medium through which mystical experience is created by the use of voice and vocal musical experience.\(^{51}\)

Pakistani band **Junoon** created the Sufi rock genre by combining the modern hard rock and traditional folk with Sufi poetry.\(^{52}\)**CokeStudio**’s first session was launched in the Pakistan in 2008 and it got high esteem in musical world. **Coke Studio** infused music of new age in **Qawwali** because this new folk **Qawwali** is connected to our roots. Various artists are combining western and eastern melodies in folk **Qawwali** and making it the part of folk music of Pakistan\(^{53}\) such as Atif Aslam sung the ‘**Qawali**, ‘**Taj Dare Hram**’ earlier sung by the Sabri brothers. This version is totally different from the previous version in respect of music and musical instruments.\(^{54}\)

**Forms of Qawwali**

In the light of above discussion, to analyze the practice of **Qawwali** as social and cultural activity and its impact on
Pakistan’s society and culture, it can be categorized into three forms: 1. Sama Qawwali, 2. Popular Qawwali of recording industry 3. Concert Qawwali

Sama: Qawwali

It is also called Khanqahi Qawwali because it is related to the Sufi lodges. It is also like the concert Qawwali but the purpose and focus of performance is different. In this type of Qawwali, meditative and ecstatic technique is used to induce spiritual state. This form of Qawwali is performed on shrines, Dargahs and in their surroundings. Apart from performing on common days (especially on Thursday) and especial occasions (Urs festivals) this form of Qawwali is sung during the performance of different kind of rituals. Poetry of the Qawwali is varied but in the theme of the Qawwali, mystical love is dominant. Focus in Sama Qawwali is Mir-e-Mehfil rather than that of Qawwal.55

Recorded Qawwali of Recording Industry

Qawwali become the part of recording industry in 1920-1930 in south Asia. Earlier in twentieth century, Tabla and harmonium were used as musical instruments, later more instruments were added in 1930s. An important change occurred in Sama Qawwali was that related to the textual content of Qawwali. Urdu got important place in recorded Qawwali in 19th century. Urdu language which was used in recording was simpler than language of Urdu poetry. Not only the language but the content of the poem also got change. Most of the recorded poems were in praise of the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W). Recorded Qawwali is easily available in the form of CDs at the shops near the Dargahs and shrines nowadays. Narrative poems, with didactic content technique, were used in which verses from different sources were inserted in the main poem56 due to which whole song sometimes lost its original structure. After the partition of India recorded Qawwali was used to promote the national ideologies of new states. Qawwali become famous as music in Pakistan. Since 1950s, film music influenced the recorded Qawwali. Although its idiom is like the non-religious musical form of popular recorded Qawwali but major difference is that of lyrics.
Concert Qawwali

From 1940, Qawwali became the part of non-religious festivals and concerts. Concert Qawwali evolved with religious character since 1960s. Innovators of this tradition were Ghulam Farid Sabri and Maqbool Farid Sabri who got popularity nationally and internationally. Qureshi called this form of Qawwali as serious popular religious Qawwali. They mixed the features of traditional Qawwali with popular Qawwali and Hindustani Qawwali. They always kept balance between textual message and unrehearsed passages. Since 1980s stage Qawwali was dominated by Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan. He approached even to that audience who was unaware of the poetry of the Qawwali. His Qawwali has lack of balance between textual message and musical improvisation. This is not possible in Sama Qawwali as it disturbs the attention and concentration of the audience. The primary concern of concert Qawwali is to get pleasure and enjoyment rather than mystical states. The qualities of an artist Qawwal are different from the qualities of Sama Qawwal. In concert Qawwali the focus is on singer who is characterized as an artist and the concentration is on the musical traits like quality of voice and artistry of the singer etc.

Social and Cultural Influence of Qawwali

The impact of a phenomenon is analyzed through understanding the aim and purposes of that phenomenon. So the impact of Qawwali on society and culture is related to the aim and purpose of Qawwali. The earlier religious aim of Sama was to get closeness to Allah. Through the practice of Sama, Sufi experienced the spiritual states and fell in ecstasy. Zikr was done with rhythm. Earlier Quranic verses and poetry in praise of Allah and Muhammad were the content of Sama. Later Sufi Kalam was also incorporated in the content of Sama. It had religious function to induce trance and it was conducted on shrines and Sufi lodges and in Mahaful.

Qawwali’s impact on society and culture can be analyzed through the aims of present day status of Qawwali. The aim of
the present day Qawwali is to get pleasure and enjoyment and as a genre of music it is considered as source of entertainment. From the last fifty years Qawwali as a genre of music, has separated itself from its religious context. In non-religious context it is used in two ways; as an art form and as a dialogue. The mystical imagery of Qawwali was used for secular purposes such as Sabri brothers used concept of ‘wine’ in their Qawwali for secular purpose. By realizing the potential of Qawwali, Indian and Pakistani film industries used Qawwali as entertainment form. Moving forward from secularization Qawwali emerged as dialogue in stage shows. In stage or concert Qawwali, opposing male and female groups used this form of Qawwali for humorous exchange. Dialogue Qawwali has now became the part of entertainment programs and functions of schools and colleges. By realizing the therapeutic effect of Qawwali, doctors now advise the mentally disturbed patients to attend Qawwali functions. Presently, Qawwali has not the religious function only rather it is rapidly growing popular in domestic festivities, functions, musical concerts, commercial recordings and films. The emergence of broadcasting and recording industry has transformed Qawwali from religious form to popular entertaining art form. People now consider Qawwali as source of entertainment rather than devotional music. Several Qawwali events are conducted every year which are attended and enjoyed by all and sundry. Traditional Qawwali was just for selective audience and Qawwal also followed a format. Eye contact with audience, explanation and spiritual stories were considered essential for devotional Qawwali but now this communication is missing in Qawwali. In present days, with the emergence of Coke Studio young generation is becoming aware to the past value of the Qawwali by listening the new versions of Qawwali. This rejuvenation has made Qawwali as an essential part of entertainment and social-cultural activity.

Conclusion

Early ascetic movement of Islam became legitimate part of Islam and with the emergence of Sufi orders in Islam in 11th
and 12th centuries Sufis formulated different mystical practices of Zikr and Sama. Zikr is the remembrance of Allah by chanting His names and Sama is also a kind of Zikr which is done with rhythm. Sama was started as religious practice by early Sufis to get closeness to Allah. Through Sama, a Sufi fell in state of ecstasy by listening rhythmic Zikr. The content of Sama was Quranic verses, rhymes in praise of Allah, in applause of the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W), Sufi Kalam etc.

several rules were followed to conduct Sama and it was usually conducted on Dargahs and shrines. It was totally a religious activity. Focus of Sufis for listening Sama was on text rather than music. This tradition of Sama was introduced in Indian subcontinent by Moinuddin Chishti; a Sufi belonged to Chishti order. He used this tradition to spread Islam to music loving Hindus and Amir Khusrau trans formed Sama into Qawwali, made it a part of music by introducing many Rags, compositions and instruments. In later period, focus of Qawwali shifted from textual content to music and transition from religious to irreligious convention also occurred in theme and function of Qawwali. This shift made Qawwali as popular genre of music and as genre of music and art it became the part of culture. As part of culture, it is serving as religious as well as non-religious functions. In non-religious context, realizing the potential of Qawwali it is used in film industry and in concerts as musical entertainment to get pleasure and enjoyment.

Pioneers of this art form of Qawwali are Sabri Brothers and Nusrat Fateh Ali. As popular form of music and with secular text, now Qawwali is sung in different social and cultural activities i.e. domestic festivities, marriage ceremonies, festivals, and in college functions as an entertainment. It is also used as therapy to cure mentally sick patients. Fused with rock and pop music and with the emergence of Coke Studio, Qawwali is being developed and progressed as musical genre and it is being transformed according to the musical rhythmic taste of new generation. This rejuvenation of present and past Qawwali music has also largely influenced the social and cultural contours of Pakistani society.
References

8. Lawrence, “The Early Chishti Approach To Sama”, P.72
9. Prof. Carl W. Earnst, *Theory And Practice of Sama (Listening To Music) In The Sufi Circle of Burhanul Din Al Gharib*, (Raliegh: University Of North Caroline, N.D), P. 2
14. Arab musicologists such as al-Kindi (d.873) and al-Farabi (b.872) wrote on the effects of music, but the first to take into account the relation between music and trance were the Brothers of Purity (Ikhwan al-Safa), “a group of philosophers, scientists, mathematicians, and litterateurs who flourished at Al-Sasra during the second half of the eleventh century”.
16. Syed Gafoor, *Sufis Monuments of Gulbarga And Bidar: A Cultural Study From 14th Century AD To 17th Century*
AS, PhD Thesis (Gulbarga University: Department of History, 2014), Pp. 233-235; 1. Sit in a seriously attentive manner by keeping the head down. 2. Do not look at each other. 3. Everyone should concentrate and occupy himself fully in the Sama. 4. Should have no conversation during Sama. 5. Do not do distracting things – do not even drink water. 6. Do not look, gaze or stare hither and thither. 7. Do not move your arms or legs unnecessarily and do not make any movement with a show. 8. Sit in a position which is presented for Quida/Tashhahudinsalat. 9. Occupy the heart and mind fully with the thought and remembrance of Allah. 10. Keep yourself under control so that you do not stand up or move about in a voluntary manner, of your own accord. However, if anybody does so under the condition that he has no control over himself and involuntarily (that is, not of his own accord or volition) then, others should also stand up and help him in order to prevent him from losing his balance and hurting himself.


18 Earnst, Theory And Practice of Sama, p. 1

19 Arberry, Sufism: An Account of Mystics of Islam, P.34

20 Subhān, Sufism: Its Saints And Shrines, P.112

21 Mikko Viitamäki, Text and Intensification of Its Impact in Chishti Sama’ Master’s Thesis (University of Helsinki:Arabic and Islamic Studies March 2008), p. 20

22 Qureshi, Sufi Music of India and Pakistan, p. 20.

23 Rasheed Malik, p 23.


26 Subhān, Sufism: Its Saints And Shrines, P.112

27 Viitamäki, Text and Intensification of Its Impact in Chishti Sama,p. 22; Kalam is a word that literally means ‘talk, utterance’ but it carries heavily religious connotations unlike the word shi’r, which refers specifically to the poetry of more profane kind.
Regula Qureshi, *Sufi Music of India and Pakistan*: p. xiii


Subḥān, *Sufism: Its Saints And Shrines*, P.113

Qureshi, *Sufi music of Indai and Pakistan*, p. 2


The word ‘Urs, literally means “wedding-festivity”, so that, as applied to the anniversary of a saint's death, it probably has a subtle reference to the sophisticated stage attained by him in his life time and consummated at the time of his death. i.e. the anniversary of the death of a saint.


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Mikko Viitamäki, Text and Intensification of Its Impact in Chishti Sama. P. 80-82.

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Qureshi, Sufi Music of India and Pakistan, p. 118.

Mikko Viitamäki, Text and Intensification of Its Impact in Chishti Sama, P. 79;( Cf. e.g. Nusrat1997 track 1). where he introduces a long improvisatory passage after the half line ‘khudayara_m kun bar man’.

Ibid.

Adam Nayyar, Origin and History of the Qawwali, (Islamabad: LokVirsa Research Centre, 1988), p

Coeli Fitzpatrick, Muhammad in History, Thought, and Culture: p. 410