

Text and Intensification of Its Impact in Chishti *Samā`*

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Master's Thesis
March 2008

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Key to transliteration

Transliteration of Persian words follows the Indo-Persian convention.

In Urdu and Hindi words the *hamza* is not transliterated when it separates two vowels.

آ (آء)	´ (´ā)	ڑ	r	گ	g
ب	b	ز	z	ل	l
پ	p	ژ	zh	م	m
ت	t	س	s	ن (ن)	n (ñ)
ٹ	ṭ	ش	sh	و	v, ū, o, au (w in some Arabic terms)
ث	ṯ	ص	ṣ	ہ	h (not transliterated in the end of a word)
ج	j	ض	ẓ	ھ	h
چ	c	ط	ṭ	ی	y, ī
ح	ḥ	ظ	ẓ	ے	e, ai
خ	<u>kh</u>	ع	´	َ (zabar)	a
د	d	غ	<u>gh</u>	ِ (zer)	i
ڈ	ḍ	ف	f	ُ (pesh)	u
ذ	<u>z</u>	ق	q		
ر	r	ک	k		

1 Introduction

1.1 Aim of the study

Then he told a story about Shaykh Farīd al-Dīn, how he had a strong inclination for *samā`*. He said: “Once Shaykh Farīd al-Dīn wished to listen to *samā`* but there was no qawwal present. He directed Badr al-Dīn Ishāq to fetch the letter recently sent by Ḥamīd al-Dīn Nagaurī. Badr al-Dīn left and fetched the bag, where letters and notes were kept. He searched the bag and the very first letter he selected was that of Ḥamīd al-Dīn. He brought it to the Shaykh, who asked him to stand up and read. Badr al-Dīn stood up and started to read aloud. The letter begun ‘This humble, weak and worthless man, Muḥammad `Aṭā, is the slave of the dervishes and from head to toe only dust of their feet.’ The Shaykh had heard only this much, when a mystical state and taste for God manifested in him.” Then Khwaja Nizamuddin recited the following quatrain also quoted in the letter:

Where is the intellect that penetrates your perfection?
Where is the soul that penetrates your majesty?
I understand, that you have removed veil from beauty’s face
But where is the eye that penetrates your beauty?

Anecdotes like the one cited above abound in texts written by Sufis of the Chishti order. This particular one appears in *Favā’id al-Fu’ād* (Fascicle IV, *Majlis* 22), collected discussions of the most famous Indian Sufi shaykh of the 13th and 14th centuries, Khwaja Nizamuddin Auliya’ (*Khvāja Nizām al-Dīn Auliya’*; d. 1325). Khwaja Nizamuddin is relating a story about his own master, who once had a desire to listen to *samā`*. No qawwal, reciter, is present and Bābā Farīd al-Dīn contents himself with reading of a letter sent by another eminent Sufi. Reading the letter then produces a mystical state in the master. What is striking about the anecdote is the emphasis laid on text. In the absence of a qawwal, the shaykh does not want anyone to play or sing, but to read from a letter by Ḥamīd al-Dīn. Mystical states are attributed expressly to the impact of poetry also in passages that describe the experiences of Chishti masters when they are listening to poetry sung by professional performers. At the present day, after an assembly for mystical music, the listeners usually comment on how good poetry the performers sung and how well they combined verses from different poems in their performance.

In this study, I am concentrating on the analysis of the textual content of Chishti *samā`* in the present day. What is this textual content? What are the themes discussed the poems? The focus of the whole study, however, will be on the question, how is the impact of text intensified to such an extent that it enables the listeners to experience mystical states? *Samā`* means literally ‘listening’ but as a technical Sufi term it refers to listening to music in order to experience mystical states. Some Sufi orders, like

Mevleviyya, acknowledge listening to purely instrumental music, but in the case of the Chishtis, one could define *samā`* as listening to sung poetry, that is usually accompanied with musical instruments, with the aim of experiencing mystical states. Moreover, a *samā`* assembly, *mahfil-i samā`* or *majlis-i samā`*, is almost without an exception a congregational ritual of like-minded Sufis, who strive for the same goal.

1.2 The previous research

Sufi music has attracted attention of only few scholars. Jean During has in his book *Musique et Extase, l'audition mystique dans la tradition soufie* (1988) analysed the theoretical framework of *samā`* ritual, concentrating mainly on the Mevlevi order. Kenneth S. Avery, on the other hand, has discussed the psychological aspects of *samā`*. He uses the earliest Sufi treatises as the material for his work *A Psychology of Early Sufi samā`*. *Listening and Altered States* (2004). Neither work pays more than cursory attention to the role of the text in *samā`*, nor discusses *samā`* in the Indian Subcontinent. On the other hand, different genres of Indian music have been studied extensively by different scholar. Bonnie C. Wade (1997) analyses the creativity within the limits of traditional school of *khayāl* (or *khyāl*) singing. Peter Manuel has devoted several works to studying lighter forms of classical music, viz. *thumrī* (1989) and ghazal (1988/89), as well as popular music and its development in the 20th century (1988). The textual content of *thumrī* has been analysed by Lalita du Perron (2002). Each of the abovementioned musical styles is, however, more or less secular and does not have a ritual function. Sufi music has been studied by Shemeem Burney Abbas (2002). Her work concentrates mainly on the vernacular mystical poetry in Sindhi, Punjabi and Hindi and the musical styles used in performing these poems. Her work is marred, though, by two factors. First, she analyses mainly the repertoire of recording and concert artists, and many examples in her book are recorded in concerts devoid of ritual context. Thus, the value of the work in describing the Sufi ritual can be contested. As will be noted in discussing the music used in Chishti *samā`*, qawwali (*qavvālī*), in Chapters 6.1 and 6.2, the commercial forms of Sufi music can be very dissimilar from the music used in the ritual settings. Second, she analyses the female voice of the vernacular poetry and sees it as propagating social change in the patriarchal society. She pays scant attention to the fact that most of the poems with female voice are written by men for predominantly male audiences and thus they are firmly in the confines of the patriarchal society.

The major ethnomusicological work on qawwali is Regula Burckhardt Qureshi's *Sufi Music of India and Pakistan. Sound, Context and Meaning in Qawwali* [2006 (1986)]. Her work analyses the musical idiom of qawwali and its development in the actual performance. She has continued her work in several articles (e.g. 1992, 1999, 2003) discussing the development of different forms of qawwali in the 20th century and its role outside South Asia. Her works are based on extensive fieldwork and she has studied qawwali music under the tutelage of a leading qawwal of Delhi, Mi`rāj Aḥmad Niẓāmī. Though her work is invaluable from the point of view of the musical theory of qawwali and its forming in the performing context, the mystical background of the *samā`* is touched upon only briefly. The analysis of the text is outside the scope of Qureshi's study, though in qawwali it is of utmost importance, as also Qureshi herself notes. The mystical poetry in India, on the other hand, has been discussed extensively in the works of Annemarie Schimmel. Her painstakingly meticulous *A Two-Colored Brocade. The Imagery of Persian Poetry* [2004 (1992)] is an excellent analysis of the imagery of the Persian poetry. The book is, however, rather encyclopaedic in nature and finding references to particularly mystical or Indian poems can be difficult. Another book by Schimmel, *Pain and Grace. A Study of Two Mystical Writers of Eighteenth-Century Muslim India* (1976), paints a vivid picture of the poems of Khvāja Mīr Dard and Shāh `Abd al-Laṭīf. Both works are products of deep acquaintance with the literary traditions of Islamic cultures. The ritual context of the poems, nonetheless, falls outside the scope of these works that are based on purely literary materials.

Christopher Shackle has examined the less known mystical poets of South Asia (e.g. 1999) as well as the popular Punjabi poet Khvāja Farīd and the ways his work has been interpreted in the 20th century (2006). A research that would take also the performance context into account in analysing the older mystical texts has been begun by Francesca Orsini (e.g. 2006). The textual content of qawwali in relation to the actual performance has been, to my knowledge, thus far discussed only by Scott Kugle. In his article "*Qawwālī* Between Written poem and Sung Lyric, Or...How a *Ghazal* Lives" (2007) he analyses one poem of Sirāj Aurangābādī in depth and traces the diverse shades of meaning the text acquires in qawwali performance. The present study aims at a wider, though inevitably less in depth, analysis of the role of mystical poetry in a living performance context.

1.3 Data and methods

My study combines both literary and ethnographic sources in order to build a picture of the textual contents and treatment of text in the present day Chishti *samā`*. Combining the methods of textual research and fieldwork is utilised already in discussing the themes of Persian, Urdu and Hindi poetry in chapters three and four. The translation of most of the texts is based on the literary sources. The selection of these verses is not, however, arbitrary, but is done in the light of the living performance tradition. I have taken care to select the verses from such poems that are frequently performed by the qawwals and are therefore familiar to the audiences of Chishti *samā`*. In addition, when the readings of the textual source and performers differ, I have favoured the latter in order to give a picture on the actual ritual.

My primary textual source on the qawwali poetry is the collection *Surūd-i Rūhānī* (henceforward *Surūd*), published in 1998. It was compiled by a leading qawwal of the Nizamuddin Dargah, Mi`rāj Aḥmad Nizāmī Qavvāl, specifically for the needs of other qawwals. *Surūd* contains 255 poems in three languages: Persian, Urdu and Hindi. The length of the poems varies from a quatrain to ghazals of over twenty couplets. No doubt, the collection represents a repertoire of only one qawwal, but the fieldwork and recordings show, that most of the poems in the collection are an integral part of the repertoires of most qawwals in the Indian Subcontinent.

Surūd is not ordered alphabetically by the rhyming word, as most collections of Urdu and Persian poetry are. The poems are organised according to two methods. First, they are divided into three sections by language. The Hindi category includes two poems in Punjabi also. Most poems are in Urdu (132), followed by Persian (75) and Hindi (58). Poems in each language category are then further divided according to the type of the poem, beginning with poems of praise and ending with lyrical love poetry. The best represented Persian authors are Amir Khusro (Amīr Khusro, d. 1325) and Jāmī (d. 1492). Poems by the classical non-Indian poets, as well as by Indian mystics form the rest of the Persian poems in *Surūd*. From among the Urdu authors, the best represented poet is the contemporary mystical writer Kāmil Ḥaidarābādī (d. 1986). This may well be due to the compiler's background in Hyderabad. Other mystic-poets of Hyderabad, `Ulvi (d. 1901) and Ḥasrat (d. 1962), are fairly well represented as well. This abundance of poems by Hyderabad writers is perhaps the most conspicuous mark of the compiler's personal repertoire. On the other hand, the famous qawwal `Azīz Aḥmad Khān Vāriṣī hailed from

Hyderabad and his recordings have made poems of the abovementioned writers well known around South Asia. Other Urdu poems are written both by mystics and canonised Urdu poets. It is striking, though, that the arguably greatest mystical poet in the Urdu language, Dard, is represented only with one poem. This may be due to his Naqshbandi background. The Hindi poetry is dominated by poems attributed to Amir Khusro as well as by poems of Indian Sufis. Few *bhajans* by the saints Kabīr and Mīrā Bāī are among the poems as well. Hindi poems include relatively the highest amount of poems by anonymous writers, which illustrate the folk roots and oral transmission of Hindi poetry. It is also worth noting that most Hindi poems in the collection are fairly simple and they acquire their full identity only in musical performance, whereas Persian and Urdu poems represent a fully developed poetical tradition also outside the performance context.¹

It should be noted that *Surūd* is a collection of poetry that is situated somewhere in between the literary and oral traditions. Some of the Hindi poems may well be printed for the first time in this collection, and many Persian poems bear marks of the oral transmission. None of the five poems of Rūmī (d. 1273) included in *Surūd* is found in his Iranian standard collection, *Dīvān Kulliyāt-i Shams Tabrezī*, and many poems of Khusro differ from the versions in standard editions. In addition, different qawwals read some portions of poems in diverse ways. They may also know a different amount of verses for a single poem. The variant readings are sometimes noted in *Surūd* itself, usually with reference to compiler's father. In discussing the poems, I have noted the differences of the poems with standard collections whenever possible. Comparing the variant readings of different qawwals and trying to trace the origin of the poems of Rūmī, for example, is outside the scope of this work.

The material of *Surūd* is enhanced with other collections of poetry. These include the *dīvāns* of individual poets, and a remarkable book called *Naghmāt-i Samā`*. *Naghmāt-i Samā`* is another collection published for the needs of qawwals. It was published in 1935 in a lithographed edition (*Surūd* is typeset) and it includes only Persian poems, which are organised traditionally according to the rhyme word. The poems in *Naghmāt-i samā`* have very few mistakes in contrast to *Surūd*, typesetter of which was obviously not very well acquainted with Persian. Most of the poems in *Naghmāt-i samā`* that are still frequently performed are found also in *Surūd*. Since the focus of this study is on the qawwali repertoire of the present day, I have used *Surūd* as the primary source. I

¹ Similar phenomenon is noted by Lalita du Perron (2002, 186) in comparing the lyrics of *thumrī* with lyrics of ghazal singing.

became acquainted with *Surūd* for the first time during the winter 2004-5, when I had a chance to study mystical poetry at the Ḥazrat `Ināyat Khān Memorial Trust. This possibility was organised by Dr. Farīda `Alī Nizāmī. Physically the Memorial Trust is situated in the immediate vicinity of the Nizamuddin Dargah, and subsequently I became familiar with the life of the shrine. My heartfelt thanks are due to Dr. Farīda `Alī also because she offered her kind help during my fieldwork period both by organising the accommodation and introducing me with the informants I was previously unacquainted with.

As has already been noted, the academic research on qawwali and Chishti *samā`* is scarce. For this reason, I have complemented the literary sources with interviews I made during a period of fieldwork in Delhi and Ajmer during the winter 2006-7. All the interviews were conducted in Urdu and during them I interviewed both qawwals and notable Sufis² in order to acquire information on the poetry and dynamics of Chishti *samā`*. How do qawwals decide what poem to perform? What are the principles regulating the selection of poetry? How are *samā`* assemblies organised, what are the requirements of the listeners and what is believed to take place in a more subtle level? I was well received by the informants, though many Sufis were reluctant to let their interviews be recorded. As a result, I took notes during the interviews and improved them from my memory immediately after the interview had taken place. In interviewing the qawwals, the recorder posed another kind of problem. This manifested, for example, in interviewing Muḥammad Ḥayāt. He wanted to organise a musical demonstration with accompanists and in between answering the questions he sung short extracts. I assume he wanted to create a demo that would travel with me to Finland and would maybe produce invitations to perform. These are the reasons, why I finally made all the interviews with the help of a notebook only. In addition to interviews, I observed and recorded eighteen *samā`* assemblies in different locations in Ajmer and Delhi. Recording an assembly was not frowned upon, since in almost every occasion there were others who were also making a recording for some purpose. The analysis of the different textual techniques employed in a qawwali performance in chapter eight is based on these recordings.

I will start the discussion with a brief introduction to the history of *samā`* and the controversy that has surrounded it in chapter two. Then I shall discuss the textual content of the songs heard in Chishti *samā`*. Chapter three is dedicated to poetry in Persian

² For information on the informants, see Appendix III.

and Urdu. Poetic traditions in these two languages can be conceived as parts of the same continuum of the Islamic poetries of India. Persian poetry used in Chishti *samā`* has been written since the 11th century, while Urdu became a language of poetry only in the 18th century. The continuum is, however, more than historical. Urdu poetry has inherited the forms and poetic images of Persian poetry, and this is why I discuss both the poetic traditions in a single chapter. I have divided the poems roughly to poems of praise and lyrical poems. The categories overlap but are still a good way to discuss the themes of the poems.

The discussion on Persian and Urdu poetry is followed by an analysis of the Hindi poetry. This tradition is based on the indigenous Indian forms and meters and it utilises conspicuously Indian imagery. Hindi poetry anchors the ritual of Chishti *samā`* to the culture of South Asia. In discussing the themes of the poems I quote translations of several verses. I have done this in order to allow the texts to speak for themselves and to give the reader a chance to get acquainted with the actual texts. Most of the verses have not, to my knowledge, appeared in translation before. All the translations from Persian, Urdu and Hindi are mine, and the transliterations of the original text, as well as a list of the poets, are found in the Appendices I and II respectively.

Qawwali utilises the conventions of classical North Indian music. The adherence to these conventions is nonetheless modified by the primacy of textual delivery, which in classical music plays only a minor role. Although this study is not ethnomusicological, it is necessary to shortly analyse the musical idiom of qawwali. This is done in chapter five, the focus being on the question, how the primacy of text has moulded the musical features of qawwali. The analysis of the musical idiom of qawwali and discussion of its recorded and concert forms relies heavily on the excellent works of Qureshi on this subject. In addition to recorded and concert qawwali, chapter 6.3 discusses the qawwali of ritual assemblies extensively. The interviews have served as the main material for this chapter.

In chapter seven I concentrate on the actual techniques of intensifying the text in a *samā`* assembly. I start with examining the thematic ordering of poems as a potential way to enhance their impact. The intensifying the impact of the text is, however, usually achieved in the level of an individual poem. I have detected three techniques that operate in this level: usage of introductory verses, inserted verses and extensive repetitions. Each technique is discussed individually in the light of examples recorded in actual ritual

concerts. This analysis, I hope, will help in understanding the meaning of text and dynamics of its treatment in a highly developed tradition of mystical music.

2 Islam, poetry and music

2.1 *Samā`* and Islamic law

Samā` is probably the most controversial practice of the Sufis and many legal scholars have criticised it severely. In discussing the legal approaches to *samā`*, Arthur Gribetz has noted that the relationship of Islamic law to music and poetry has always been ambivalent. This attitude is naturally projected into *samā`*. The opponents of *samā`*, the Hanbalite jurist Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 1200) foremost among them, have seen the references of Qur'an to the amusement [23:3, 53:61], excitement through voice [17:64] and idle talk [31:5] as references to singing and music. Also the poets are treated with contempt as people who lead others astray [26:224-6]. Moreover, a hadith, in which Ibn `Umar blocks his ears when he hears the sound of a *mizmār* (reed pipe) and thus claims to follow the example of the Prophet, is construed as a proof for prohibiting music. None of the Qur'anic passages mentions specifically music or singing, and selective interpretation is used by the proponents of *samā`* as well. The Qur'an declares that God has distinguished what is legal and what is not [6:119], and since there is no mention of music, it is obviously allowed. Also listening to the Word of God is interpreted as listening to music and poetry. Likewise, al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) interprets the *mizmār* hadith not to prohibit music but demonstrate only that the Prophet was disturbed by the playing of *mizmār* at that instance. To prove his case, he adds that the Prophet had not unambiguously forbidden Ibn `Umar from listening to music. The legal argumentation has never managed to create a conclusion, which would convince both the opponents and proponents of *samā`*. Rather, the legal discussions have been characterised by the subjectivity of interpretation. Arthur Gribetz takes the difference of Ibn Taymiyya's (d. 1328) and al-Ghazālī's views as an illustrative example. The former declared *samā`* forbidden because it was not specifically referred to in Qur'an and Sunna, while the latter declared, for exactly the same reason, that there was no basis on which *samā`* could be proclaimed illegal. (Gribetz 1991, 45-50)

One fact, on which both the proponents and opponents of *samā`* have agreed is that a beautiful voice has a strong influence on a human being. Opponents of course perceived this influence as undesirable, while the Sufis utilised it in their religious life. A hadith cited by almost all the proponents of *samā`* is the report of a black camel driver who with his beautiful voice was able to lure camels carry such a weighty load that they would

die under it.(Gribetz 1991, 48) This hadith is found in most early Sufi manuals. These manuals concentrated largely on the legal ramifications of *samā`*. Qushayrī (d. 1074), for example, takes in his *Risāla* great pains to define the legality of *samā`* in order to ascertain the limits of its permissibility. (Graham 1999, 119) Also *Kitāb al-Lumā` fī'l-taṣawwuf* by al-Sarrāj (d. 988) and *Iḥyā` `Ulūm al-Dīn* by al-Ghazālī concentrate on the legal aspects. In addition to legal discussion, these two texts show a growing interest in the spiritual benefits of *samā`*. Al-Sarrāj perceives *samā`* as a technique, which during the moments of heightened awareness can produce a spiritual experience in the listener's heart. This experience is a grace or revelation from the divine realm. Al-Ghazālī differs from this approach in stating that *samā`* brings forth the divine secrets already contained in the heart; it is not an experience coming from outside but a revelation from within. The attitude of al-Ghazālī is apparently moulded by the Pythagorean and Neo-Platonic thought of the music as an awakener of the memory of the celestial harmonies the soul heard in pre-existence. (Avery 2004, 152, 155-6) The Qur'anic support for this idea of souls' divine pre-existence is the passage on the primordial covenant between God and the souls. God asked the souls before they were created into the bodily existence "Am I not your Lord?" [7:172]. The voice of God the souls heard was the most beautiful voice and an consequently they hear echoes of this voice in all the beautiful voices. Thus, every beautiful voice reminds the souls of their divine origin and the time they were with their Beloved. (Ḥasan Ṣānī, speech on 9.11.2006)

It should be noted that most of the abovementioned writers were very cautious in their advocacy of *samā`*. This attitude crystallises in Hujvīrī's (d. 1071) *Kashf al-Mahjūb*. He warns against the dangers *samā`* could pose to the uninitiated listeners and quotes approvingly words of shaykh who told him that one day listening to music would be to him like croaking of a raven. Though Hujvīrī admits *samā`* only instrumental value in the early stages of mystical path, he also reveals – though abashedly – that he himself likes to listen to mystical music. (Ernst & Lawrence 2002, 38-9) An early Sufi and enthusiastic proponent of *samā`* was the younger brother of al-Ghazālī, Aḥmad al-Ghazālī (d. 1126). He is polemical against the critique directed towards the practice and devotes almost half of his *Bawāriq al-`Ilma`* to the refutation of the arguments of the opponents of *samā`*. After the refutation he declares that *samā`* is necessary to the people of knowledge. It is not an assigned duty of the Sufi disciples, but is admissible to them as they are aspiring lovers. The strong advocacy of his work is a rare example among the early Sufi treatises, and it is noteworthy that Aḥmad al-Ghazālī's spiritual descendants, Abū Najīb and Abū

Hafs `Umar al-Suhrawardī, followed the ideas of more reserved al-Qushayrī and al-Sarrāj. (Ernst & Lawrence 2002, 36-7, 39)

All the Sufis were not, however, interested in the legal aspects of *samā`* and discussing its potential dangers. Instead, they laid more emphasis on its value in the mystical path. Foremost of these masters was Abū Sa`īd ibn Abī'l-Khayr (d. 1049). He left behind no writings, but his life is exceptionally well documented in two biographies completed in about hundred years after the master's death. The significance of Abū Sa`īd lies in his impact in Persian becoming the language of Sufism in the eastern Islamic areas and in the integration of anti-legalistic and blame incurring tendencies to Sufism in those areas. Terry Graham notes that even greater contribution was the institutionalisation of the *khānqāh*, Sufi lodge. This is also central to the development of *samā`*, since this practice was an integral part of the religious practices in Abū Sa`īd's *khānqāh*. Moreover, the master conceived *samā`* beneficial for the novices as well. Other masters allowed listening to mystical music only to the elect, but Abū Sa`īd permitted even the beginners in the mystical path take part in the mystical concerts. He saw, for example, that it is better to let the music rule the bodies of the youths instead of their desires. Abū Sa`īd was not very concerned with the legal discussions on *samā`*; to him the benefits accrued from the practice were the greatest argument for it. He emphasised the role of *samā`* in the mystic's progress and its capability to bring him closer to the Beloved. According to Graham, the practice was one form of worship to him. Abū Sa`īd also adopted ghazals and quatrains in Persian as the principal texts to be performed by the reciters. (Graham 1999, 83-4, 117, 119-121) Ernst and Lawrence point out that the role of *samā`* among the Sufi practices became more pronounced when different Sufi paths or orders (*tarīqa*, pl. *ṭuruq*) were founded since the 13th century. Certain Sufi orders, notably Mevleviyya and Chishtiyya, adopted *samā`* as a central practice. After founding the orders, *samā`* was not anymore an idiosyncratic practise of individual masters but it spread widely as an institutionalised part of the Sufi orders. The congregational nature of *samā`* assemblies made it a heated topic of debates. (Ernst & Lawrence 2002, 35)

2.2 *Samā`* in India

Islam became a permanent part of the religious landscape of South Asia only after the founding of the Sufi orders. The Ghaznavid Empire held sway over parts of the modern Punjab since the 11th century. Many Muslims were, however, born outside India and had

migrated there later on. More stable Islamic state was founded only in the early years of the 13th century by a general of the invading Ghurid troops, Quṭb al-Dīn Aibak. The founder of the Indian Chishtiyya, Khwaja Moinuddin (Khvāja Mu`īn al-Dīn, d. 1236), arrived to India in the wake of the Ghurid conquest and *samā`* was to become a central feature of the Chishti practice. Ernst and Lawrence note (2002, 36) that the emphasis on *samā`* also served to separate the Chishti order from their rival order, Suhrawardiyya, in the Delhi sultanate.

In analysing the 14th and 15th century texts of Chishti writers, Ernst and Lawrence note that there is a clear difference in tone to the earlier writings. While earlier treatises, discussed above, emphasised the legal limitations of *samā`* and were overtly cautious in their advocacy of the practice, the Chishti theoreticians propagate a full fledged utilisation of *samā`*. They do not want to limit this practice for a small group of selected people, but consider it beneficial to the beginners as well. On the other hand, they do not consider *samā`* either as a practice of little importance, which an advanced Sufi could abandon, as e.g. Hujvīrī had written. The main contribution of the early Chishti writers is, according to Ernst and Lawrence, connecting the three grades of ecstasy with three classes of listeners. Both, the three categories of ecstasy – empathetic ecstasy, momentary ecstasy and durative ecstasy – and the three classes of listeners – uninitiated listener, mature listener and perfected listener – were discussed earlier by the non-Indian Sufis. Into a single theoretical construction they were conflated only in the circle of Khwaja Nizamuddin, most notably by Fakhr al-Dīn Zarrādī in his Arabic *Uṣūl al-Samā`*. In the early Chishti treatises the empathetic ecstasy was attributed to the uninitiated listener, momentary and durative ecstasy to the mature and perfected listeners respectively. The significance of this theory is that the empathetic ecstasy, *tawājud*, is conceived as an important threshold experience of the Sufi path. The hadith often used in supporting the empathetic ecstasy is the injunction of the Prophet that the believers should weep or at least try to weep, when they recite the Qur`an. Similarly, in *samā`*, the uninitiated listener should try to experience the ecstasy, *wajd*, of the perfected listeners, if they cannot experience it themselves. The theory of three kinds of ecstasies connected with three kinds of listeners also implies that *samā`* is important to the perfected listeners, not only to the beginners. (Ernst & Lawrence 2002, 37-8, 44)

Ernst and Lawrence note (2002, 43-4) that there is a clear change in the attitudes of the theoretical writings of the Chishtis in relation to the earlier treatises of non-Indian writers. The tone in advocating *samā`* is more daring and the practice is considered

potentially more beneficial than dangerous. The Chishti writers also find new ways to trace the legal basis of *samā`*. Ashraf Jahāngīr Simnānī quotes the *ḥadīth qudsī* “He who is hostile to the saint of mine has come against me in warfare” and combines it with a list of saints, who died while listening to music, in order to make his case. I would argue, however, that attribution of this kind of attitude towards *samā`* to the Indian writers is incorrect. This bolder attitude may have not been voiced in theoretical writings before Ḥamīd al-Dīn Nagaurī and Zarrādī in the 13th and 14th centuries respectively, but it certainly existed in the *khānqāh* of Abū Sa`īd, as has been noted above. Thus, I would suggest that the Chishti writers only gave a literary and theoretical expression to the practice of Abū Sa`īd. He was certainly well known among the Indian Sufis, and, for example, in *Favā`id al-Fu`ād* Khwaja Nizamuddin speaks of him in about fifteen instances. It would not be surprising if Abū Sa`īd’s attitude towards *samā`* had been transmitted to the Chishti tradition.

It is interesting that the idea of *samā`* as a well grounded spiritual practice was mirrored also to Sufi orders, which normally do not consider *samā`* as the focal point of their practice. Among these orders are the Indian Suhrawardiyya, Firdausiyya and Qadiriyya. The wholesale rejection of *samā`* was articulated only in the turn of 16th and 17th centuries by Aḥmad Sirhindī (d. 1624). (Lawrence & Ernst 2002, 44-5) Subsequently, the most widespread Naqshbandi sub-order, Mujaddidiyya, rejects *samā`* as a part of mystical practice. Arthur F. Buehler notes (1998, 73) that some other Naqshbandi sub-orders did engage in *samā`*, among them the lineages that followed the teachings of Bāqī Bi`llāh (d. 1603) and Amīr Abū`l-`Ulā` (d. 1651). The latter’s lineage combines the Chishti practice of *samā`* with the unvoiced *zīkr* typical to the Naqshbandiyya. Buehler writes that this order never became widespread in South Asia. Nevertheless, I noted during my fieldwork that members of this lineage, easily recognisable from their attire, were constant visitors in the Chishti shrines. Dr. Farīda `Alī (personal communication) informed me that they usually take part in the `urs festivities of the Chishtis and bring a ceremonial covering to the tomb dancing. In addition to these lineages, Schimmel points out (1976, 53) that also a famous Mujaddidi of the 18th century, *Khvāja Mīr Dard* (d. 1785), was fond of music. I am not fully convinced, however, that one can necessarily speak about *samā`* in his case. Music has been considered a basic skill of a gentleman, as Metcalf notes (2005, 256), and as an artistically sensitive gentleman Dard must have been inclined to listening music for aesthetic reasons, not necessarily to achieve mystical states.

The sharpest critique of the Mujaddidis was not directed towards *samā`*, but towards the doctrine of unity of existence, which they conceived subordinate to the unity of witnessing. The more polemical attitude was adopted in the 19th century by different reformist Islamic movements, which conceived *samā`* as one of the un-Islamic innovations. In the forefront of this criticism were the members of the theological school of Deoband, founded in 1867. The founders, Muḥammad Qāsim Nanautavī and Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī were themselves disciples of Ḥajjī Imdād Allāh, a famous Sufi of Ṣābirī Chishti lineage. The early Deobandis did not propagate total rejection of Sufism, but only of the forms they considered degenerated. It is also worth noting that the Deobandis were by no means inimical to poetry, only its musical performance. Muḥammad Ya`qūb, an early Deobandi, instructed his followers to recite verses of Ḥāfīz, Dard and Saudā, if they felt distracted during *zīkr*. (Metcalf 2005, 189) *Samā`* has been attacked since the 19th century by the representatives of the Deobandi school and since 1920s by the members of Tablīghī Jamā`at, a grassroots organisation dedicated to promoting strict adherence to the Islamic rituals.

A good example of the lines the criticism of *samā`* follows can be extracted from a short book named *Qavvālī aur Islām* (1994) by Muḥammad Ashfāq Ḥusain. The line of thought is typical to the Deobandis and representatives of Tablīghī Jamā`at but it also summarises many centuries of the debate. The Deobandis accept the moral qualities of the early Sufi masters, and the writer of *Qavvālī aur Islām* begins with stating that the great Sufis were morally so elevated that listening to qawwali could not do any harm to them. Common people, on the contrary, should not follow their example. This is followed by often repeated arguments from Qur`an and Sunna in an attempt to demonstrate that music is prohibited by God and that the Prophet and his companions never listened to it. As if to appeal to the Sufi authorities favoured by a potential reader, the author next quotes notable Sufis ranging from `Abd al-Qādir Jīlānī to Khwaja Nizamuddin. Every quotation expresses some limiting factor concerning the use of instruments and the status of participants. The quotations are complemented with remarks of the author stating that this limitation is not followed anymore, which is a reason enough to prohibit all *samā`* and qawwali. The discussion is continued by condemnation of poetry, especially its lyrical forms, and mystical states. The conclusion of the book is that the good Muslims should not follow the example of the Sufis. Instead, they should stick to the example of the Prophet and his companions in imitating a precedent (*taqlīd*).

The rhetoric of the book is interesting because of its selectiveness in choosing the quotations from Chishti masters who are known to have had a strong inclination for *samā`*. Ernst and Lawrence note (2002, 121) that this kind of argumentations is very central in the writings of the Deobandi school, especially in the polemical writings of Ashraf `Alī Thānavī (d. 1943). It is ironic, though, that even the Chishti master, who nowadays exemplifies the reserved attitude towards *samā`* (e.g. Aḥmad Nizāmī, 18.1.2007), Khvāja Naṣīr al-Dīn (d. 1356), seems to have been sensitive to the affects of poetry sung without musical instruments. Khaliq Ahmad Nizami notes (1991, 60) that a major disciple of Khvāja Naṣīr al-Dīn, Khvāja Bandanavāz Gesudarāz (d. 1422), relates several instances when his master was absorbed in *samā`*. Among the Chishti masters, the reserved attitude of Khvāja Naṣīr al-Dīn is encountered only in Ḥajjī Imdād Allāh, the guide of the founders of Deoband. The legacy of this master has been subjectively interpreted much in the same way the Qur`anic statements or hadiths were interpreted in supporting or rejecting of *samā`*.

One of the disciples of Ḥajjī Imdād Allāh was Zauqī Shāh (d. 1951). Ernst and Lawrence note (2002, 120) that he was among the followers of Ḥajjī Imdād Allāh, to whom the latter had given *khilāfat*, in contrast to the followers who had received only permission to spread the religious message of Islam. The founders of Deoband belong to this latter group, and Zauqī Shāh's attitude to *samā`* differs from their attitude radically. He referred to the example of Ḥajjī Imdād Allāh and considered *samā`* a central spiritual practice that is in the core of the Chishti spirituality. He even went as far as to organise a *samā`* assembly in the Mecca mosque during his pilgrimage in 1950, when the Saudi dynasty and the Wahhabi movement already held firm grip of the holy cities of Islam. Even more polemical stance was adopted by the principle follower of Zauqī Shāh, Capt. Wāḥid Bakhsh Siyāl (d. 1995), who dedicated a notable portion of his writings to the defence of *samā`*. He deems the practice central to the elevated spiritual life and even makes Ḥajjī Imdād Allāh one of its staunchest supporters. (Ernst & Lawrence 2002, 82, 134-5) The debate continues in the present day. Many notable Chishtis of the present day have not, however, taken part in this debate. They seem to rely on the example of the past masters of the order. In this light listening to poetry and music appears such a self evident part of the Chishti spirituality that taking part in the debate becomes irrelevant.

2.3 History of qawwali

The history of Chishti *samā`* is inextricably linked with the history of qawwali. The beginnings of creating this musical form are often traced back to Khwaja Moinuddin, and an often stated reason for his institutionalising *samā`* is his desire to preach Islam to the music loving Hindus. Shemeem Abbas proclaims (2002, 136-7) that the Sufis preached a simplified Qur`anic message to large masses with the help of music and vernacular poetry. In the interview, Pīr Aḥmad Nizāmī stated (18.1.2007) that Khwaja Moinuddin, detecting the fondness of music in Hindu population, started to use qawwali as a means to attract people together. Thus, qawwali facilitated preaching to large crowds. In Pīr Aḥmad Nizāmī's case, the idea is perhaps a projection of the programs of `Urs Maḥal which were instituted by his late father, Pīr Zāmin Nizāmī. The programs begin with a *mushā`ira*, poets' recitation, and end with a qawwali performance. The focal point is, however, a lengthy speech about the Islamic nature and humanistic values of Sufism delivered by Pīr Aḥmad Nizāmī between the reading of poems and qawwali. The popular nature of the qawwali performance attracts a wide audience, in addition to which the program is broadcasted live by the All India Radio. Thus, qawwali is instrumental in gathering a wide audience to listen to the speech of Pīr Aḥmad Nizāmī

The idea of qawwali as a means of preaching is, however, fairly anachronistic. Dr. Farīda `Alī noted (8.3.2007) that in the time of Khwaja Moinuddin qawwali was already a common practice among the Sufis. According to her, the Indian environment certainly had much impact on the enthusiastic acceptance of *samā`* and on the development of the musical idiom of what was to become qawwali. But, as such, the practice itself was well grounded already when it reached the Indian Subcontinent. The development of qawwali is connected with the name of Amir Khusro, poet, musician and disciple of Khwaja Nizamuddin, as is the development of North Indian classical music. `Abd al-Ḥalīm Ja`far Khān notes that the composition of many ragas is attributed to Khusro. Among them are ragas *kāfi* and *shāhāna*, which are still widely performed. The invention of musical instruments tabla and sitar is also popularly attributed to Khusro. `Abd al-Ḥalīm notes, however, that these specific instruments are not mentioned in the contemporary documents. The names tabla and sitar are used, but they refer to different kinds of instruments than the modern ones. Sitar was a three stringed instrument (*sih tār*,

‘three strings’) used in accompanying singing and tabla (*tabla*) was a common name for a drum. (‘Abd al-Ḥalīm Ja`far 1998, 299, 308-10, 315, 318)

However different the qawwali might have been in the times of Amir Khusro, it seems plausible that he had a definite impact in the development of this musical form and that some parts of the qawwali repertoire can be his compositions. Another early personage connected to qawwali is Miyān Ṣāmat. Mi`rāj Aḥmad told me (20.1.2007) that Miyān Ṣāmat was the leading qawwal to reside in the *khānqāh* of Khwaja Nizamuddin. He was trained by Amir Khusro and many traditional qawwals trace their lineage back to him. An important member of this very lineage was Tānras Khān, a court musician of the last Mughal emperor Bahādur Shāh Zafar. After the 1857 rebellion he migrated to Hyderabad where he was sponsored by the Nizāms. Mi`rāj Aḥmad attached great importance to Tānras Khān, since he was instrumental in developing the idiom of contemporary qawwali. (Mi`raj Ahmad, 20.1.2007) Among the traditional qawwals (*qavvāl bacce*), who are descendants of Tānras Khān are Mi`rāj Aḥmad and the late master `Azīz Aḥmad Khān Vāriṣī.

An important question discussed by the Chishti masters since founding of the order is the usage of musical instruments. Vāriṣ Hūṣain referred (11.2.2007) to the recurrent *mazāmīr*-argumentation, according to which all the musical instruments are forbidden since *mizmār* is forbidden. He saw, however, that prohibition of *mizmār* does not prevent the usage of musical instruments altogether. In Chishti *samā`*, only the usage of this instrument has been unanimously prohibited, but the attitude towards other instruments has been more lenient. (Nizāmī 1980, 391) According to Pīr Aḥmad Nizāmī (18.1.2007) a framed drum (*daff*) was used in Chishti *samā`* already in the days of Khwaja Nizamuddin. Later on it was substituted with *dholak*, and harmonium was added to the instrumentation “by the consideration of some great ones of the religion”. It seems more plausible, however, that the history of instruments in Chishti *samā`* is not this straightforward. Mughal miniatures depicting ecstatic dervishes feature accompanists with various different musical instruments. In the older recordings of, for example, `Azīz Aḥmad Khān, the *sārangī*, stringed instrument with approximately 40 strings, provides the melodic accompaniment along with the harmonium. As an older instrument *sārangī* may have been a predecessor of the harmonium. The latter does not need to be tuned for different ragas, which has given it advantage over *sārangī* as the primary accompanying instrument. Other instruments may have also been used, such as the abovementioned three stringed sitar.

Nowadays, the accompaniment of *dholak* and harmonium, sometimes with added tabla, is the preferred combination in qawwali groups. The simplified development of accompaniment for qawwali is perhaps a corollary of the desire to emphasise the Islamic nature of the musical form through de-emphasising its musical features.

The terminology used in speaking about qawwali is based on the concept of qawwali as a religious musical form. Consequently, the qawwali terminology is connected to recitation of holy text rather than to music. The whole name of the musical form is derived from the Arabic verb *qāla*, ‘to say’ not from the verb referring to singing, *ghannā*. In Urdu the expression used for performing qawwali is *qavvālī paṛhnā*, ‘to read qawwali’, not *qavvālī gānā*, ‘to sing qawwali’. Moreover, the poems performed by qawwals are usually referred to as *kalām* instead of a more common *shi`r*. *Kalām* 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. One reason for the selection of these expressions is the desire to set qawwali apart from profane musical forms. Many forms of art music were connected to the courts of aristocracy and courtesans. Both were shunned by Sufis, who consequently may have wanted to emphasise this difference. A more important explanation for these terms is noted by Regula Qureshi (1972, 16). According to her the reason for this terminology is the fundamental Islamic belief to the supremacy of revelation in the form of word as the basis of religious life. The inviolability of the Qur’anic text, both in meaning and recitation, is projected to other religious texts as well. Among these are the poems performed in qawwali. This takes us directly to the importance of textual content of qawwali, which is discussed in the next two chapters.

3 Poetry in Persian and Urdu

3.1 Selecting poetry for Chishti *samā`*

The poetical repertoire of qawwals is not fixed, but new poems enter it constantly, while others are rarely performed. In its core are poems which have become an integral part of qawwals' repertoires all over the areas where qawwali is heard.³ Some of these classics may have been heard in *samā`* assemblies for hundreds of years. They are written mostly in Persian and Hindi. These two languages have consequently gained more prestige than the more recent languages of Sufi poetry, Urdu and Punjabi. Urdu, which is nowadays the cosmopolitan language of South Asian Muslims, has been employed in the Chishti *samā`* only since the 20th century. *Naghmāt-i samā`*, published in 1934 especially for qawwals, includes only Persian poems, and still in the early 1970s a group attempting to sing Urdu verses was made to leave the principal *samā`* assembly of the *`urs* festivities in Ajmer. (Vāriṣ Ḥusain, 11.2.2007) As Qureshi notes (2006, 188), the incident was partly due to the newly invested *dīvān*'s desire to demonstrate his power over his predecessor, who had allowed singing in Urdu. Nonetheless, it also reveals the dignity attached to Persian and Hindi poems.

The Persian poetry heard in Chishti *samā`* comprises both classics of Persian literature and more local Indian writers. The educated Muslims of South Asia have always been acquainted with poems of Sā`dī, Rūmī, Ḥāfiẓ and Jāmī, since their writings have been studied in the course of a typical curriculum. For this reason, the works of these poets have been aptly called “madrasa poetry”. (Orsini n.d. 3) The Persian writing favourite of the Chishtis is, however, Amir Khusro. He was not only an eminent poet and musician, but also a close disciple of Khwaja Nizamuddin, which undoubtedly is behind his popularity. The poems written in *sabk-i hind*, ‘the Indian style’, which developed in the 16th and 17th centuries, are performed by qawwals only occasionally. One reason for this is probably the complexity of this poetic style, caused by the use of classical metaphors and images in twisted and reordered ways. This is not, however, the sole reason, since Urdu poems by Mirzā Asad Allāh Khān Ghālib (d. 1869), who brought the Indian style to Urdu writing, are still cherished in the *samā`* assemblies. Thus, another reason for exclusion of these

³ Qawwali is connected to the heartland of the Indo-Islamic culture around the axis Lahore-Delhi-Hyderabad. Sindhi and Bengali speaking areas, situated east and west of this area, have their respective traditions of mystical poetry and music.

poems from contemporary assemblies is the diminished acquaintance of the audiences with Persian.

Early Chishti masters are often considered to have written Persian poems and an entire collection of poems ascribed to Khwaja Moinuddin, *Kalām-i `Irfān Ṭarāz*, is in wide circulation. The mystics have continued the tradition of writing in Persian in the present day as well. Even though the significance of Persian in education and literature has steadily diminished since the 18th century, understanding at least a certain amount of Persian is essential to the Sufis and their literary culture. In the *samā`* assemblies the most important Persian poets of the 19th and 20th centuries are Shāh Niyāz Barelvī (d. 1831) and Ḥasrat Ḥaidarābādī (d. 1962), who are famous Sufis of Chishti and Qadiri orders respectively. Muḥammad Aḥmad stressed in the interview (13.11.2006) that in the *samā`* assemblies the usage of Persian and Hindi is a sign of sophistication and has a special aura of sanctity to it because both of these languages are closely linked to the Sufi masters of the yore.

Mystics were instrumental in making the Indian vernaculars a literary medium for Islamic literature. Urdu developed on the basis of the spoken language of Delhi region, *kharībolī*. This language spread with the invading troops also to Deccan, where the Chishti master of Gulbarga, Khvāja Bandanavāz Gesudarāz (d. 1422) wrote treatises in *dakḥinī*, ‘the southern language’. He is also credited for introducing Persian poetic forms ghazal and *maṣnavī* into vernacular Indian poetry. (Schimmel 1975, 128, 133) These poems are naturally cherished in the *dargāh* of Khvāja Bandanavāz, and they are sung by the qawwals in the local *samā`* assemblies. Most of them have not, however, entered the translocal repertoire of the qawwals.

Urdu matured into a fully developed medium of literary expression in the beginning of the 18th century. This development took place in Delhi after Aurangzeb had annexed the Deccani sultanates to the Mughal Empire and Delhi had become the centre of Urdu literature. The Urdu poets of this period favoured straightforward expression that was based on the model of spoken language. Many of the early poets had close ties to Sufism. The Deccani poet to reside in Delhi, Shams al-Dīn Valī Allāh Valī (d. 1707) had close contact with Suhrawardis in Ahmedabad and Naqshbandis in Delhi. (Schimmel 1975, 153) Sirāj Aurangābādī (d. 1763), who was also of Deccani origin, was a disciple of `Abd al-Raḥmān Chishtī. (Sarvarī in introduction to *Kulliyāt-i Sirāj* 1998, 48) From among the Delhi poets, Khvāja Mīr Dard (d. 1785) was an heir to the mystical tradition of his father, the Naqshbandi master Muḥammad Nāṣir `Anbalīb. (Schimmel 1975, 170) Also Mīr Taqī

Mīr's (d. 1810) father was a famous mystic. Mīr's autobiography includes many references to the disciples of his father and the mystically tinged atmosphere of his home. Although Mīr himself did not claim to be a mystic, many of his poems bear a mystical tone. (Islam & Russell 2004, 207)

Since the 18th century Urdu has replaced Persian as the lingua franca of South Asian Muslims, and many poets have written in all the main languages used in the Chishti *samā`*. Among them are the abovementioned Niyāz and Ḥasrat. There are also Sufi poets, who have written mainly in Urdu. The most prominent among them are Bedam Shāh Vāriṣī (d. 1936) and Kāmil Ḥaidarābādī (d. 1986). These writers are not first and foremost poets and consequently their writings are seldom found in the histories of Persian and Urdu poetry. In their case, the spiritual background of their poems seems to be more important reason for their popularity than purely artistic consideration, though many of their verses are of high literary quality. Poets with Sufi background are included into the qawwali repertoire more easily than poets without mystical ties. In *Surūd*, for example, about 65 percent of poems are written by Sufi poets, while only 35 percent are by other literary figures, mostly Urdu poets. Still, also the latter amount is fairly high considering that the collection is designed especially for qawwals. Muḥammad Aḥmad pointed to the reason for this by noting (13.11.2006) that the knowledge of ideas and practices of Sufism was very widespread among the educated classes. Thus, even those, who were not practising Sufis, were able to include Sufi themes into their poems.

Another reason for inclusion of poems by Urdu writing non-Sufi poets is the fact that Urdu poetry inherited the imagery of Persian poetry. This imagery does not in itself bear clear indications on whether the poem is a mystical one or not. The emphasised role of mystics in developing the Urdu poetry may have even accentuated this feature. The mystical tradition of early writers was continued later by the poets like Bahādur Shāh Zafar (d. 1862), the last Mughal emperor and a devotee of Khvāja Quṭb al-Dīn's (d. 1235) shrine, and Jigar Murādābādī (d. 1960), who had close connections to the Sufi poet Aṣghar Gondavī. Poems of both these writers are frequently performed by qawwals. The selection of poetry to be sung in *samā`* can also be affected by the contemporary cultural atmosphere. For example, the poems of Muḥammad Iqbāl (d. 1938), who has posthumously become the national poet of Pakistan, are often performed by Pakistani qawwals, whereas in India they are seldom heard.

In the end, I think, pondering if some poem in itself is mystical or not, is not relevant in the case of qawwali poetry. The poems are in themselves ambiguous and one

may guess that mystical interpretation is primarily intended if the writer is a mystic. But what is more crucial in discussing the poetry used in Chishti *samā`*, is the context in which a poem is used. This context is to some extent created by the musical style. Qawwali is connected to the mystical concerts of the Chishtis and the motive behind these events is experiencing mystical states. This presupposes mystical interpretation of the poems. The centrality of the musical context for interpreting a poem can be detected from the fact that the poetic repertoire of qawwali overlaps with that of certain other musical forms: many classics of Urdu poetry, notably Mīr and Ghālib, are performed also by the ghazal singers like Begam Akhtār and Farīda Khānam. Also the lyrics in *thumrī* and *dādrā* styles of singing are very similar to the Hindi poems of qawwali repertoire.⁴ This indicates how the interpretation of poetry is connected to the context of performance. Qawwali is connected to Sufism and spirituality, while ghazal is concerned with aesthetic refinement and even sensuousness. Thus a poem of Ghālib, *Zikr us parī-vash kā aur phir bayān apnā* (‘Mention is of that fairy like one, and still expression is mine’), would in qawwali acquire a spiritual meaning and in ghazal a more sensuous one.

Even more crucial to the interpretation of a specific poem, is the personal interpretation of the listener. As will be noted in chapter 6.3.3, the formal regulations required from the audience of a *samā`* assembly are not monitored by anyone. Instead, they are left to the responsibility of the listeners. Similarly, the poem becomes a mystical poem only when the listener gives it a mystical interpretation. The poems sung in Chishti *samā`* are seldom didactic and certainly they do not aim at building a clear system of thought. On the contrary, the poems are lyrical poems with no clear indicators as to what kind of meaning is intended. This has led to a need to intellectually analyse the poetic images and attribute them to the different qualities of God. The question of interpretation of poems and attribution of the poetic images is discussed already in *Favā`id al-Fu`ād* (III:5). Khwaja Nizamuddin notes that in the day of resurrection a dervish will be questioned if he really did attribute all qualities depicted in the poems to God. The shaykh also noted that he himself used to be reminded of his own master when listening to poems. The need for interpretation has manifested also in treatises discussing the poetic imagery, among them the work *Ḥaqā`iq-i Hindī*, analysed by Francesca Orsini (2006).

Describing the nature of *samā`* often seems to escape the technical analysis and Sufi writers have taken shelter in poetic images in explaining it as, for example, “nourishment for the spirits” (Nizāmī 1980, 391) or “an ocean bird transporting lovers to

⁴ For a more detailed discussion on Hindi poetry, see chapter four.

the treasures that they seek”. (Ernst & Lawrence 2002, 38) Consequently, most Sufis have not bothered themselves with prolonged treatises on interpreting poetic images. In *Favā'id al-Fu'ād* (III:8), Khwaja Nizamuddin notes that every individual should always grasp the connotation of ghazals for himself instead of following someone else's interpretation. This notion is followed by two anecdotes, featuring Bābā Farīd al-Dīn and Bahā' al-Dīn Zakariyā respectively. In both anecdotes the master is impressed by a verse he then repeats for an extended period of time. In neither case, however, does the master reveal what the verse denoted to him. In the end, Khwaja Nizamuddin states that no one ever came to know their experience of the verse. In the *samā`* assemblies I have observed, the shaykhs sometimes share their thoughts on some verses, like Khvāja Ḥasan Sānī, who often stops the qawwals' singing in order to comment on some verse. Usually, however, the responsibility of interpreting a mystical poem in a mystical way is left to individual listeners. This has been decisive in including a very wide array of poetry to the qawwali repertoire. Before entering the discussion of the themes of these poems, it is necessary to shortly consider the formal requirements of the poems written in Persian and Urdu.

3.2 Forms of Persian and Urdu poetry

In the Persian and Urdu poems the outer form of the verse is intrinsically tied to the meaning. This is even more pronounced in a musical performance. The poems of qawwali repertoire consist of verses that are bound together by the poetic meter and rhyme structure. For this reason qawwali as a musical form is pronouncedly strophic. The most important literary form of the Persian and Urdu poems heard in *samā`* assemblies is the ghazal. The rhyme of the ghazal consists of the end rhyme, *radīf*, which is repeated throughout the verse unchanged. The *radīf* is preceded by *qāfiya*, a varying rhyme word. The rhyme scheme of the ghazal is AA, BA, CA, DA etc. The first couplet establishes the rhyme with its both lines. In the consequent couplets, the rhyme features only in the second line, which also concludes the opening statement of the first line. A ghazal normally consists of five to thirteen couplets. Each verse of a ghazal is a complete and independent whole. Scott Kugle notes (2007, 574) that this can be a great advantage: verses of a single poem can communicate various, even contradictory, shades of, for example, love. It is more typical, however, that the verses of a ghazal are connected – in addition to metre and rhyme – by the unity of mood. The number and order of the verses of a ghazal can vary between different manuscripts. It is not surprising that the variation is even more

pronounced in a musical performance. Moreover, qawwals sometimes mix verses from different ghazals with single rhyme, meter and theme into a unified whole. Generally, only the first and last verses are without an exception sung in their respective places. The first verse, *maṭla`*, is distinguishable from other verses for its repeated rhyme. A poem is also popularly referred to with its opening line. The other distinctive verse is the last verse, *maqta`*. This verse contains the nom-de-plume of the writer, *takhalluṣ*. Except for these two verses, the qawwals are rather free to choose, which verses of a ghazal they perform, depending on the constituency and mood of the audience.

Another common poem type in qawwali repertoire is *qaṣīda*, which employs the same rhyme structure as the ghazal. *Qaṣīdas* written by mystics are usually poems in praise of God, Prophet Muhammad and Islamic saints. The mystical *qaṣīdas* used in the present day Chishti *samā`* are approximately as long as ghazals. Sometimes the praise of the Prophet or a saint resembles the descriptions of beloved found in the more lyrical poems and the reader/listener is left to wonder, if he is encountering a miniature *qaṣīda* or a lyrical poem praising the beloved's beauty. Qawwals seldom perform ghazals and *qaṣīdas* without adjunct verses. The aim of these verses is to explain a verse or widen its metaphorical meaning. The usage of these adjunct items will be analysed in detail in chapter seven.

Many adjunct items are individual verses from ghazals or *qaṣīdas*, but they can also be shorter poetic forms. Among these shorter forms is *qiṭ`a*, 'fragment'. It shares the rhyme structure of ghazal and *qaṣīda*, except that the first couplet does not feature the repeated rhyme. *Qiṭ`as* are usually descriptive or they concentrate on a single topic. They often have a more personal tone than the ghazals. (Schimmel 2004, 28) Another important shorter form is *rubā`ī*, a quatrain. The quatrains are mostly written in different metres than ghazals or *qaṣīdas*. The metre may also be different in each of the four lines of a *rubā`ī*. (Bailey 1939, 982-3) The traditional rhyme scheme is AAXA, while more popular verses employ also the scheme ABAB. The rhyme scheme of a quatrain is closely tied to the meaning. The first two lines build a situation, a kind of thesis. The third line offers an antithesis to it, while the third line, which returns to the original rhyme, presents a synthesis. (Schimmel 2004, 29) *Rubā`īs* seldom constitute an independent song in themselves. In a rare case, when *rubā`ī* is used as the main text for a song, its textual bulk

is augmented with other adjunct items.⁵ In addition, qawwals use verses from *masnavīs* as adjunct items. An important poem type, that in itself includes both the salient text and an adjunct item, is *tazmīn*. *Tazmīn* is a rather long poem. It is usually written on the basis of a ghazal or *qaṣīda* as an explanation for it. Normally it is written using a five line verse called *mukhammas*, in which a couplet of the original poem constitutes the last two lines. The three explanatory lines derive their rhyme from the first line of the couplet. Thus the rhyme scheme is AAAAA, BBBBA, CCCCA etc. Besides the formal requirements of meter and rhyme, the poetry in Persian and Urdu utilises several rhetoric features. These will be noted, however, in discussing the themes of the poems.⁶ The next two chapters will discuss the themes of Persian and Urdu poems. Both of these poetic traditions share same forms and poetic images and for this reason, I am discussing them jointly.

3.3 Poems of praise

3.3.1 Poems in praise of God

A *samā`* assembly opens ideally with poems in praise of the God, *ḥamd*. This category is very fluid and *Surūd* includes only four Persian and five Urdu poems classified as *ḥamd*. The small amount probably depends on the fact, that almost every poem praises God through metaphors. Thus, every lyrical poem could be classified as *ḥamd*. In practice this would be problematic, since the Prophet and the saints are to be praised before performing love poetry. As a result, only poems that deal exclusively with God's majesty and unity are included in the category of *ḥamd*.

The most common *ḥamd* is a poem that has the *zīkr* formula *allāh hū* as its refrain. This formula literally means 'God He', but it is usually understood meaning 'God, He, is', as in the next verse by Zāmin `Alī. The theme of *tauḥīd*, unity of God, forms the basis of Islamic thought and is elaborated here.

One day Lailā, her face beautiful as moon
 Asked Qais: "Who else is searched for, save me?"
 Qais reached ecstasy and spoke thus:
 "It is a mystery, listen well, o moon-faced:
 Neither am I Majnūn nor are you Lailā

⁵ In 12.11.2006, Muḥammad Aḥmad performed the *rubā`ī Haidariy-am qalandar-am mast-am*, ascribed to Bū `Alī Shāh Qalandar, with eight different verses inserted to it, one of which was in Persian, one in Hindi and six in Urdu.

⁶ For a detailed discussion on the rhetorical rules, see Schimmel 2004, 37-52. A thorough analysis of the Persian, Urdu and Ottoman Turkish prosody is found in Thiesen 1982.

God, He, is; God, He, is. (*Surūd*, 126)⁷

The poems often feature the ideal loving couples, like Lailā and Majnūn (i.e. Qais) here. The verse states that neither Lailā nor Majnūn really exists, but only God is. God's essence, though, is not in the reach of a human being, but the mystic can see Him with the help of similitude. The next verse is attributed to Khwaja Moinuddin.

This kind of light that withdraw [everything] from sight in the mirror of the soul
Is the vision of the essence, yet I see it with the help of similitude. (*Surūd*, 40)⁸

The other mood often depicted in *ḥamds*, as if to balance the majesty of God, is an intimate prayer for God's presence. Ḥasrat writes:

Become the light in my eyes, become the joy in my heart
Become eternal life, and like this come to my life.

My heart is your abode, but still, where are you, my dearest
Why do you stay here and there, come to your appropriate place. (*Surūd*, 127)

A mystic can also pray for a more ecstatic experience, using the metaphor of intoxication. One encounters the old man of the ruins, the place for drinking, as a metaphor for God or the Sufi master, depending on the context:

O old man of the ruins, let me have a goblet too
Let there be your charity
Until the Doomsday run your wine house like this
Let your cup go around! (Bedam in *Surūd*, 131-2)

3.3.2 Poems in praise of the Prophet

The *ḥamds* are followed by *na`ts*, poems praising Prophet Muhammad, who brought the conclusive revelation from God to the mankind and was the seal of the Prophets. Praising him, describing his qualities and mentioning his name is seen as establishing a spiritual bond with him, so it is only natural that his praise has occupied poets everywhere in the Islamic world. The Qur'an stresses the humanity of the Prophet and his only miracle was considered to be receiving the revelation from God. The personal qualities of Muhammad

⁷ Nowadays the younger qawwals in the Nizamuddin Dargah favour the simpler and more popular version of *Allāh hū* made famous by Nuṣrat. Recordings are found, for example, in Nusrat 1993a, track 2 and Nusrat 2002, track 3. For other versions of *Allāh hū*, listen to Rizwan-Muazzam Qawwali 1999, Track 1 and The Sabri Brothers 1998, Track 1.

⁸ *Surūd* includes only three verses, whereas a whole ghazal of nine verses is found in *Kalām-i `Irfān Ṭarāz*, 206.

played very small or non-existent role in this process. Nonetheless, fairly early lofty attributes were connected to him, and many collections of hadith include, for instance, descriptions of his exceptional physical beauty. (Schimmel 1985, 25, 33, 177) This has offered the poets good material for describing the Prophet as an ideal beloved. The curved letters of the Qur'an offer a perfect way to describe the tresses and eyebrows of Muhammad:

Your eyebrows are verses of the Qur'an, your hair is the commentary of the Qur'an
O, your face is our Qur'an, and you are faith, you are faith. (*Surūd*, 49)

This verse employs the rhetorical device of anaphora, repeating the same word, in this instance Qur'an, several times in a single verse to emphasise its meaning. In the same poem, Jāmī describes the Prophet's beauty with comparison to the moon. And while in the Qur'an [6:50] God is understood to instruct the Prophet to say that he is not an angel, but only follows what has been revealed to him (Schimmel 1985, 25), Jāmī takes it not as a sign of inferiority, but perceives it to demonstrate that the angels envy the Prophet, despite of his humanity.

On the earth and heaven, like the moon, you are shining, you are shining
Enviied by the angels, light of God, still you are a human being, you are a human being.
(*Surūd*, 49)

Although Muhammad is mentioned by name in the Qur'an only in four instances, the poets have seen signs of his beauty everywhere in the holy book. Describing the beloved with the verses of Qur'an is not in Persian and Urdu poetry limited to Muhammad alone, but still, the religious connotations of the Qur'anic verses have a stronger effect when they are connected with the Prophet. In the next verse, Jāmī inserts two Qur'anic citations to his verse, from 53:17 and 92:1 respectively.

His two eyes are described by "His eye did not swerve"
His two locks, fragrant like amber, by "By the night when it descends".
(*Naghmāt-i Samā'*, 25)

Inserting Qur'anic phrases in Arabic to Persian or Urdu verses, *iqtibās*, is a common rhetoric feature. These phrases are treated as single Persian or Urdu words, regardless of their Arabic grammar. Using the Qur'anic citations is made possible by the fact that all the Muslims read the Qur'an in the original language, and the educated audiences would understand even oblique cases of *iqtibās*. (Schimmel 2004, 42)

Sometimes love poems directed to the Prophet acquire an almost erotic tone, like in an Urdu verse of Bedam:

Gentle fragrance spread and breathless (or O Bedam) world of heart became fragrant
When the tresses of Muhammad opened, God bless him and give his peace. (*Surūd*, 143)

The usage of the blessing formulas as *radīf*, in this instance *ṣallā'llāhu `alayhi wa sallam*, is quite common in *na`ts*. If the Qur'an [33:56] tells that both God and his angels bless the Prophet; then why would not the people follow their suit? (Schimmel 1985, 92) In poetry the blessing as a *radīf* is an appropriate way to end a verse, since a blessing should always be uttered after mentioning the Prophet.

The poets have longed for Prophet Muhammad much in the same way the lovers have longed for their beloved ones:

My heart is afflicted by the wound of your separation, O Messenger of God
I carry the spring of thousand gardens in my breast, O messenger of God. (Jāmī in *Surūd*, 52)

The situation, in which the breast of the poet is turned into a garden blooming with many red flowers, is a common way to describe the wounds caused by separation. One way to ease this separation is to send a greeting to Medina with the wind. Poems with some message to the Prophet constitute a special category of *na`ts* called *salām*. The next verse is attributed to Khwaja Nizamuddin and it is recited daily, when the doors of his *dargāh* close. Other *salāms* are performed in qawwali performances.

O zephyr, turn towards Medina and recite greetings from this supplicant
Go around the King of Prophets⁹ and recite the message with great humility. (*Surūd*, 43)

The message of an afflicted lover is full of beauty generated by longing and pain. Khwaja Nizamuddin asks the wind to sing with the melodies of David. In poetic tradition David, the singer of the *Zabūr*, represents an ideal beautiful voice and melody. (Schimmel 2004, 73)

Sing together with David's melody, become acquainted with lamentation and pain
Recite this ghazal by Niẓām, the dejected slave, in the assembly of the Messenger.
(*Surūd*, 43)

As well as longing, the meeting with the Prophet is also a topic of poems sung by qawwals. As the whole world is illuminated by the beauty of Muhammad, a heart becomes alive through the union with him:

The world is illuminated by the beauty of Muhammad
The heart became alive through union with Muhammad. (Jāmī in *Surūd*, 50)

Muhammad is not, however, the beloved of only the human beings, but also of God. Especially the night journey, *isrā`*, and ascension of Muhammad, *mi`rāj*, have been seen in

⁹ *Surūd* reads *shāh-i madīna*, but I have followed the reading of the Nizamuddin qawwals, *shāh-i rusul*.

this light. The whole incident is deduced from two Qur'anic passages, 17:1 and 53:6-18. The first passage is understood to describe the journey from Mecca to Jerusalem and the second the ascension to the heaven by climbing the ladder¹⁰ or on the back of Burāq, a mythical steed with woman's head and mule's body. During the ascension the Prophet travelled through the seven spheres and finally entered the paradise and the presence of God. Gabriel, his guide, could not enter God's presence. Only the Prophet could be as close to God as "two bows or closer" [53:9]. To the poets, the *mi`rāj* is a result of God's desire to meet his beloved.

It was a pleasant night and the world was peaceful
Attraction of the lover was affecting it.

He wanted to invite the beloved to the Throne
The eye yearned a vision, *mi`rāj* was only an excuse. (Anonymous in *Surūd*, 146)

The verse is a good example of a *qit`a* used in describing some event. It also functions as an introduction to a longer poem based on a verse by Sā`dī. The *mi`rāj* has not been only a proof of Muhammad's high position but also a prototype of mystical experience, that transgresses the limits of time and place. When the Prophet returned, his bed was still warm and the tumbled pitcher had not yet leaked out. Thus, the *mi`rāj* is an example of the mystical experience of the eternal now. Muhammad made his journey in bodily reality, while the mystics have to content themselves to journeying in the spiritual realm. (Schimmel 1985, 161-2)

A theme with a more popular appeal in the qawwali repertoire is Muhammad's role as an intercessor in the Day of Resurrection. This intercession, *shafā`at*, is in full measure the prerogative of Muhammad only. Muhammad is thought to intercede especially on behalf of the most sinful people. This has been a great solace to the members of the Islamic community and has been celebrated in several poems. (Schimmel 1985, 84-5) In *samā`* assemblies with a wider audience, the verses like the following written by Jāmī, are frequently sung.

I am sinful, I am weak, I am helpless – this is the condition
O intercessor in the day of retribution, that you are asking, you are asking. (*Surūd*, 49)

The role of Prophet Muhammad is not limited to end of the creation, but he is present also in its beginning. In the Qur'an [33:46] he is called "a shining lamp". This has encouraged mystics to interpret the light verse [24:35] as an allusion to the Prophet. This

¹⁰ *mi`rāj*. This word has given name to the whole journey.

light of Muhammad, *nūr-i muḥammadī*, or the reality of Muhammad, *ḥaqīqa muḥammadiyya*, was the first created thing and everything else was created through it. (Schimmel 1985, 124-5) Every prophet preceding Muhammad is thus created from his light. Dāgh, whose work is often seen only in the light of his infamous relationship with a famous courtesan (Matthews & al., 97), describes the effect of the Prophet’s light in the beauty of Josef, the scent of whose shirt gave the eyesight back to Jacob:

In the beauty of Josef was your light, O Light of God
The eyesight of Jacob was cured, well done! (*Dīvān-i Dāgh*, 198)

Aḥmad Jām elaborates on the *ḥaqīqa muḥammadiyya*:

You came as the meaning of “If you had not been”, quick and swift you came
You came from the pure world, souls are offerings to you, welcome. (*Surūd*, 45)

He mentions the well known *ḥadīth qudsī* “If you had not been, I would have not created the spheres.” This saying is one of the most famous proofs used in referring to the unique position of Muhammad in the process of creation. (Schimmel 1985, 130) The longing for the Prophet has also brought the souls into existence:

Longing for the Prophet has brought the soul into being from the non-existence
Where does the search for the Prophet take [my soul]? (Bedam in *Surūd*, 142)

The birth of the Prophet has been celebrated throughout the Islamic world since the Fatimid rule of Egypt (969-1171; Schimmel 1985, 145). The festival is celebrated also in South Asia with recitations of *na`ṭ-khvānī* poetry. Some poems describing Muhammad’s birth, however, have also entered the qawwali repertoire. Many of them, like the Urdu poem cited below, resemble the actual celebrations following the birth of the child current in the area. *Bhakti* poetry may have given an impetus to writing the next poem:

When Muḥammad Muṣṭafā was born, aunt Ḥalīma took him to her lap and said:
“Do light the lamps of ghee, Āmina’s darling was born!”
In the Heaven ‘*Āhā*’¹¹ resounds, the earth sings hymns of praise.
“Today Muhammad was born!” Gabriel calls out.
Today the huris dance ‘*camā cam*’ in `Abd Allāh’s courtyard.
All the prophets from Adam to Jesus came to say heartily: “Congratulations!”
Angels come reading blessings and stars twinkle ‘*ṭim ṭim*’
On the lap of his mother he is just like a jewel in a ring. (*Surūd*, 148)¹²

¹¹ An interjection expressing joy. *Surūd* reads *hāhā*, but this interjection is used to express grief or pain.

¹² Anonymous poet in *Surūd*, 148. Ja`far Ḥusain Badayūnī sings a verse with *takhalluṣ Khāliq* in his performance (Jafar 1992, track 2). Thus, the poem is probably written by *Khāliq Kānpurī*.

3.3.3 Poems in praise of the saints

After the praise of the Prophet, the masters of the Sufi lineage are praised in poems called *manqabat* (or in pl. *manāqib*). The Chishti lineage is traced to the Prophet through `Ali, his son in law. When the *samā`* assembly follows the recitation of *fātiḥa*¹³ for the soul of a saint, the first hymn is the *qaul* set to music by Amir Khusro, *Man kuntu maulā fa-`aliyun maulā* ('Whose master I am, his master is `Ali')¹⁴. Prophet Muhammad announced this saying in the Ghadīr Khumm during his farewell pilgrimage. Some qawwals recite the complete *qaul*, adding *Anā madīnatu'l-`ilm wa `alīyun bābuhā* ('I am the city of knowledge and `Ali is its door')¹⁵. The *qaul* is sang by all qawwals in the same melody based on raga *shuddh kalyān*. It seems likely that this melody presents very old layer of qawwali tunes. The composition of Khusro includes also a *tarāna*:

*dar dil dar dil dar dānī
ham tum tanā nānā nātanā nānā rī
yalālī yalālī yalā lālālī
yalā lālā yalā lālā yalā lālālī*

A *tarāna* is a piece of composition, which utilises meaningless words as its text. (Roychaudhuri 2002, 146) Several *tarānas* are attributed to Khusro and they have enticed several speculations on the hidden meaning of these words.¹⁶ *Dar* and *dil* are Persian words and *ham* and *tum* are pronouns of Hindi/Urdu. I would nonetheless assume that no cognitive meaning is intended, but the words are suited to depict the melody the composer wants to present. Thus, they would also represent a rare example of wordless music entering the qawwali repertoire.

Since the text of the song is very short, it is often augmented with inserted verses. Qawwals have a stock of verses that can be inserted into this song. They commonly insert verses from a *qaṣīda* of Niyāz, which is performed as an independent item also.

Friend of the Truth, assignee of Mustafā, ocean of graces
Imam of the two worlds, *qibla* of religion and faith.

Companion in the assembly of mankind, quest in the holy assembly
Delight of the elect souls, pleasure of the pure spirits. (*Surūd*, 58)

¹³ The whole ceremony which includes recitation of Qur'anic passages, the lineage of the *silsila* and *du`ā* is in Indo-Muslim culture known by the name of the first sura of the Qur'an.

¹⁴ The correct form of this *qaul* is *Man kuntu maulāhu fa-`aliyyun maulāh*. The pronominal suffix is perhaps forgotten since it is normally pronounced only as *-h* in singing.

¹⁵ Among them is Muḥammad Ḥayāt.

¹⁶ Many writers have tried to find meaningful Arabic, Persian and Hindi words in the *tarāna* syllables. See e.g. `Abd al-Ḥalīm 1998, 304-5, for explanations of some of these syllables.

Another famous poem in praise of `Ali is written by Kāmil. His poem describes the spiritual significance of `Ali, also known as Murtaẓā, to the mystics:

What did I get due to the hem of Murtaẓā? What should I tell?
When I got `Ali I got the Prophet, when I got the Prophet, I got God. (*Surūd*, 162)

The way to the God goes through the Prophet, and the Prophet can be attained only through `Ali. As the *qaul* mentioned above explains, `Ali is the door to the city of knowledge, the Prophet. Another verse from the *qaṣīda* of Kāmil traces the way of the mystic to the station of patience (*ṣabr*) and satisfaction (*riẓā*), where there are signs of the mystics travelled before him:

When I arrived to the stage of patience and satisfaction, in your footprints, in every step
There was somewhere the dust of the madmen, somewhere blood of the faithful.
(*Surūd*, 162)

If we follow the Chishti *silsila*, the next personage that is commonly lauded in the poems, is Khwaja Moinuddin. The fourteen masters between `Ali and Khwaja Moinuddin are rarely met in the qawwali poetry. The only exception is Khvāja `Uṣmān Hārūnī, the master of Khwaja Moinuddin, whose `urs is celebrated in large scale in Ajmer. Khwaja Moinuddin, however, is the most widely known saint in the Indian Subcontinent, and his `urs festivities attract hundreds of thousands of people to Ajmer every year. He is a saint whose fame has spread all over South Asia, and it is natural that poems in praise of him are part of the common qawwali repertoire. The poems in praise of him accord him with the loftiest of attributes. The next verses are from a poem by Niyāz, who has written some of the most popular Persian *manqabats*:

Master of masters, Moinuddin
Pride of existence and place, Moinuddin.

An explanation for the secret of the Truth, Moinuddin
A sign of the Signless, Moinuddin. (*Surūd*, 63)

Since Khwaja Moinuddin is the first Chishti master to have resided in India, every subsequent saint is seen as his blessing. The next Urdu verse by an anonymous poet lists the names of the saints who followed Khwaja Moinuddin. The epithet used for Khwaja Moinuddin himself is Khvāja-yi Hindalvalī, ‘the Saint who conquers India’. The title is apt, since whole South Asia is considered to be part of the *wilāyat*, spiritual dominion, of the saint.

Due to your blessings they are all saints, Ganj-i Shakkar, beloved Ṣābir
The thing that makes Niẓām and Khusro saints, my Khvāja, is your blessing.
O Khvāja-yi Hindalvalī! (*Surūd*, 178)

Poetry reveals also another side of the saints. They are not only spiritual giants aloof from the world and its concerns, but they are also benefactors of the human kind. Khwaja Moinuddin is commonly called *Gharīb Navāz*, ‘Nurturer of the Poor’. Many pilgrims travel to Ajmer with the hope of solace and blessing. In understanding the reverence paid to the saints, and in this particular instance, the poetry written in their honour, it is unavoidable to take verses like the one below into account as well. The verses are taken from an Urdu poem by Kāmil, and they describe *Khvāja Gharīb Navāz* as the shelter of those with nothing. One senses the sense of pride for having a connection with Khwaja Moinuddin in the verses.

The poor lower their glance to you doorstep
When every other shelter is shattered, O *Khvāja*!

By the bonds of affection! By the perfect (or Kāmil’s) connection!
You are ours, you are ours, our *Khvāja*! (*Surūd*, 169)

From among Khwaja Moinuddin’s followers, *Khvāja Qutb al-Dīn* is not prominent in the poems. Even *Bābā Farīd al-Dīn* has remained a fairly local saint, and poems extolling him are common in Punjab, but seldom heard outside the region. *Bābā Farīd al-Dīn*’s two disciples, Khwaja Nizamuddin and `Alī Aḥmad Ṣābir Kaliyarī have become famous throughout the Subcontinent. Especially the former and his mausoleum in Delhi have inspired many poets.

Khwaja Nizamuddin, also known as *Maḥbūb-i Ilāhī*, ‘the Divine Beloved’, was learned in *tafsīr* and hadith, but was also sensitive to poetry and music. He also stressed sobriety in his teaching but experienced ecstatic states as well. (Lawrence 2004, 45-9) He was by no means the only great shaykh of his times, and the role of his famous disciples was definitive in making the master’s name eternal. Among them were the historian *Ziyā’ al-Dīn Baranī*, who saw the high moral standards of Delhi depending on the presence of Khwaja Nizamuddin. Two poet-disciples, Amir Khusro and Amīr Ḥasan Sijzī wrote panegyrics and lyrical poems with mystical tinge inspired by their master. The latter also noted down the discourses of Khwaja Nizamuddin. (Digby 2004, 252-3) Later, Khwaja Nizamuddin’s descendants were sponsored by the rulers and a splendid mausoleum was erected on his grave. The poems written in praise of Khwaja Nizamuddin are often of more lyrical character than those written in honour of Khwaja Moinuddin, for example. One can only guess the reason for this. Maybe it is *Favā’id al-Fu’ād*’s intimate

atmosphere and gentleness, traits that are absent in the *malḥūzāt* texts of previous Chishti masters. These works were written after the death of these masters, when their memory had already been hallowed by the hagiographical processes.¹⁷ Or maybe the reason is his association with the greatest poets of his time. The following verses from a famous *qaṣīda* written by Niyāz exemplify this lyricism:

The bedchamber of the world became illuminated as in daylight
When a moon like this rose from the earth's horizon.

Because of desire for the love of the Divine Beloved I turn like this
That the painter paints my picture into the form of a sigh. (*Surūd*, 64-5)

The verses include elegant examples of *mubālagha*, hyperbola, one of the most frequent rhetorical features used in the Persian and Urdu poetry. In the first verse the moon is so bright, that it illuminates the world like the sun. In the second verse the lover is wasted in longing to such an extent that everything that remains of him is sighs. The theme of moon like beauty is continued in a *qaṣīda* attributed to Khusro. The poem is one of the best known Persian poems in India and Pakistan, since qawwals always sing it after the `Id prayers, when the mosques adjacent to the shrines are full of people.

Place for celebrating `Id for us poor is your street
Joy of seeing the moon of `Id is your face. (*Surūd*, 70)

The verse is as an example of *tanāsub* or *murā`āt-i naẓīr*, 'the harmony of similar things'. The term refers to including several words from one sphere of meaning into one verse. In this instance, Khusro uses words connected to celebrating `Id. The verse includes the place of celebrating (*`īd-gāh*), the poor people (*gharībān*), who gather there to receive alms, and sighting the crescent moon (*`īd dīdan*) that indicates the end of Ramadan. In Urdu verses the Indian influence is once again more discernible. Zāmin Niẓāmī, a descendant of the saint, pictures Delhi as bride of Khwaja Nizamuddin, while the entire world follows as the bridal procession, *bārāt*.

Delhi became bride and Nizamuddin Chishti is the groom
All the world is the wedding procession of Nizamuddin Chishti.¹⁸

The most famous *manqabats* for Khwaja Nizamuddin are the ones written in Hindi and attributed to Khusro. These, however, will be discussed later, together with other Hindi poems. Moinuddin, Ṣābir `Alā' al-Dīn and Nizamuddin are saints who have

¹⁷ A detailed discussion on writings of the early Chishtiyya is found in Ernst 2004, 62-84.

¹⁸ Transcribed from the performance of Muḥammad Aḥmad, 12.11.2006.

universal following all over the Indian Subcontinent. Other saints are praised by the qawwals in the areas surrounding their *dargāhs*. Bābā Farīd al-Dīn is praised in Punjab and Khvāja Bandanavāz Gesudarāz in Deccan. Two popular saints of qawwali poems, who are not part of the Chishti *silsila*, are Imam Husain and `Abd al-Qādir Jīlānī.

Husain was martyred in Karbala and is mourned by the Shia community during the month of Muharram. The Chishtis do not listen to qawwali during the twelve first days of Muharram. Instead, the qawwals recite elegies, *marṣiyas*, during those days. In the mystical poetry, however, Husain is not remembered with grief but as a martyr of love, a faithful lover, who offered his life in the path of God. Niyāz describes the status of Husain as the king and soul of the saints. His face reflects God's beauty and the poet takes shelter in him in the Doomsday.

O heart, cling to the hem of the King of the Saints
Namely Ḥusain, Son of `Ali, Soul of the Saints.

His countenance is a mirror for divine beauty
That face has become *qibla* for the faith of the saints.

During his resurrection Niyāz puts his hope on Ḥusain
The lovers of saints are with the saints during the resurrection. (*Surūd*, 60)

`Abd al-Qādir Jīlānī is maybe the most famous saint in the Islamic world, and poems praising him are included in the qawwali repertoire. He began his career as a preacher, but his fame as a saint and intercessor spread rapidly after his death and he became immensely popular. The Qadiri order itself never became widely popular, but places where `Abd al-Qādir is said to have meditated exist all over the Islamic world. (Trimingham 1998, 41, 43) Poems in praise of this saint often concentrate to his lofty attributes much in the same way as the poems in praise of Khwaja Moinuddin. The following verses are written by Niyāz. The first one lists the epithets by which the saint is usually known:

The Prince, the Holder of Hand, the Greatest Help, the Divine Pole
The Beloved, Prince of the World, what a Divine Beloved!

The angels move in his entourage saying 'Give way!'
The selected from among people and jinns walk by his horse. (*Surūd*, 61-2)

After the poems of praise, the qawwals would ideally move on to the lyrical love poems, which will be discussed in the following chapter.

3.4 Lyrical poetry

In comparing different *mahfils*, one observes that the qawwals sing more lyrical poems when more high ranking Sufis are present in the audience. Obvious reason for this is that the lyrical poems are written in strongly metaphoric language devoid of obviously religious motifs. Attaching mystical meanings to lyrical poetry requires consequently thorough familiarity with the Sufi ideas. In discussing the themes of lyrical poetry I depart from the arrangement of *Surūd*. *Surūd* divides Persian lyrical poems into the categories of *ishq* ('love'), *firāq* ('separation') and *ilm* ('knowledge'). Urdu ghazals are divided in the same way with the additional category of *wahdat al-wujūd* ('unity of existence'). The category of *ilm* is especially elusive. In Urdu it contains poems of writers not known as mystics, such as Ghālib, Jigar and Mīr. This category, however, overlaps with other categories, notably *ishq* and *wahdat al-wujūd*. In the following discussion I shall divide the poems into more illustrative groups: poems on wine, disbelief, love and *wahdat al-wujūd*.

3.4.1 Poems on wine

A distinctive group of lyrical poems is *khamriyyāt*, wine poems. Wine was very much present in the Indian courts.¹⁹ *Qaṣīdas* praising the rulers abound in depictions of drinking scenes. Mystics seldom touched alcohol, but it served them as a poetic metaphor for the drunkenness caused by divine love. The self-forgetfulness caused by this wine becomes the aim of the mystics who have gathered in the wine house. The wine house is the *khānqāh* of the Sufi master where he offers intoxicating drink. Ḥasrat describes drinking wine as the ritual prayer of the mystics. The ritual prayer begins with *takbīr*, *allāhu akbar*. Similarly, the prayer of self-forgetfulness begins with the gurgling of the flagon:

Wine drinkers; perform the prayer of self-forgetfulness
The gurgling of flagon became "God is greatest!" shout of the wine house. (*Surūd*, 189)

The Sufi master of the *khānqāh* is the old Magus who runs the wine house. Supplications to him for more wine are the religious litanies of Ḥāfiz:

I am the one, whose Sufi lodge is the corner of the wine house
Supplication to the old magus is my litany of morning time. (*Surūd*, 101)

¹⁹ See Schimmel 2005, 195-199.

Later in the same ghazal, Ḥāfiẓ accords to the meeting with the beloved a position higher than mosque or wine house; both are only instrumental in quest for this meeting.

Aim from my [going to the] mosque and wine house is meeting with you
I have nothing except this thought, God is my witness. (*Surūd*, 101)

Another character in the wine house is the saqī, the youthful cup bearer. He may be the Sufī master, but often he is also God himself. Saqī is endowed with the qualities of the cruel and beautiful beloved. Sarmad, an eccentric mystic who was executed by Aurangzeb for his close relations to latter's brother and rival Dārā Shikoh (Schimmel 2005, 116-8), describes the effect of saqī's eyes. Those eyes intoxicate like wine. The ghazal, from which the Persian verse is taken, is a *mubārak*, congratulatory poem. Qawwals often sing this poem when a covering (*cādar*) is placed on the tomb of a saint during the `urs festivities.

If there is neither cup nor wine in the hand of the saqī
Then the wondering glances from drunken narcissus eyes are welcome! (*Surūd*, 71)

The cruelty of the saqī is unlimited. After his coquettishness has killed the enamoured wine bibber, he forms a cup out of his dust. To the lover, this is of course a blessing, since his dust can feel the touch of the beloved's hands:

After death, Saqī, I am grateful
You formed a cup from my dust. (ʿUlvi in *Surūd*, 185)

The mystics have always prided themselves on their drinking capacity. This is an indication of their capability to experience the mystical love. A verse by Jāmī includes a good example of *mubālāgha*. He has drunk so much that wine comes out from his eyes, and his heart burns so intensely that smoke of roasting comes out of it. Since roasted meat (*kabāb*) was a common snack in the drinking parties, pairing it with wine is also a nice *tanāsub*.

I am so much drunk that wine comes out from my eyes
And from the heart full of desire smoke of roasting comes out. (*Surūd*, 105)

In wine poems even ruining the abstinence is a virtue. A verse from a ghazal attributed to Khvāja `Uṣmān Hārūnī extols the virtues of unrestrained drunkenness: it is piety to dance with the cloak and turban, emblems of a pious Sufī. The situation described in the verse is sometimes seen in actual *samā`* assemblies, where a Sufī master dances intoxicated by poetry and music:

Happy the drunkenness, in which I ruin hundred abstinences
Bravo the piety that I dance with cloak and turban. (*Surūd*, 72)

The person who is mocked in the wine poems more than anywhere else is the ascetic or learned shaykh. He is concerned merely with bookish learning and is not able to adapt himself to the activities in the wine house.

This is a wine house and there are drunkards here, here the prayer leader is a saqi for
everyone
This is not a shrine, o venerable shaykh, here abstinence is forbidden. (*Surūd*, 249)²⁰

Jigar Murādābādī, writer of the verse, is an excellent example on a non-mystic poet whose poems have been included in the qawwali repertoire. No doubt, Jigar's close relation to the Sufi poet Aṣghar Gondavī acquainted him with mystical themes. Yet, his addiction to alcohol and gambling make him an unlikely poet to be favoured by Sufis. (Matthews & al. 1985, 124) The intertwining levels of meaning, however, have made his poems a fresh addition to the qawwali repertoire in the 20th century.²¹ The verse includes an example of *ishitiqāq*, using words derived from a single Arabic root in one verse. In this verse the words are 'shrine' (*ḥaram*) and 'forbidden' (*ḥarām*), both derived from the root *ḥ-r-m*.

Sometimes the poets are kind enough to advice the shaykh in an exasperated tone to see the futility of asceticism and realise the value of love:

O ascetic, listen to what I am saying to you, for the sake of God
Asceticism passes away in vain, drink the goblet of wine from me. (*Surūd*, 110)

Niyāz asks the shaykh in another verse to leave the confines of the *madrassa* of intellect and drink the wine of annihilation and selflessness without consideration of consequences. The *radīf* of the poem, *jo ho so ho*, is a common proverb in Hindi/Urdu speaking areas. Inserting a proverb to a poem as is called *irsāl-i miṣāl*.

Leave the *madrassa* of the intellect and come to the wine house of love
Now I have drunk the goblet of annihilation and selflessness, what is to be must be.
(*Surūd*, 305)

More often than advising the shaykh, the poets are bidding him farewell. Ghālib reveals the nature of the beloved to the shaykh, who would not feel comfortable in his company anyway:

²⁰ This famous poem is not found in *Kulliyāt-i Jigar* (2005). Instead, the collection includes some poems with similar theme, e.g. *Rind jo mujh ko samajhte haiñ unheñ hosh nahñi* (232) and rhyme, e.g. *Ham se rindon kã zamãne se judã mai-khãna hai* (314)

²¹ It is noteworthy that *Naghmāt-i Samã`* (1935) includes some of Jigar's Persian poems. Sufis seem to have held his writings in high regard already during his lifetime.

Yes, he does not worship God. Go, he is unfaithful, too
Why would he, who has regard for religion and heart, go to his lane? (*Dīvān-i Ghālib*, 321)

Also those, who loose control after drinking only few drops, are to be thrown out from the wine house. The idea that Sufism is only for those with enough capacity, is rather common. Jigar writes:

Who drank little and lost control, throw him out of the wine house
Those with a narrow vision cannot spend time here, only people of capacity can stay.
(*Surūd*, 249)

In poetry the real drunkard of the mystical love has the privilege to enter the sacred shrine (of Mecca?) also in the night, when the common public is shut out:

I am that drunkard, for whom the shaykh of the shrine
Has left the door of the shrine open at night. (Fanā in *Surūd*, 290)

While reading these poems, one should keep in mind that the Sufi masters have multiple roles in the society. While in a *samā`* assembly they may be intoxicated ecstasies, they may also be learned shaykhs, hadith scholars and theologians, and practice different ascetic exercises. The metaphors of the poems still retain their charm as inducers of mystical experiences. Even more radical than wine poetry, are poems on infidelity.

3.4.2 Poems on infidelity

If one is surprised by the frequency of poems praising wine and drunkenness, one may be even more so due to the several poems that describe infidelity, *kufr*, and are frequently heard in Chishti *samā`*. This genre of poetry is called *kufriyyāt*. In the poems of this genre the poet shows himself rejecting all the traditional religious inhibitions and denying the faith, usually in a very radical way. The audience of the poems encounters the conventionality of the Persian and Urdu poetry and the difference of metaphorical (*majāzī*) and real (*ḥaqīqī*) meanings. The *kufr* of the poems is obviously metaphorical *kufr*²², action that would be *kufr* in the human realm. The real *kufr*, on the other hand, is something else. As has been already mentioned, most Sufis were strict followers of Islamic law. Why are they, then, charmed by the *kufriyyāt*? One explanation may be found in the attitude that crystallises in the adage of Abū Sa`īd ibn Abī'l-Khair “Until you have become an

²² Some poems by the Qalandari poets described the real situation of the writers. These, however, are rare exceptions.

unbeliever (*kāfir*) in your self, you cannot become a believer (*momin*) in God". (Quoted in Graham 1999, 129) The *kufir* of poems is a metaphor for turning away from the ego (*nafs*) towards God. The beloved for whose sake the poet abandons Islamic faith is due to his/her beauty often called an idol (*but, śanam*). All the infidels known to Muslims appear in the poems. Khusro's beloved is more beautiful than the idols of Āzar, the idolater father of Abraham:

O your beautiful face, envy of the idols of Āzar
Though I am praising you in every way, you are still more beautiful. (*Surūd*, 84)

The sign of an infidel is *zunnār*, the infidels girdle or, in the Indian context, the Brahmin's thread. Khusro boasts to be more infidel than the infidel himself in a fanciful *mubālagha*: He does not need even Brahmin's thread, since each and every of his veins has become an infidel's thread.

I am an unbeliever of love, being Muslim is of no use to me
My every vein has become a string, so there is no need for Brahmin's thread. (*Surūd*, 121)²³

Love for the idol-like beloved is the force that robs poet's religious observance. For Kāmil it is not only his own religion and doctrine that were destroyed, but the entire universe was looted by one glance of the beloved.

What is soul and heart in love? Religion went, doctrine went
Due to one coquettish glance, the entire universe was looted. (*Surūd*, 212)

Several poems describe how the mystic's mind turns towards the beloved even during the Islamic rituals. The audiences hear in them also the obligation to remain concentrated on the beloved in everything they do. (In`ām Ḥasan, 11.2.2007) In the verses attributed to *Khvāja Quṭb al-Dīn*, two central Islamic rituals, ritual prayer and pilgrimage to Kaba are both directed to the beloved:

In a mosque, when I take my place in the row of devotion
My heart inclines towards the arch of your two eyebrows.

A pilgrim goes to circumambulate the shrine of Ka`ba
But my desired Ka`ba is on your street. (*Surūd*, 74)

A poet of Qalandari movement, Bū `Alī Shāh, continues in the same vein. To him the beloved's face is the Ka`ba. Bū `Alī Shāh performs the rituals of circumambulation and

²³ An Urdu version of this verse opens a famous ghazal of Niyāz:
I am an unbeliever of love, not a slave of Islam
Except worshipping the idols, I have no other work. (*Surūd*, 181)

kissing the black rock of the Ka`ba in the wine house. The verse is an example of *tanāsub* combining things of the same thematic sphere.

Why should I circumambulate the Ka`ba, since the face of my friend is the Ka`ba
I shall walk around the wine house and kiss²⁴ the feet of the intoxicated. (*Surūd*, 83)

Like in the wine poems, the ascetic is mocked also in *kufriyyāt*. Khusro writes in the victorious tone about the ascetic, who has had to abandon the symbols of his continence, rosary and prayer mat:

Since ascetic's eyes fell on your beautiful face
His rosary of continence is in one direction, abandoned prayer mat in the other. (*Surūd*, 94)

In Jāmī's verse the hundred years of ascetic practices are destroyed when the beloved appears in the middle of the night:

If my Friend comes out in the midnight without a veil
Ascetic of hundred years comes out from the mosque spoiled. (*Surūd*, 105)

Shahīdī advises the ascetic to abandon self-restraint and restrictions in love and worship. Otherwise both love and worship are futile. The real worship is not just bowing one's head to someone's threshold, but to make the threshold sway when one bows one's head on it.

Is it love, in which there are self-restraints? Is it worship, in which there are restrictions?
In reality, O ascetic, only that is life that you bow your head and the threshold sways.
(*Surūd*, 182)

According to Khusro, to speak the truth is often construed as profession of unbelief (*kalma-yi kufr*) in this world. Khusro's advice to keep the secrets to oneself in this world reminds the numerous verses in the end of poems, in which Rūmī exhorts silence.

Do not speak the truth, it is profession of unbelief in this world, Khusro
Wonderful knowledge of the secret, wonderful holder of the secret. (*Surūd*, 93)

In reality, mystics followed such recommendations as little as they followed the exhortations to drink wine and reject worship. The secrets of mystical love were revealed in numerous metaphors, that still form the core of poems heard in Chishti *samā`*.

3.4.3 Poems on love

Love has been the underlying theme of many poems discussed thus far. Many *na`ts* and *manqabats* resemble love poems rather than *qaṣīdas*. Wine is a common metaphor for

²⁴ *Surūd* reads *bi-posham*, 'I clothe', but *bi-bosam*, 'I kiss' seems a more likely reading.

mystical love, and the love of the idol-like beloved causes the mystic to lose his interest in religion and ascetic practises. In addition, actual love poems are numerous in the qawwali repertoire. As a result, majority of the poems performed in Chishti *samā`* deal with love.

Many Sufis have attempted to organise love into a system of states and stations. Carl W. Ernst notes that introduction of the word *`ishq*, which denotes specifically passionate love, into Sufi terminology is attributed to `Abd al Wāḥid ibn Zayd (d. 792). In the 12th century, `Ayn al-Quzāt Hamadānī (d.1131) saw love as a religious obligation (*farz*) for the human beings. According to Ruzbihān Baqlī (d. 1209), in the last stage of love all the distinction between the lover and the beloved, human being and God, disappear. (Ernst 1999b, 438, 447, 453) Many mystics have considered the trust, *amānat*, to be love. God offered this trust to the heaven and mountains, but finally only man accepted it. (Schimmel 1976, 108) Ibn `Arabī notes that love is specifically a human attribute. He notes in *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiya*, that in the Qur`anic passages that mention God's love or lack of it, the objects are always the human beings. (Chittick 2006, 35) An anonymous poet elaborates on the connection of love and humanity:

If there is no throbbing in the heart, lover is not a lover
If one knows nothing about the pain, he is not a human. (*Surūd*, 320)

The Sufis have often turned to writing poetry when they have wanted to discuss different aspects of love. Perhaps the best known Sufi poet is Maulānā Rūmī, whose gigantic *dīvān* speaks of love in always new metaphors.

Placing love among the stations that a mystic passes through in his way to perfection is problematic since it tends to negate the dynamism always present in love. Poetry, on the other hand, can describe separation (*firāq*, *hijr*) and union (*viṣāl*), soothing memory and burning love, without making any of them the final state. In every *samā`* assembly, the qawwals recreate this dynamism and with a skilful selection of poems they can help the listeners in delving into the depths of mystical experience. For example, a poem on union of the lovers following a poem on separation, or a poem on kindness of the beloved after describing his cruelty, is sure to enhance the impact of the text in the listeners.

A central meditative technique of the Sufis is *zīkr*. *Zīkr* means both invocation and remembrance. In a widest sense, *zīkr* comprises all the techniques that help the mystic to remember God. In qawwali poems, the power of beloved's memory is often described. The memory can be soothing, as in a *qit`a* written by the most notable modern

Urdu poet, Faiz Aḥmad Faiz. Faiz was not a Sufi and did not always even utilise the conventional imagery of Persian poetry. Still, his poems have become a part of the qawwali repertoire.

Last night your lost memory came to my heart
Like spring comes slowly to the wasteland
Like zephyr comes softly to the desert
Like a sick one gets rest, without reason. (*Nuskḥahā-yi vafā*, 13)

This memory is not a trivial thing to the poets. Poems in which the phantom or dream picture visits the poet abound in Persian and Urdu literature. The memory of the beloved can be almost as real as an actual meeting with him:

He comes close to me, but still does not call me
Is it little that he comes to me at least as a memory?²⁵

The memory is not always soothing, but it can also be passionate and consuming. It can be so faithful that even the death cannot erase it, as Fanā writes:

Your memory is so faithful, that even after death it did not leave me
It was I who was erased in your memory, your memory was not erased from the heart.
(*Surūd*, 317)

In separation the lover hopes the beloved to come. In poetry the beloved shows affection to the rivals of the lover but ignores him totally. Niyāz sighs that roses may bloom in the morning breeze, but his bud of heart does not open. The innocent question of the second line is an example of *tajāḥul-i `ārif*, feigned ignorance of the poet: he does know, that affections of the cruel beloved are difficult to achieve.

Morning breeze may cause thousands of roses to bloom
But when will he make this one bud of heart open? (*Surūd*, 304)

The separation causes in the lover a state that resembles delirium. In this state he forgets the rules of society, and uses all his time to roam around in search of the beloved. To the outsider this roaming is just waste of time but to the lover it bears the hope of meeting with the beloved.

I do not rove around lanes and marketplaces in vain
I carry the ardent desire of a lover; I wander around in hope of meeting. (Rūmī in *Surūd*, 78)

The lover is oblivious of his own state, sometimes crying sometimes laughing like a child in sleep.

²⁵ Kāmil, transcribed from Aziz 2005, track 1.

Sometimes I am happy, sometimes sorrowful, negligent of my own state
I am crying and I am laughing like a child in sleep. (Khvāja Naṣīr al-Dīn in *Surūd*, 97)

One of the consequences of madness caused by love is writing poetry. Classical example of this is Majnūn, who lost his sense in love of Lailā and went to live in the desert. There he dedicated his time to composing poetry. Among the Sufi poets, Rūmī is the most famous to have composed poems in ecstasy. In the Indian realm, Sirāj Aurangābādī experienced a period of mystical madness, during which he composed many of his poems. Although Sirāj later gave up writing poetry in order to concentrate on mysticism, he is still remembered for his haunting verses that represent the Deccani style of writing. (Sarvarī in introduction to *Kulliyāt-i Sirāj* 1998, 44, 55) He is also known to have set many of his poems to so that they could be sung in *samā`* assemblies. (Kugle 2007, 599) His verse below describes the receding of intellect to the background, when a mystic experiences love and opens to the intuitional knowledge. This knowledge is achieved through a direct experience of reality. (Ernst & Lawrence 2002, 15) The verse utilises words connected to studying (*dars* ‘lesson’, *nuskha* ‘manuscript’, *kitāb* ‘book’, *īāq* ‘bookshelf’) in a nice *tanāsub*.

It was a peculiar moment, when I studied the manuscript of love
The book of intellect remained on the shelf as it was placed there. (*Surūd*, 179)

In order to experience this love, one is to loose the virtues of self-restraint and tranquillity:

Today you have to leave the hem of patience and tranquillity
Today control has to become uncontrolled. (Mumtāz in *Surūd*, 217)

Not only the virtues of this world have to be abandoned, but the mystic has to give up all consideration for hell and paradise. The theme of love that desires no reward is central in Sufi poetry. The story of Rābi`a, who wanted to extinguish the hell fire and burn the paradise, is maybe the most famous example of this attitude. In *Favā'id al-Fu'ād* (IV:24), Khwaja Nizamuddin explains a hadith, in which some believers are dragged to paradise in chains, to refer to the mystics, who loved God only for his sake and are reluctant to enjoy their reward. The theme is often elaborated in poems. A verse attributed to `Alī Aḥmad Ṣābir sees the contentment of the beloved as the guardian angel of the Paradise, Rizvān. The verse includes an *ishtiqaq* of the words *rizā* ‘satisfaction’ and Rizvān, both derived from the root *r-ḡ-y*.

Aḥmad, the paradise and hell are forbidden to the lovers
Every moment, the satisfaction of the beloved has become our Rizvān. (*Surūd*, 82)

If we return to the experience of love, the most common metaphor for it is fire. Love has the power to burn not only intellect but also the whole existence of the mystic. But even when the existence is burned, the love remains under the ashes:

A spark of love burned the chattels of my existence
Under the ashes of heart, my hidden burning remains. (Niyāz in *Surūd*, 108)

The most famous metaphor for burning lover is the moth that flies to the candle over and over again, finally burning to death. The story is found already in al-Ḥāllaj's *Kitāb al-Tawāsīn*, and it has been retold again and again by the poets in Persian and Urdu. (Schimmel 2004, 198) Kāmil describes the beloved as a candle who infatuates the lover in the gathering. The central figure of the gathering is in the Indo-Muslim culture known as the candle of the gathering.

Let the gathering of him go on like this eternally
Who makes me a moth after becoming a candle himself.²⁶

In the hands of the Indian writers the image of candle and moth could become twisted, as often was the case with the writers of the Indian style. `Ulvi depicts love's burning as such a strong force that even the ocean is not able to extinguish it:

No one was saved from the burning of love
It turned even the ocean into a moth. (*Surūd*, 186)

The beloved of the Persian lyrical poems is usually a youth, who is very conscious of his beauty. In Urdu poems the beloved may sometimes be a young unmarried woman, who is unreachable. Or she may be a courtesan, for whose attention the lovers compete. Whichever the case may be, the beauty of the beloved is one of the favourite topics of the poets, and it has incited them to depict the beloved with most fanciful metaphors. A verse by Bedil offers a whole array of traditional metaphors for the beloved's beauty:

In your sidelong glance is the dawn, in your gaze magic,
in your locks is a charm, in your figure the Doomsday
In your down a violet²⁷, in your tresses a hyacinth,
in your eyes a narcissus, on your face a rose garden. (*Surūd*, 111)

²⁶ Transcribed from Aziz 2005, track 1.

²⁷ *Surūd* reads *ba khaṭ ba naqsha*, 'in your down, in your reflection'. I assume here is one of the several lapses in the Persian text and the verse should read *ba khaṭ banafsha* "in your down a violet". The down on the face of a youth was often perceived to be of violet-bluish colour.

One glance at the beloved is enough to burn the lover's world, but when he smiles, he scatters sugar everywhere.

You burn the world if it throws an amorous glance on you
You scatter sugar, if you just smile. (Khusro in *Surūd*, 91)

The special charm of the verse is due to its form as much as it is due to its meaning. Khusro has written the verse using *tarṣī*, 'studding with jewels'. This means that both lines of the verse have exactly parallel words.

jahān sozī agar dar ghamza ā ī
shakkar rezī agar dar-khanda bāshī

Rhetorical features like this are almost impossible to convey in translation, but in a qawwali performance they are sure to make an impact on the discerning listeners. Another rhetorical feature especially suited for performance is *savāl o javāb*. This means that the first line of a verse includes a question and the second one answers it. Jāmī asks his beloved, what are the tears or sweat drops on the cheeks of the beloved. The beloved, whose cheeks are like roses, as we already learned from the verse of Bedil, answers playfully that they are rose water coming out from a rose. In the performance the first half of the second line ('He smiled and said') would be repeated several times to heighten the impact of the answer in the second half ('Rosewater comes out from a rose').

I said to him: "What are these dewdrops on the cheek?"
He smiled and said: "Rosewater comes out from a rose." (*Surūd*, 105)

Cruelty of the beloved often manifests as killing the lover. For Sa`dī the lips of the beloved are red from the blood of lovers. The lovers lie killed everywhere and the situation reminds the plain of Karbala after Imam Husain and his troops were killed.

From your sweet lips I keep drinking blood of the heart
You killed the lovers; this is the plain of Karbala. (*Surūd*, 79)

The lover seeks to suffer in the hands of the beloved, since in the end suffering and shedding heart's blood may cause the beloved to appear:

Jāmī, throw a drop of heart's blood into the ocean
Breast blazing, heart burning, the moon comes out from the water. (*Surūd*, 105)

The key to disentangling this convoluted verse of Jāmī is the belief that pearls are formed out of raindrops that fall in to the ocean and finally find a shelter in an oyster, where they mature into pearls. This has served Sufis as a metaphor for mystic's path. The mystic

matures in separation to the love of God as the water drop becomes a pearl in separation from the rain clouds. (Schimmel 2004, 204) In the verse above, Jāmī twists the image in a way that would be typical to the Indian style. If the lover sheds his hearts blood, instead of water, into the ocean, the result will not be a mere pearl but the full moon-like beloved.

Poets were not satisfied with descriptions of the unattainable beloved, but they also recognised that the beloved cannot be a beloved without the lover. Among the Sufis, a parallel thought revolved around the idea that the transcendental God is not merely an object of human being's love, but that there is a mutual relationship between the two. The Qur'anic statement that "He loves them and they love him" [5:54] is often quoted as a proof of this. In the Islamic thought, only similar could love similar and therefore the souls had to be of divine origin in order to love God. The thought of souls' divine origin was adapted to Islamic philosophy and mysticism from Neo-Platonic thinking. The more legally minded orthodoxy supported the gulf between the immanent soul and the transcendent God, which was also a reason to proclaim poetry and *samā`* illegal since both of these could easily induce an experience of a mutual love between a human being and God. (Gribetz 1991, 52) The possibility of mutual love is celebrated in many poems that describe the lovers' union. Kāmīl hints at the reciprocal need of the beloved and lover:

When lovers were finished, he felt something
Now he cries remembering them, having fully forgotten the playful torture.²⁸ (*Surūd*, 257)

What will the anticipated union be like in the end? *Khvāja`Uṣmān Hārūnī* does not know, what will happen during the meeting, but he is proud of the fact that he will dance in front of no lesser person than the Friend.

I do not know, how I shall finally dance at the time of meeting
But I am proud of the delight that I will dance in front of the friend. (*Surūd*, 72)

During the separation, the lover may have thought that he would reveal to the beloved all his sufferings. But the meeting is so overwhelming that he forgets the pangs of separation.

I thought I would relate to him the sadness and grief of my heart
But when he came in front of me, there was neither sadness nor grief. (*Zafar in Surūd*, 222)

The poets have elaborated the effects of beloved's glance over and over again. In *Mīr's* verse it causes the lover to lose himself:

You appeared and made me lose my consciousness
You separated me even from myself. (*Surūd*, 218)²⁹

²⁸ *hañs hañs ke rulānā*, lit. 'making cry while laughing'.

It is again difficult to tell the difference between the lover and the beloved, which was the highest peak of love, for example, to Ruzbihān Baqlī. (Ernst 1999b, 453-4) It is impossible to know, who is who anymore:

I became you, you became me, I became body, you became soul
So that no one will say after this that I am someone else, you are someone else.
(Khusro in *Surūd*, 85)

The union of the lovers is not stationary. After union, the lover longs for the permanence of this meeting and mutual love. (Chittick 2006, 39-40) The lover derives his life from the restlessness of heart and longing in love:

Kāmil, peace is death, why should you ask for death?
Your life is from the restless heart. (*Surūd*, 252)

A verse of `Ulvī describes the dialectics of mystical love with a metaphor of a sand storm. The wind and sand mix in such a way that it is impossible to say whether they are united or separated, whether the lover is annihilated in the beloved (*fanā`*) or whether he remains (*baqā`*).

When a whirlwind rises in the desert, there is tumult in wind and sand:
I am annihilated in you, you remain in me, you are no one else, I am no one else. (*Surūd*, 335)

The disappearing of the lover into the beloved brings us to the final theme of the Persian and Urdu poetry used in qawwali. This theme is *waḥdat al-wujūd*, ‘the unity if existence’.

3.4.4 Poems on unity of existence

The mystical philosophy of Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn al-`Arabī (d. 1240) is in India commonly referred to as *falsafa-yi waḥdat al-wujūd*, ‘philosophy of unity of existence’, or simply as *waḥdat al-wujūd*. The term is not found in the writings of Ibn `Arabī, but was coined by his grand-disciple Sa`īd al-Dīn Farghānī (d. c. 1300). (Chittick 2006, 71) The philosophy of Ibn `Arabī and his followers reached India in the 15th century and was crystallised into the slogan *hama ūst*, ‘everything is he’. The opponents of *wujūdī* school mostly supported the idea of *waḥdat al-shuhūd*, which was compressed into the slogan *hama az ūst*, ‘everything is from him’. Among the early Chishti masters there were both proponents

²⁹ The poem in *Surūd* has seven verses, which actually are a selection from one ghazal and two *qit`as* with the same *radīf*. See *Kulliyāt-i Mīr*, 150.

(e.g. Ashraf Jahāngīr Simnānī, d. 1425) and opponents (e.g. Khvāja Bandanavāz Gesudarāz, d. 1422) of *waḥdat al-wujūd*. (Rizvi 2003 I, 249-51, 269)

In the 17th century the debate on *waḥdat al-wujūd* vs. *waḥdat al-shuhūd* became heated in the writings of Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī (d. 1624) The Naqshbandi sub-order named after him as Naqshbandiyya-Mujaddidiyya has overshadowed every other sub-order³⁰ and consequently his thoughts have spread widely among the Naqshbandis and reform movements influenced by this particular order. In the 18th century, Shāh Valī Allāh (d. 1762) attempted a reconciliation of the *wujūdī* and *shuhūdī* schools in his writings. Many Naqshbandi shaykhs, however, continued to adhere to the teachings of Aḥmad Sirhindī. Among them were Khvājas Muḥammad Nāṣir `Andaliṭb and Mīr Dard³¹, as well as Ghulām Yahyā. In a larger scale, the synthesis of Valī Allāh gave the thoughts of *wujūdī* school certain acceptability in the intellectual life of Muslim India. (Metcalf 2005, 39-40)

Many prominent Chishti masters have been supporters of *waḥdat al-wujūd* since the 18th century.³² Subsequently many poems presenting the ideas of this philosophy have been included in the qawwali repertoire and one encounters verses on this topic even in poems written by non-Sufis. Shakīl Badayūnī was among the first poets, who used their talents in the film industry. In addition to writing lyrics for several classics of Hindi cinema, he wrote numerous ghazals. (*Encyclopaedia of Hindi Cinema*, 636) In one of his ghazals he sighs in a melancholic *maqta`* verse:

Neither annihilation is mine, nor remaining, so do not search for me, Shakīl
I am a beauty of someone's imagination, I have neither existence nor non-existence.
(*Surūd*, 316)

In closer scrutiny, the verse includes many basic ideas of Ibn `Arabī in condensed form. The selection of central terms of Ibn `Arabī into the verse – imagination (*khayāl*), existence (*wujūd*) and non-existence (*adam*) – suggests that the writer was well acquainted with his philosophy. In Ibn `Arabī's thinking the human beings and the entire creation appear in the imagination where an immutable entity (*ayn s̄ābīta*) becomes an existent entity (*ayn maujūda*). Even when the entity is manifest in the cosmos, it still

³⁰ Among these are the sub-orders derived from Khvāja Bāqī Bi'llāh (d. 1603) and Shāh Amīr Abū'l-`Ulā (d. 1651)

³¹ The pervasiveness of *waḥdat al-wujūd* in poetry can be detected even in the poems of Khvāja Mīr Dard, several of which could be read as descriptions of this philosophy. See for example poems on pages 117 (*māhiyatoñ ko roshan kartā hai nūt terā*) and 127 (*tujhī ko jo yhāñ jalva-farmā na dekhā*) in *Dīvān-i Dard* (2003).

³² E.g. Niẓām al-Dīn Aurangābādī (d. 1730), Shāh Niyāz Barelvī (d. 1831) and Pīr Mīhr `Alī Shāh (d. 1937). (Niẓāmī 1980, 436-7)

retains its position as a possible thing in the knowledge of God. As a possible thing it does not belong to pure non-existence (*ʿadam*). Neither does it have existence (*wujūd*), since only God exists and only God manifests. A manifest possible entity has a relation to both, existence and non-existence, and simultaneously has neither. The first line of the verse intensifies the second line. In Ibn ʿArabī’s thinking the perfect man is a perfect servant of God. In the perfected state he realises that even his servanthood comes from God, what to speak of high stations of the Sufī path, annihilation (*fanāʿ*) and remaining (*baqāʿ*). (Chittick 1989, 83-84, 318, 375) Thus, a verse that in the first sight seems to describe a melancholic lover and his hopeless situation, turns out to be a verse with profound mystical-philosophical meaning.

Niyāz writes on the same theme with the melancholy typical to the poets of the Indian style. He uses the images of a caravan passing away and of a footprint in the sand, which the wind quickly wipes away. Both of these images became current among the Persian writers of India in the 17th century. (Schimmel 2005, 244) Despite the melancholy of the verse, one can detect in them the underlying theme of the creatures sharing the existence of God.

My whole caravan passed away from the field of manifestation
Just like a footprint, my name and sign are left.

My whole existence is imaginary like a mirage
For sure, I am not and my imagination and fancy are left. (*Surūd*, 108)

Many verses describe the unity of existence by juxtaposing opposing things and then explaining how they are both derived from a single source:

From where did the shout of Maṣṣūr come and from where the gibbet for Maṣṣūr?
You raised the cry "Anā al-ḥaqq" and then came to the gallows. (*Surūd*, 107)

This verse by Khvāja ʿAbd al-Quddūs Gangohī uses not only *taẓādd*, ‘contrast’, of the shout of Maṣṣūr and his gallows, but also the *savāl o javāb*, ‘question and answer’, to enhance the impact of the verse. Maṣṣūr al-Ḥallāj is in poetry remembered for having shouted “*Anā’l-Ḥaqq*”, ‘I am the Truth’, and being hanged for that. Some poets have seen him being punished for divulging divine secrets to the public. Some have seen in him a martyr of love, who attained a perfect union with the beloved. To the proponents of *wujūdī* school he was also a proof that there is nothing but God. (Schimmel 2004, 126-7)

God’s manifestations in this universe are his names, or attributes. They manifest in the loci of manifestation, that is, in the existent entities. (Chittick 1989, 89-90)

All the existent entities point towards the one reality, as Kāmil writes using *tajāhul-i `ārif*, feigned ignorance of the poet.

For whom in this world is there so much anxiety?
Towards whom are pointing all the places of attributes' manifestation? (Kāmil in *Surūd*, 212)

As God is the only existent being, the mystics see him everywhere. In the verses of Niyāz, everything reminds the poet of the beloved. The first verse refers to the moment preceding creation, which is also seen as the origin of the experiences in *samā`*.³³ In the following verses the manifestations of the beloved range from God to human beings, from king to beggars and suspicious entertainers.

Somewhere he said "Yes!" after saying "Am I not?"
Somewhere I saw a human being, somewhere God.

Somewhere he was a king sitting on the throne
Somewhere I saw a beggar with a begging bowl.

Somewhere he was a dancer, somewhere a singer
Somewhere I saw him playing the lute. (*Surūd*, 321)

Often the poets go in their poems as far as condemning all thoughts of duality as infidelity, *kufr*:

Somehow forget all consideration for adding
To think about duality is infidelity: one existence, one essence. (Kāmil in *Surūd*, 211)

Sometimes the mystic is compared to a mirror. When the mirror reflects the picture of the one who looks at it, it is neither that picture nor totally different from that picture, or non-existent:

As a mirror would say in front of the sun "I am the sun"
I would say "I am God", say this to the holder of secret. (Niyāz in *Surūd*, 303)

As the mystic becomes seemingly one with God when he realises God's attributes in himself, he may confront a problem: where should he direct his prayers, if everything, including himself, is God:

This is the time of devotion to for, tell me to whom I should prostrate if
From the pre-eternity until the era of creation I have been my own God.
(Nāṭiq in *Surūd*, 337)

In the real life the mystics were very much engaged in worship. In the philosophy of Ibn `Arabī the question of abandoning worship never arises, because it is in *`ubūdiyya*,

³³ See page 14.

‘serventhood’, that a human being manifests and serves the essential divine name, Allāh most fully. (Chittick 1989, 371)

Poems on *wahdat al-wujūd* are not always overtly philosophical. They can also take form of a more lyrical love poem, such as the verse of Taskīn:

Colours of spring, morning of rose garden, what would that enchanted see
Whose eyes have in one rose seen the whole rose garden?³⁴

In Chishti *samā`*, the poems on unity of existence would ideally end an assembly. In the midst of the Persian and Urdu poems, however, qawwals sing several poems in Hindi, which utilise indigenous Indian metres and poetic images.

³⁴ Taskīn, transcribed from the performance of Muḥammad Aḥmad, 9.11.2006.

4 Poetry in Hindi

4.1 Significance of indigenous forms and themes

The Hindi poetry has in Chishti *samā`* as elevated position as the Persian poetry. This is due to the close connection of the language with Amir Khusro and his master Khwaja Nizamuddin. Moreover, Hindi is not only a regional language like other vernaculars used in poetry, but it has spread outside the immediate area where it is spoken. Hindi poetry is heard everywhere the qawwals perform in *samā`* assemblies. Other vernacular poetic traditions, e.g. those in Sindhi, Kashmiri, Punjabi and Bengali are heard only in their respective areas.

The Hindi employed by the Sufi poets is not the standard Hindi of the present day, and often it is named rather vaguely as *hindavī*, ‘an Indian language’. The variants of the language are often called *pūrabī*, ‘the eastern language’, or *dakkhinī*, ‘the southern language’. The latter refers also to the *dakkhinī urdū*, the variant of Urdu prominent in the Deccan. The beginning of Sufi literature in Hindi is popularly traced back to Amir Khusro. A verse in which he describes himself as a speaker of Hindi but not Arabic is often seen as a proof of this. (Nārang 1998, 236) Subsequently a whole corpus of Hindi poems has become ascribed to him. These poems form an integral part of the repertoire of the qawwals all over the Subcontinent. Sunil Sharma notes, however, that they began to appear in the literary sources only in the 18th and 19th centuries and their language is heavily tinged with the spoken language of Delhi of those days. He does not, though, outright reject the possibility that these poems could be based on some verses by Khusro. Khusro is known to have employed Hindi words in his Persian writings and his epical and historical works reveal a deep understanding of the nature and customs of India. (Sharma 2006, 14, 78-9) Moreover, Khusro hailed from his mother’s side from an Indian family that had converted to Islam, and he learned Hindi from his mother. The reason why there are no Hindi poems in his collections is considered to be the lesser value attached to Hindi in comparison to Persian. Consequently, Khusro would not have considered these poems worth writing down. (Nārang 1998, 235-6, 242; Pancāl 1998, 265)

The early Chishti masters were connoisseurs of both music and poetry, and poems in Persian and Hindi are attributed to them. The oldest examples of Hindi verses are found in the holy book of the Sikhs, *Gurū Granth Sāhib*. These verses are called *Farīd*

verses and their authorship is attributed to Bābā Farīd al-Dīn Ganj Shakkār (d. 1265), the predecessor of Khwaja Nizamuddin. Their authenticity has been disputed in the academic circles since 1904, when the translator of the *Granth*, M. A. MacAuliffe challenged their authenticity. However, Carl W. Ernst has noted in discussing the discourses of a Sufi master of Khuldabad, Zain al-Dīn Shirāzī (d. 1369), that one of Bābā Farīd's verses cited by him is found also in the *Granth*. Thus the *Farīd* verses may well represent the oldest layer mystical Islamic poetry in Hindi. (Ernst 2004, 167-8)

The earliest longer Sufi work written in Hindi is probably *Candāyan* finished in 1379. It is an allegorical metric composition written in *avadhī* by the Chishti master Maulānā Da'ūd. In the 16th century three other allegorical works³⁵ were written in this language. All these works utilise the indigenous forms and imagery of the Indian poetry. (Weightman 1999, 468-9) Simultaneously in Deccan the local Sufis started to write poems in the form of Hindi that had spread there from Northern India with the invading troops. In addition to indigenous forms they utilised also forms borrowed from Persian. The Chishti master of Gulbarga, Khvāja Bandanāvaz Gesūdarāz wrote *masnavīs* and ghazals in Hindi. (Schimmel 1975, 132-3)

More than Persian forms, the Sufis favoured the indigenous forms in writing Hindi poetry. The basic form is *gīt*, 'song'. *Gīts* are in mystical Hindi poetry as important as are the ghazals in Persian and Urdu. *Gīt* is metrically very free, lyrical poem. No uniform rhyme scheme is applied in the *gīt*, and the first line of the poem serves as a refrain throughout the poem. The most common short form is *dohā* or *dohrā*, a couplet. Both lines have thirteen syllables and the same rhyming word. *Dohās* are in the Chishti *samā`* used much in the same way as the *rubā`īs* and individual verses from *masnavīs* and ghazals, as introductory or inserted verses. *Dohās* often paint a lyrical miniature, like the verse Khusro is said to have written after the death of his master, Khwaja Nizamuddin:

The fair beauty sleeps in the bed, hairs fallen to her face
Khusro, go home, evening has set in every direction. (*Surūd*, 345)

Alternatively they may express some piece of wisdom. The next verse is also attributed to Khusro and it has his nom de plume, which in Hindi is called *chāp*.

O Khusro, river of love flows in the opposite direction:
Who rose from it, drowned; who drowned, he got across.³⁶

³⁵ *Mirgāvātī* by Shaiḫ Qutban (1504), *Padmāvātī* by Malik Muḥammad Jāyasī (begun ca 1540) and *Madhumālātī* by Shaiḫ Manjhan (begun ca 1545).

³⁶ Transcribed from Jafar 1993, track 3.

In addition to this, the qawwals sometimes sing Hindi poems written in the ghazal format using Persian meters. It should be noted, that Hindi poems are not just a peculiarity among the Persian and Urdu poems, but they form an integral part of the poetic corpus heard in the *samā`* assemblies.

In addition to prevalence of indigenous meters and forms, an important characteristic of Hindi poetry is the usage of Indian poetic imagery. The greatest difference between the Persian and Hindi poetry is the way of depicting the subject of the poems. In the Arabic poetry he is a man longing for his beloved woman. In the lyrical Persian poetry the lover is usually a man, whose beloved is a youth. In the epic poetry the lover is a man while the beloved is a woman. Urdu poetry utilises these same conventions, but sometimes poems are also addressed by men to unmarried, unattainable women or courtesans. In the Hindi poetry³⁷ the lover is always a young woman, who longs for her beloved. The beloved is the woman's husband, either real or imagined. In the epic poems the woman has to endure severe afflictions to attain her beloved. According to Schimmel, these afflictions are a metaphor for the path of the Sufis, who have to become clear of all impurities, which include also their ego. The Arabic word for ego or lower soul, *nafs*, is feminine in gender, which must have played an important role in assimilation of the conventional female voice of the Hindi poetry. (Schimmel 1976, 172-3) The lyrical poems often paint pictures of the heroine in varied situations during different seasons and the Hindi poems performed by qawwals resemble the songs performed in different festive occasions, such as marriage. Alternatively, these poems belong to the *bārahmāsa* genre, which depicts nature and festivals of different seasons.

Maybe the most intriguing question concerning Hindi poems is, why were the Sufis so eager to write in Hindi and utilise the conventions of Hindi poetry? An often repeated explanation is that the Sufis wanted to present their teachings to the common people in a language and idiom they would understand.³⁸ In this theory the Sufis are conceived as missionaries: they wanted to disseminate the teachings of Islam especially to the Hindus, who were slaved by the rigid caste system. (See Abbas 2002, 14, 19) In the Indian subcontinent, the liberal middle class Muslims have lately projected their values to

³⁷ The same convention characterises poetry in Punjabi and Sindhi.

³⁸ See e.g. Schimmel 1975, 128; Abbas 2002, 114, 136

the Muslim saints.³⁹ Consequently, the Sufi poetry has become very much favoured among them. The female heroine of the Hindi poetry has made some writers even to argue (e.g. Abbas 2002, 86, 119) that Sufis were interested to write in Hindi and other vernaculars, because they wanted to fight the patriarchal system and social injustice directed towards women.

Such lofty, but anachronistic ideas have been challenged by several researchers. Carl W. Ernst, for example, notes (2004, 166-8) that Sufism was during its early phase in the Indian Subcontinent essentially a way of deepening the basic Islamic rituals by adding an inner dimension to them. It required deep acquaintance with the basic tenets of Islam, and could hardly be described as a simplification of Islamic doctrines. In discussing the Hindi poetry, Ernst further notes, that many of the Hindi poems are devoid of any overtly Islamic themes and didactic passages, which necessitates a very developed metaphorical interpretation. Otherwise these poems could be read as any other Hindi poems with no mystical themes. Thus, the theory that vernacular poetry was used in missionary work is hardly convincing. The reason for writing in Hindi is according to Ernst simply the fact that the Sufis lived in the Indian society and were influenced by it. They adopted from it items that would fit to their mystical interpretation of Islam and aesthetic taste. Similar conclusion is reached by Francesca Orsini who has analysed a 16th century text on metaphorical interpretations of Hindi poems. She notes that this work does not indicate any syncretistic attempt on the level of theology or mystical practice. It is rather an example of reception of influences in the form of poems and poetic images from the culture surrounding the Indian Sufis. These poetic images are then given a new signification by the Sufis according to their own theological and mystical thoughts. (Orsini 2006, 5, 16) In another paper she discusses the *Rushd-nāma* of `Abd al-Quddūs Gangohī (d. 1537). The text includes parallel verses in Persian and Hindi on parallel themes, but clearly shows that the writer did not conceive a hierarchy between the Hindi and Persian writing. He did not conceive Hindi and Persian fulfilling different functions, homely vs. courtly (and common people vs. Sufi audience?), but are a sign of a “translated Islam” in which `Abd al-Quddūs “refracted” Sufi concepts in Indian images (Orsini n.d. 23)

The vernacular poetry may have, though, played a role in the Islamisation of certain parts of the Indian population. According to Richard M. Eaton, a particular group

³⁹ C.f. manifestos of Pakistan People’s Party (<http://www.ppp.org.pk/manifestos.html>) which all open with statement that the popular Sufis who are buried in Pakistan were supporters of the values of the party – democracy, freedom and equality.

of devotees formed around the Sufi masters and their graves very early. This group constituted of persons who were not interested in acquiring Sufi training and learn mystical thinking, but wanted to acquire amulets and blessings from the saints and their graves. Often these persons belonged to the lower strata of the society, and from the shrines they took with them not only the amulets but also Hindi poems that the Sufis listened and recited. As many of these were written in the form of songs sung during weddings, spinning or grinding flour, they became part of the everyday life of these people. Especially women conveyed these songs to their children, who thus assimilated some aspects of the Islamic and Sufi tradition into their lives. In this way, the vernacular poetry would have indirectly been a part of the Islamisation. (Eaton 2000, 191, 198-9) The Hindi verses fix Chishti *samā`* tightly to the Indian environment, while the Persianate poetry connects the mystical music concerts to the more cosmopolitan Persian world. Although these poems do not promote a syncretistic worldview or modern democratic values, they are significant since their imagery represent a clearly Indian component in the Chishti *samā`*.

4.2 Imagery of Hindi poetry

Poems from the *ḥamd* and *na`ṭ* categories are very few in Hindi. *Surūd* includes no Hindi *ḥamds* and only two *na`ṭs*, neither of which is often heard in the Chishti *samā`*. On the other hand, numerous poems that praise the saints are found in the categories *manqabat*, *rang* and *mubāarak*. The poems of praise in Hindi are often directed to the Indian saints of the Chishti order. The high sounding epithets met in the Persian and Urdu poems are substituted with indigenous images. It should be noted that these images do not derive from the Sanskrit aesthetics but from the folk tradition. It is customary, that poets write in Persian, Urdu and Hindi utilising the respective conventions of each poetic tradition. Niyāz, whose verses we have already encountered in the previous chapter, writes in praise of Khwaja Moinuddin:

Khāja Garīb Navāj will fix my broken little hut
He will thatch it, he will fix it, he will fix my broken little hut. (*Surūd*, 349)

The poem is written in the ghazal format, but imagery is fully Indian. The writer trusts Khwaja Moinuddin to thatch the broken hut. Saint's title Khvāja Gharīb Navāj has been assimilated to Hindi phonetics as Khāja Garīb Navāj. The female voice is dominant already

in the poems of praise. An anonymous writer describes how Khwaja Moinuddin arrives to her courtyard as a bridegroom. In the Indian wedding the bridegroom arrives to the house of the bride with a group of relatives. Often this procession is a metaphor for the initiatic line, *silsila*, of the Sufis. In this poem also `Abd al-Qādir Jīlānī is included among the Indian saints:

Flowers from the garden of Ḥusain
 Ḡhaus al-A`zam ordered
 Khvāja Usmān made a garland of them and brought it
 Khvāja Quṭab raised the flag
 Shaykh Farīd came in ecstasy
 Nizām al-Dīn and Ṣābir sang:
 Moinuddin came to my courtyard, hey,
 Came, hey, came and woke up my fortune! (*Surūd*, 351)

Among the classics known to all qawwals are the Hindi poems ascribed to Amir Khusro. His master Khwaja Nizamuddin is said to have appreciated Hindi very much. It is told that Khwaja Nizamuddin heard echoes of God’s words “Am I not your Lord?” [7:172] in the *pūrābī* language. (Khvāja Ḥasan Nizāmī in his foreword to *Muṣḥaf-i Bedam*, 3) Among the Hindi poems of Khusro is the following *gīt*. The wife offers herself as a sacrifice to her beloved Khwaja Nizamuddin’s (here Nijām), beautiful face. The poem also employs the image of veil, the symbol of woman’s chastity and honour. Following Abbas (2002, 65) one is tempted to connect this imagery to *kashf*, a way to acquire direct knowledge through mystical revelation. But as much as the English term ‘unveiling’ points to this direction, one should remember that Persian and Urdu equivalents for veil are *naqāb*, *ḥijāb* and *parda*. In Persian poetry these are all to be lifted, not cherished. Hindi poems, on the contrary, repeatedly advocate preserving the veil. It is perhaps more apt to link the veil imagery to the traditional Sufi cloak, *khirqā*. Pīr Aḥmad Nizāmī referred to this in the interview (18.1.2007) saying that the Sufis should always pray for protection of their cloak. Though actual cloak is seldom used nowadays, it can still serve as a potential symbol for the spiritual life of a Sufi. In the following *gīt* the saint’s blessings are invoked through asking for the husband’s help in quarrels with the women of the household.

An offering to your face, Nijām
 Offering Nijām, O I am captive
 Among all the friends, my veil is dirty
 Look, men and women laugh
 Now, in the spring, dye my veil
 Protect my honour
 An offering to the face
 Sometimes quarrels with mother-in-law, sometimes with sister-in-law

My hope is in you
I am your slave, everyone knows
Is the honour mine or yours
Nijām, an offering to your face
Wedding procession comes with Quṭb and Farīd
Khusro is the princess bride
Nijām, an offering to your face. (*Surūd*, 345-6)

If the difference between the poems of praise and lyrical poems is sometimes difficult to detect in Persian and Urdu poetry, dividing is even more difficult in Hindi poetry. A poem by Khusro found in *manqabat* category is actually a lyrical *gīt* on separation, *virāh*. The motive of honour that the beloved should protect is again repeated.

Do not turn your eyes from me, I have fallen to your feet
As you have made me your own, accordingly keep your promise
My honour is in your hands, beloved, let there be no laughing in the world
I have fallen to your feet
For you there are hundreds like me, but for me you are only one
Look with your mercy, do not see my faults
I have fallen to your feet
I forgot all due to you, do not forget me
If you forget, I shall disappear from the both worlds
I have fallen to your feet. (*Surūd*, 347)

Although the imageries of Persian and Hindi poetry are rarely mixed in poems or qawwali performance, there are few macaronic poems that are written half in Persian and half in Hindi. The next verses are from a poem written in ghazal format. In every verse the first line is written in Persian and the second line in Hindi. The first verse forms an exception with the first half of each line in Persian and the second half in Hindi. Maybe the need to have the Hindi ending *-iyān* as *radīf* is behind this ordering. The poem is attributed to Khusro and it is along the *dohā Gorī sove sej par* ('The fair beauty sleeps in the bed') the earliest Hindi poem of Khusro to appear in literary sources in the end of the 18th century. (Nārang 1998, 246-7) Mixing two languages and two imageries add the poem's appeal and its ascription to Khusro has made it a great favourite in the Chishti *samā`*. The charm of macaronic verses is lost in translation, since parallel bilingual tradition is lost from the Western cultures.

The nights of separation long as the tresses and the day of meeting short like the life
O friend, when I do not see my beloved, how can I endure the dark nights.

Like a burning candle, like a bewildered particle, always crying for the pleasure of that
moon⁴⁰

No sleep in the eyes, no peace in the body, since you do not come, nor send letters.

⁴⁰ I follow the reading of qawwals and Prof. Nārang (1998, 245) *hamesha giriyān ba-`aish-i ān mah*, instead of *zi-mihr-i āmīn bi-gashtam ākhir* found in Surud for the second half of the line.

Many of the Hindi poems bear traces of folk tradition, since they are written as poems to be sung, for example, during the wedding. The songs of the groom's party are always happy. The songs sung during the departure of bride from her parental home, *bidāī*, are always sad in tone. The next verses are from the most famous mystical exemplar of this genre, once again attributed to Khusro. The poem *Kāhe ko byāhī bides re* is one of the poems that Shemeem Burney Abbas considers an example of Sufis' radical social attitude against child marriage and patriarchal society. (Abbas 2002, 114) I am more prone to attribute purely aesthetic value to the poem and think that the poem is meant to increase the feeling of separation, *virāh*, in the Sufi listeners. They would, according to their mystical world view, interpret the poem as a metaphoric representation of, for example, turning away from the world of comfort in order to meet the beloved. Abbas also maintains (2002, 115) that poems like this were not intended solely for Sufi audiences but for larger gatherings of a particular language group. Thus, they would have been used to promulgate social reform. The otherwise noble thought is marred by the fact, that the child marriage and arranged marriage have not disappeared, and the departure of bride from the childhood home is still a sad, even traumatic, occasion. This is true despite the fact that all the songs sung during the *bidāī* repeat the same motives of lamentation, with or without the hope of joyous meeting with the husband.⁴¹

Why do I have to marry outside the village
O my watching father

To my brothers you are to give one palace, two palaces
To me you gave a foreign land
O my watching father.

When I raised the curtain of the palanquin and looked out
I had arrived to the strange land
O my watching father. (*Surūd*, 372-3)

Also daily chores are part of the imagery. Fetching the water was, and in many places still is, a daily task that took time. In the next poem by Amir Khusro, prankish Khwaja Nizamuddin breaks the earthen pot of the girl. Farīda `Alī Nizāmī suggested (personal communication) that the water is a metaphor for all intellectual knowledge. Like

⁴¹ For examples of *bidāī* songs outside the Sufi context see Varma 2005, 142-9. For a film version, see for example the song *Bālam se milan hogā* from the film *Chaudhvin ka Chand* released in 1960. (Pyaasa 2002, track 15).

the water in the poem, it is hard to acquire. It has to, nonetheless, give way to the intuitive knowledge and unveiling in the end. The Sufi master helps in this process like Khwaja Nizamuddin, who in the poem breaks the water pot.

Way to the well is very difficult
How shall I fill my pot with water?
I just went to fill it with water
When he run, jumped and broke my pot.
Nijām al-Dīn Auliya'! I am a sacrifice for you!
Protect the honour of my veil. (*Surūd*, 371)

A particular type of *gīts* is *bārahmāsa* poetry. *Bārahmāsa* means twelve months, and this poetic genre describes events and moods of the heroine in different seasons. The rainy season, *sāvan*, is one of the favourite seasons of poets. The rainy season is conceived as a romantic period. But it can also be a period of intense separation. If the beloved husband was not present in the beginning of the *sāvan*, it was likely that he would not come home before the end of the rains, since travelling during the monsoon was usually impossible. The following poem by an anonymous poet describes also the adornments of the married women, which are described in greater detail in the poetic genre called *nakh sikh varnan*, 'description from toe nails to hair locks'. The gaiety of the poem is enhanced through contrasting with the situation of a lonely wife who has to spend *sāvan* alone. In such a situation even the rainy season is scorched by the fire of separation.

O friend, my beloved has come home!
He makes this courtyard fortunate
I stood there full of hope
Having adorned the parting of my hair with henna and jasmine.
Seeing the form of my beloved
I lost my body and soul.
O friend, my beloved has come home!
Whose *Sāvan* passes with the beloved
That bride will enjoy the wedding night.
Whose beloved is not home in the *Sāvan*
Her *Sāvan* will catch fire.
O friend, my beloved has come home! (*Surūd*, 381)

The other central theme of *bārahmāsa* poems is spring, which after the cool winter of Northern India is welcomed with joy. The colours connected with spring are yellow and orange in their different hues. These happen to be also the colours of the Chishti order, and many masters sport at least a cap or scarf in some of these colours as a part of their attire. In the nature the mustard flower gives the yellow colour to the spring. The Chishtis celebrate in January-February a festival adapted from the Hindu calendar, *vasant pancamī*. The beginnings of *vasant pancamī* are traced back to Khwaja Nizamuddin, and during this festival people wear yellow scarves and take earthen pots

Play, Chishtis, play holi! He has come in the form of Khāja Nijām. (*Surūd*, 405)⁴³

The description of Khwaja Nizamuddin wearing a crown and having a syringe for sprouting water in the hand reminds the depictions of Krishna. One may be surprised to encounter poems on Krishna among the poems sung by the qawwals. This must have attracted the attention of groups unsympathetic to Sufis, as Francesca Orsini notes in discussing the work of `Abd al-Vāḥid Bilgramī (d. 1608), *Ḥaqā'iq-i Hindī*. The work describes the metaphors of Hindi poetry from the Sufi point of view. The author justifies listening to the poems with Krishna motive with a hadith relating that Abū Jahl heard only the names of the Pharaoh, Hamar and Qarun in the Qu`ran. Similarly it is possible that someone hears the names of the *kāfirs* in the Krishna poems. Those endowed with capacity, though, hear the divine truths. As a whole, `Abd al-Vāḥid's text shows very little interest in the actual theology of the Krishna *bhakti*, and Orsini explains the appropriation of Krishna poetry to result from the fact that some poems circulated widely among different interpretive communities.⁴⁴ In the course of this process, the Sufis enjoyed these songs and gave them their own interpretations. `Abd al-Vāḥid explains the Krishna imagery entirely from the Sufi perspective. Orsini also points out that Krishna is never assimilated by `Abd al-Vāḥid with Allah but with the highest man, the Prophet Muhammad. (Orsini 2006, 5-6, 11-12) Similar phenomenon is seen in the verse quoted above, where Krishna is paired with a Sufi master, Khwaja Nizamuddin. Often the poems themselves contain no hints to explain the metaphor, but the responsibility of interpretation is left to the audience. The next verses by an anonymous poet describe the feelings of the milkmaids, whom Krishna left behind in Vrindaban when he left for Mathura:

Without you, O darling of Nanda from Braj, I have no peace.
I fall to your feet and beg, I put a garland on your neck.
Without you, O darling of Nanda from Braj, I have no peace.
I roved around Vrindaban searching and found peace nowhere.
The charming flute player was born in Mathura
Without you, O darling of Nanda from Braj, I have no peace. (*Surūd*, 402)

⁴³ The verse in *Surūd* mixes lines of the original. *Surūd*'s version is, however, mostly followed in performance. The original verses in *Muṣḥaf-i Bedam* (168) read:

sīs mukuḥ hāthan pickārī morī āngan holī khelan āyo
pīr nīzām al-dīn catur khilārī bha'īyyān pakaḥ mero ghūnghaṭā uṭhāyo

dhan dhan bhāg unke morī sajanī jin aiso sundar prītam pāyo

khelo re cishtīyo holī khelo khvāja nīzām ke bhes meṅ āyo

⁴⁴ Similar phenomenon has already been encountered in the modern context while discussing the poems shared by qawwali with other musical genres. (See page 26)

Poems on *waḥdat al-wujūd* have also been written in Hindi. It is common for modern writers to consider *waḥdat al-wujūd* identical with the Vedantic views of the Upanishads.⁴⁵ Hindi poems on *waḥdat al-wujūd*, however, do not utilise philosophical concepts of the Upanishads, but are firmly rooted in the lyrical poetic tradition. The imagery used in the first line of the next verse could well be from a Persian or Urdu poem. The yellow colour of mustards, which spreads in the eyes, is a metaphor for joy and love.

Every single drop I recognize as the ocean, every atom the sun
Bravo Guruḡī, well you made me understand, mustard bloomed in the eyes. (*Surūd*, 376)

These poems are in Chishti *samā`* always heard set into music. The ways in which the musical idiom of qawwali combines the musical and textual features is discussed in the next chapter.

⁴⁵ See e.g. Nizāmī 1980, 438.

5 The musical idiom of qawwali

5.1 The melodic structure, *rāg*

Before entering the discussion of the musical idiom of qawwali, it is necessary to introduce two terms of Indian musical theory. A term essential to understanding any classical form of music in the Indian Subcontinent is raga (*rāg*). As Sandeep Bagchee points out (1998, 20), musical systems of the world can be divided into two. The basis of this division is whether harmony or melody predominates. Indian music belongs to the latter category and the raga system is the structure that governs it. Raga is an archetypal melody which consists of *surs*, notes that can be sounded so long as to produce an expression. The seven pure *surs* of Indian music are named *sā*, *re*, *gā*, *mā*, *pā*, *dhā* and *nī*. Of these *sā* and *pā* have no half notes. *Re*, *gā*, *dhā* and *nī* have flats (*utrā*) and *mā* has a sharp (*caṛhā*). Each one of the notes has its colour and effect. Hence the different moods of different ragas are derived from a particular constellation and mutual relation of *surs*. Every raga has five to seven notes in ascending and descending order. Ragas with different number of notes in ascent and descend are called mixed ragas, e.g. raga *Asavarī* has five notes in ascent and seven in descend. Notes of a raga are sung or played in succession and performer glides from one note to the next via different microtones that are situated between the notes. (Massey 1976, 96, 104-6)

The tonic of every raga is *sā* and it can be fixed according to the needs of the performer. All the other notes depend on the tonic. Once the raga is established, the performer returns again and again to the *vādī*, the dominant note of the raga. This note gives each raga its particular expression. Every variation begins and ends with this note. (Massey 1976, 104) In addition to *sā*, every raga has to include one of the two notes *mā* or *pā*. Moreover, one raga cannot employ both pure (*shuddh*) and altered (*vikrit*) forms of one note. (Bagchee 1998, 41) Important terms in discussing qawwali are *asthāyī* ('permanent') which denotes lower register of the raga and *antarā* ('intermittent') which denotes the upper register. The registers depend on the tonic centres. The lower register, also called *nīce* ('below'), is situated between the lower tonic and the fifth note while the upper register, also called *ūpar* ('above'), is situated between the fifth note and the upper tonic of

the raga. The main part of a composition⁴⁶ is in the *asthāyī* whereas variations usually employ the *antarā*. (Qureshi 2006, 50, 55, 62) The variations or embellishments of the raga, usually sung in a faster tempo than the composition, are called *tāns*. In the vocal music there are three kinds of *tāns*. Their classification is based on the type of verbal delivery they employ: first, *sargam tāns* are sung using the names of the notes. Second, *ākār tāns* are sung to the syllable *ā*. Third, *bol tāns* are performed employing a text. On the other hand, *tāns* can be categorised depending on the vocal technique employed. For example, *jabrā tān* denotes trembling throaty voice, *kūṭ tān* singing the notes in a fast zigzag manner and *cūṭ tān* upward and downward movements in a great speed. (Bagchee 1998, 48; Massey 1976, 106)

5.2 The rhythmical pattern, *tāl*

Along the melodic structure, the rhythmical pattern or rhythmical cycle, *tāl*, is the other main constituent of a classical Indian composition. The *tāl* is repeated throughout the whole composition and it provides the rhythmical structure and timing. A *tāl* consists of beats, *mātrās*. Duration of one beat is in Indian manuals of music derived from the pulse of a healthy man, thus achieving something between 3/4 and 6/7 seconds. Different *tāls* have different number of beats, ranging from *dādrā* with six beats to *tīntāl* with sixteen beats and *brahmā* with 28. Beats of a *tāl* are divided into subdivisions. Thus abovementioned *dādrā* has 3+3 beats and *tīntāl* 4+4+4+4. The *tāls* are performed in different tempi. The slow tempo is called *vilambit*, the medium, which is two times as fast as the slow tempo, *madhya* and the fast, which is four times as fast as the slow tempo, *drut*. Compositions usually begin in slow tempo and fasten progressively, finally ending in the fast or very fast⁴⁷ tempo. (Bagchee 1998, 57; Massey 1976, 110-111)

Indian musical theory recognises three kinds of beats. The most important beat of a *tāl* is not the last but first beat of a rhythmical pattern. This beat is called *sam*. It bears the heaviest stress among the beats of the *tāl* and the whole rhythmical structure evolves around it. The soloist, whether a vocalist or an instrumentalist, achieves the climax

⁴⁶ I use the word composition to denote any piece of music performed by a musician, though it should be kept in mind that most of the North Indian classical music relies heavily on improvisation. The closest equivalent for composition in the Indian musical theory is *bandish* ('tying, binding'), which denotes tying text, melody and rhythm together. (Bagchee 1998, 326) *Bandish* is the basic part of a classical vocal performance. It concludes all the improvisatory sections, but forms only a small part of the total bulk of a composition. In addition, *bandish* is often used to denote merely the text of a song.

⁴⁷ I.e. two times the fast tempo.

of his variations on this beat. In the light classical music, which lays more stress on text than heavier classical forms, the *sam* beat often falls on some word with much importance. Sometimes de-emphasis of *sam* is used to produce a special effect. For example, in the performance of afternoon ragas of *Sārang* group the lack of emphasis is meant to create a languorous atmosphere of an Indian afternoon. The complete opposite of *sam* is the empty beat, *khālī*, which is used as a point of contrast to the *sam*. This contrast is enhanced by the percussionist, who employs only a soft drum-stroke for *khālī* in opposition to a sharp stroke for *sam*. Position of *sam* and *khālī* beats in the subdivisions of a *tāl* gives each *tāl* its special character and also enables the listener to distinguish between different rhythmical patterns. The remaining beats, that are neither *sam* nor *khālī*, are known as *tālī*. (Bagchee 1998, 57-58, 70; Massey 1976, 111-112) Heavier forms of classical music, such as *dhrupād* and *khayāl*, follow the musical grammar of raga and *tāl* most strictly, whereas the approach of lighter classical forms, such as *thumrī*, *dādrā*, *ghazal* and qawwali, to it is more relaxed.

5.3 Relationship of words and music in qawwali

Qawwali is set apart from the pure raga based North Indian, or Hindustani classical music by its emphasis on words over music. In classical Hindustani music, the verbal delivery may or may not be present. Even when the text, or *bandish*, is employed, it is subordinate to the melody and rhythm. As Bagchee aptly notes, “*bandish* is only a means of expressing the *rāga* and precise representation is not of great import”. (Bagchee 1998, 33) Thus, the textual message in itself is not important; words are only material for variations and different *tāns*. For example, in a *dhrupād* performance one verse may offer material for variations extending to one hour. In the field of North Indian music, the primacy of words sets qawwali apart from the pure raga music (*pakkā gānā bajānā*) and places it into the category of song (*gānā*) with other lighter classical forms, *ghazal*, *thumrī* and *dādrā*. To this category belong also the folk songs and the popular versions of the abovementioned forms, often used in films. On the other hand, the instrumental accompaniment is so essential to qawwali that it is set apart from chanting or recitation (*parhnā*). Chanting is melodic recitation unaccompanied by musical instruments and it derives its rhythm solely from the poetic metre. Recitation of poems for Prophet Muhammad’s birthday (*na`t-khvānī*) and elegies for Imam Husain’s martyrdom chanted in *Muḥarram* (*marṣiya-khvānī*) belong to this purely text based category. (Qureshi 2006, 46-47)

The primacy of text is apparent in the structure of a qawwali song. The musical form is strophic, since all the poems performed in qawwali, be it *qaṣīda*, ghazal or *gīt*, constitute of verses that share identical structure dictated by the shared metrical and rhyming structure. Every verse in *qaṣīdas* and ghazals is divisible into two metrically identical lines, which again are divisible into two identical or almost identical half lines. In the musical level, the melody of a qawwali song is divisible into corresponding units. This is due to the fact that occurrence of a mystical state in a listener requires repetition of some phrase of the poem. Thus the melody has to have corresponding units that can be repeated. Moreover, the musical metre, *tāl*, is in qawwali chosen so that it replicates the poetic metre's long-short pattern. (Qureshi 2006, 62, 66-9)

Since the musical metre is selected according to the poetic metre, the shorter *tāls* of Hindustani music are in qawwali much more common than the long ones heard in classical concerts. Most common ones utilised in qawwali are *dādrā* of six beats, *pashto* of seven beats and *kaharvā* of eight beats. The last-mentioned is also known as *qavvālī tāl*. The most common *tāl* of heavier classical music, *tīntāl* of sixteen beats, is conspicuously absent from qawwali, since it is simply too long for most poetical metres. (Qureshi 1983, 126-7) In a qawwali performance the *sam* beat falls on some important word, e.g. the *radīf*. Khan and Ruckert point out (2002, 307) that one feature distinguishing qawwali from other forms of classical music is the fact that the rhythmical cycle can be finished and began any time according to the performer's convenience. In the classical music the rhythmical cycles follow each other continuously throughout the performance and the soloist has to return to the same words at every *sam* beat. In qawwali, also this fluctuates; the word that falls to the *sam* changes in the course of performance. (Muḥammad Ḥayāt, 12.12.2006) It is also common that the rhythm retreats to the background during the inserted verses. When the group leader returns to the main text, a new cycle begins from the *sam* beat. The tempo in a qawwali song begins usually in a medium tempo but soon increases into fast tempo, which, according to Mi`rāj Aḥmad (20.1.2007), serves the purpose of spiritual arousal. Qureshi has pointed out (2006, 53) that qawwals from Punjab utilise a faster and more accentuated tempo than qawwals from Uttar Pradesh.

Ragas that are employed in qawwali are mostly mixed ragas of light classical music. (Qureshi 1983, 125) Most common are ragas *shāhāna*, *kāfī*, *bahār* and *jaijivantī*. Particular ragas are connected to particular songs, e.g. *shuddh kalyān* to *Man kuntu maulā* and *shāhāna* to *Ba-khūbī ham-cūn mah tābanda bāshī*, and they are not chosen according to season or time of the day as in other North Indian classical forms. Many younger

qawwals do not know these ragas that date back to the times of Amir Khusro; they only preserve the melody, but do not sing it in the right raga. (Mī`rāj Aḥmad, 20.1.2007)

If we examine a single verse in qawwali performance, we will see how the registers are utilised in enhancing the impact the text has on the listeners. The example is a verse from Amir Khusro's ghazal *Khabar-am rasīd im-shab ki nigār khvāhī āmad* ('I got the news that you, beloved, will arrive tonight'). The analysis is based on the performance of the poem by Muḥammad Aḥmad Rāmpurī in 9.11.2006 at Khvāja Hall.

hama āhuvān-i ṣaḥrā / sar-i khvud nihāda bar kaf
ba-ummīd ān-ki roz-e / ba-shikar khvāhī amad

All the deer of the desert / have taken their heads into their hands
With this hope that one day / you will come to hunt.

As was noted earlier, the upper *antarā* register denotes excursions from the main theme. In the verse of a *qaṣīda* or ghazal the first line represents not only semantic departure in presenting a statement that requires solution, but in the level of the poetic form it departs from the rhyme scheme of the poem. In the example the *radīf* of the poem, *khvāhī āmad*, is featured only in the second line. The first line devoid of the *radīf* paints a picture of the deer voluntarily offering themselves to be killed. The question remains: why? The second line will provide the answer. In a qawwali performance the first lines of the verses are sung in the *antarā* register several times to enhance the excitement. When the leading qawwal deems it suitable, he ends the repetition of the first line in the *asthāyī* register, thus denoting return to the main theme and the rhyming structure. This return happens also in the level of the meaning. The second line offers a solution or an explanation to the first line. In the example it is explained that the deer are hoping the beloved to come and hunt them. The lines are usually further divided into two semantically self-contained units. Especially the repetition of the first half of the second line, *ba-ummīd ān-ki roz-e* in this case, is a common technique utilised in the qawwali performance to delay the final statement.

Qureshi notes (2006, 62) that the first line of a *qaṣīda* or ghazal is a special case, since it is both a first line with an opening statement and a line having the recurring rhyme. Musically this duality is expressed by first singing the line in *asthāyī* to mark it as a rhyming line and then singing it in *antarā* to mark it as an opening statement requiring conclusion. Qureshi also points out (2006, 63), that the textual orientation of qawwali music is discernible already from the speech of the qawwals. They speak about

manipulating the melody in terms of a poem. They refer, for example, to the *antarā* and *asthāyī* sections of the verse melody as the first line (*miṣra` ūlā*) and second line (*ḡānī miṣra`*) respectively. This is the practice among the qawwals even when they are familiar with the terms for these phenomena derived from the musical theory.

The performance of a song in qawwali consists of performing a series of individual verses. The transition from one verse to another is always executed in the *asthāyī* register. The flow of verses, however, is disrupted with inserted verses and extensive repetitions, both of which are performed in the *antarā* register as they represent departures from the main poem. The inserted verses are in addition performed in recitative with the rhythmical accompaniment receding to the background. This is due to the fact that the poetic metre of the inserted verses often differs from the poetic metre of the main poem. Thus, the musical metre of the song does not represent the poetic metre of the verses anymore. These techniques of textual manipulation will be discussed in detail in chapter seven.

The primacy of the text in qawwali is also behind certain acoustic features of the musical form. Since the text has to be pronounced clearly and enounced audibly, great care is taken to attain perfect diction. A qawwal should never subordinate the sharpness of enunciation to the melodic improvisations. The *tāns* are used very sparingly, since they are likely to distort the meaning of the words. *Tāns* require very fast movement between the notes and clear articulation of words becomes difficult. (Qureshi 2006, 61-62, 204) Introductory section, *ālāp*, which in heavier classical forms employs a central role in introducing the raga without words and accompaniment of percussion instruments, is in qawwali reduced into few notes sung to the syllable *ā*. The ideal voice for qawwali is a voice full of energy and life, not the melodious and modulated voice of, for example, film music. The performers are all male. In addition to the ideal of strong voice, this is due to the fact that qawwali is traditionally performed by the male members of a certain service class. Also the identification of female singers with courtesans has helped in keeping the performance of qawwali a purely male domain, though in the 20th century some female Sufi musicians, `Abīda Parvīn being the most famous example, have developed their musical style in imitation of qawwali. (Qureshi 2006, 61; Abbas 2002, 4)

Qawwali is always performed by a group. The group enforcement serves the audible delivery of the text and enables its continuous presentation. The group consists usually of four to ten members. Among them, the group leader occupies a central place. He is a senior vocalist, who chooses the poems and inserted verses, and conducts the repetition

of textual phrases. Mi`rāj Aḥmad emphasised (20.1.2007) also the alertness of the group leader in detecting the mystical state in the listeners, since he has to repeat the appropriate phrase in order to sustain the state. In addition to the group leader, the group consists of one or two leading vocalists, who engage in improvisations along with the leader. The leader and one of the leading vocalists play the harmonium, and other members of the group sustain the rhythm with percussion instruments and hand claps. They also form a chorus that repeats the lines introduced by the group leader.

In the Chishti tradition no instrument has achieved such a hallowed position as the *nay* among the Mevlevis. As the qawwali is primarily oriented towards delivering the text, the accompaniment is rather ascetic, and instruments are used only to support the melody of human voice and offer the rhythmical accompaniment. The melodic support is provided by a portable harmonium (*bājā*). This instrument was adopted to Indian music about two hundred years ago. Usually one harmonium is played by the group leader and another by one of the leading vocalists. This allows continuous accompaniment, since the group leader often uses different gestures of hand to emphasise certain parts of the text. Qureshi points out that the rhythmical accompaniment has an important place, since the beats of the drum correspond to the beats of the heart – both are called *zarb* – and an accentuated rhythm is essential to make the heart moved. The recurring rhythmical patterns also correspond to the recurring *zīkr* that is often perceived as constituting of varying numbers of beats.⁴⁸ The traditional percussion instrument is *ḍholak*, a double headed barrel shaped drum. These days, the paired drum tabla is widely used along the *ḍholak*. In Qawwali the tabla is played with flat hand technique (*thāp se*) like *ḍholak* in contrast to the classical music that employs the finger technique (*cuṭkī se*). The group members, who do not play any instrument, accentuate certain beats of the rhythm with hand claps (*tālī bajānā*). (Qureshi 2006, 58, 60) Though all the forms of qawwali are based on these same conventions, some features vary. These variations will be discussed in the next chapter before entering the discussion of the techniques of textual manipulation in the actual *samā`* assemblies.

⁴⁸ See e.g. Ernst 1999a for a detailed discussion of the Chishti *zīkr*.

6 Different forms of qawwali

Thus far I have discussed qawwali in one uniform and archetypal form. Reality is not this simple but there are different forms of qawwali. I would classify these forms into three: 1. popular qawwali of recording industry 2. qawwali of concerts, and 3. *samā`ī* qawwali heard in *mahfil-i samā`*, an assembly for mystical music. In addition, one could add the secular qawwali favoured by film industry as the fourth category. Its musical idiom, though, is similar to that of popular qawwali, the biggest difference being the non-religious lyrics. For this reason, I will not treat secular qawwali separately. Although many qawwals perform their music in more than one of these stages, they clearly favour one of them over the others.

6.1 Popular qawwali of recordings

The qawwali became an integral part of the recording industry in the 1920s and 1930s. The producers of the leading recording companies, HMV and the British Gramophone Company, conceived separate religious groups as profitable markets. This led to introduction of such musical categories as Hindu devotional and Muslim devotional. Qawwali was obviously part of the latter category. Some stylistic features that still characterise the popular recorded qawwali were launched at this early period. In fact, the early recordings created a stylistic hegemony that still is prominent in the popular forms of qawwali. (Qureshi 1992, 112-3; 1999, 70)

The accompaniment for all the recordings in the beginning of the 20th century was provided by harmonium and tabla. Due to the limitations of recording technology, all the musical genres utilised only solo voice. In the 1930s, new instruments were added, and a peculiar instrument, *bulbultarang* or *teshokoto*, became a standard instrument in popular qawwali. This instrument originates in the Meiji era (1868-1912) Japan, and it is a simple board zither with typewriter keys. The most interesting change in relation to *samā`ī* qawwali, however, took place in the textual content of songs. Urdu had become the *lingua franca* of the Indian Muslim communities in the 19th century and it gained prominence in the recorded qawwali. Urdu used in recordings was rather simple when compared with the language of Urdu poets. Qureshi accords this to the actions of a qawwali loving but unlettered producer of HMV in the 1920s. He favoured simple Urdu poems over Persian and Hindi ones that are an essential part of the *samā`ī* qawwali repertoire. But it was not

only language, but also the content of the poems that changed. Most recorded poems were poems of praise in honour of Prophet Muhammad. Lyrical poetry relating to mystical love was not recorded in order to ensure a distinctively religious character in the eyes of the consumers. In the level of the poetic genre, the form, which Qureshi calls narrative-didactic, gained ground. The background of the narrative poems with didactic content is the much utilised technique of inserting verses from other sources to the main poem.⁴⁹ In the recorded qawwali this has become the most popular way to manipulate the sung texts, even to such an extent that sometimes the songs lose their strophic structure. (Qureshi 1992, 114, 116-117; 1999, 71-73)

After the partition of the British India, the recorded qawwali was used to promote the nationalistic ideology of the new national states. In India the themes of the poems started to concentrate more on Indian saints and the humanistic values attached to them. The vocabulary became heavily tinted with distinctively Hindi words. In Pakistan, qawwali became popular as music with a distinct Muslim identification. Since the 1950s, the film music has influenced the recorded qawwali in both countries through introducing catchy interludes and the crooning voice ideal of the film industry. Introduction of long-play recording technology to South Asia in the end of the 1960s made also longer recordings possible. Up to the 1960s, most recorded qawwals had hailed from the classes of urban entertainers, not from among the hereditary qawwals attached to the Sufi shrines. But the advent of LP technology enticed some qawwals from the traditional performing classes to record their music. (Qureshi 1992, 117; 1999, 72-3, 76, 84) Among the most famous qawwals that hail from the traditional performing lineages and have made recordings since the 1960s are Bahā' al-Dīn Quṭb al-Dīn Qavvāl (d. 2006) and Munshī Razī al-Dīn Khān (d. 2002), who immigrated to Pakistan in 1947, and `Azīz Aḥmad Khān Vārisī (d. in the 1980s).

At the present, recorded qawwali is immensely popular and easily available in the shops surrounding the *dargāhs*. The inexpensive VCDs show not only the singers using showy gestures, but also views from the major shrines in India and abroad, thus making them good souvenirs for the pilgrims. The accompaniment features keyboard, guitar and different percussion instruments, though *teshokoto*, tabla and harmonium still predominate. The poetry concentrates largely on the praise of the Prophet and the Indian saints in simple Urdu. Also Punjabi is used in Punjabi speaking areas. The poems are

⁴⁹ See chapter 7.2 for a detailed discussion on the inserted verses.

performed by a soloist and chorus who take turns in singing. Catchy interludes are inserted between the verses. The extensive repetitions and refined introductory and inserted verses are not part of the recorded qawwali. Since these features depend on the reactions of the live audience, their absence from the recorded qawwali is understandable.

It is important to note that many shaykhs and qawwals hold this form of qawwali in contempt. Pīr Aḥmad Nizāmī criticises its profuse use of different instruments, which only disturbs the concentration of the listeners. In the *maḥfils* he himself organises, he never allows other instruments than harmonium, tabla and *ḍholak*. Also adaptation of film melodies to popular qawwali raises his objection. (Aḥmad Nizāmī, 18.1.2007) Mī rāj Aḥmad Nizāmī (20.1.2007), the leading qawwal of the Nizamuddin Dargah, and Muḥammad Aḥmad Rāmpurī (13.11.2006) both felt that most singers are nowadays just giving qawwali bad name by turning it into entertainment. While my interviewees frequently voiced complaints like this, in the Indian Subcontinent this form of qawwali reaches the widest audiences, and one should not underrate the religious value attached to these recordings. Qureshi mentions (1992, 119) even a Sufi shaikh, who was so enraptured by a broadcasting of a recorded song that he smashed the radio.

6.2 Concert qawwali

Qawwali has been a part of concerts and different non-religious festivals since the 1940s, when the qawwali contests (*muqābila*) became a form of popular entertainment in Bombay. These contests featured two performers, who were competing on who could use the same refrain or rhyme more creatively.⁵⁰ More serious form of concert qawwali with distinctively religious character, however, evolved only in the late 1960s along with the introduction of long-play technology. The great innovator was Ghulām Farīd Šābirī (d. 1994) who with his brother Maqbūl Aḥmad Šābirī gained national and international fame as an exponent of the musical form Qureshi calls “serious popular religious qawwali”. The Sabri Brothers mixed features from the traditional qawwali – accentuated drum beat, textual communication and improvisational patterns – and combined them with the features of popular qawwali and classical Hindustani music. The Sabri Brothers have always taken great care to maintain the balance between the textual message and

⁵⁰ The contest format has dominated the depictions of qawwali in the Indian films which usually present qawwali as a staged contest between two parties. More religiously oriented exponent of this genre was the late Ḥabīb Painter.

improvisational passages, so that the latter do not disturb the former. (Qureshi 1992, 118; 1999, 76, 84, 88)

Since the late 1980s the concert stages have been dominated by Nuṣrat Fath `Alī Khān (d. 1997), whose name has in the world music circles become synonymous with qawwali. He aimed also at reaching the audiences not familiar with the languages of qawwali poetry. Influence of classical Hindustani music is clearly discernible in the prolonged improvisatory parts using *sargam* and *ākār tāns*, and sometimes it is difficult to differentiate some of Nuṣrat's performances from a classical *khayāl* performance.⁵¹ The balance between delivery of a textual message and purely musical improvisation is often lacking in Nuṣrat's qawwali, and he may engage in prolonged improvisations even in the middle of a half verse.⁵² In a *samā`* assembly this would not be possible since it would likely disturb the concentration of the listeners.

Concert qawwali is primarily concerned with aesthetic enjoyment, not so much with mystical states. These two levels can, of course, never be separated from each other when discussing qawwali, but they can serve as a tool in analysing concert qawwali. In performing the poems, concert qawwali does utilise the techniques of performing introductory and inserted verses. But as the singer is in the concert an artist entertaining his audiences, these are means to demonstrate the ability to combine verses in a delightful way. The extensive repetitions are absent, since the main aim is aesthetic enjoyment, not experiencing mystical states. The qualities of a qawwal as an artist are often in an outright contradiction with the qualities required from a qawwal who performs in *samā`* assemblies. A description of an aspiring Pakistani qawwal Faiz `Alī Faiz gives a good picture of the qualities required from a concert artist. In *samā`* qawwali these same qualities would be redeemed most inappropriate: "He has no scruples about disturbing the ritual order so as to arouse the emotions of the audience and impose his personality as a soloist. Faiz Ali Faiz is unquestionably the major new voice of *qawwali*." (Faiz, 2002) Imposing one's self in a *samā`* assembly would probably lead to censoring by the *mīr-i mahfil*, head of the assembly.⁵³ Rhetoric of changing the thematic order is perhaps an attempt to place Faiz `Alī Faiz among the qawwals known for developing the musical form and guarantee him a status comparable with that of Nuṣrat Fath `Alī Khān. Manipulating

⁵¹ Cf. e.g. Nusrat 1993a, track 1 and Nusrat 1993b, track 1.

⁵² Cf. e.g. Nusrat 1997a, track 1, where he introduces a long improvisatory passage after the half line '*khudāyā raḥm kun bar man*'.

⁵³ Cf. example one, page 93.

the thematic order in itself is a fairly non-innovative innovation, since the thematic order is in any case rarely followed.

Accompaniment in concert qawwali is basically the same as in *samā`ī* qawwali although keyboards and tambourines are sometimes added to it. Influence of the audience is somewhat limited, although listeners may express their admiration by applause, laudatory exclamations of *vāh vāh* or *kyā bāt* ('What a thing!') or by offering notes of money to the performers. The focus of the performance is in the singer, who can very much be characterised as an artist. The concentration of concert qawwali on musical traits, such as voice quality and vocal artistry, is very much due to the constituency of the audience. Lalita du Perron notes (2002, 191) in examining the *ṭhumrī* style of singing in the 20th century that the pronounced emphasis on the musical traits is connected to the change in the audiences. The intimate musical gatherings of courts and salons of courtesans have changed into public concerts which are largely sponsored by the bourgeois middle-classes. According to du Perron, this has affected also the lyrical content of *ṭhumrī*. The erotic lyrics have been sanitised and given expressly devotional interpretation in the Krishnaite context. Similar development is discernible also in the case of lyrical content of concert qawwali, likewise sponsored and consumed by middle-classes. The love poems are rarely performed in concerts and poems of praise with more devotional themes dominate.

6.3 *Samā`ī* qawwali

6.3.1 Stages of samā`ī qawwali

Samā`ī qawwali, often called also *khānqāhī* qawwali due to its connection to the Sufi lodge, is performed in *samā`* assemblies. It follows the musical conventions described in chapter 5.3 most closely. It sounds much like the concert qawwali, but the aim and focus of the performance are different. This type of qawwali is a meditative and/or ecstatic technique used by the Sufis of the Chishtiyya order to invite spiritual states. *Samā`ī* qawwali is performed in the tomb shrines of the saints, *dargāhs*, and their surroundings. There are two kinds of *maḥfils*, common ones (*maḥfil-i`āmm*) and special ones (*maḥfil-i khāṣṣ*). The common *maḥfil* denotes the singing that is performed in front of the shrine in ordinary days. Qawwals sing every day at least some time in front of the shrine, usually between the sunset and evening prayers (*maghrib* and *ishā`* respectively). On Thursday evenings the singing is prolonged, since more pilgrims visit the shrines that day. In the

major shrines, like in Ajmer, where there is a steady flow of pilgrims and several hereditary qawwals present, the singing goes on almost the whole day. Qureshi notes that this kind of singing is so called mixed singing (*mushtarak gānā*), in which all the qawwals who happen to be present sing as one group. (Qureshi 2006, 104-5) Moreover, in common *mahfils* there is no particularly designated *mīr-i mahfil*, leader of the assembly. Monetary gifts that provide for the qawwals are given straight to the group leader or placed on the threshold of the shrine. In common assemblies the performed texts are mainly well known poems in Hindi and Urdu. Qawwali of the common assemblies may borrow features from the more popular forms of qawwali.

Special *mahfils* are usually organised during the *`urs* festivities of the saints. A notable Sufi with special connection to the saint acts as the *mīr-i mahfil* while other notables sit in the front rows. These *mahfils* often begin with recitation from the Qurʻan or with a *fātiḥa* and end with *du`ā* by the *mīr-i mahfil*. Kenneth S. Avery notes (2004, 177) that framing the *samā`* assembly by Qurʻanic recitation in order to emphasise the devotional atmosphere is mentioned already in the writings of Aḥmad al-Ghazālī (d. 1126). During the *`urs* festivities, these *mahfils* may take place directly in front of the shrine⁵⁴ but more often they are organised in the more intimate locations, such as the *Khvāja Hall*⁵⁵ built next to the tomb of *Khvāja Ḥasan Nizāmī* in Delhi or the *khānqāhs* of different Sufi masters. There are also special rooms around the shrines that are used especially for *mahfils*. Often these spaces are considered to have a special atmosphere conducive to listening *samā`*. Such places are *Ṭāq-i Buzurg* in Delhi⁵⁶ and *Ḍeorī Gate* in Gulbarga. The *cilla-gāhs* of *Bābā Farīd Ganj Shakkār* and *Khvāja Uṣmān Harūnī* in Delhi and Ajmer respectively are favoured as well. Some *dargāhs* have special halls, called *mahfil-khāna* or *samā`-khāna*, for listening music. Perhaps the most formal assemblies take place in the *mahfil-khāna* of Ajmer. There the *dīvān*, a hereditary official whose post was established by emperor Akbar (d. 1605), supervises the occasion from a throne, while attendants dressed in Mughal outfit and armed with staffs carry the monetary offerings, *nazar*, to the singers. A more open *mahfil* is held in the *`urs maḥal*⁵⁷ of Delhi during the *`urs* festivities at the *Nizamuddin Dargah*. These programs are presided over by *Pīr Aḥmad Nizāmī* and they are broadcasted live by the All India Radio.

⁵⁴ Examples five and seven, pages 105 and 114.

⁵⁵ Example two, page 94.

⁵⁶ Example six, page 111.

⁵⁷ Example four, page 100.

In addition to common and special assemblies, qawwals sing during certain occasions connected to the rituals of the shrines. Among these rituals is the closing of the doors in the shrine of Khwaja Moinuddin. At this time the qawwals sing a hymn in the local dialect of Rajasthani. In Delhi the local qawwals sing a *salām* hymn written by Khwaja Nizamuddin, when the door curtain of the shrine is lowered in the night. In both occasions only *ḍholak* or *daff*, a framed drum, is used for the accompaniment. When a *cādar* is brought to the shrine during the *ʿurs* festivities, the procession is accompanied by qawwals singing *mubāraks*, congratulatory songs. During the twelve days in the beginning of *Muḥarram*, the music is generally not heard in the Chishti *dargāhs*. Instead, the qawwals sing *marṣiyas*, elegies commemorating the martyrdom of Imam Husain.

Selection of poetry in *samāʿī* qawwali varies. It seems, however, that the more selected the audience, the more prevalent are poems in Persian and Hindi. Also the theme of mystical love dominates in the assemblies with selected audience. Most celebrated names of *samāʿī* qawwali are the late ʿAzīz Aḥmad Khān Vāriṣī and Munshī Razī al-Dīn Khān. Nowadays, Farīd Ayāz, son of the latter, Mi`rāj Aḥmad Nizāmī and Muḥammad Aḥmad Rāmpurī are among the qawwals, who perform during the main *ʿurs* celebrations of the Subcontinent.

6.3.2 Role of the qawwals in maḥfil-i samāʿ

In addition to the differing stages, *samāʿī* qawwali differs from the concert qawwali in respect to the central figure of the performance occasion. The focus is not anymore on the qawwals but on the *mīr-i maḥfil*, who usually is a Sufi shaykh or a *pīr-zāda* with at least some standing. In my opinion, the most important component in understanding the dynamics of *samāʿī* qawwali is not so much the singer, as Qureshi argues (1983, 119), but the *mīr-i maḥfil* and the act of listening itself. Undoubtedly, qawwals are very learned in the fields of music and poetry, but they are not religious functionaries in the *maḥfil*. In order to throw some light on the role of the qawwals, it is important to shortly describe their position *vis à vis* *pīr-zādas* and Sufis.

Spiritual elite of the Indian Sufi circles constitutes mainly of *pīr-zādas* and Sufi shaykhs. The former are hereditary custodians of the *dargāhs*, claiming descent from the saint or some of his disciples. They are in charge of the shrines and supervise their daily rituals. Their most important task is to act as a *vakīl*, an intermediary for the pilgrims to the shrine. They not only help the pilgrims during their *ziyārat*, pilgrimage, but also

continue to pray for them after they have departed. Pilgrims compensate for these services by cash and this is the main source of income for many *pīr-zādas*. (Ernst and Lawrence 2002, 102) Their standing in Sufi hierarchy is based on blood ties to the saint – and supposedly to the Prophet also, since a *sayyid* status has been attached to most of the saints – and their prosperity. On the other hand, Sufis without *pīr-zāda* background attain their exalted status by their spiritual standing. Some notable shaykhs, like Khvāja Ḥasan Ṣānī Nizāmī of Delhi, are also *pīr-zādas*, but instead of the role of *vakīl* they concentrate on their work as teaching shaykhs and scholars. Qureshi notes, that qawwals, although they are indispensable to the central Chishti ritual, are not religious functionaries. They stand in their relationship to the *mīr-i maḥfil*, whether a *pīr zāda* or a Sufi shaykh, in a position of a service professionals comparable to craftspeople. (Qureshi 2006, 92) They depend on the financial support of their patrons, the Sufi elites. The resources of these elites have diminished since the 19th century and this has forced qawwals to reach for new stages to earn their living and search for patronage outside the traditional context of *maḥfil-i samā`*.⁵⁸

In this context, I believe, it is better to call the qawwals artisans, rather than artists. However, I consider the notion of Qureshi, that the performers' identity "as a type of religious functionary is nevertheless subsumed within the traditional identity of the service professional, so that a performer, almost by definition, cannot also be a Sufi" (2006, 128), exaggerated, since many qawwals have also been initiated into the Chishti *silsila*. For example, the foreword of *Surūd-i Rūḥānī* (29-30) lays a strong emphasis on the Sufi background of the editor, Mī`rāj Aḥmad Nizāmī. Dr. Farīda `Alī noted (8.3.2007) in this connection that in the times of Khwaja Nizamuddin the qawwals were trained by Amir Khusro and thus they received also mystical education. Later their most important quality was to know the art of music and poetry. According to her, being too spiritual may even be harmful, since the qawwal has to stay in his senses to sing appropriate verses and repeat lines in appropriate time. On the other hand, if the singer experiences *kaifiyat* ('enchanted state'), it can enhance the *kaifiyat* of the whole *maḥfil*. This attitude is in consonance with many classical Sufi treatises which consider the maker of music unimportant while

⁵⁸ This is probably the main reason why the qawwals are so eager to promote themselves. A Western researcher is also a potential patron, who can maybe arrange a concert for them in his country. This situation was conspicuous during my interview of Muḥammad Ḥayāt. He answered many of my questions only cursorily, but was most eager to demonstrate his abilities in different musical genres.

discussing *samā`*.⁵⁹ Vāriṣ Ḥusain Cishtī (11.2.2007) described the qawwals as blind torchbearers, who convey light from the divine reality but are unable to see it themselves. This simile brings us back to the act of listening as the central factor in understanding the dynamics of a *maḥfil-i samā`*.

6.3.3 Setting of maḥfil-i samā`

Setting of a *maḥfil* is organised so that the listeners can concentrate on listening without disturbance. Three classical conditions of *samā`*, namely the right time (*zamān*), the right place (*makān*) and the right people (*ikhvān*) are strictly adhered to in special *maḥfils*. (Aḥmad Nizāmī, 18.1.2007) According to Qureshi (2006, 109) this rhyming triplet was first conceived by al-Ghazālī, but Vāriṣ Ḥusain pointed out (11.2.2007) that in the Indian Subcontinent it was first discussed in detail by Khvāja Naṣīr al-Dīn Cirāgh Dihlī. The first condition is usually interpreted to prohibit attending *samā`* during the five daily prayers. The fourth *gudrī shāhī bābā* Zuhūr al-Ḥasan also interprets it to refer to time when no other obligation comes into the way of concentration. (Sharib 1999, 107) Consequently, the special *maḥfils* often take place during the night, beginning after the evening prayer (*ishā`*) about nine o'clock or later and continuing sometimes up to the morning prayer (*fajr*) about half past five. Choosing this time also helps to fulfil the second condition, since it provides a place free of noise and disturbance. In addition, the *maḥfil* should take place in clean environment, which is not a place of worship for anyone. Thus *samā`* is never organised in a mosque so that the people can pray in peace. The air should be scented and ground covered with a white sheet, not with fancy mats which could distract the listeners. Moreover, the lightning should be dim, since the vision of God takes place in darkness. The audience should be ritually clean (*bā-vuzū`*), wearing pure clothes and seated in rows. These very same conditions of purity apply also to the *namāz* or *ṣalāt*, the ritual prayer. (In`ām Ḥasan, 11.2.2007) This can be seen as one indication of how much the Chishtis actually value *samā`*. Vāriṣ Ḥusain also noted (11.2.2007) that only those, who can feel 'the strong pulling towards God' (*jazbāt kā maḥsūs*), have the right to listen to *samā`*; otherwise it is forbidden. Checking that the abovementioned conditions are fulfilled is in practice left to the listeners, since the *maḥfils* are usually open to all and there is no one to control the participants.

⁵⁹ See e.g. Ernst and Lawrence 2002, 34-45.

Both Abbas (2002, 53) and Qureshi (2006, xix, 1) stress that qawwali is essentially a male genre with little female participation. This is true as far as the performers are concerned. When it comes to the listeners, it should be noted that participation in *samā`* assembly is usually open to both sexes. The audience of every assembly I have attended has constituted of both men and women. Women were, however, a minority among the listeners and separate spaces were reserved for different sexes as is customary in the Indo-Islamic culture. Sometimes women sat in a certain part of the single space (K̤hvāja Hall and the *dargāh* compounds), sometimes in a different space adjacent to the main space (Tāq-i Buzurg, *mahfil-khāna* in Ajmer) and sometimes behind the traditional reed curtain (certain *mahfils* of the Gudrī Shāhī order).

In addition to the three conditions mentioned above, there are other aspects of *adab* ('behavioural code') that are followed in a *mahfil*. In discussing the Mughal *mahfils* Katherine Butler Brown points out (2006, 74) that the strict behavioural code was needed to prevent transgressions of social order, which were very close in the heightened atmosphere of musical assemblies, from spilling to the actual realm. A parallel motive may be behind *adab* of *mahfil-i samā`*. Farīda `Alī noted (8.3 2007), however, that the entire *adab* of the *samā`* assembly was essentially designed to enable undisturbed listening, which is more or less the only act of the audience. Listeners have to sit quietly without moving. All the gestures, like tapping the rhythm with one's fingers or moving one's hands, should be suppressed as far as possible since they can disturb other listeners. If listener wants to show one's appreciation of certain verse, he can do so by taking *nazar*, often a note of five rupees, to the *mīr-i mahfil*. This should happen quietly. *Mīr-i mahfil* usually keeps the money with himself and it is distributed to the qawwals only in the end of their turn. Sometimes there is a constant flow of money to the qawwals during the singing, but this disturbs their concentration, because they often start counting the money immediately. (Farīda `Alī, 8.3.2007)

Usually there are no interruptions to the singing from the part of the audience. *Farmāyish*, requesting a verse or poem, is usually not accepted. In`ām Ḥasan Gudrī Shāh stated in the interview (11.2.2007) that one should never request any certain verse, since as long as the qawwals sing what they are inspired to sing, the message comes straight from the divine reality. It is interesting that he used the word *ilhāmī* in this connection, thus equating the poems sung by qawwals to the divine inspiration. Also qawwals have similar feelings. Mī`rāj Aḥmad Nizāmī told (20.1.2007) that he does sing

certain verses if they are requested from him, but they do not come straight from his heart and he himself does not feel any pleasure (*luṭf*) in singing them. *Mahfils* presided over by Khvāja Ḥasan Ṣānī seem to be an exception to this tendency. In every one of his *mahfils* I have attended, he has interrupted the singers. Sometimes he has told them what to sing, sometimes corrected them and sometimes explained a particular verse. During the `urs of Amir Khusro in November 2006 he told Muḥammad Aḥmad Rāmpurī to stop singing Maulānā Rūmī's poem *Ārzū dāram ki miḥmān-at kunam* ('I am longing to make you my guest') since there was not enough longing in his voice. This is, nevertheless, exceptional and the only time when *mīr-i mahfil* or one of his assistants interferes, is when one group has to give way to the next group.

6.3.4 *Samā` as a meditative and/or ecstatic technique*

Samā` is not a meditative and/or ecstatic technique separate from other devotional activities. In the Chishti tradition, obligatory religious practices form the basis of devotional life. In addition to this, specific Sufi practices are helpful in order to benefit fully from *samā`*. Pīr Aḥmad Nizāmī stressed (18.1.2007) that one has to frame listening to *samā`* with *zīkr*, *fīkr* and *murāqaba*. *Zīkr* is the remembrance and repetition of the names of God and other formulas. *Fīkr* refers to meditating one's deeds in the end of the day and repenting sinful actions. *Murāqaba* can take form of meditating the face of one's shaykh or the written form of the word *allāh* inscribed into one's heart. All these draw the senses and mind into one point, and this makes attentive listening of *samā`* possible. This kind of listening produces *kaiḥiyat*, 'enchanted state' in the *mahfil*. According to Dr. Farīda `Alī (8.3.2007) only the state of stillness arising from concentration can give rise to *raqs*, the whirling dance. In the Chishti tradition, this whirling dance is an expression of *wajd*, mystical state, not a way to produce it. Unlike the Mevlevis, who use whirling dance to induce mystical states, the Chishtis do not practice this dancing beforehand. Among other outer reactions produced by *samā`* are crying and all kinds of shouts. Often listeners stand up or walk to and fro or raise a hand with the fore finger pointed upwards as a declaration of God's unity. If the *mīr-i mahfil* stands up in *wajd*, all the listeners follow his suit. Qawwals repeat the particular verse that has caused an ecstatic state in some listener until his state recedes and he sits down again.

The most dramatic result of listening to *samā`* is death. The most famous case is that of Quṭb al-Dīn Bakḥtiyār Kākī, the second great master of the Chishti order in

India. He is known up to these days with the epithet *Shahīd-i Muḥabbat*, ‘Martyr of Love’. According to *Siyar al-Auliya’*, his state was caused by a verse by Aḥmad Jām:

kushtagān-i kḥanjar-i taslīm rā
har gāh az ghaib jān-i dīgar ast

For those, who are killed by the dagger of submission
Every moment, there is another life from the Hidden.

The mystical state of *Khvāja Quṭb al-Dīn* continued for five days. During these days he emerged to consciousness only to pray the five obligatory prayers. In the fifth day his disciples decided to ask qawwals to stop singing and let the master pass away. (*Siyar al-Auliya’*, 102-3) Examples like this, however, do not belong only to the mythical past of the Chishtis. In the beginning of the 20th century Maulvī Ḥusain Ilāhābādī died in Ajmer while listening to the verses of `Abd al-Quddūs Gangohī. (Ernst and Lawrence 2002, 136)

This aspect of *samā`* has been the most fascinating side of the phenomenon to the outside observers, scholars and travellers alike.⁶⁰ It is most often called *wajd* and indiscriminately translated as ecstasy. Kenneth S. Avery, however, notes (2004, 65) the inadequacy of this translation. The first problem faced in translating the word *wajd* as ecstasy is that many outer expressions of this state, as the ones described above, do not demonstrate the feelings of exhilaration as does the word ecstasy, but could as well be signs of a sudden onset of an illness. Avery points out that Hujvīrī understands the word *wajd* to derive from the meaning ‘to grieve’ of the verb *wajada*. For this reason he suggests, as a working definition, that *wajd* should be understood as a roof term for all the behaviours or physical signs that are caused by the aural stimuli in the listeners of *samā`*.

In observing the Chishti *samā`*, however, one notes a peculiar phenomenon. The high ranking Sufis and shaykhs seldom exhibit any outer signs that could be understood as *wajd* according to Avery’s wider definition. One is left wondering, if the masters of the path are excluded from the goal of *samā`*, *wajd*? Qureshi suggests (2006, 128) that the socially prominent listeners, whether Sufi adepts or otherwise prominent personalities, tend to avoid reaching a state that causes some eccentric behaviour unsuitable for their social image. In my opinion this explanation is not fully plausible, although it may help to explain the lack of the so called ecstatic symptoms in the Sufi shaykhs. I would like to suggest still wider understanding for the term *wajd* as a mystical experience that does not necessarily have any outer manifestations. It is commonly

⁶⁰ For a description of ecstasy experienced in a *samā`* assembly, see Sadler 1963, 291-2. For travellers’ accounts on ecstatic states or trance, as Dalrymple calls *wajd*, see Dalrymple 2003, 277-80, 309-11 and Mackintosh-Smith 2005, 93-6.

perceived – by both Sufis and scholars – that Sufism has been deteriorating since the 12th and 13th centuries.⁶¹ This attitude is mirrored also in the understanding of Sufi practices. Arthur Gribetz states bluntly (1991, 57) in discussing the *samā`* controversy between the Sufis and legalists, that

“in fact, from the sixth/twelfth century, Sufism deteriorated when a system of artificially induced ecstasy became standardized...The goal for the majority of Sufis became the attainment of ecstasy in the sense of ‘loss of perception’ (*faqd al-ihsās*), rather than the ecstasy mentioned by Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazzālī, i.e. ‘ecstasy is lifting of the curtain, and witnessing of the watcher, and presence of understanding , and observation of the unseen, and converse with the secret, and intercourse with that which is missing...and that is ecstasy (*wajd*), because he has found (*wajada*) what was lacking with him.’ ”

A contemporary shaykh Khvāja Ḥasan Sānī spoke (9.11.2006) about *wajd* as a state of extreme awareness, during which one notes even a rose petal under one’s foot. Obviously, this is in line with al-Ghazzālī’s thoughts mentioned in the above passage. Deriving the meaning of *wajd* from the meaning ‘to find’ of the verb *wajada* has also been discussed by Ibn `Arabī. He connects the term with *wujūd*, a word derived from the same root and usually considered to mean existence but also finding. To Ibn `Arabī *wajd* is a collective term for the states in which all the witnessing of oneself and those present is annihilated from the heart. He also compares the singing of the qawwals to the word of God ‘*Kun*’ (‘Be’) that brought everything into existence. But *wujūd* is not only existence but also finding the Truth (*al-Ḥaqq*) in the state of *wajd*. It is also worth noting that to Ibn `Arabī the outer expression of any inrush (*wārid*) from the divine depends on the capacity of the receiver. The greater the capacity of a person, the more unnoticeable is the outer expression. (Chittick 1989, 212-3, 266-7) This analysis of a more meditative kind of *wajd* has certainly been known among the Indian mystic also. It is not possible to delve into this subject more deeply here, but I hope the above notions help to understand the varied experiences of the listeners in Chishti *samā`*. In inducing these experiences the poems sung by qawwals are of utmost importance, and the techniques used to intensify their impact will now be discussed in detail.

⁶¹ The most famous example of this scheme of thought is probably Trimingham’s *The Sufi Orders in Islam* 1998 [1971].

7 Intensifying the impact of text in *mahfil-i samā`*

7.1 Intensification through thematic order

The thematic ordering of poems, which proceeds from poems of praise to lyrical poems, was already discussed in chapter four. In a *samā`* assembly this order is a potential way to enhance the impact of poems. The poems of praise inspire respect and replicate the Sufi lineage, *silsila*, through which the divine knowledge and love is transmitted from God through Prophet Muhammad and saints to the listeners. Paying respect to these personages in *mahfil-i samā`* is obligatory, as it is obligatory for a mystic to become connected with a Sufi master. In choosing lyrical poems, qawwals may, for example, sing poems on separation (*firāq*) before singing poems on joyous union with the beloved (*viṣāl*) in order to increase the latter's impact. Finishing a performance with the theme of *waḥdat al-wujūd* would be an effective ending. The full range of themes is, however, covered with individual poems only in assemblies where there is no more than one qawwali group performing. The following poems were performed by Mi`rāj Aḥmad Nizāmī and his group in the weekly Friday night *mahfil* at the *dargāh* of `Ināyat Khān in 19.1.2007. All the songs were rather short, since the *mahfil* took place between *maghrib* and `ishā` prayers, lasting less than one and half hours. The performance begun with poems of praise and continued with lyrical poems in four languages. The last lyrical poem touched upon the theme of *waḥdat al-wujūd*. The final poem, which praises `Ināyat Khān, concludes all the assemblies at his shrine.

1. *naghma* (instrumental prelude)
2. *Allāh hū* (an Urdu *ḥamd* by Zāmin `Alī)
3. *Sar-tāj-i rusul makkī madanī sar-kār-i do `ālam ṣalli `alā* (an Urdu *na`at* by Kāmil)
4. *Man kuntu maulā* (an Arabic *manqabat* in praise of `Alī)
5. *E hindvalī khvāja ek merā sahārā hai* (an Urdu *manqabat* in praise of Khwaja Moinuddin by Pīr Zāmin Nizāmī)
6. *`Id-gāh-i mā gharībān kū-yi to* (a Persian ghazal by Khusro)
7. *Zi-ḥāl-i miskīn ma-kun taghāful durāe nainān banāe batiyān* (a Persian and Hindi ghazal by Khusro)
8. *Rānjhīrī ṭakaṭ hajārāpaṭ benī* (a Punjabi *kāfī* by Bulhe Shāh)
9. *Torī ṣūrat ke balhāri nijām* (a Hindi *gīt* by Khusro)
10. *Ye mire ḥadd-i naẓar kī dīdanī tāṣīr hai* (an Urdu ghazal by an anonymous poet)

11. *Hazrat `ināyat pyāre šūfiyon ke tum sarkār* (an Urdu *manqabat* in praise of `Ināyat Khān)

In reality, this thematic order is seldom followed in its entirety. The presentation of all the themes would require at least three or four *qaṣīda* type poems and few lyrical poems. Keeping in mind, that performing an individual poem usually takes twenty to thirty minutes, the minimal length of a *mahfil* would be over two hours. If only one group of qawwals performed in a *mahfil*, this would be possible. In most *mahfils*, however, several qawwali groups perform and time allowed for each of them is limited. Consequently, the thematic sequence cannot be followed as such. Often the poems of praise are covered with introductory verses instead of longer, individual poems. The following poems were sung by three different groups in the *mahfil* at Khvāja Hall in 9.11.2006. Since many members of the audience were notable Sufis, literati and musicians, most time was allotted to the best of the groups present, Muḥammad Aḥmad Rāmpurī and his party.

I Muḥammad Aḥmad Rāmpurī
(two and half hours)

1. *naghma* (instrumental prelude)
2. *Ārzū dāram ki mihmān-at kunam* (a Persian ghazal by Rūmī; introductory verses in praise of the Prophet and the saints)
3. *E harvā ras būndān barse* (a Hindī *manqabat* by Khusro)
4. *Ba-sar-at ki juz sar-i zulf-i to ba-sar-am sar-i digar-e na shud* (a Persian ghazal by Khusro)
5. *Kis se pūcheñ ham ne kahāñ vuh cehra-yi roshan dekhā hai* (an Urdu ghazal by Taskīn)
6. *Na-mī-dānam ki ākhīr cūn dam-i dīdār mī-raqṣam* (a Persian ghazal by Khvāja `Uṣmān Hārūnī)
7. *Khābar-am rasīd im-shab ki nigār khvāhī āmad* (a Persian ghazal by Khusro)
8. *Kaunsā ghar hai ki e jān nahīn kāshāna tirā* (an Urdu *ḥamd* by Bedam)
9. *Sadad barshān-i to `ālam panāhī* (an Urdu *manqabat* in praise of Khwaja Nizamuddin)
10. *E dil bi-gīr dāman-i sulṭān-i auliyā`* (a Persian *manqabat* in praise of Husain by Niyāz)

II Second group
(forty minutes)

11. *Al-salām e hazrat-i maḥdūm ṣābir al-salām* (a Persian *manqabat* in praise of `Alā` al-Dīn Ṣābir by Niyāz)
- III Third group (ten minutes)
12. *Zabān khāmosh hai allāh kī takvīn ke āge* (an Urdu *ḥamd*)

In a refined performance as the one above, qawwals are often keen to proceed to lyrical poems, since these are more likely to cause reactions in the audience and a flow of *nazar* to the *mīr-i maḥfil*. In larger *maḥfils* with less selected audience, the bulk of the poems concentrates on the praise of the Prophet and the saints. From among the *maḥfils* I observed during my fieldwork, only the assemblies at the *dargāh* of `Ināyat Khān and the programs of the Gudrī Shāhī lineage followed the thematic order. At the *dargāh* of `Ināyat Khān, the weekly salary and few listeners allow a single qawwali group to perform the full set of poems. In the *maḥfils* of the Gudrī Shāhī order, only the poems of the order heads are used. Consequently, also the poems of praise cause immediate reactions in the audience which has close connections to the order.

In the actual Chishti *samā`*, only two poems have a function directly connected to the ritual and thus a fixed place. These two poems are the Arabic saying of the Prophet, *qaul*, *Man kuntu maulā* set to music by Amir Khusro. The other poem is also attributed to Khusro and it is called *Rang*, 'Colour'. This poem celebrates the disciple's relationship to his spiritual guide. The place of these songs varies in different centres of Sufism. In Delhi, their place of origin, they always follow the *fātiḥa*. In other places, such as Ajmer and Gulbarga, *Rang* concludes the *maḥfil*, while in Pakistan both poems are sung in the end of an assembly. Excluding these two poems, the qawwals are free to perform the poems in an order that best suits the needs of the audience. The intensification of the text is in a *samā`* assembly generally carried out in the level of individual poems, through extensive usage of introductory verses, inserted verses and repetitions.

7.2 Intensification of an individual poem

7.2.1 *Naghma and the introductory verses*

A simple beginning for a *maḥfil-i samā`* is a short recitation from the Qur'an. In a more elaborate ritual context, especially during the `urs festivities, a *maḥfil* is preceded by the reading of *fātiḥa*. It is important to note that these rituals are not executed by the qawwals but by the *mīr-i maḥfil* or his assistant. After recitation from the Qur'an or *fātiḥa*, the

leader of a qawwali group opens the *maḥfil* with a *naghma*, an instrumental prelude played by the harmonium and accompanied by the percussion instruments. *Naghma* originates in the assemblies of `Abd al-Quddūs Gangohī from the 16th century and according to Qureshi (2006, 45) its rhythm and melody were originally derived from the *zīkr* formula *allāh hū*. Nowadays the qawwals elaborate this rhythmical structure to such an extent that the beats of *allāh hū* are rather difficult to detect. Qureshi notes (2006, 193), however, that despite developments like this the recurring rhythmic patterns of *naghma* still evoke the *zīkr* like atmosphere. Melodically *naghma* either forms an independent whole or follows the melody of the song it precedes. *Naghmas* are extremely varied and the only overarching feature of them all is that the rhythm accelerates and the pitch rises into the upper register towards the end. *Naghma* lasts only few minutes and ends abruptly in the tonic *sā*. Only the first song of a *maḥfil* is usually preceded by a *naghma*. If there are several groups performing in the same *maḥfil*, every group normally begins its turn with a *naghma*.

The *naghma* is followed by one or more introductory verses, always sung in a recitative without the rhythmical accompaniment. If the rhythm is present, it recedes to the background and does not affect the singing. The introductory verses are indiscriminately called *rubā`ī*, since quatrains are most often used to introduce a poem. Through a *rubā`ī* the group leader introduces the theme of the poem with the leading vocalist and offers the listeners a sort of preview into its contents. In addition to this, Qureshi notes (2006, 195-6), the introductory verses also offer the qawwals an opportunity to test the reactions of the listeners to the song to come. In an interview Muḥammad Aḥmad Rāmpurī related that with the more cultured listeners he usually begins with Persian verses, and if they are not received with enthusiasm he precedes to verses in Urdu and Hindi. In addition to language he is able to decide the theme of the most appropriate poem. (Muḥammad Aḥmad, 13.11.2006) The role of *rubā`ī* in testing the reactions of the audience becomes apparent when a listener requests a particular poem to be sung. In such a case, the qawwals seldom perform introductory verses, since the favourable reaction is guaranteed. In a *maḥfil*, where several groups perform, the requirements of the thematic sequence of poems may be met through the introductory verses. Thus, the qawwals may cover the praise of God, the Prophet and the saints only in few verses and then move on to the mystical love songs.

The equivalent of the *rubā`ī* is the musical introduction of classical music, *ālāp*. *Ālāp* serves as an introduction to the raga to be performed. It offers the audience time to get attuned to the raga. The musical introduction is performed without rhythmical

accompaniment, as is the *rubā`ī*, but seldom utilises words. This is to give the soloist a chance to elaborate the pure music without being limited by rhythm and words. In qawwali, purely musical *ālāp* extends to only few phrases, while the textual introduction in the form of *rubā`ī* can sometimes be rather extensive. Purely musical features like *ālāp* are utilised in the *samā`ī* qawwali with utmost care because of the emphasised textual orientation of the musical form.

Example one⁶²

This is an example of a simple *rubā`ī*. It was performed by the leading qawwal of Ajmer, Asrār Ajmerī, with his group during the `urs festivities of the second *gudrī ghāhī bābā*, Qāzī `Abd al-Raḥīm Shāh, on 29.10.2007 (5th Shawwāl). The *maḥfil* took place in front of the tomb of Qāzī `Abd al-Raḥīm situated close to the *cilla-gāh* of Khwaja Moinuddin. The *maḥfil* was presided over by the current head of the Gudrī Shāhī order, In`ām Ḥasan and it coincided with the `urs of Khvāja `Uṣmān Hārūnī, the master of Khwaja Moinuddin. For this reason qawwals selected many poems, the present one among them, in praise of this particular saint.

- As: *vahān ḥaram hai yahān dil-sarā-yi `uṣmānī*
There is the shrine (of Kaaba), here is the home of `Uṣmān's heart
- 2nd: *khudā ke donoḡ gharoḡ meḡ hai jā-yi `uṣmānī*
In the both houses of God there is the place of `Uṣmān
- As: *banā diyā mire khvāja ko raḥmatan li`l-hind*
You made my Khvāja the mercy for India
- 2nd: *yih hai `aṭā-yi rasūl aur `aṭā-yi `uṣmānī*
This is the present of the Prophet and the present of `Uṣmān.
- A: *yih hai `aṭā-yi rasūl aur `aṭā-yi `uṣmānī*
This is the present of the Prophet and the present of `Uṣmān.
- As: ***khudā kī qasam us kī qismat baṛī hai***
By God, his lot is grate

The poem *Khudā kī qasam us kī qismat baṛī hai* ('By God, his lot is great') is written by the third head of the Gudrī Shāhī order, Muḥammad Khādīm Ḥasan Shāh. With the *manqabats*, the introductory verses usually praise the saint invoked in the main poem. In this example Asrār Ajmerī and the second leading vocalist sing the lines of the *rubā`ī* in turns, while all repeat the last line together and Asrār initiates the poem proper by presenting the first line.

⁶² As = Asrār Ajmerī, 2nd = the second leading vocalist, A = all. I have used three dots to mark prolonged improvisations with some particular word or the syllable *ā*. The text of the main poem is in bold.

The *rubāʿī* itself is an interesting example of the respect Ajmer and Indian holy places in general enjoy in South Asia. It is also very local, since one can understand the first two lines only if one knows that ʿUṣmān Hārūnī is believed to have been buried in Mecca. But there is also a tomb in Ajmer, where some relics of the saint, brought from Mecca by Khādim Ḥasan, were buried with the latter. This is why both houses of God (no hierarchy is implied in the verse), Mecca and Ajmer, have some place connected to ʿUṣmān Hārūnī. This saint is somewhat vague figure in the history of the Chishtiyya and is mainly known for being the master of Khwaja Moinuddin. The third line invokes Khwaja Moinuddin with the title *raḥmatan liʿl-hind*. Thus, he is mercy to India in the same way as the Prophet is mercy to the both worlds, *raḥmatan liʿl-ʿālamīn* [Qurʿan 21:107]. Finally, the last line introduces Khwaja Moinuddin as a present of both, the Prophet and ʿUṣmān Hārūnī.

Example two⁶³

This is an example of a more elaborate *rubāʿī*. It was performed during the ʿurs festivities of Amir Khusro on 9.11.2006 (18th Shawwāl) by Muḥammad Aḥmad Rāmpurī. The assembly was presided over by Khvāja Ḥasan Ṣānī Nizāmī, who is not only an eminent shaykh and scholar of the Nizāmiyya Chishtiyya *silsila*, but also a connoisseur of poetry and music. Likewise, Muḥammad Aḥmad is known for his musical skills and sophisticated selection of poetry. This combination results in a performance that is refined both musically and poetically. The *mahfil* was organised in Khvāja Hall, a fairly large hall that also houses the tomb of Khvāja Ḥasan Nizāmī in its other end. The *mahfils* at Khvāja Hall are a part of every ʿurs celebration at the Nizamuddin Dargah, and they are especially favoured by Sufi minded scholars, literati and classical musicians, who would also appreciate Persian poems.

naghma

M: *re nā...*

A: *ā...*

M: *re nā...*

A: *ā...*

M: *ā...*

A: *ā...*

M: *ā...*

⁶³ M=Muḥammad Aḥmad Rāmpurī, 2nd = the second leading vocalist, 3rd = the third leading vocalist, A = all.

2nd: *ā... te re nā*
A: *ā...*
M: *shud silsila-e*
Became a line
ā... shud silsila-e ahl-i junūn...-i muḥammad
ā... Became a line, the people of madness... for Muḥammad
2nd: *ā... shud silsila-e ahl-i junūn...-i muḥammad*
ā... Became a line, the people of madness... for Muḥammad
M: *ā... shud silsila-e silsila-e ahl-i junūn... junūn-i muḥammad*
Became a line, a line, the people of madness..., madness for Muḥammad
2nd: *shud silsila-e ahl-i junūn-i muḥammad*
Became a line, the people of madness for Muḥammad
M: *shud silsila-e silsila-e*
Became a line, a line
shud silsila-e ahl-i junūn-i muḥammad
Became a line, the people of madness for Muḥammad
2nd: *ā... shud silsila-e ahl-i junūn... junūn-i muḥammad*
ā... Became a line, the people of madness for Muḥammad
M: *miḥrāb-i `ibādat kham-i abrū-yi muḥammad*
Their prayer niche for devotion the arch of Muḥammad's eyebrows
3rd: *miḥrāb-i `ibādat kham-i abrū-yi muḥammad*
Their prayer niche for devotion the arch of Muḥammad's eyebrows
M: *dar `ālam-i lāhūt tamannā-yi jamāl-ash*
In the world of divinity there is longing for his beauty
dar kishvar-i nāsūt ham āhū-yi muḥammad
In the region of humanity there is likewise a cry for help to Muḥammad

The *mahfil* was opened with recitation from the Qur'an and Muḥammad Aḥmad was the first performer. The performance begins with a *naghma*, which emulates the rhythm and melody of the formula *allāh hū* very clearly. During my fieldwork Muḥammad Aḥmad followed this classical model in the most articulated way. The *naghma* is followed by improvisations with the *tarāna* syllables by the group leader, to which all the singers join with the syllable *ā*. *Tarāna* syllables, e.g. *te*, *re* and *nā*, are meaningless words that are used in classical music to sing the pure melody without words.

The example at hand was the first song of the *mahfil*, so it was compulsory for the qawwals to begin with at least some verses of praise. Muḥammad Aḥmad initiates a *rubā`ī* in praise of Prophet Muḥammad and uses many embellishments in decorating it. He also stops to some words, e.g. *silsila-e*, to repeat them in different variations. The verse combines the praise of the Prophet to the praise of the chain of masters descending from him. The first two lines describe the people of madness for the Prophet forming a line of prayer, which then turns towards the *miḥrāb* of the arch Muḥammad's eyebrows, as the

row of believers turns their face towards the *miḥrāb* in the mosque. The word here used for line, *silsila*, also denotes the initiatic chain that has its beginning in the Prophet.

3rd: *ā...*

hameñ rasūl vaṣīla (?)

M: *qaṣd-i jannat ci kunam kūca-yi yār-e dāram*

Why would I pursue the Paradise, I have the lane of the beloved

2nd: *qaṣd-i jannat ci kunam kūca-yi yār-e dāram*

Why would I pursue the Paradise, I have the lane of the beloved

M: *qaṣd-i jannat ci kunam kūca-yi yār-e dāram*

Why would I pursue the Paradise, I have the lane of the beloved

2nd: *qaṣd-i jannat ci kunam kūca-yi yār-e dāram*

Why would I make pursue the Paradise, I have the lane of the beloved

M: *tars-i dozakḥ ci kunam rū-yi niḡār-e dāram*

Why would I be afraid of the Hell, I have the face of the beauty [in sight]

2nd: *tars-i dozakḥ ci kunam rū-yi niḡār-e dāram*

Why would I be afraid of the Hell, I have the face of the beauty [in sight]

3rd: *ham-cū majnūn ba-tamannā-yi viṣāl...-i lailā*

Like Majnūn yearning for a meeting... with Lailā

M: *ham-cū majnūn ba-tamannā-yi viṣāl-i lailā*

Like Majnūn yearning for a meeting with Lailā

roz-o shab cashm sū-yi

Day and night eyes towards

A: *lā-taṣavvar-e dāram*

the “Do not make a mental image” I have

3rd: *roz-o shab cashm-e sū-yi lā-taṣavvar-e dāram*

Day and night eyes towards the “Do not make a mental image” I have.

After the first introductory verse the third leading vocalist tries to initiate another verse, i.e. *hameñ rasūl vaṣīla*, in praise of the Prophet, but is cut short by Muḥammad Aḥmad, who moves towards the theme of mystical love with a new Persian *rubā`ī*. It states that the lover has no interest in hell or heaven, but is interested only in the friend. The rhyme *dāram* and the theme of longing presented in the two last verses of the *rubā`ī* foreshadow the main poem, which also depicts the theme of longing and has the very word *dāram* in its first line. Thus far only the leading vocalists have taken part in singing the verses but they all become an active part of the performance by joining to the words *lā-taṣavvar-e dāram*.

M: *dilbar-i jānān-i man kar de karam*

Lovely sweetheart of mine, be kind

A: *dilbar-i jānān-i man kar de karam*

Lovely sweetheart of mine, be kind

M: *kar de karam*

Be kind

dilbar-i jānān-i

Lovely sweetheart

- A: *man kar de karam oho karam*
of mine, be kind, oh kind
- M: *jaise mumkin ho tū rakh merā bharam*
According to what is possible, protect my honour
- A: *merā bharam*
My honour
jaise mumkin ho tū rakh merā bharam
According to what is possible, protect my honour
- M: *dilbar-i jānān-i*
Lovely sweetheart
- A: *man kar de karam*
of mine, be kind
jaise mumkin ho tū rakh merā bharam merā bharam
According to what is possible, protect my honour, my honour
- M: *dast-i khālī (?) bhar ke lie ā jā ṣanam*
Filling an empty hand (?) come, beloved
- 3rd: *ā jā ṣanam*
Come, beloved
- A: *dast-i khālī bhar ke lie ā jā ṣanam*
Filling an empty hand come, beloved
- 2nd: *o ṣanam*
O beloved
- M: *ārzū dāram*
I am longing
- A: *kī mihmān-at kunam*
that I would make you my guest.

The introduction of an Urdu verse marks the beginning of the rhythmical section. Two introductory quatrains performed in recitative are followed by a *tazmīn*, a poem which explains and contextualises the first verse of the poem proper. The *tazmīn* is written in *mukhammas* form, in which the first verse of the main poem, Maulānā Rūmī's *Ārzū dāram kī mihmān-at kunam / jān o dil e dost qurbān-at kunam*⁶⁴ ('I am longing to make you my guest / I am offering my soul and heart to you, o friend) forms the last two lines. The *radīf* is *-am*, since *mukhammas* follows the rhyme pattern AAAAA, BBBBA, and all the lines are in the same *raml musaddas* metre. The *tazmīn* is written in Urdu though the main poem is in Persian. It is the lover's prayer that the beloved would be kind, protect the honour of the lover at least in some way and would come with the bounty. The Persian part then changes the mood and makes the lover declare that he would like to make the beloved his guest and is ready to offer his soul and heart to the beloved. These moods are reflected in the music, and the qawwals sing the Urdu lines in gentle tones until finally they arrive at the first line of the Persian poem, which they sing with full force.

⁶⁴ The poem is not found in *Dīvān Kulliyāt-i Shams Tabrezī*.

Ārzū dāram is part of the common repertoire of the qawwals in the Indian subcontinent, but Muḥammad Aḥmad is especially famous for performing it and he knows several *tazmīns* to introduce the poem. His rendering of the poem usually induces immediate response from the listeners. This was also the case in the present *maḥfil*; the audience reacted by presenting *nazar* to the *mīr-i maḥfil* and with exclamations of *vāh vāh* and *subḥān allāh*. It is interesting to note that, in spite of his success, in this particular *maḥfil* Muḥammad Aḥmad was not able to sing more than the first verse before being interrupted by the *mīr-i maḥfil*, Khvāja Ḥasan Ṣānī. He noted that there was not enough *ārzū* ('longing') in his singing and Muḥammad Aḥmad was forced to start another poem. This incident is a good example on how the *mīr-i maḥfil* exercises the highest authority in an assembly. It can also be seen as an instance of a Sufi shaykh educating the *nafs* of the performer, who has become proud of his skills in rendering a particular poem.

7.2.2 *Inserted verses*

Not only are verses used to introduce a poem, but they are also inserted in between its verses. This is called *gīrah lagānā*, 'to tie a knot'. These verses can be *rubā'īs* or *dohās* or individual verses from other ghazals or *qaṣīdas*. They are normally sung in recitative, since the melody of a song is tied to the metre of the main text and other metres can seldom be sung in the same melody. The pitch is in the *antarā* register to denote excursions from the main poem. Inserted verses are used to accentuate the thematic and associational framework of the poem. These verses should not constitute a song in themselves and the qawwal always has to return to the original poem. Only couple of verses are usually inserted at a time, and Qureshi has noted (2006, 202) that multiple *gīrah* verses are likely to be censored by the *mīr-i maḥfil*. However, in some songs, like *Man kuntu maulā*, the song text itself is so short that the performer has to increase its bulk with appropriate inserts. Also the central place `Alī occupies in the Chishti tradition calls for expanding this poem. In one *maḥfil*⁶⁵ Ghulām Ḥusain Niyāzī inserted seven separate verses in Persian, Urdu and Hindi into the song. The group leader, and sometimes also a leading vocalist, initiates *gīrah* verses. The textual excursions from the main poem in qawwali have an equivalent in the musical excursions of classical music. Both are executed in the upper

⁶⁵ *Maḥfil* was organized by a junior *pūr-zāda* Afsar `Alī Nizāmī in his *hujra* on the *dargāh* compound during the `urs of Amir Khusro on 11.11.2006.

register and both aim at enhancing the impact of the performance, qawwali through textual excursions and classical music through musical ones.

Example three⁶⁶

This example was recorded during the weekly Friday *maḥfil* on 12.1.2007 at the *dargāh* of `Ināyat Khān (d. 1927), situated in the neighbourhood of the Nizamuddin Dargah. Usually the western followers of `Ināyat Khān and trend conscious Indians form the majority of the audience, but this time there were some guests from the Iranian Cultural House present in the *maḥfil*. This prompted Mi`rāj Aḥmad Nizāmī, the leading qawwal of the Nizamuddin Dargah, to sing mostly in Persian.

- M: *kaj-kulāh-i `ajab-e `arbada-sāz-i*
The one with tilted cap [is] wonderful, the troublemaker
- A: *`ajab-e*
[is] wonderful.
- kaj-kulāh-i*
The one with tilted cap
- M: *kaj-kulāh-i*
The one with tilted cap
- A: *kaj-kulāh-i*
The one with tilted cap
- M: *sansār har ko pūje gur ko jagat sarāhe*
Let the world worship God, let the earth praise the Guide
- A: *sansār har ko pūje gur ko jagat sarāhe*
Let the world worship God, let the earth praise the Guide
- M& *makke meñ koī dhūñḍhe kāshī meñ koī cāhe*
Gh: Someone may search him from Kāshī, someone from Mecca
- A: *makke meñ koī dhūñḍhe kāshī meñ koī cāhe*
Someone may search him from Kāshī, someone from Mecca
- M& *duniyā meñ apne pī ke paiyyāñ paṛūñ nā kāhe*
Gh: Why should I not fall to the feet of my beloved in this world?
- A: *duniyā meñ apne pī ke payyāñ paṛūñ nā kāhe*
Why should I not fall to the feet of my beloved in this world?
- M& *har qaum o millat-e rā dīn-e va qibla-gāh-e*
Gh: Every people and nation has its path, religion and direction for prayer
- A: *har qaum o millat-e rā dīn-e va qibla-gāh-e*
Every people and nation has its path, religion and direction for prayer
- M& *man qibla rāst kardā'm bar simt-i*
Gh: I have directed my *qibla* towards
- A: *kaj-kulāh-e*
the one with tilted cap.
man qibla rāst kardā'm bar simt-i kaj-kulāh-e
I have directed my *qibla* towards the one with tilted cap

⁶⁶ M = Mi`rāj Aḥmad Qavvāl, Gh = Ghulām Ḥasanain, A = all.

man qibla rāst karda'm bar simt-i kaj-kulāh-e
 I have directed my *qibla* towards the one with tilted cap
man qibla rāst karda'm bar simt-i kaj-kulāh-e
 I have directed my *qibla* towards the one with tilted cap

M: **kaj-**

The one with tilted

A: **kulāh-i `ajab-e `arbada-sāz-i `ajab-e**
 cap [is] wonderful, the troublemaker [is] wonderful

This poem, *Cashm-i mast-i `ajab-e zulf-i darāz-i `ajab-e* ('Wonderful intoxicated eyes, wonderful long tresses') is a Persian ghazal by Amir Khusro and it is part of the qawwali repertoires all over the Subcontinent. After a line ending with *kaj-kulāh-i `ajab-e*, Mi`rāj Aḥmad initiates a *mukḥammas* verse with the line *sansār har ko pūje gur ko jagat sarāhe* which the group repeats. In the consecutive lines Mi`rāj Aḥmad's son Ghulām Ḥasanain sings along with his father whose voice has weakened during the past years. The pattern recurs with four lines of the verse. The verse itself is an exceptional mixture of three lines in Hindi and two lines in Persian. Qureshi claims (2006, 88) that the first three lines were composed by Khwaja Nizamuddin and were then amplified by his disciple Amir Khusro by two Persian lines. Bearing in mind that the usual form for *tazmīn* poems is *mukḥammas*, I am tempted to think that the last two lines were the original text on which the three lines have been written to explain the meaning. The reason for inserting a verse of a more didactic kind into a love poem is the culmination of the *gīrah* verse in the words *kaj kulāh-e*. In the song the qawwals stress this climax by singing the last words of the verse together. They also return to the *asthāyī* register while repeating the last line three times until the group leader returns to the main poem. The song is in fast tempo which reflects the *rindāna*, or intoxicated character of the poem. Also the *gīrah* verse with the theme of worshiping the beloved fits into this theme.

Example four⁶⁷

This is an example of a more elaborate *gīrah*. This example was recorded in the `Urs maḥal during the `urs of Amir Khusro on 10.11.2006 (19th Shawwāl). The *maḥfil* is presided over by Pīr Aḥmad Niẓāmī but it is a complete opposite of his intimate *maḥfils* at Tāq-i buzug.⁶⁸ The programs at `Urs Maḥal are broadcasted by the All India Radio and there are several qawwali groups, each singing only one song. `Urs Maḥal is a large hall open from one side. In the one end sits the *mīr-i maḥfil* with guests of honour. The other

⁶⁷ Gh = Ghulām Ḥasanain, 2nd = the second leading vocalist, A = all.

⁶⁸ See example six.

end is filled with chairs in a manner of a concert hall, except that they are not opposite the performers but on their right side. Only the people who sit on the dais around the *mīr-i mahfil* offer *nazar* to him. The time limitation for each group hinders the qawwals from engaging in extensive repetitions, *takrārs*. The programs in `Urs Maḥal always open with *Man kuntu maulā* and *Āj rang hai*. The example below is taken from the latter. The leading qawwal of the *dargāh*, Mī`rāj Aḥmad usually leads these two poems. This time, however, he was ill and was deputised for by his son Ghulām Ḥasanain.

- A: *maiñ to aiso rang aur*
Another such a colour I
maḥbūb-i ilāhī
Divine beloved!
- maiñ to aiso rang*
Another such a colour I
- Gh: *kach jagmag jagmag hovat hai*
How glistening glistening is
- A: *kach jagmag jagmag hovat hai*
How glistening glistening is
- Gh: *vo jo oṛh cundariyā sovat hai*
She who sleeps covered with a veil
- A: *vo jo oṛh cundariyā sovat hai*
She who sleeps covered with a veil
- Gh: *ganj-i shakkar ke bhes meñ*
In the guise of Ganj-i Shakkar
- A: *ganj-i shakkar ke bhes meñ*
In the guise of Ganj-i Shakkar
maḥbūb piyārā sovat hai
The lovely beloved is sleeping
- maiñ to aiso rang aur*
Another such a colour I
maḥbūb-i ilāhī
Divine beloved!

The line which the group is repeating is the first line of *Rang-i s̄anī*, ‘The Second Colour’. It describes the feelings of a young woman, who has never seen a colour comparable to the colour of her beloved. The insertions of *maḥbūb-i ilāhī* make clear that this colour is Khwaja Nizamuddin’s colour. The first *gīrah* verse is a *dohā* in Hindi. It has experienced a peculiar metamorphosis into a *rubā`ī*, and even follows the rhyme pattern AABA. It is performed in *antarā* register to suggest an excursion from the poem proper and it belongs to the old verses sung nowadays only by few qawwals. Ghulām Ḥasanain sings the first three lines, which are repeated by the rest of the qawwals. Last line, which returns to the *asthāyī* register indicating return to the main poem, is sung by all the qawwals, as is the

normal practice with the last lines of the *gīrah* verses. The verse elaborates the theme of the colour that glitters and comes from the veil of sleeping Khwaja Nizamuddin, here represented as a young girl according to the conventions of Hindi poetry.

A: ***maiñ to aiso rang aur***
Another such a colour I
maḥbūb-i ilāhī
Divine beloved!

maiñ to aiso rang aur
Another such a colour I
maḥbūb-i ilāhī
Divine beloved!

maiñ to aiso rang aur nahīñ dekhī
Another such a colour I have not seen

Gh: *phire zamāne meñ*
Roaming in the world

A: *cār jānib*
in the four directions

Gh: *nigār yaktā tumhīñ ko dekhā*
Idols just like you I saw

A. *nigār yaktā tumhīñ ko dekhā*
Idols just like you I saw
ḥasīn dekhe jamīl dekhe
I saw beauties, I saw beautiful ones
va lek tum sā tumhīñ ko dekhā
But though they were like you, I saw only you

maiñ to aiso rang aur
Another such a colour I
maḥbūb-i ilāhī
Divine beloved!

The second *gīrah* expands the theme of never before seen colour into the incomparable beauty with an Urdu couplet sung in four parts.⁶⁹ Ghulām Ḥasanain initiates the first line into which rest of the qawwals join. The verse is apparently not familiar to the entire group, since in repeating the first line some qawwals tangle with their words. The second half of the verse is obviously better known, since everyone sings it together, returning to the main poem and *asthāyī* register after it.

A: ***maiñ to aiso rang aur***
Another such a colour I

⁶⁹ Since the verse is also sung by Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan (1997b, track 2) as a *gīrah* in a *na`ṭ*, it seems to be in wider circulation. The verse appears also in the *taḥkīra* of Shāh Muḥammad `Abd al-Ḥayy, *Sīrat-i Fakhr al-`Arīfīn* (46), among the favourite poems of the object of the hagiography. The final verse is omitted, but the poem is surrounded by verses of Niyāz. The style and content of the verse also makes it highly probable that the verse is written by Niyāz.

maḥbūb-i ilāhī

Divine beloved!

Gh: *sarv-i sīmīnā ba-ṣaḥrā mī-ravī*

O cypress of silver, you are going to the desert

2nd: *sarv-i sīmīnā ba-ṣaḥrā mī-ravī*

O cypress of silver, you are going to the desert

Gh: *nek bad-`ahdī ki be-mā mī-ravī*

It is excellent promise breaking that you are going without us

e tamāshā-gāh-i `ālam rū-yi to

Oh, the theatre of the world is your face

A: *e tamāshā-gāh-i `ālam rū-yi to*

Oh, the theatre of the world is your face

to kujā bahr-i tamāshā mī-ravī

Where are you going for a spectacle?

maiñ to aiso rang aur

Another such a colour I

maḥbūb-i ilāhī

Divine beloved!

The next *gīrah* verse is a Persian *rubā`ī* of Sa`dī. Again the first two lines are sung only by Ghulām Ḥasanain and the second leading vocalist. He is also a close relative and pupil of Mī`rāj Aḥmad and is thus without doubt acquainted with the verse. The third line is repeated by everyone after Ghulām Ḥasanain. Conventionally the last line is sung by everyone. The verse itself describes the beloved as a source of the incomparable beauty, since the entire world seeks for its beautiful spectacles from the face of him.

A: ***maiñ to aiso rang aur***

Another such a colour I

maḥbūb-i ilāhī

Divine beloved!

maiñ to aiso rang aur

Another such a colour I

maḥbūb-i ilāhī

Divine beloved!

maiñ to

I

Gh: *aisī maḥbūbgī tum se sivā kyā dil pāī ho*

Could the heart have found belovedness like this except in you?

2nd: *aisī maḥbūbgī... tum se sivā kya dil pāī ho*

Could the heart have found belovedness like this except in you?

Gh: *ki tum maḥbūb ho aise ki maḥbūb-i ilāhī ho*

Since you are such a beloved that you are the divine beloved.

A: ***maiñ to aiso rang aur***

Another such a colour I

maḥbūb-i ilāhī

Divine beloved!

The last inserted verse, again in Urdu, brings the series of *girahs* into a climax by revealing the identity of the beloved. The Persian verse made face of the beloved the source of beauty and this verse reveals that such a beloved is no one else than Khwaja Nizamuddin, the Divine Beloved. And the incomparable colour is the colour of Khwaja Nizamuddin, which spreads over the devotees during the `urs. The thematic sequencing of the *girah* verses is rather subtle and employs less known verses. The last verse seems to be rarely heard also and only Ghulām Ḥasanain and the second vocalist sing it.

A: *maiñ to aiso rang aur*

Another such a colour I

maḥbūb-i ilāhī

Divine beloved!

maiñ to aiso rang aur

Another such a colour I

maḥbūb-i ilāhī

Divine beloved!

maiñ to aiso rang aur

Another such a colour I

Gh: *āhe des bides meñ ḡhunḡh phirī hūn*

Oh, I have wandered searching in my country and abroad

A: *des ba-des meñ*

From country to country

The following line of *Rang* demonstrates the difference between the erudition of Mi`rāj Aḥmad and his pupils and the rest of the qawwals of the Nizamuddin Dargah. Ghulām Ḥasanain interrupts the repetition of *maiñ to aiso rang* with the exclamation *āhe* and sings the next line. *Āhe* is along with *oho* a very common interjection to mark repetition or the end of repetition in a qawwali performance. But the interesting thing in the line is that Ghulām Ḥasanain sing *des bides meñ*, ‘in my country and abroad’, while the other qawwals sing *des ba-des meñ*, ‘from country to country’, thus substituting the Hindi expression with a Persian one better known to Urdu and Hindi speakers of the present day but less suitable for the archaic Hindi of the poem. This situation is quite common in the mixed singing when a learned senior qawwal – or his pupil – sings with less educated qawwals.

Example five⁷⁰

The final example of *girah* verses was recorded in a *mahfil* presided over by `Ārif `Alī Niẓāmī, a senior most *pīr-zāda* of the Nizamuddin Dargah, during the `urs of Amir Khusro on 11.11.2006 (20th Shawwāl). The *mahfil* took place directly in front of the shrine of Khwaja Nizamuddin. Despite this the listeners were not many, probably due to the late time (the *mahfil* began 10.30 PM). Among the listeners were several connoisseurs of mystical poetry from Delhi and Ajmer, so all the qawwali groups selected classical poems and interspersed them with delicate *girahs*. In the example at hand, three lines in Urdu, beginning with *un ke kūce meñ gayā*, are inserted into an itself inserted Persian verse, *muflisān-em āmada dar kū-yi to*. Extensive *takrār* is also employed with several units of the Persian insert. Qureshi has noted (2006, 202) that the inserts should not be too long in order not to interrupt the concentration on the main poem. In this particular instance the rupture is prevented by the continuity in both the musical and poetic metre. Every verse is in *raml musaddas* metre also known as *masnavī* metre and they are sung in the same melody. This is in direct contrast with a conventional *girah*, which is sung in recitative while the rhythm recedes to the background. The poem itself, *`Īd-gāh-i mā gharībān kū-yi to*, is written by Amir Khusro, and it describes the lane of the beloved as the place where the lovers may obtain similar bounty that the beggars obtain close to the *`īd-gāhs* during the `Id prayers. Qawwals favour this poem when they sing after the `Id prayers in the Chishti *dargāhs*. Thus, the poem is very familiar to the audiences. Before the qawwals begun singing the main poem, they had performed two introductory verses, in Persian and Urdu respectively:

I am proud to have bowed my head to the threshold of his door
Freed from my existence, I have journeyed to the friend
Life, faith, heart, patience and tranquillity of my religion
Thank God, I have thrown all of them away.

I have wasted the wealth of being's splendour
Beloved, in your eyes I have wasted my faith
Before, I still saw all the riches of the world
When nothing else was left, I wasted also my life.

The verses describe poverty that is not only material, but covers non-material values from faith to patience as well. The verses build an effective background for the first verse of the poem:

⁷⁰ M = Muḥammad Aḥmad Rāmpurī, 2nd = second leading vocalist, 3rd = third leading vocalist.

- A: *`īdgāh-i mā gharībān kū-yi to*
 `Id ground for us poor is your lane
`īdgāh-i mā
 `Id ground for us poor
- M: *muflisān-em*
 We paupers have
- A: *āmada dar kū-yi to*
 come to your lane
muflisān-em āmada dar kū-yi to
 We paupers have come to your lane
- 2nd: *muflisān-em*
 We paupers have
- A: *muflisān-em āmada dar kū-yi to*
 We paupers have come to your lane

All the qawwals have been repeating the opening line of the main poem several times when Muḥammad Aḥmad introduces a *girah*. The verses are modelled after the example of Maulānā Rūmī's Maṣnavī.⁷¹ They are often connected to this particular poem, either as a *rubā`ī* or a *girah*.⁷² This connection is due to the same metre and *radīf*, but also to the thematic connection. Both verses describe the relationship of the poor, *gharībān* or *muflisān*, with the lane of the beloved.

- M: *un ke*
 To his
- A: *kūce meñ gayā aur dī ṣadā*
 alley I went and called out
un ke kūce meñ gayā
 To his alley I went
- 2nd: *un ke kūce meñ gayā*
 To his alley I went
- A: *un ke kūce meñ gayā aur dī ṣadā*
 To his alley I went and called out
- M: *kāsa-yi*
 Bowl
- A: *dil hāth meñ letā gayā*
 of heart in the hand I went
kāsa-yi dil hāth meñ letā gayā
 Bowl of heart in the hand I went
- 2nd: *ā...hāth meñ*
 ā...in the hand
- A: *kāsa-yi dil hāth meñ letā gayā*
 Bowl of heart in the hand I went
- M: *cup ke*
 Silently

⁷¹ I am indebted to Muḥammad Aḥmad for this information.

⁷² Cf. Qureshi 1986, 27-30, for this verse as a *rubā`ī*.

A: *cup ke main ne un se yih kahā*
silently I said this to him

After repeating the first line of the Persian *girah*, Muḥammed Aḥmad introduces three lines in Urdu. These lines contextualize the Persian verse and could be considered a *tazmīn* were they not written with the different rhyme, *-ā*. In this insert the Persian verse is turned into the words of a supplicant who has gone to the alley of the beloved. The verse explores the imagery connected to the beggars. The beggars are usually attached to some street or area, and while they go around they call out to attract people's attention. The beggar also has the begging bowl (*kāsa*) in hand, and finally he humbly says to the beloved that his beggars have arrived. *Takrār* is employed even in this insert of an insert, except in the last line which leads back to the Persian verse.

A: *muflisān-em āmada dar kū-yi to*
We paupers have come to your lane
muflisān-em āmada dar
We paupers have come to
muflisān-em āmada dar
We paupers have come to
muflisān-em āmada dar kū-yi to
We paupers have come to your lane.
sha 'n `an allāh az jamāl-i rū-yi to
Thing from God is from the beauty your face
sha 'n `an allāh az jamāl-i rū-yi to
Thing from God is from the beauty of your face

2nd: *rū-yi to*
Your face

A: *sha 'n `an allāh*
Thing from God
sha 'n `an allāh
Thing from God
sha 'n `an allāh az jamāl-i rū-yi to
Thing from God is from the beauty of your face
sha 'n `an allāh az jamāl-i rū-yi to
Thing from God is from the beauty of your face

2nd: *muflisān-em*
We paupers have

A: *āmada dar kū-yi to*
come to your lane

2nd: *āmada*
Come

A: *muflisān-em āmada dar kū-yi to*
We paupers have come to your lane
sha 'n `an allāh az jamāl-i rū-yi to
Thing from God is from the beauty of your face

- sha`n `an allāh az jamāl-i rū-yi to*
 Thing from God is from the beauty of your face
- M: *sha`n `an allāh*
 Thing from God
- A: *sha`n `an allāh*
 Thing from God
sha`n `an allāh az jamāl-i rū-yi to
 Thing from God is from the beauty of your face
- 3rd: *az jamāl-i*
 From the beauty of
- A: *sha`n `an allāh az jamāl-i rū-yi to*
 Thing from God is from the beauty of your face
sha`n `an allāh az jamāl-i rū-yi to
 Thing from God is from the beauty of your face

The framing of the Persian *gīrah* by an Urdu verse enhances the impact of the verse and audience responses by offering *nazar* to the *mīr-i mahfil*. The situation itself is made alive because the poem *Īd-gāh-i mā gharībān* is dedicated to Khwaja Nizamuddin as the later verses of the poem reveal. Thus, the listeners identify themselves with the beggars, who have come to the threshold of the saint, someone for divine love, someone for solution to a personal problem. The qawwals employ extensive *takrār* with the words *sha`n `an allāh* of the second line of the *gīrah* verse, because it indicates that the affairs of God are seen from the face of the beloved, Khwaja Nizamuddin.

- M: *ka`ba-yi man*
 My Ka`ba
- A: *qibla-yi man rū-yi to*
 my *qibla* is your face
ka`ba-yi man qibla-yi man rū-yi to
 My Ka`ba, my *qibla* is your face
- M: *oho ka`ba-yi dil qibla-yi man rū-yi to*
 Oh, Ka`ba of heart, my *qibla* is your face
sajdagāh-i
 Place of prostration for
- A: *`āshiqān abrū-yi to*
 lovers [is] your eyebrow
sajdagāh-i
 The place of prostration for
sajdagāh-i
 The place of prostration for
sajdagāh-i
 The place of prostration for
sajdagāh-i
 The place of prostration for
- M: *ka`ba-yi*
 Ka`ba of

- A: *dil qibla-yi man rū-yi to*
heart, my *qibla* is your face
ka`ba-yi dil qibla-yi man rū-yi to
Ka`ba of heart, my *qibla* is your face
ka`ba-yi dil qibla-yi man rū-yi to
Ka`ba of heart, my *qibla* is your face
sajdagāh-i `āshiqān abrū-yi to
Place of prostration for lovers is your eyebrow
- 3rd: *sajdagāh-i*
Place of prostration for
- A: *sajdagāh-i `āshiqān abrū-yi to*
Place of prostration for lovers is your eyebrow
sajdagāh-i `āshiqān abrū-yi to
Place of prostration for lovers is your eyebrow.
- M: *`īd-*
`īd
- A: *gāh-i mā gharībān kū-yi to*
ground for us poor is your lane.

The other half of the insert utilises the common imagery of the beloved as the Ka`ba, *qibla* and place of prostration for the lovers. On the one hand, the favourable response of the audience which leads to reiterating different units of the verse is caused by the delight this classical imagery continues to produce. On the other, the closeness of this very Ka`ba, *qibla* and place of prostration even in the sensible reality – the *mahfil* was organised right in front of the shrine – increases the effect. It is to be noted that Muḥammad Aḥmad sings the third line of the Persian verse as *ka`ba-yi man qibla-yi man rū-yi to* and the group follows him. When he returns to this line after introducing the fourth line he sings it in the correct form as *ka`ba-yi dil qibla-yi man rū-yi to* which the group repeats. Thus, a small lapse of memory does not cause a disruption in delivery of the text which would disturb the listeners because of the qualified group. Finally, after the long insert, Muḥammad Aḥmad returns to the main poem. This shift is made almost unnoticeable by the continuity in melody, rhyme and metre. The last verse of insert and the first verse of the poem proper are also similar in connecting some place (*sajda-gāh* and *`īd-gāh* respectively) to the beloved.

The performance at hand is a good example of how qawwals expand the meaning of a single line of a poem, in this instance the opening line. Two introductory verses make it clear that the poem is not concerned with ordinary poverty, but with *ḥaqīqī* poverty in which only the beloved remains. The Urdu *gīrah* accentuates the metaphors of poverty by, for example, describing the heart as a begging bowl. The Persian *gīrah* connects the poverty again to the theme of love: everything that is worth obtaining is

obtained through the beloved. The continuance in melody and both musical and poetic metres makes this prolonged *gīrah* a unified whole.

7.2.3 Repetitions

In the qawwali performance every line of the verse is sung at least two times. The reason for this is that the listeners have to be provided some time to understand the meaning of the verse. This kind of standard repetition is called *dohrānā*. A more specific type of repetition is *takrār*. This kind of repetition can go on tens and hundreds of times and reason for it is the mystical state (*wajd*, *ḥāl*) that a verse has caused in a listener. *Takrār* is closely connected to sustaining the mystical state, whereas singing *rubāʿīs* and *gīrah* verses serves the purpose of inducing *wajd*. As was noted earlier, the state-producing phrase has to be repeated as long as the state subsists. Otherwise, the listener is in danger to die, as happened in the case of Khvāja Quṭb al-Dīn. Any part of the text can arouse mystical experiences in the listeners, according to their spiritual states and stations. Some verses, though, have gained so much weight during the centuries that they are always repeated several times. In addition, the poetic form of ghazal, in which the first line builds up the excitement and the second line solves it, offers the qawwals a chance to arouse the excitement of the listeners by repeating the lines separately. In determining how long to continue repeating a textual unit, reactions of the listeners are decisive. If the listeners stand up to make monetary contributions to the *mīr-i mahfil*, make laudatory gestures or noises or exhibit some ecstatic symptoms, the qawwals continue to repeat the textual unit.

One factor behind the pronounced role of repetition in qawwali is the association with *zīkr*. Especially the repetition of shorter textual units creates a *zīkr* like atmosphere. The length of repeated units in qawwali varies from one word to whole verse, the most common being a line or a half line of a verse. There are also other reasons for the pronounced role of repetition in qawwali, in addition to making the textual message understood and sustaining the mystical state. Repetition is also a way to let the listeners merge into the metaphorical meaning of the verse, not just understand its literal meaning. Since listeners are generally acquainted with poetry used in Chishti *samāʿ*, the qawwals can concentrate on accentuating the nuances of text through repetition. Repetition also gives the group leader time to observe reactions of the audience in order to reach the decision whether to continue repeating the verse, to continue to the next verse or insert a verse. Time is also needed to decide which verses to insert.

According to Muḥammad Aḥmad (13.11.2006), *takrār* without musical embellishments is the soul of qawwali, because it increases the *wajd*. This statement leads us directly to the fact that the *takrār* is a specific trait of qawwali that depends from the ritual function of the music. Musically unvaried repetitions do not have any equivalent, for example, in the classical music, *raison d'être* of which is the aesthetic refinement through constant variations and improvisations. Only time when the same melodic phrase is repeated unchanged – and even then only three times – is the end of a composition or part of it. It is worth noting that the extensive *takrār* is absent from the recorded and concert versions of qawwali, since neither has the ritual function of *samā'ī* qawwali.

Example six⁷³

This is an example of fairly prolonged *takrār* of one single verse. It was performed by Iftikhār Aḥmad Amrohavī in a *mahfil* of Pīr Aḥmad Nizāmī during the *`urs* of Amir Khusro on 12.11.2006 (21st Shawwāl). The assembly took place in Ṭāq-i Buzurg, one of the rooms surrounding the Nizamuddin Dargah compound. It is held that Khwaja Nizamuddin used to meditate in this room, and during the *`urs* festivities of Khwaja Nizamuddin and Amir Khusro it is a place for intimate *mahfils*. This time there were about thirty listeners, most of them *pīr-zādas* of the shrine or Sufī shaykhs and their disciples. Female listeners sat in the adjacent room behind of a glass door left ajar. Moreover, the place is said to have been blessed by a dervish to the effect that it would be very favourable for listening to *samā'*. The example demonstrates *takrār* of the first line of Ṣādiq Dihlavī's ghazal:

main zubān se kaise bayān karūn dil-i sogvār kī bāt hai

merī cashm-i tar se sune koī gham-i hijr-i yār kī bāt hai

How would I explain with the tongue, it is about the sorrowful heart

Someone may hear from my wet eyes; it is about pain of separation from the friend

I: *main zubān se kaise bayān karūn*

A: *main zubān se kaise bayān karūn*
main zubān se kaise bayān karūn

I: *dil-i*

A: *sogvār kī bāt hai*

main zubān se kaise

main zubān se kaise bayān karūn dil-i sogvār kī bāt hai

⁷³ I = Iftikhār Aḥmad Amrohavī, A = all.

During the performance, the atmosphere of the *maḥfil* was already fairly heightened. The first half of the line, which is repeated few times, incites response in the audience, from among whom some stand up to offer *nazar* to the *mīr-i maḥfil*. At the same time, some listeners are very deep in concentration, their heads bent down. But it would be the *ḥāl* of a Pakistani shaykh of Ṣābiriyya Chishtiyya *silsila*, Muḥammad Sibṭain Shāhjahānī, that would dominate the *maḥfil* during this poem. He started to act as if he had been struck every time Iftikhār Aḥmad reached the *radīf*, *kī bāt hai*. Musically, these words also dissolve the tension built up during the beginning of the verse.

A: *main zubān se kaise*
 I: *main zubān se kaise*
 A: *main zubān se kaise*
 I: *main zubān se kaise*
 A: *main zubān se kaise bayān karūn dil-i sogvār kī bāt hai*
main zubān se kaise bayān karūn
main zubān se kaise bayān karūn dil-i sogvār kī bāt hai
 I: *dil-i*
 A: *sogvār kī bāt hai*
dil-i sogvār kī bāt hai
 I: *main*
 A: *zubān se kaise bayān karūn dil-i sogvār kī bāt hai*

Iftikhār Aḥmad makes his group repeat the first half of the verse to build up the excitement. This is then again dissolved and again the shaykh cries out as if struck. When they repeat the whole line for the last time, the outer expressions of his *wajd* have receded.

I: *merī*
 A: *cashm-i tar se sune koī*
merī cashm-i tar se sune koī ḡham-i hijr-i yār kī bāt hai
merī cashm-i tar se sune koī
 I: *cashm-i tar se*
 A: *merī cashm-i tar se*
merī cashm-i tar se
merī cashm-i tar se sune koī ḡham-i hijr-i yār kī bāt hai
merī cashm-i tar se sune koī ḡham-i hijr-i yār kī bāt hai
 I: *tar se sune koī*
 A: *merī cashm-i tar se*
merī cashm-i tar se
merī cashm-i tar se sune koī ḡham-i hijr-i yār kī bāt hai
merī cashm-i tar se sune koī ḡham-i hijr-i yār kī bāt hai
 I: *merī cashm-i tar se sune koī*
 A: *merī cashm-i tar se sune koī ḡham-i hijr-i yār kī bāt hai*

Iftikhār Aḥmad initiates the second hemistich, which is then repeated. Here different units of different length are employed in the repetition: the first half of the line, the whole line and, as kind of a catch phrase, *merī cashm-i tar se*, ‘from my wet eyes’. This *takrār* makes an elderly dervish stand up and sway in his place. His mystical state manifests in a more peaceful way. The qawwals repeat the whole line and *merī cashm-i tar se* for few more times.

I: *maiñ*
 A: *zubāñ se kaise bayāñ karūñ*
maiñ zubāñ se kaise bayāñ karūñ
maiñ zubāñ se kaise bayāñ karūñ dil-i sogvār kī bāt hai
 I: *merī*
 A: *cashm-i tar se sune koī*
merī cashm-i tar se sune koī ḡham-i hijr-i yār kī bāt hai
merī cashm-i tar se sune koī
merī cashm-i tar se sune koī ḡham-i hijr-i yār kī bāt hai

Because of the reactions caused by this verse, the qawwals return to the first line. When Iftikhār Aḥmad initiates the second line again, Shaykh Muḥammad Sibṭain cries out and stands up with such vehemence that his eyeglasses fly on the floor. His two disciples, who are present, stand up also in confirmation with their master’s state. One Sufi comes to stand by the shaykh to support him in case he starts falling. The shaykh raises his right hand and cries out every time the *radīf* is sung.

I: *maiñ*
 A: *zubāñ se kaise bayāñ karūñ*
maiñ zubāñ se kaise
maiñ zubāñ se kaise
maiñ zubāñ se kaise
maiñ zubāñ se kaise bayāñ karūñ dil-i sogvār kī bāt hai
 I: *dil-i*
 A: *sogvār kī bāt hai*
dil-i sigvār kī bāt hai
dil-i sogvār kī bāt hai
 I: *merī*
 A: *cashm-i tar se sune koī*
merī cashm-i tar se sune koī ḡham-i hijr-i yār kī bāt hai
merī cashm-i tar se
merī cashm-i tar se
merī cashm-i tar se
merī cashm-i tar se
merī cashm-i tar se
merī cashm-i tar se sune koī ḡham-i hijr-i yār kī bāt hai

- I: *maiñ*
 A: *zubān se kaise bayān karūñ*
maiñ zubān se kaise bayān karūñ
 I: *maiñ zubān se kaise*
 A: *maiñ zubān se kaise*
maiñ zubān se kaise bayān karūñ dil-i sogvār kī bāt hai
maiñ zubān se kaise bayān karūñ dil-i sogvār kī bāt hai
 I: *merī*
 A: *cashm-i tar se sune koī*
merī cashm-i tar se sune koī ḡham-i hijr-i yār kī bāt hai
merī cashm-i tar se sune koī ḡham-i hijr-i yār kī bāt hai
 I: *hai khaṭāen*
 A: *itnī batāūñ kyā*

The state of Muḥammad Sibṭain continues and the qawwals return to the first line. They repeat different units of both the lines until the *wajd* recedes and the shaykh sits down. When the words *kī bāt hai* cause no more outward expressions in him, Iftikhār Aḥmad initiates the second verse of the poem beginning with *hai khaṭāen itnī batāūñ kyā*, ‘The faults are so many, what could I tell’. *Wajd* will overtake the same shaykh again during the third verse of the poem, which is repeated as extensively as the first one. In this performance the qawwals sung in perfect unison, not needing much guidance from the leader of the group. Musical embellishments and improvisations were hardly at all used and the performance relied heavily on the textual import. Later, Dr. Farīda `Alī (personal communication) attributed the heightened ambience rather to the presence of so many high ranking Sufis and the blessed place, than to the musical skills of the qawwals.

Example seven⁷⁴

Another pattern of *takrār* is the use of some individual word or phrase to cut the original poem. The textual unit cut out from the poem and corresponding melody are then repeated again. This example is taken from the performance of Amir Khusro’s poem *Ba-khūbī ham-cūn mah tābanda bāshī* (‘Shine with the beauty like the moon’). It is a poem usually sung after the completion of the *fātiḥa* during the `urs festivities, immediately after the obligatory poems, *Man kuntu maulā* and *Āj rang hai*. This performance took place after the *fātiḥa* marking the beginning of the `urs of Amir Khusro on 8.11.2006 in front of the shrine of Khwaja Nizamuddin. The occasion was not a formal *mahfil* but so called mixed (*mushtarak*) singing in which all the hereditary qawwals, who were present, sung together.

⁷⁴ C = Cānd Nizāmī, Gh = Ghulām Rasūl, GhH = Ghulām Husain Niyāzī, A = all.

A: *man-i darvesh rā kushī ba-ghamza*
 C: *karam*
 A: *kardī ilāhī zinda bāshī*
karam kardī
karam kardī
karam kardī
 Gh: *maḥbūb-i ilāhī*
 A: *karam kardī*
 Gh: *maḥbūb-i ilāhī*
 A: *karam kardī*
 GhH: *mere maḥbūb*
 A: *karam kardī*
 GhH: *mere maḥbūb*
 A: *karam kardī*
 Gh: *maḥbūb-i ilāhī*
 A: *karam kardī*
maḥbūb-i ilāhī
karam kardī
 Gh: *bābā farīd ke lāl*
 A: *karam kardī*
 Gh: *ganj-i shakkar ke lāl*
 A: *karam kardī*
 Gh: *bābā farīd ke lāl*
 A: *karam kardī*
 Gh: *ganj-i shakkar ke lāl*
 A: *karam kardī*
 C: *maḥbūb-i ilāhī*
 A: *karam kardī*
maḥbūb-i ilāhī
karam kardī
maḥbūb-i ilāhī
karam kardī
 C: *maḥbūb-i ilāhī*
 A: *karam kardī ilāhī zinda bāshī*

The whole group is repeating the first line of the second verse *man-i darvesh rā kushī ba-ghamza* ('You killed me, the poor, by an amorous glance') when the leading vocalist Cānd Nizāmī initiates the second line *karam kardī ilāhī zinda bāshī* ('You were merciful, my God, may you live [long]!'). Many listeners are common visitors to the shrine who are not acquainted with Persian. For this reason, the group starts repeating the words *karam kardī*⁷⁵, 'you were merciful'. For many listeners the mercy, *karam*, of the saint is the most important reason to visit the shrine. The word *ilāhī*, 'my God', in the verse associates with the title of Khwaja Nizamuddin, *Maḥbūb-i Ilāhī*, The Divine Beloved. This association is

⁷⁵ These words also resemble the Urdu expression *karam kar diyā*, 'you were merciful'.

only enhanced by the close connection of Amir Khusro to the saint. Thus, the verse is interpreted to point to the mercy of Khwaja Nizamuddin. For this reason different qawwals insert different titles of the saint to the song after every repetition of *karam kardī*. The titles employed here are *maḥbūb-i ilāhī* ('the Divine Beloved'), *mere maḥbūb* ('o my beloved'), *bābā farīd ke lāl* ('o Darling of Bābā Farīd') and *ganj-i shakkar ke lāl* ('o Darling of the Sugar Treasure'). The latter two indicate the relationship between the saint and his master Bābā Farīd al-Dīn Ganj Shakkar. The insertions of the titles are sung in the *antarā* register indicating excursions from the main poem. Cānd Nizāmī sings the last insert in *asthāyī* register to indicate to the rest of the group that they would stop repeating the unit *karam kardī* and continue the song by singing the whole line and then moving on to the next verse.

Example eight⁷⁶

The final example represents repetition in rhythmically denser variations. The recording was made in the same *maḥfil* as example one. The performers are less known qawwals of Ajmer. Less known to the extent that their names remain unknown to me.

A: *tujh sā mu`īn mere liye ek bhī nahīn*
 1st: *aur khādīm hazār mujh se tirī bārgāh meñ*
 A: *aur khādīm hazār mujh se tirī bārgāh meñ*
 1st: *khādīm hazār tirī bārgāh*
 A: *khādīm hazār tirī bārgāh*
khādīm hazār tirī bārgāh
khādīm hazār tirī bārgāh
khādīm hazār tirī bārgāh
khādīm hazār tirī bārgāh
khādīm hazār tirī bārgāh
khādīm hazār tirī bārgāh
 1st: *tujh sā mu`īn mere liye ek bhī nahīn*

All the qawwals are repeating the first line of the final verse *tujh sā mu`īn mere liye ek bhī nahīn*, ('There is not anyone like you for me, Mu`īn'), when the leading vocalist begins the second line *aur khādīm hazār mujh se tirī bārgāh meñ* ('And there are thousand Khādīms like me in your court'). The verse includes the *takhalluṣ* of the writer, the third Gudṛī Shāhī Bābā. The *takhalluṣ* Khādīm means servant and the line can thus also mean 'And there are

⁷⁶ 1st = the leader of the group, A = all.

thousand servants like me in your court'. It is customary in the Chishti *mahfils* to show one's reverence to the saints by offering *nazar* whenever their names are mentioned. To give time for this action, the leading vocalist initiates a repetition in a rhythmically denser variation. It combines the main parts of the line, *khādim hazār tirī bārgāh* ('Thousand Khādims, your court') and is sung in a tempo twice as fast as the normal tempo of the song. After repeating this phrase long enough to give listeners time to offer their *nazar*, the leading vocalist sings the first line again, returning to the normal tempo and *asthāyī* register.

8. Conclusion

In this study I have discussed the Chishti *samā`* and its textual content. I have attempted to build a comprehensible picture of the phenomenon as it is practised today. Literary sources have formed the basis of this study, but I have also taken the living performance and ritual context into account. The thematic overview of poems commonly used by qawwals in chapters three and four was primarily based on a single collection of poetry, *Surūd-i Rūḥānī*. I utilised, however, ethnographic material in choosing examples from poems that are known to the qawwals and listeners of Chishti *samā`* everywhere in South Asia. The role of recordings made in actual *samā`* assemblies was even more pronounced in chapter seven, which analysed the techniques of intensifying the impact of text in Chishti *samā`*.

The Chishti *samā`* is very much textually oriented. The Chishtis do not acknowledge instrumental music in *samā`* and dance is only an outcome of a mystical state, not a way to achieve it. Consequently, the poetry is in the focus of the *samā`* assemblies of the order. The poetic repertoire of qawwals is very wide, and it changes constantly, though some classics remain in its core. The Chishtis favour the poems of mystic writers, both non-Indian and Indian. The former group comprises the works of classical Persian poets which have been a part of a traditional curriculum. To the latter group belong Indian mystic-poets, foremost among them being Amir Khusro. Khusro was also a poet laureate at the imperial court and all his writings are hardly mystical. His connection to Khwaja Nizamuddin has, however, made all his lyrical poems classics of qawwali repertoire. The qawwali repertoire includes also poems by some Urdu writers who were not bonded with ties of discipleship with a Sufi master and whose lifestyles were not exactly spiritual. The ambivalent imagery of Persian and Urdu poems has, nonetheless, facilitated performing poems by these writers in *samā`* assemblies. To a degree, this ambivalence is changed into mystical interpretation when the poems are performed in mystical context, in *samā`* assembly and in qawwali style, which already associates with the mystical experience. In practice, the responsibility of interpreting poems on wine or infidelity in the Sufi context is left to the listeners, who are even encouraged to discover the connotations of poems for themselves.

In addition to Persian and Urdu, qawwals also sing poems in Hindi. Perhaps surprisingly, Hindi enjoys more prestige than Urdu as a language of mystical poetry. This is due to the common association of Hindi with the early Chishti masters, whereas Urdu

fully matured into a medium of poetry only in the 18th century. The Hindi poems, however, are often rather simple and bear traces of folk tradition and oral transmission. The indigenous images and forms of Hindi poetry can be difficult to conceive as parts of the same poetic tradition as the more rigid and high-sounding Persian poetry or even the Urdu poetry which is based on Persian models. Some scholars have admitted Hindi poetry only instrumental value as a way to preach simplified Sufi message to Hindu masses. Alternatively, the female voice of Hindi poetry has been considered to propagate social change in the patriarchal society. In a similar vein, qawwali is largely explained as a tool for proselytising music loving Hindus. The explanation for the use of music and Hindi poetry, as well as for listening to poems by non-mystic writers, is not, I believe, this far-fetched. Rather, all of these are employed by the Chishtis for practical reasons: Sufis of the Chishti order conceive them beneficial for their spiritual practice.

Despite the textual orientation of Chishti *samā`*, the poems are always set into music and performed by qawwals. The textual orientation is, however, discernible in the musical idiom of qawwali, both in modification of the musical grammar of classical Hindustani music and in its acoustic features. The musical conventions of, for example, upper and lower registers and rhythmical cycles are in qawwali used to accentuate the textual message, and through this enhance the text's impact on listeners. This is the most marked contrast in comparison with classical Hindustani music, in which the text is employed only sparingly and even when it is employed, the delivery of its meaning is of little importance.

Qawwali lives in many forms. The form, which is in the widest circulation, is recorded popular qawwali. It differs from the traditional qawwali of *samā`* assemblies, not only musically but also, in an even more pronounced way, in the level of the text. The texts of recorded qawwali are mostly devotional and devoid of themes elaborated in lyrical poems, such as wine, infidelity and love. Obvious reason for this is the desire to give recorded qawwali distinctively Islamic stamp, so that no danger of potentially immoral interpretation remains. The wide circulation of recorded qawwali has also resulted in the simplification of the language of the poems and total exclusion of Persian poems that are not widely understood anymore.

The concert version of qawwali resembles *samā`ī* qawwali in relation to its musical idiom and textual content. In musical level, the most important difference is the emphasis on the musical traits, which are sometimes favoured in the cost of textual delivery. The repertoire of concert qawwali overlaps largely with that of *samā`ī* qawwali,

though simpler poems with no morally suspicious themes are favoured. The aim of concert qawwali is aesthetic refinement and pleasure. The levels of aesthetic and mystical experience can never be fully separated in qawwali, but the focus of concert qawwali is more on the aesthetic side while *samā`ī* qawwali concentrates on the mystical side. Assemblies of *samā`ī* qawwali are also characterised with a more strict behavioural code, *adab*, than musical concerts. The *adab* of *samā`ī* assemblies aims at underlining the religious context by connecting *samā`ī* to the Islamic prayer ritual and also at facilitating undisturbed listening.

The different techniques of manipulating the text are employed in their full measure only in *samā`ī* qawwali in order to intensify the impact of the text. Many of these techniques are directly connected with the inducement of mystical states, an aspect which is absent from other forms of qawwali. In the more general level, the poems to be performed should be organised so as to proceed from poems of praise to love poems. Replicating the Sufi *silsila* in poems of praise contributes to the mystical interpretation of lyrical poems. The lyrical poems, again, can be so arranged that they proceed from poems on separation to poems on union and unity of existence. Although the thematic order is a potential way to increase the impact of the poems, it is followed only rarely in actual *samā`ī* assemblies and intensification of a text is achieved in the level of individual poems.

I have distinguished between three respective techniques in manipulating the text of an individual poem, each of which is tied to the living performance context. This has led to their exclusion from recorded versions of qawwali. These three techniques are 1. use of introductory verses, 2. use of inserted verses and 3. extensive repetitions. Each of these techniques has dual function. The first function is connected to the role of qawwals as musicians who earn their living by providing the mystical music in *samā`ī* assemblies of the Chishti order. In their role as professional musicians, the qawwals need to examine the audience in the course of performing in order to detect the hints on which text causes the most favourable reaction in the listeners. Accordingly, through the introductory verses the qawwals can test, what the audience would like to hear, whereas inserted verses and repetitions help in prolonging the enthusiasm of the listeners. One manifestation of enthusiasm is offering *nazar* to the *mīr-i mahfil*, which provides for the qawwals.

The second function intertwines with the first one but is more closely connected with experiencing mystical states through listening to qawwali. Introductory verses and inserted verses expand the metaphorical nets of individual verses of the main poem and help the listeners in delving into the depths of the text. Poetic sensitivity is as

important as the musical skills for qawwals, since they have to be able to combine verses from different poems into a unified whole. This can be very difficult in case they want to mix verses in Hindi with Persian and Urdu verses, since these traditions employ very different poetic images. The introductory and inserted verses are elemental in inducing mystical states in the listeners, whereas repetition is instrumental in sustaining them. The qawwals should repeat the textual unit, length of which varies from one word to an entire verse, as long as some listener is engrossed in a mystical state. Thus, the reason behind the different techniques of manipulating the text in *samā`ī* qawwali is not motivated by aesthetic reasons but by the desire to enable the Sufi listeners to experience the divine reality.

The scope of this study has been limited temporally, geographically and contextually. The present study has discussed the textual content of Chishti *samā`* as it is performed today from the basis of a single collection of poetry. Even though many of the poems included in *Surūd-i Rūḥānī* belong to the repertoires of qawwals all over South Asia, the emphasis of my study might have become different had I conducted my fieldwork in, for example, the Deccani Sufi centres, Gulbarga and Hyderabad. For my dissertation, I am intending to collect material also in these locations. I am also going to widen the time frame backwards. The convenient starting point would be *Naghmāt-i Samā`* published over seventy years ago, before the social changes ensuing from the division of the British India. I will also examine the discourses, letters and hagiographies of the past Sufi masters, which – beginning with *Favā`id al-Fu`ād* – include mentions of verses that have stirred the listeners in *samā`* assemblies. Another fruitful topic would be *samā`* in Punjab. Qawwali has become an integral part of the Punjabi identity in Pakistan in addition to being a religious practice. I had to leave this area with its tradition of mystical poetry and distinctive form of qawwali outside this study, because as a master's thesis its scope is limited.

One aspect of the textual content of Chishti *samā`*, which has been only briefly touched upon in this study, is the relation of the poems to the social and religious atmosphere at different periods of time. The qawwals have always been dependent on the patronage of Sufis, and consequently the poems they have performed mirror the attitudes of their patrons. Thus, the contextual analysis of the poems would contribute greatly to the ideological history of Islamic South Asia.

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Appendix I: The poets in *Surūd-i Rūhānī*

The division into Sufis and non-Sufis is only tentative, since, for example, Sa`dī and Ḥāfiẓ are commonly conceived as Sufi writers. The death dates are given as they are recorded in *Surūd-i Rūhānī* (27-29) unless I have been able to find a different date in a more reliable source. The *takhalluṣ* is written in bold and the poets not found in *Surūd-i Rūhānī* but discussed in this study are marked with an asterisk.

Writers in the Chishti *silsila*

Khvāja `Uṣmān Ḥārūnī (d. 1210)

Khvāja **Mu`īn** al-Dīn Cishtī (d. 1236)

Khvāja **Quṭb al-Dīn** Bakhtiyār Kākī (d. 1235)

(no poems from Bābā Farīd al-Dīn Ganj Shakkar, d. 1265)

Nizāmiyya Chishtiyya

Khvāja Nizām al-Dīn Auliyā` (d. 1325)

Amīr **Khusro** (d. 1325)

Amīr **Ḥasan** Sijzī (d. 1336)

Khvāja Naṣīr al-Dīn Cirāgh Dihlī (d. 1356)

Miyān **Ṣāmat** (d. 14th century)

Khvāja Bandanavāz Gesudarāz (d. 1422)

Shāh **Niyāz** Barelvī (d. 1831)

Miskīn Shāh (d. 1896)

Pīr Zāmin **Nizāmī*** (d. in 1980s)

Navāb Luqmān al-Daula Bahādur

Other

Navāb **Khādīm** Ḥasan Murādābādī (d. 1970)

Ṣābiriyya Chishtiyya

`Alī **Aḥmad** Ṣābir Kaliyarī (d. 1291)

Khvāja `Abd al-Quddūs Gangohī (d. 1537)

Sirāj Aurangābādī (d. 1763)

Shāh **Khāmosh** Ṣābirī (d. 1871)

Mīrān **Bhikā** Ṣābirī (d. ?)

Other Indian Sufis

Sharaf al-Dīn Bū `Alī Shāh Qalandar (d. 1324), **Sarmad** Shahīd (d. 1661), Khvāja Mīr Dard (d. 1785), **Zāmin** `Alī (d. 1855), **Mahv** Abū'l-`Ulā`ī (d. 1869), **Ḥabīb** `Alī Shāh Ḥaidarābādī (d. 1905), **Ṣahv** Abū'l-`Ulā`ī (d. 1906), **Ulvī** Ḥaidarābādī (d. 1901), **Aḥmad**

Rizā Khān Barelvī (d. 1921), Navāb Bahādur **Hilm** Abū'l `Ulā'ī (d. 1928), **Bedam** Shāh Vārisī (d. 1936), `Abd al-Raḥīm Khān **Nādir** Dihlavī (d. 1939), **Saudāgar** Mirzā'ī (d. 1947), Badr al-Dīn Shāh **Aughāṭ** Vārisī (d. 1954), **Ḥasrat** Ḥaidarābādī (d. 1962), **Māhir** al-Qādirī (d. 1978), Dr. **Ziyā'** al-Ḥaqq Qādirī (d. 1983), **Kāmil** Ḥaidarābādī (d. 1986), Muḥammad **Vaqār** al-Dīn Şiddīqī Qādirī Ḥaidarābādī (d. 1992), **Mumtāz** Ḥaidarābādī (d. 1996), Shāh Manzūr `Ālam, Shāh **Turāb** Kākorī, **Sayyid** Turāb al-Ḥaqq Qādirī, Maulānā **Mauj**

Other non-Indian Sufis

Aḥmad Jām (d. 1142), Maulānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 1273), Fakhr al-Dīn **Irāqī** (d. 1289), `Abd al-Raḥmān **Jāmī** (d. 1492)

Other Indian poets

Kabir Dās (d. 1518), **Mirā** Bā'ī (d. 1546), **Ahlī** Shīrāzī (d. 1535), `Abd al-Qādir **Bedil** (d. 1720), Mīr Taqī **Mīr** (d. 1810), **Bahlūl** Dānā (d. 1831), **Qatīl** (d. 1818), Bahādur Shāh **Zafar** (d. 1862), Mirzā Asad Allāh **Khān Ghālib** (d. 1869), **Hāfiz** Hindī (d. 1896), **Dāgh** Dihlavī* (d. 1905), Sa`īd Shahīdī (d. 1914), **Azīz** Şafīpurī (d. 1928), **Riyāz** Ḥaidarābādī (d. 1934), Bābū **Ḥayā** Badayūnī (d. 1935), Muḥammad **Iqbāl** (d. 1938) **Fānī** Badayūnī (d. 1941), Navāb **Mu`īn** al-Daula Bahādur (d. 1941), **Jalīl** Mānikpurī (d. 1946), `Abd al-Karīm Khān **Şabr** Dihlavī (d. 1947), **Ārzū** Lakhnavī (d. 1951), **Ḥasrat** Mohānī (d. 1951), `Abd al-`Azīm Khān **Bayān** Dihlavī (d. 1951), **Mihr** Ḥaidarābādī (d.1953), **Amjad** Ḥaidarābādī (d. 1961), **Jigar** Murādābādī (d. 1961), Shailendar (d. 1966), **Nāṭiq** Galāoṭhī (d. 1969), **Shakīl** Badayūnī (d. 1970), **Firāq** Gorakhpurī (d. 1972), Faiz Aḥmad **Faiz** (d. 1984), **Ḥabīb** al-Raḥmān (d. 1988), **Fanā** Kānpurī (d. 1988), **Shamīm** Jaipurī, **Bāqir** Shāhjāhānpurī, **Şahbā'** Akbarābādī, **Ilzām** Kānpurī

Other non-Indian poets

Nizāmī Ganjavī (d. 1209), **Sa`dī** (d. 1292) , **Hāfiz** Shīrāzī (d. 1390), **Maghribī** (d. 1402)

Appendix II: Transliteration of the verses discussed in chapters 3 and 4

page 29

ek din qais se lailā-yi māh-rū bolī mere sivā kis kī hai justujū
vajd meñ ā-ke kī qais ne guftugū rāz kī bāt hai khair sun māh-rū
na to majnūñ hūñ main aur na lailā hai tū
allāh hū allāh hū

page 30

īn cunīn nūr ki dar ā īna-yi jān bi-rabūd
`ain-i zāt ast o lekin ba-miṣāl dīdam
ānkhon meñ nūr ban ke ā dil meñ surūr ban ke ā
ban ke ḥayāt-i jāvidāñ tū merī jān meñ bhī ā
dil to merā hai terā ghar phir tū hai merī jān kidhar
rahtā hai kyon idhar udhar apne makān meñ bhī ā
mujh ko bhī jān koī pīr-i kharābāt mile
terī khairāt mile
tā qiyāmat yūnhī jāri rahe mai-khāna terā
daur-i paimāna tirā

page 31

āyāt-i qurʿān abrūyat tafsīr-i qurʿān gesūyat
e rū-yi to qurʿān-mā īmān tū ī īmān tū ī
cūn māh dar arz-o samā tābān tū ī tābān tū ī
rashk-i malak nūr-i khudā insān tū ī insān tū ī
do cashm-i nargisīn-ash rā mā zāgha'l-baṣar khvānand
do zulf-i ambrīn-ash rā cū va'l-laili izā yaghshā

page 32

bhīnī bhīnī khushbū lahkī be-dam dil kī duniyā mahkī
jab khul gae gesū-yi muḥammad ṣallā'llāhu alaihi va sallam
zi-dāgh-i hijr-i to dil-figār-am yā rasūl allāh
bahār-i ṣad caman dar sīna dāram yā rasūl allāh

ṣabā ba-sū-yi madīna rū kun az īn du`ā-go salām bar-khvān
ba-gird-shāh-i rusul bi-gird o ba-ṣad tazarru` payām bar-khvān

ba-laḥn-i dā`ūd ham-navā shau ba-nāla-yi dard āshnā shau
ba-bazm-i paigham-bar īn ghazal rā zi-`abd-i `ājiz nizām bar-khvān

jahān roshan ast az jamāl-i muḥammad
dil-am zinda shud az viṣāl-i muḥammad

page 33

suhānī rāt thī aur pur-sukūn zamāna thā
aṣar meñ ḍubā huā jazb-i `āshiqāna thā

unheñ to `arsh pi maḥbūb ko bulānā thā
ṭalab thī dīd kī mi`raj kā bahāna thā

man `āṣiy-am man `ājiz-am man be-kas-am ḥāl-i ma-rā
yā shāfi`-i roz-i jazā pursān tū`ī pursān tū`ī

page 34

ḥusn-i yūsif meñ tirā nūr thā e nūr-i khudā
cāra-yi dīda-yi ya`qūb huā khūb huā

maqṣūd-i lau lāk āmadī bas cust o cālāk āmadī
az `ālam-i pāk āmadī jān-hā fidā-yat marḥabā

`adam se lāi hai hastī meñ ārzū-yi rasūl
kahān kahān liye phirtī hai justujū-yi rasūl

jab hue paidā muḥammad muṣṭafā god meñ le kar ḥalīma ne kahā
bhāro ghī ke die nā bhaīle āmina ke lalnā

`arsh pi āhā kār macī hai dhartī gāe malhār
āj muḥammad paidā bhaīle kahe jibrīl pukār

ḥureñ nāceñ chamā cham āj `abd allāh ke ānganvā
ādam se `īsā tak āe dene badhāi sāre

parh-ke durūd farishte āe ṭim ṭim karte tāre
mān kī god meñ aisan lāge jaise mudrī meñ nagīna

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valī-yi ḥaqq vaṣī-yi muṣṭafā daryā-yi faizān-e
imām-i do jahān-e qibla-yi dīn-e va imān-e

anīs-i maḥfil-i insī jalīs-i majlis-i qudsī
surūr-i jān-khaṣṣān-e nishāt-i rūḥ-i pākkān-e

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ba-ṭufail-i dāman-i murtazā main batāūn kyā mujhe kyā milā
ki `alī mile to nabī mile jo nabī mile to khudā milā

tire naqsh-i pā se qadam qadam jo maqām-i ṣabr o rizā milā
kahīn khāk-i ahl-i junūn milī kahīn khūn-i ahl-i vafā milā

khvāja-yi khvājagān mu`īn al-dīn
fakhr-i kaun o makān mu`īn al-dīn

sirr-i ḥaqq rā bayān mu`īn al-dīn
be-nishān rā nishān mu`īn al-dīn

hue tere faiz se auliyā` ganj-i shakkar ṣābir piyā
jo nizām khusro valī bane mire khvāja faiz hai āp kā
yā khvāja-yi hind al-valī

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āp ke dar pi gharībōn kī nazār partī hai
khatm ho jāte hai jab sāre sahāre khvāja

rabṭ-i ulfat kī qasam nisbat-i kāmīl kī qasam
tum hamāre ho hamāre ho hamāre khvāja

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shabistān-i jahān shud ham-cū roz-i roshnī roshan
ki ṭālī` gashta az āfāq-i `ālam īn cunīn māh-e

zi-shauq-i `ishq-i maḥbūb-i ilāhī ān-cunān gashtam
ki taṣvīr-am muṣavvir dar kashad bar ṣūrat-i āh-e

`īd-gāh-i mā gharībān kū-yi to
inbisāṭ-i `īd dīdan rū-yi to

banī dillī dulhan dulhā niẓām al-dīn cishtī hai
zamāna sab barātī hai niẓām al-dīn cishtī kā

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e dil bi-gīr dāman-i sulṭān-i auliyā`
ya`nī ḥusain ibn-i `alī jān-i auliyā`

ā`īna-yi jamāl-i ilāhī`st ṣūrat-ash
z-ān rū shuda`st qibla-yi īmān-i auliyā`

dārad niyāz ḥashr-i khvud ummīd bā ḥusain
bā auliyā`st ḥashr muḥibb-ān-i auliyā`

amīr-e dast-gīr-e ghaus-i a`zam quṭb-i rabbānī
ḥabīb-e sayyid-i `ālam zahe maḥbūb-i subḥānī

malā`ik taraqū gūyān ravand andar rikāb-i ū
jilau-dārī kunand ū rā khavvāṣ-i insī-o jānī

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paṛho bāda-gusāro namāz-i khvud-farāmoshī
ṣadā-yi qulqul-i mīnā huī takbīr-i mai-khāna

man-am ki gosha-yi mai-khāna khānqāh-i man-ast
du`ā-yi pīr-i mughān vird-i ṣubḥ-gāh-i man-ast

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gharaz zi-masjid o mai-khāna-am viṣāl-i shumā-st
juz īn khayāl na-dāram khudā gavāh-i man-ast

sāghar o bāda agar nīst ba-kaf sāqī rā

gardish-i nargis-i mastāna mubāarak bāshad

pas-i murdan bhī hūn mamnūn sāqī

mirī miṭṭī se paimāna banāyā

īn qadar mast-am ki az cashm-am sharāb āyad birūn

v'az dil-i pur-ḥasrat-am dūd-i kabāb āyad birūn

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khvushā rindī ki pāmāl-ash kunam ṣad pārsā'ī rā

zahe taqvā ki man bā jubba o dastār mī-raqṣam

yih hai mai-kada yahān rind haiṅ yahān sab kā sāqī imām hai

yih ḥaram nahīn hai e shaikh jī yahān pārsā'ī ḥarām hai

zāhidā bi-shinau khudā rā ān-ci mī-gūyam tu-rā

zuhd be-ma`nī guzārad jān-i `ishq az man bi-nosh

`aql ke madrase se uṭh `ishq ke mai-kade meṅ ā

jām-i fanā o be-khvudī ab to piyā jo ho so ho

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hān vuh nahīn khudā-parast jāo vuh be-vafā sahī

jis ko ho dīn o dil `azīz us kī galī meṅ jāe kyon

jo zarā-sī pī-ke bahak gayā use mai-kade se nikāl do

yahān kam-naẓar kā guzar nahīn yahān ahl-i zarf kā kām hai

vuh rind hūn ki jis ke lie shaikh-i ḥaram ne

rātoṅ ko khulā bāb-i ḥaram choṛ diyā hai

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e cihra-yi zebā-yi to rashk-i butān-i āzarī

har cand vaṣf-at mī-kunam dar ḥusn az ān zebātar-ī

kāfir-i `ishq-am musalmānī ma-rā dar kār nīst

har rag-i man tār gashta ḥājat-i zunnār nīst

`ishq meṅ jān o dil hī kyā dīn gayā dharam gayā

ek nigāh-i nāz meñ luṭ gaī sārī kāināt

andar ṣaff-i ṭā`at cū ba-masjid bi-nishīnam

dil mā'il-i miḥrāb-i do abrū-yi to dāram

ḥājī ba-ṭavāf-i ḥaram-i ka`ba ravad lek

man ka`ba-yi maqṣūd sar-i kū-yi to dāram

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ba-gird-i ka`ba kai gardam cū rū-yi yār-man ka`ba

shavam ṭavvāf-i mai-khāna bi-bosam pā-yi mastān rā

tā bar rukh-i zebā-yi to uftāda zāhid rā nazār

tasbīḥ-i zuhd-ash yak ṭaraf mānda muṣallā yak ṭaraf

yār-i man dar nīm-shab gar be-naqāb āyad birūn

zāhid-i ṣad-sāla az masjid kharāb āyad birūn

muḥabbat vuh kyā jis meñ khvud-dāriyān hoñ `ibādat vuh kyā jis meñ pā-bandiyān hoñ

ḥaqīqat meñ zāhid vuhī bandagī hai jahān sar jhuke āstān jhūm jāe

ḥaqq ma-gū kalma-yi kufr ast dar īn jā khusro

rāz-dān-i `ajab-e ṣāhib-i rāz-i `ajab-e

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dil meñ agar tarāp na ho `āshiqī `āshiqī nahīn

dard se ho jo be-khabar ādmī ādmī nahīn

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rāt yūn dil meñ tirī khoī huī yād āī

jaise vīrāne meñ cup-ke se bahār ā jāe

jaise ṣaḥrāoñ meñ haule se cale bād-i nasīm

jaise bīmār ko be-vajh qarār ā jāe

pās āte hai mire aur na bulāte haiñ mujhe

yih bhī kyā kam hai ki vuh yād to ate haiñ mujhe

tirī yād aisī hai bā-vafā pas-i marg bhī na huī judā

tirī yād meñ ham miṭ gae tirī yād dil se miṭī nahīñ

ṣabā agarci shigufta kare hazāroñ gul
is ek ghunca-yi dil ko vuh kab khilā jāne

na man be-hūda gird-i kūca o bāzār mī-gardam
mazāq-i `āshiqī dāram pay-i dīdār mī-gardam

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gah shād-am o gah gham-gīn az ḥāl-i khvud-am ghāfil
mī-giriyam o mī-khandam cūn tufl ba-khvāb andar

vuh `ajab ghaṛī thī maiñ jis ghaṛī liyā dars nuskha-yi `ishq kā
ki kitāb `aql kī tāq meñ jon dharī thī tyoñ hī dharī rahī

hai chūṭne ko dāman-i ṣabr o qarār āj
be-ikhtiyār hone ko hai ikhtiyār āj

aḥmad bihisht o dozakh bar `āshiqān ḥarām ast
har dam riṣā-yi jānān riṣvān shuda`st mā rā

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sar o sāmān-i vujūd-am sharar-i `ishq bi-sokht
zer-i khākistar-i dil soz-i nihān-am bāqī`st

qāyim ābād rahe yūnhī bharī bazm un kī
ban-ke khvud shama` jo parvāna banāte haiñ mujhe

bacā soz-i muḥabbat se na ko`ī
samundar ko bhī parvāna banāyā

ba ghamza siḥr o nigāh jādū ba turra afsūn ba qad qiyāmat
ba khaj banafsha ba zulf sunbul ba cashm nargis ba rukh gulistān

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jahān sozī agar dar ghamza ā`ī
shakkar rezī agar dar khanda bāshī

guftam-ash bar `āriṣ-at īn qatra-hā-yi zhāla cīst

zer-i lab khandīd o guft az gul gulāb āyad birūn

man zi-la`l-i noshīn-at khūn-i dil hamī nosham
qatl-i `āshiqān kardī dasht-i karbalā īn ast

qatra-yi khūn-i dil jāmi ba-daryā dar-figan
sīna sozān dil tapān māh-e zi-āb āyad birūn

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jab cāhne-vāle khatm hue us vaqt unheñ ihsās huā
ab yād meñ un kī rote haiñ hañs hañs-ke rulānā bhūl gae

na-mī-dānam ki ākhir cūn dam-i dīdār mī-raqsam
magar nāzam ba-īn zauq-e ki pesh-i yār mī-raqsam

mire jī meñ thā ki kahūngā main yih jo dil pi ranj o malāl hai
vuh jab ā gayā mire sāmne na to ranj thā na malāl thā

dikhāi die yūn ki be-khvud kiyā
hameñ āp se bhī judā kar cale

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man to shudam to man shudī man tan shudam to jān shudī
tā kas na-gūyad ba`d az-īn man dīgar-am to dīgar-ī

kāmil sukūn maut hai kyon maut māngie
apnī to zindagī hai dil-i be-qarār se

ṣaḥrā meñ bagūlā jo uṭṭhā hai bād o khāk meñ yih ghauḡhā
main tujh meñ fanā tu mujh meñ baqā tū aur nahīn main aur nahīn

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na fanā mirī na baqā mirī mujhe e shakīl na ḡhūndhie
main kisī kā ḡsun-i khayāl hūñ mirā kuch vujūd o `adam nahīn

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kāravān-am hama bu-gzasht zi-maidān-i shuhūd
ham-cū naqsh-i kaf-i pā nām o nishān-am bāqī`st

hasti-yam jumla khayāl ast ba-timṣāl-i sarāb

bi'l-yaqīn man nayam o vahm o gumān-am bāqī' st

shor-i manṣūr az kujā o dār-i manṣūr az kujā
khvud zadī bāng anā'l-ḥaqq bar sar-i dār āmadī

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kis ke lie jahān meñ itnā sab ihtimām hai
kis kī ṭaraf mushīr hain sāre maẓāhir-i ṣifāt

kahīn bolā balā vuh kah-ke a last
kahīn banda kahīn khudā dekhā

kahīn vuh bād-shāh-i takht-nashīn
kahīn kāsa lie gadā dekhā

kahīn raqqāṣ aur kahīn muṭrib
kahīn vuh sāz bājtā dekhā

bhūl bhī jāiye kahīn sārī izāfaton kī bāt
vahm-i dūī bhī kufr hai ek vujūd ek zāt

joñ mihr ke samukh kahe āina anā'l-shams
bolūn hūn anā'llāh sirr-dār se kah do

yih vaqt hai mujh pi bandagī kā kaho jise kar lūn sajda varna
azal se tā `ahd-i āfirīnish main āp apnā khudā rahā hūn

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rang-i bahāren ṣubḥ-i gulistān kyā dekhe vuh dīvāna
jis kī naẓar ne ek hī gul meñ sārā gulshan dekhā hai

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gorī sove sej par so mukh par dāro kes
cal khusro ghar āpne so bhaī sānjh cahoñ des

khusro nadiyā prem kī so ulṭī vā kī dhār
jo niklā so dūb gayo jo dūbā so pār

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khājā garīb navāj morī ṭūṭī mandhayyā chavāe banegī

chāe banegī chavāe banegī morī tūṭī mandhayyā chavāe banegī

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phūl ḥusainī bāgh se āe

ghaus al-a`zam ne maṅgvāe

khvāja `uṣmān gūndh-ke lāe

khvāja quṭb haiñ jhande uṭhāe

shaikh farīd haiñ vajd meñ āe

nizām al-dīn aur ṣābir gāe

more aṅganā mu`īn al-dīn āyo re

torī ṣūrat ke balhārī nijām

balhārī nijām e main vārī nijām

sab sakhiyan meñ cundar morī mailī

dekh hañseñ nar-nārī

ab kī bahār cundar morī rang de

rakh le lāj hamārī

ṣūrat ke balhārī

ku`o sās ku`o nanad se jhagṛe

maīkā to ās tihārī

cerī tihārī hūñ sab kaū jāneñ

lāj mirī hai yā tihārī

nijām torī ṣūrat ke bal-hārī

quṭb farīd mil āe barātī

khushro rāj-dulārī

nijām torī ṣūrat ke balhārī

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mose nainān mat mornā main tore caran lāgī re

jaisā maīkā apnā kie ho vaisā hī līje nibāh

lāj tumhī ko hamrī maḥbūb hove nā jag meñ hañsāi re

main tore caran lāgī re

ham se tum ko saikṛoñ aur tum to ham ko ek

apne karam par kījie najariyā augun nā hamre nā dekh

main tore caran lāgī re

tumre kāran sab ko bhūlī tum mat bhuliyo moe

tum bhūle to jāūngī main donoñ jahāñ se khoe

main tore caran lāgī re

shabān-i hijrān darāz cūn zulf o roz-i vaṣlat cū `umr kotāh
sakhī piyā ko jo main na dekhūn to kaise kāṭūn andherī ratiyān

cūn shama` sozān cūn zarra ḥairān hamesha giriyaṅ ba-`aish-i ān mah
na nīnd nainān na ang cainān na āp āve na bhejī batiyān

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kahe ko byāhī bides re

lakhī bābul more

bhāiyōn ko denī bābul maḥal do maḥale

ham ko diyā pades re

lakhī bābul more

ḍole kā parda uṭhā kar jo dekhā

āyā parāyā des re

lakhī bābul more

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bahut kaṭhin hai ḍagar panghaṭ kī

kaise ki bhar lāūn madhvā se maṭkī

main jo gāī thī paniyā bharan ko

daur jhapaṭ morī maṭkī paṭkī

nijām al-dīn auliyā` main tore balhārī

lāj rakho tum hamre ghunghaṭ kī

e rī sakhī more piyā ghar āe

bhāg lage is āngan ko

main to kharī thī ās lagāe

mihaṅdī kajrā māng sajāe

dekh ṣūratiyā apne piyā kī

hār gāī main tan man ko

e rī sakhī more piyā ghar āe

jis kā piyā sang bīte sāvan

us dulhan kī rain suhāgan

jis sāvan meṅ piyā ghar nāhīn

āg lage us sāvan ko

e rī sakhī more piyā ghar āe

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sakal ban phūl rahī sarsoñ
aṅganā more ṭesū phūle
koyal bole ḍār ḍār
aur gorī karat singhār
malaniyā gaḍvā le āī garsoñ
 sakal ban phūl rahī sarsoñ
taraḥ taraḥ ke phūl lagāe
le gaḍvā hāthan meñ āe
nijām al-dīn ke darvāje par
āvan kah gae `āshiq rang
aur bīte gae barsoñ
 sakal ban phūl rahī sarsoñ

āj rang hai e māñ rang hai rī
mere maḥbūb ke ghar rang hai rī
sajan milāve rā anand badhāve rā
is āṅgan meñ āj rang hai
e māñ rang hai rī
mohe pīr pāyo nijām al-dīn auliyā`
jab dekhūñ more sang hai rī
nijām al-dīn auliyā` jag-ujiyāro
jab dekhūñ more sang hai rī
e māñ rang hai rī
main to aiso rang aur nahīñ dekhī nijām al-dīn
des bides meñ ḍhūñḍh phirī hūñ
torā rang man bhāyo nijām al-dīn

sīs mukuṭ hāthan pickārī morī āṅgan holī khelan āyo
khelo re cishtiyon holī khelo khājā nijām ke bhes meñ āyo

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tore binā mohe cain nahīñ braj ke nand-lālā
payyāñ parūñ binatī karūñ ḍāro gale mālā
 tore binā mohe cain nahīñ braj ke nand-lālā
ḍhūñḍh phirī vrindāban meñ kahīñ na cain pāyo
mathurā meñ janam liyo mohan bansī-vālā
 tore binā mohe cain nahīñ braj ke nand-lālā

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har har bund samund pahcānūn har zarra khurshīd
vāh gurū-jī khūb sujhāyo sarson phūlī ānkhoñ meñ

Appendix III: The informants

Pīr Aḥmad Nizāmī, a leading shaykh and *pīr-zāda* in the Nizamuddin Dargah. He organises the *samā`* assemblies in the `Urs Maḥal. He is the son of the late Pīr Zāmin Nizāmī, and runs several educational and welfare organisations.

Farīda `Alī Nizāmī, PhD (The Australian National University). She is a disciple of the late Khvāja Islām al-Dīn Nizāmī, and the local representative at the `Ināyat Khān *dargāh* and retreat house in Delhi.

In`ām Ḥasan Gudrī Shāh, the head of the Gudrī Shāhī order based in Ajmer. Founder of the Sufi Saint School for the deprived children of all faiths.

Mi`rāj Aḥmad Nizāmī Qavvāl, the leading qawwal of the Nizamuddin Dargah, known for his command over wide corpus of poetry. Because of his talents as a performer, he has been named *Bulbul-i Cisht*, ‘The Nightingale of Chisht’ by Khvāja Ḥasan Sānī Nizāmī.

Muḥammad Aḥmad Rāmpurī, an eminent qawwal from Rampur. He is famous for his classical style of performing qawwali and refined repertoire of poetry.

Muḥammad Ḥayāt, a qawwal and classical musician of the Delhi *gharāna*. One of the leading qawwals in the Nizamuddin Dargah.

Vāriṣ Ḥusain Cishtī, a leading *khādim* in the *dargāh* of Khvāja Mu`īn al-Dīn in Ajmer. He is a connoisseur of and specialist in mystical poetry and music.