



MUSIC AND PERFORMANCE IN UMRAO JAAN ADA

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ABSTRACT

Indian classical music was centered around the courts and thus often associated with Islamicate culture; though being again in no way is 'Islamic'. Iqbal Masud says that Naushad Ali brought Uttar Pradesh's folk music and the elegance of its courts to film music. Naushad Ali 1999 had trained with orchestras who played in cinema and was no musical purist. Yet even though he brought in western instruments and large orchestras, he was always the composer that producers sought for films which required a more classical feel. Among his famous compositions were films set in mughal times such as Baiju Bawra 1952, dir. Vijay Bhatt) and Mughal-e-Azam 1961, Mr. K. Asif) as well as socials such as Anmol Ghadi 1946, dir. Mehboob Khan) and Mother India 1957, dir. Mehboob Khan).

INTRODUCTION

There is no such thing in India as 'Muslim' music, although there are genres associated with Muslims, notably qawwali. We do not think one can say there is anything 'Muslim' about Naushad's music, which draws on classical Hindustani ragas and UP folk music as well as various western influences. However, he certainly knew how to evoke a feeling of the Muslim courts where appropriate (in Baiju Bawra or Mughal-e-Azam), but his use of folk music in Mother India has no Islamicate reference.

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Some composers use a song with Muslim or least Islamicate associations in their films. The qawwali a song associated with Sufism, is often sung by two opposing teams in a Muqabla ('contest'), often taking themes such as love versus beauty. It is distinguished by its rhythmic clapping and light melodies which often create a feeling of ecstasy in the audiences. Traditionally performed on Thursday nights at durgahs ('shrines') of sufi Pirs, the qawwali achieved a phenomenal popularity largely through the non film qawwalis of Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan who became one of the giants of the world music scene.

Nusrats repertoire was mostly songs in urdu and Punjabi, which were dedicated to holy men (Mast Qalander, Shams-e-Tabriz) and composed by famous poets (Bulleh Shah, 1680-758) but could also be interpreted as referring to earthly love. He recorded a few popular songs and even made an excursion in to film making but the Sufi inspired qawwali remained his favourite.

Several film makers have been inspired by nusrats qawwalis to copy the tunes and modify the lyrics to remove any spiritual meaning, although some echo of a higher love remains for some listeners: 'Kinne Sona' becoming 'Kitna Sona' in Raja Hindustani (1996), dir. Dharmesh Darshan); 'Mast mast' being definitively turned in to an 'item' song in Mohra (1994), dir. Rajiv Rai and 'Mere piya ghar aaya' in Yaarana (1995), dir David Dhawan), with the chorus adding 'O Ramji', to remove any sufi sentiment. Others have composed original qawwalis, such as those of A.R.Rehman, which are also spiritual ('Piya Haji Ali in Fiza 2000, dir Khalid Mohammed), where as some are just to celebrate love (the fusion qawwali, lyrics by javed Akhtar, music by Anu Malik, 'Tumse milke dil ka jo haal' in Main hoon na, 2004, dir. Frah Khan). The qawwali provided a general cultural reference, perhaps a link to a world of divine passion, with a 'classy' cultural association and good, 'cool' form of world music.



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