

Chaap Tilak shot at Baha al-Din Zakariya's tomb in Multan plays

Title Card

Tabinda: It is a little surreal or ethereal kind of experience when you are on another plane because it is so much about, you know, your relationship with God in so many ways. It is so much about questioning what you're doing in life. So I do start getting, you know, a little I sometimes pensive, sometimes existential questions start coming in and sometimes you're like oh wow. Well, you know, just at the mere poetry, you are like oh wow, so I think it's a very beautiful experience in terms of how it transports you from this, you know, world to another world where music has no form.

Haman hai ishq by Dream Journey plays

Sauran: Yar milay Lajpal milay tad yari lawan chass hai/Jay srid te aa yar milay fir sird dewan keru kass ay/ kafir hay jera yari lakay akhay medi buss hai

Sauran: It is at least a thought provoking. It encourages you to think at least. That at least you think.

Bina It makes you think. It makes the audience think. And that is the wonder of Qawwali.

Mareez e Muhabbat unhi ka fasana plays

Aimon it brings me a step closer to maybe nature or maybe to the Creator

Tahir Qawwal: You know, when they say music is the food of the soul. It is in fact Qawwali that is the food for soul. Because it is the remembrance of Allah, the remembrance of the Prophet

Shab e Hijr by Dream Journey plays

Mishal: It's a storytelling narrative, so really rich and, you know, rooted in South Asian culture and religion as well. They're kind of informative pieces of art. So it's not merely a song. So when I think of some of my favorite pieces, which is Allah Hu or Bhardo Jholi, they're actually really resonating with you as a listener because there's a story to it and stories that we've often grown up with listening to from our parents or from our grandparents

Sauran The people who wrote these Qawwalis, the people whose kalam (speech) it is, the Sufis, the Saints, it is the findings of their whole lives. They compiled and are sharing them with us.

Dekh le shakal meri by Dream Journey plays

Aneeqa: And I think in ghazal, I think emotion is very controlled. It's punctuated. It rises, it falls. It's still very much how can I say this? Because this is very hard to capture in language, but I think it's still controlled in some way. It's if I if I could say it, I feel ghazal is like writing fiction and Qawwali is like poetry.

Tahir Qawwal: I don't need to say anything. The heart in which Allah and His prophet lives, it gravitates towards Qawwali. People like it. One does not have to say something. The spirit runs towards it.

Taimoor Khan Mumtaz What I've heard of the history from the Qawwals and Chishtiya people is that it started with Hazrat Khawaja Moinuddin Chishti of Ajmer.

Taimoor Khan Mumtaz within the Chistiya tradition. Otherwise Sama has always been there in the Sufi gatherings, which means that reciting and singing a mystical poetry for self-elevation and so and so forth, to concentrate upon God

Bina Jawwad: and that is how it was spread. The saints' messages were spread to the audience through their poetry and how the Qawwals used to sing it

Bina Jawwad: And Hazrat Amir Khusrow was then of course the person who wrote so much poetry, which is sung in Qawwali..therefore a lot of Amir Khusrow's Qawwali is in praise of his master, very sort of, the love poem tradition of India, in fact.

Taimoor Khan Mumtaz: it seems that in a sense, the real impetus was Hazrat Nizamuddin. In that sense, because he was an extremely sensitive person, so anything would throw him into an ecstasy. So his disciples reacted to that. Sometimes if he'd hear a verse, he'd go into ecstasy so his musical disciples would start to sing that same verse. So it is like it is just like that's how I understand it.

Bina Jawwad: Sings har shab manam) it's like it's so sweet, it shows his sorrow, that he has been parted, parted from his beloved, the Divine. And you can see that in it. It's the ending, it's the ending. It's like he has put all his lament into it.

Bina Jawwad: And the thing about Amir Khusrow is that he wrote everything in love. It was love for his murshid (guide)

Ghar Nari by Ajab Ghar plays

Taimoor Khan Mumtaz : So the Qawwali starts with hamd (praise) or singing to God and His qualities. It has a certain tartib, which has a certain, uh, sequence. It's not just a concert for listening to music, not at all, it is connected to meaning and it has a certain etiquette.

Bina Jawwad: Sama e mehfil it is called. It holds a very significant place in the dargahs because the sama-e-mehfil if accompanied and presided over by the correct PIR has a totally different ambiance and meaning

Taimoor Khan Mumtaz: So it starts with God. Then there are hymns to the Prophet and all Muslims love to hear hymns of the prophet CUT then continue. So those who are not Sufis, this sort of refreshes their faith from whenever they get to listen to it, they can immediately relate to it through the hymns of the prophet, because that's part of the culture.

Bina Jawwad: Qawwali, which contains all these lyrics of *marifah*, meaning the truth, if one listens to it, then it is really something they can really think about and they can observe and they can maybe along with the enlightened says they can look within and try to self- realize. It's a long process, it's not an easy thing. It's a long process, but it will happen if one is sincere.

Bohat Kathin Hai by Munshi Raziuddin plays

Bina Jawwad: the real Qawwali, which is the *kalam* or the poetry of the mystic saint. If sung by properly initiated Qawwals, holds a totally different meaning and then sung in the presence of an enlightened sage, it holds a totally, it can really do wonders for different audience.

Ghulam Shabbir No, Qawwali is not the same anymore. It's not the same. If a new legend is born, that's another thing. Pakistan has produced many great names. Currently, I do not see Qawwali being revived.

Tahir Qawwal: I do not agree with it. Because there were less people and less people used to hear it. Now it has revived.

Aneeqa: I mean, more recently, I think that the rise of a particular kind of right wing nationalism in Pakistan is something that scholars are writing about that's being spoken about a bit more in academic circles. There is the recent book by Ammara Maqsood *The Pakistani Middle Class*. I think she makes a very good point when she says that something that changed in the post Zia era is that there is a new visible religiosity. She calls it that is very evident in this middle class. And we know that there is an inspiration of Wahhabism. That element is there. It's a particular strand of Islam that's now being promoted in dramas, etc. But I believe despite this whole background in this whole cultural and religious, these trends that are emerging, I know in general people don't feel that bad about music. People love music despite themselves down to and I mean, this is

like in every class. And if I think of spaces, if I think of my life, I think of a street, if I think of Lahore like small, small areas in Lahore and passing by them, I, I always recall music. I always recall people like enjoying festivity.

Tabinda: How I have seen it evolve. I can start from my own family or my circle of friends, of course, so we did not use to have Qawwali nights when we were growing up, And then there came a time, I remember, when you were growing up and became very popular... And then I think there was a decline, because if I think of the younger generation, like my nephews and nieces, they are not accustomed or they are not like into Qawwalis the same way. And then came the time when Coke studio brought this these things back. So I think that is the phase when a lot of younger people became familiar with the kind of music with our original kind of music, but they weren't used to.

Mishal Another aspect of Qawwali specifically really common in Lahore is the really common in weddings now specifically.

Mishal And I think that really makes the class divide really evident because the upper middle class or the elite class of Lahore and a lot of the metropolitan cities in Pakistan, they started hosting Qawwalis to kind of showcase even their wealth or sometimes the pseudo culture that they'd like to flaunt.

Ghar Nari by Ho Mann Jahan and Chaap tilak by Hadiqa Kiani plays

Aimon: So a lot of brands, they've started capitalizing on this culture or on this music to get this, what do you call it, leveraging this fashion point through branding, or through brand management to capture audiences.

Haidry Am by Coke studio plays

Aimon: Brands like Coke Studio and Nescafe Basement , they have revived Qawwali a lot. It has become something much more relatable to the youth as well so they can listen to it all the time wherever whenever. So the music has been upgraded for them, its more modern, its more fusion, so it makes sense to them as well.

Bina Jawwad: when you listen to a Qawwali with along with an enlightened sage it holds greater meaning. Otherwise, it is a pop culture. Many people hear it, they listen to it because it's got a very moving percussion and beat and the lyrics and everything, you know, and nowadays

the Qawwali has really changed into a more of a you know very moving or hip hop type of it, you know, number.

Tu Kuja Man Kuja by Coke Studio plays

Tabinda: Now I feel to be very honest, I think it's become a fad also, you know, to enjoy Qawwali so people, you know, it's like, okay, there's a Qawwali night that everybody wants to go kind of thing which is fine. I mean I won't even judge that, I mean as long as they're enjoying.

Tabinda: But I still feel that there is a shrunken or like a limited number of people or circles where Qawwali is enjoyed in its true essence.

Bina Jawwad: if you are so sincere to find the truth, as if someone was holding your head under water and you're dying to breathe, but you couldn't breathe because your head was under water and you were screaming and you are screaming to try and breathe, that is the sincerity which needed to find truth. And another thing they say is that every day you ask yourself, who am I? Who am I? Question. Question and question again, if you have doubts, it's all right, doubt and question, doubt and you will be given the answers. That is a sure shot thing.

Gorakh Dhanda plays