

A PERFORMANCE STUDY OF ABIDA PARVEEN'S TU JHOOM

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ABSTRACT

This research paper studies a selection of Abida Parveen's Qawwali performance of Tu Jhoom with a primary focus on the impact of spatiality, semiocity and lyrical composition on the audience and the performers. Moreover, the paper investigates into the depths of Tu Jhoom from a theoretical viewpoint, which focuses on the performative tools, the scenographic actions and bodily semantics employed by the performers, with a particular focus on Abida Parveen's musical persona, which is essential when it comes to producing the desired impact. By using the theoretical frameworks given by Erika Fischer-Lichte, Regula Qureshi, Richard Schechner, and Hartmut Böhme, this paper gives a detailed understanding of how Parveen's technique of Sufi performances captures the essence of spiritual spaces, which allow the audience to experience transcendence- the motive of Sufi performances.



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Qawwali performances are a type of devotional musical genre associated with the Sufi sect of Islam. They have been a part of the Sufi culture in South East Asia for a long time. From the Mughals till modern day, Qawwali is a genre that a few mastered in their attempt to connect with the divine and reach a level of transcendence and spirituality. Sufi performances, be it the whirling dance of dervishes or Qawwalis, as seen historically, are a male-dominated field, where male artists such as Ustad Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, Amjad Sabri, Amir Khusroe and others have given exceptionally powerful performances that have strengthened the genre of Qawwali throughout the world. However, along with all these male artists, Abida Parveen is the first female to have risen to unparalleled fame in the genre of Sufi music. *Qafis* [a specific type of devotional poem or song] and Qawwali have become her identity over the years, and she is now considered one of the top successful female artists belonging to the region of South Asia, who excel in this field.

Despite the historical struggles of women, Abida Parveen has managed to reach the stage of fame that has removed the gender-disparity that was associated with the profession of Qawwali artists. Kelly Pemberton in her book, *Women Mystics and Sufi Shrines in India*, describes how she found women present on dargahs [shrines] for worship as well as to handle the managerial duties of the shrine. "Studies of Sufi shrines and their patrons tend to focus on the dargah and the Sufi lodge (khanaqah) as the central venues for ritual performances. While the presence of women is noticeable at these two types of shrines, their activities, to all appearances, are the same as those of other pilgrims. The key to understanding that women can and do play a very significant part in Sufism today - not only as pilgrims but, in many cases, as "ritual specialists" who mediate the power of the saint or, less often, as de facto pirs - lies in the smaller spaces that are not always readily apparent to the public. These smaller, ancillary spaces are part of a network of shrines where the (deceased) pir's power

has manifested itself, and they are often considered holy in their own right" (Pemberton 15). Other than these duties, women were not seen actively participating in the whirling dances or Qawwali performances that were usually performed and Abida Parveen has refuted this through her powerful involvement in this field.

It is important to know the biographical and professional history of this persona who has changed the pathways of Sufi music and Qawwali for generations to come. Abida Parveen, born 20th February 1954, is a Pakistani Singer, composer, and musician of the Sufi genre. She is one of the most notable singers of the Gharana of Sham Chaurasia which means that she grew up in a Sufi singing environment. Due to her parents' involvement and passion in this profession, for Parveen, singing is a natural process, "almost like the way birds learn to sing" (Hashmi 10). Thus, her quest for good music began at home from the onset of her life and never went away. She claims that she was surrounded by music by the grace of God, but she is still searching for beautiful melodies (11). Her singing and music have earned her many laurels, and she is now recognized as the "Queen of Sufi Music" on various online newspaper platforms and magazines, such as the "*The News International*". Thus, it shows that Abida Parveen is a celebrated figure not only in the subcontinent but worldwide; she engages the listeners, and they transcend temporal space and sink in with an intensity that is trance-like. When asked what she feels like when she is performing, she reminisces, "I feel I am there but am somewhere else. When you speak with your Maker, you are bound to feel lost. I am fortunate to have felt this" (12). Her passion exceeds all shackles of Mystical experiences, and transcends any cultural, or social norms in her union with God through her music. Her music is an overwhelming experience for her as well as for her listeners, it is a prayer and a form of worship. She further explains, "I sing for my inner self. One must satisfy that self before entertaining others" (Hashmi). For Sufis, submission and surrendering to the will of God is the main idea behind their performances. Abida Parveen manifests this submissive and surrendering quality in her personality itself. Her posture, for example, is that of being in Tashahhud, a position in prayer where a person kneels or sits on the ground facing the Kabah [situated in Makkah, Saudi Arabia], glorifies God, and claims the oneness of Allah and the finality of Prophethood. It is a sign of resignation to the God, submitting one's self and

showing respect to the Lord one is sitting in front of. Her performances and posture are explained as such, "[Parveen's] voice disrupts the bio-logic of body, sound, spirit. It is this unsynching of sound, speech, and body that she performs so beautifully. Abida Parveen does not perform within the dictates of these biologics, instead, she sits (both literally and metaphorically) like a qawwal and a qawwal sits in submission to their beloved" (Shroff). Her performances are like a religious ritual to her. Her work mainly comprises Ghazals, Urdu love songs, and songs sung by dervishes or fakirs with a single harmonium, one Tabla, or Dholak, which eventually gained popularity in the world when Abida Parveen introduced it to the Western society. "Abida Parveen's full-throated voice is best fitted for a poetical and musical genre that already boasted of exceptional folk singers such as Teji Bhojwani, Zarina Baloch, Jalal Chandio, Allan Fakir, and others" (Saeed 9). Parveen was tutored at an early age by her father Ustad Ghulam Haidar and was soon performing the songs of Shah Latif Bhattai, Ghulam Farid, and Shaikh Ayaz, at the Urs [death anniversary] of the Sufi saints in the region. Reminiscing about her first public performance she says: "It was the Urs of Hazrat Shah Abdul Latif Bhattai (God be pleased with him). There was a gathering of approximately 30,000 people. I was only 15 years old at the time. My father was with me. I was, of course, very nervous and prayed that I should perform well. Even today I stand with my hands folded in prayer at that Dargha (Shrine). Singing before people is the best feeling for a performer. People are a reflection of God. It is through their soul that you connect to the Almighty. The smell of the flowers tell you where God is" (Shroff 13). Although she sings typical qawwali compositions too - for instance, those ascribed to Amir Khusroe - her singing style does not follow that of a formal Qawwali singer who is usually accompanied by supporting singers. She remains a solo vocalist, along with the dholak or Tabla and sarangi. Her voice is the ecstasy of the mystic songs like *Maheyar Ishq vi tu...* - some of the classics from the Sindh and Punjab region" (Saeed 11). Thus has Abida Parveen distinguished herself in the field.

Apart from this, the choice of the kalam (text) is what makes Abida Parveen stand out, as the selection of the text to perform is very crucial in an artist's life. Their voice and craft give life to the written words. A text is a major part of a performance as the words

resonate in the souls of the listeners. The selection of texts as Abida puts it,

Good music is a bridge to a good kalam. Amir Khusroe, [according to many, who was the father of Qawwali], said that music is a way of getting your message into another person's soul. The beauty of voice transports the beauty of the words onwards. Music is a strong bond of communication with yourself and your maker. Both are bound to each other and cannot be separated. Every person possesses this feeling of being alive through music. All other forms of art are only a shadow of music, music opens doors to other arts.....The faqeers (devotees) in the darbars have the most beautiful kalam. I always went to faqeer Abdul Ghafoor for inspiration. A good kalam is for everyone to sing. It is everyone's copyright. (12-13)

Parveen has been regularly labeled as the world's greatest mystic singer and is listed among the 500 most influential Muslims for her power that induces hysteria among the audience. She is also referred to as the Global Mystic Sufi Ambassador as her contribution to Sufism has led it to be recognized in far-fetched areas of the world. Her initial training was by her 'Baba sain or Gawayya' as she refers to her father, who chose her as the heir to the musical throne over her two brothers. Parveen was never forced into singing, as she claims to have sung her first complete kalam at the tender age of 3. Performance came naturally to her, and soon, she started her professional career by performing at Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai's shrine at the age of 15. From then on, it accelerated with no limitations. She had already begun to perform at the shrines and dargahs in the early 1970s, but it was in 1973 that she had her first breakthrough on Radio Pakistan with a Sindhi. After decades of true devotion to her art, she is now seen as one of the finest vocal artists of Pakistan. With her being one of the only female qawwals in the subcontinent, her persona soars above any 'Normal' in this society. Any lines between her being a man or a woman are blurred, along with being sacred or secular because her art is beyond any of these shackles of this society. When asked in an interview regarding sexism that she might have faced in a male-dominated society, within a male-driven profession, she replied with a smile, "The concept of being a man or a woman doesn't cross my mind. I'm neither on

stage, I'm a vehicle on stage for passion" (Iqbal). This explains why "[s]he is referred to as one of the world's greatest mystic singers. Parveen has a unique position in Sufi music in that she is an exception to the male-dominated genre of qawwali music, subverting gender norms on and off stage" (Beg 105). This research paper primarily focuses on one of her performances, *Tu Jhoom*, from a theoretical performative lens. Coke Studio season 14, launched on Jan 12, 2022, released its first song for the season titled "Coke Studio | Season 14 | Tu Jhoom | Naseebo Lal x Abida Parveen", produced by Zulfiqar Jabbar Khan (Xulfi). The song lyrics were written by Adnan Dhool, and the Urdu kalam [verses] in the song were written by Abida Parveen herself, inspired by Hasrat Mohani. On vocals, we have Abida Parveen and Naseebo Lal, two female Pakistani folk singers primarily singing in Punjabi, Urdu, and Marwari languages. The unique aspect of this performance was the cross-over of two singers whose works are completely different from one another. While Parveen is known for her Sufi singing, Naseebo, is famous for her stage shows and her flirtatious and loud pitched music. This song being a Sufi song and Naseebo's contribution to it was somewhat frowned upon but since its launch, the concept has changed entirely. Vocally speaking her high-pitched voice was a beautiful contrast to Abida's soft yet powerful voice. The latter complements the former by saying how "Xulfi Sahab has put his heart and soul into it. He has fleshed out its melody with purity and warmth and pairing me with Naseebo Lal was a great idea too. She too, is an old-timer just like myself and sings really well," (Sultana). Studying it through a holistic lens, we see how this performance is a blend of multiple cultures and traditions creating a whole new experience. The craftsmanship of the producers and the artist is reflected in their efforts to absorb from different cultures and make a whole, or as Fischer-Lichte upholds the idea of interweaving a cloth in such a manner that strands cannot be separated despite the efforts.

Coke studio comes up with different stage settings every season, this time the staging was very well worked upon. Every song has a different set made depending on the genre of the Performance. Coke Studio is a recorded show but it is a live singing show where the song is recorded live, it is the modern version of a stage performance. A proper space is acquired, there is a proper set of people playing the instruments and the singers and in this music video, we also see live dance performers who are doing a

Sufi dance to the tunes. Their dance resembles that of a whirling dervish; the dancers are clad in green robes while the chorus is clad in white dresses. All the instrument players are wearing traditional clothes, adding to the vibe of the song. The camera moves in all directions, and we see a very mosque-like architecture, with niches everywhere and lamps giving the impression of oil lamps (diya). The lighting is dim, but changes throughout the performance. The sitting places of both the performers are such that they are perched up round disk-like circles, when both the artists sit in their designated places, they face each other, which is the beauty of this song. It is as if they are both in conversation with one another. Their sitting places are covered in blue velvet, with patterned cushions, they sit crossed legged exactly how Qawwals or Sufi singers sit. Since Coke Studio Pakistan is also popular with the international audience, the original video comes with subtitles at the bottom of the screen, in Urdu, the English version of the Urdu, and the English translation of the lyrics for a better understanding of such a wide audience. This video has 124 million views as of February 25th, 2026. When questioned about this unlikely blend of corporate shows and Sufi music in Pakistan, Parveen said; “Buzurgaan e Deen ka kalam Jahan bhi parha jae, woh jagah dargah he banjati hai (Whatever space the message of our elated figures reaches that place turns into a shrine). He is there in every heart; we don't need to switch places to talk to or about Him. There is no need for formalities. His mention is the tide that drives the dance of ecstasy” (Sultana). *The Express Tribune* published an interview of Abida Parveen on May 11, 2022, where Parveen clarified any doubt anyone had regarding this performance. “The purpose of being on any platform is to spread God's message. The great thing about television is that it is in every home. These kalams do not need a medium, to be honest. But this silsila [chain of events] is to make things easier for people, so the message is easily accessible for them” (Sultan). In this age and time, Sufism cannot be restricted to places like shrines or darbars, the concept is way beyond that. One needs to have an access to these concepts in their homes or they might fade away in the background for this world is headed in an entirely opposite direction.

In such a situation, Abida Parveen's contribution might be the greatest for this generation and for the generations to come. The atmosphere that is created by how a space is used, the atmosphere that emanates from the use of the space is what is spatiality. Böhme calls atmospheres “spaces, insofar as they are affected by the presence of things, people, or the

environmental surroundings and their ecstasies. They are themselves spheres of the presence of these things, of their reality in space” (33). It is the dimensions and forms apart from the color, smell, or appearance that make the outward effects and captures the attention of the perceiver. What tops it all is how the atmosphere reveals the transience of the spatiality of any performance. This is because performances are transient, one cannot give them permanence. They are so transient that every little change impacts them and create an atmosphere and can completely change it. Moreover, “[t]he spectator is surrounded and absorbed by the atmosphere, dives into it, and is immersed in it. Ultimately, spectators become a part of the atmosphere, their reactions strengthen, weaken, or even disperse the atmosphere—and thus create a new and different spatiality. The fleeting character of spatiality is most pronounced in the atmosphere of a performance” (25). Atmospheres in recorded performances are more about the viewer's response to a certain music video, thus manifesting how every experience of listening to *Tu Jhoom* is different. Modern technology allows us to pause the fleeting nature of an atmosphere and feel it again and again, only in such performances, while live performances are an entirely separate story. This performance is 6 minutes and 40 seconds and starts with light background music, the video is dark at the start and then the lights start to appear very dim at first. The mosque-like architecture starts to get visible as the intensity of light increases. A neon light sign of Coke Studio is lit up as everything is dark, and the light appears on Naseebo Lal, who is sitting on her perched place. She is wearing a bright orange and gold dress; it is a purely Eastern dress, and her blonde hair is neatly tied at the back. Her makeup is minimal and so is her stance, and she directly starts with the first verse of the kalam,

*Peeran nu mein seene laavaan, te mein
hasdi jaavaan*

(I have embraced all the hardships while
staying unfazed).

The very first line of the kalam sets the tone and mood of the performance for it talks about the highest form of surrendering to the Divine which is to embrace all the pain and to smile through it. The first and the most important stance of a Sufi towards life is embracing the pain. She, in her high-pitched-voice, repeats the first verse, adds a *Sur* [tune] to it, and moves on to the next verse. The next verse explains the struggles of a man who fights all kinds of pain to find one ounce of relief, who no matter what, no matter what the circumstances are finds a

way to smile. Then comes the next verse where she states that one does not need to understand everyone, that is the only thing one needs to understand.

*Dukh vee apnay sukh vee apnay, mein te
bus ye jaanan*

(The joys and sorrows of this life are mine
to endure, This I to myself assure).

After mentioning the worldly pains and sorrows of this life, with a slight pause, she comes to the main verse of this kalam in such a beautiful manner that it puts a smile on the viewer. With both her fingers closed and her body moving from side to side she with a smile on her face dictates the way to live a life,

Tu jhoom

(Transcend into a greater realm to discover
the Soul's gem)

The translation of these two words in Urdu took nine words in the English language to somewhat understand the concept of it. At this point, all the lights are now on and Naseebo Lal repeats the main verse again and again moving from side to side. Then the camera moves from Naseebo Lal to Abida Parveen and one can definitely feel the change. The depth of the song takes a shift, the strength in her voice uplifts the persona of the entire performance. She has her script all sprayed out in front of her in Urdu and is sitting on a perched-up stage designated for her. She is in her most natural state, her hair in its curly glory, a navy blue shawl like gown draped around her shoulder with tiny red flowered pattern. On her neck, is her signature Ajrak without which she is rarely seen. She takes over the song in a gliding motion, completely as ease, no amount of worry or distress on her face. Arms wide open she embraces the next verse, which could literally describe her personal and professional life.

*Mein Deewani kuj na janaan, mast ho ke
gaawaan*

(Forgetting my being, in a trance I go),

She claims to know nothing but to sing- explaining a Sufi's lifestyle- to care about nothing else but what she has chosen for herself in order to reach the doors of the Divine. Knowing Abida Parveen, we know this is how she spends her life, in modesty and just resigning in front of the Lord through her art (her singing).

*Dunia raazi kr ke kamlay, phir wee chen
nai owna*

(All the adulation from this world, still does
not resolve my woes),

The world should be least of a Sufi's worries for no matter what anyone does, the world would have

something to bicker about. There is no point in caring for the world.

*Saari khushiyan mil jaavan te, piche kee
reh jaana*

(If all my wishes were to come true, what
would be left in the world to do),

She then explains the nature of man and the system of getting what a man wants. No matter how much a man gets he will always have something to ask for from God. If he is given everything that he desires, there would be no purpose for people to live. It is our desires that we seek and struggle for in this world. It is our desires that keep us connected to God. If we get everything, our purpose of living this life would be lost.

Tere bus mein kuch v nai ae,

Dil noon ae samjhavaan

(My destiny is beyond my control,

I always let my heart know),

Here Abida explains how man is without any power and has no control over his fate. Whatever is given to him is by the mercy of God. If you make your heart understand, all of this one can live a better life. By educating the audience about a lifestyle of a Sufi Dervish, she also sings the main verse *Tu Jhoom* while she really moves and grooves with the tunes, and the chorus clad in white also joins her, but her voice echoes above every voice. As she sings the verse *Tu Jhoom*, Naseebo and Abida make eye contact and smile at each other (*Tu Jhoom* 1:45).

There is a chorus of men and women who add to the performance, as shown at 1:58, clad in white. They get the spotlight now where they chant *Tu jhoom, Tu jhoom* with the main singers. The dancers carry on with their steps with the music, they form a circle and dance, they pause when the music pauses, and their moves are in sync with that of the lyrics and the music. The spatiality and the interplay of all these elements together add to this performance and make it a whole. The diversity of performative cultures interact, interweave, and depend upon each other to create a performance. Such performance cultures 'interweave' so much that it is impossible to trace the strands back to their origin. Everything is forming a cloth-like representation, forming a particular pattern. Through the metaphor of a thread woven into a cloth, the essence of interweaving cultural performance is encapsulated where the cloth may not be perfect but captures each and every element of how and what a performance should be. This performance of *Tu Jhoom* has interconnected elements woven together into a whole: the sound

system that is used is not something that we see in most Sufi performances but here we see as a part of it woven intricately and adding to the performance. Furthermore, the lyrics give the lessons of a Sufi's way of life. Naseebo Lal says she is happy in her own self and worldly pleasures do not elate her. However, there is a change in the music whenever it is Abida's turn to add to the performance, the music goes mellow, and her voice takes the floor. Her lyrics speak of modesty, a reflection of her being,

*kee karna oochyaan shaanaan nu ,
kee hath laana aasmaanaan nu*

(why strive to grasp beyond reach, why let unattainable desires unleash). (2:47)

The camera shifts between both the singers, it is one verse each, and their one-on-one correspondence is an impeccable sight. At 3:22, Abida rests her case on destiny, another Sufi concept, that ordains that what is destined for one will reach them, no matter what, that it will find its way to them eventually.

Jo hai tera lab jaye ga, kr ke koi bahana
(what you are destined to get, will find a way to you, do not fret).

The interval and pinnacle come when there is *Tu Jhoom* repeated and we see Abida Parveen with both her arms up in the air giving in to her own instructions (*Tu Jhoom*, 3:45). With all the instruments and all the performers involved, the performance takes a step up, where it is as if ecstasy is induced in everyone including Abida Parveen and Naseebo Lal, they both smile and move in a particular manner as if in a frenzy, with hand gestures Abida instructs Naseebo to sway (4:45), which she willingly accepts and with her arms she grooves, her face is lit up as if she has gotten to the point where she is free and has resigned her being to the Divine. The dancers have clearly transcended and are soaring in between the earth and the heavens.

*Nigah-e-yaar jise ashna-e-raaz kare,
Wo apni khoobi-e-qismat pe kyun na naaz kare*
(the fortunate one who is bestowed with the insight into Thy's realm, then why should he not on providence's favor dwell). (Parveen)

The performance ends with these lyrics sung by Abida where there is a chorus of *Tu jhoom* by the chorus in the background and occasional surs and smiles and appreciation from Naseebo Lal. These lyrics, yet again, speak of a Sufi concept where it is believed that it is all about a glance from the creator that sets a Sufi apart, Sufis are the chosen ones, they are chosen to spend their lives pleasing Allah. Man is a single order away from a different life and one

should be happy if they are chosen and God chooses to unveil the secrets to them. After another round of *tu jhoom*, the lights of the stage start to fade away and we see Naseebo Lal praising Abida Parveen with her hand gestures and facial expressions.

It can be theorised that *Tu Jhoom* depicts the way Abida Parveen leads her life, by swaying; to leave all the worries on Allah. Through this approach, this performance is autobiographical, as it is her own self that she is performing. Jhoom is a term that is coined from the dance move 'jhoomar', which literally means 'swaying'. It is a dance of ecstasy and serves as a living demonstration of happiness. It is a slow rhythmic dance to the tunes of love and emotional songs. It is a light sway when one is content, and the heart is full. Moreover, it is a traditional dance mostly produced by the people of southern and central Punjab. The relation that this paper draws between this dance and Abida Parveen is that through this performance, she preaches an approach to life where she claims that the Divine has her back and she instructs the others to trust His plans. People do not need to worry about anything in this world as they are here with destiny and all they should do is praise God and the rest will be taken care of. The way Abida Parveen is swaying as she sings tells her ownership of this performance. It is her own way of life being expressed in a song, the way she leads her life, having a strong faith in destiny and Allah. Her performances are an extension of her own being, jhoom is her lifestyle.

Apart from the audio-poetic effect of the performance, there are some aspects to the performers that manifest the entire aura of the Qawwali. There is a mannerism in Abida Parveen's personality; the adab [manners], and tehzeeb [politeness, etiquette] that she displays in her demeanor despite the position she holds in this generation of music is a commendable way to teach this generation the age-old saying "Ba adab ba naseeb, be adab be naseeb" (A Mannerly man is Fortunate while a Mannerless is Unfortunate). This shows how she is thriving in this profession by still carrying the traditions of her Buzurg (elders). The internet wholly appreciated this newly launched track but also over the behind-the-scenes video of Parveen greeting Lal. Parveen enters the studio and comes to where Lal is sitting and touches her feet as a sign of respect followed by Sufis, to which Lal gets emotional and stands up to do the same. This exchange is a display of her phenomenal self which is the same as the semiotic self she displays through her performance. This exchange between the two stars

went viral and the people who watched this were seen praising the beauty that such traditions hold. This genre of music is traditional and ritualistic as much as it is Sufi (Coke Studio 'Tu Jhoom': Video of Naseebo Laal and Abida Parveen's meetup goes viral - BBC URDU).

The philology of this performance is *Tu Jhoom*, imploring others to whirl and dance like Sufis do. Therefore, the whole idea of the performance has been derived from Sufism and the inner peace they develop from their practices. The two lead singers, Abida Parveen and Naseebo Lal seem to promote the idea of embracing oneself and contentment after earning their fame in a male-dominated world. Therefore, the Qawwali, recorded by a leading music franchise in the country, also conveys the message of women empowerment as they wholly embrace themselves and exhibit contentment for what they have achieved, while simultaneously radiating the mystic essence, devoid of worldly gains. And whereas it does seem like a worldly music, it really does not mean that and is purportedly related to God and how He blesses the chosen ones – be them a man or a woman. By creating a unique *sama'* [the sufi term for listening in a spiritual gathering] in the studio, they remind everyone of God's blessings whilst delivering a musical masterpiece that meets the contemporary musical needs. Therefore, it can be said that *sama'* can serve various purposes. Al-Hajwari quotes, "Dhu 'l-Nun the Egyptian says: "Audition is a Divine influence (warid al-haqq) which stirs the heart to seek God: those who listen to it spiritually (ba-haqq) attain unto God (tahaqqaaq), and those who listen to it sensually (ba-nafs) fall into heresy (tazandaqa)" (Nicholson 404). The Sufi here emphasizes on the spiritual reality the auditor must train to attain and not the sound produced by the instruments. Moreover, he underscores that this sound should be adsorbed onto his soul and stir it up, for if it does not follow the truth, it will remain veiled and face ta'wil (recourse from interpretation). About this topic, Shibly opines that if the audition is not used to seek God and one fails to grasp the actual meaning behind it, he will cause himself utter damnation; therefore, the heart must be absorbed in the dhikr [remembrance] of God. Some people are of the view that the core purpose of audition is to fill one's heart and be up with God's remembrance – that the mystical trance it creates suffices to remind one of the Mighty Beloved, and if it does not happen, that means there is no love. But in this rendition, that love, and praise can easily be recognized. Abida Parveen and Naseebo Lal provide the audience with a great

Qawwali rendition that meets the contemporary musical needs and satiates the Sufi spirit of the performance simultaneously. The group standing on one side of the studio, reiterating the lyrics in sync imitate a true Qawwal's performance. The second group of girls and boys dancing emulates the audience in a Qawwali performance and how they move in their own way – thereby, making this performance a true masterpiece.

It is crucial to understand the performer's relationship with the audience and the musician's performance persona as an interface between the audience and the performer. Music in this study is more of an interaction of the multiple selves of a performer with the audiences. Every performer has three selves, their personal self, the character they are portraying and the persona that they create when they are performing. A successful and impactful performer is the one we can't divorce these three selves from. There is a phenomenal self to Abida Parveen and there is a semiotic self; the semiotic self is the one we see in her performances, the phenomenal self is the one we see when she is not performing, in her interviews and her public appearances. There is a degree of performance in interviews also but we can claim that as a public figure, that is the most we can get out of her true phenomenal self. There have been numerous instances where we see Parveen getting emotional and overwhelmed speaking of her journey and her relationship with her art and the Divinity. There is a display of emotions similar to the display of emotions in the form of symbols and signs in her performances. In another one of her performances, *Mai Naara-e-Mastana*, there is a point where she is looking towards the sky, arms spread wide, a smile on her face as she dances. That is a display of her semiotic self and there is a display of her Phenomenal self in an online interview where she cannot stop crying while speaking of her blessings that she has gained from the Divine. This *rabt* (sync) between her different selves is what allows her to create a performance persona for herself and her audience. In order to understand this relationship among her two selves (semiotic and phenomenal), we can take the help of the term 'embodiment'. Embodiment describes how through the articulation of a body, imperceptible ideas became perceptible to the world. Meanings are understood as mental entities and are comprehensible only insofar as there are signs to convey them. The act of embodiment highlights another aspect of the performance where there was a

tension between the concepts of 'transmission of truth' and 'transience of performance'. While the gestures, sounds and movements in the performances of *Mai Naara-e-Mastana* and *Tu Jhoom* by Abida Parveen might be transitory, the meanings they express are permanent. When I speak of the embodiment of Parveen, I mean to talk about her presence, a presence that allows her to control the performance space and navigate her audience, audience can physically feel a power radiating from her that captures their attention and makes them focus completely on Parveen and register her as a source of strength and eventually a means to access the metaphysical world. "The spectator experiences the actor as present in an unusually intense way. This can be termed the strong concept of presence. Such strategies of embodiment combined with the presence of the performer create a circulating energy that affects the spectators and ultimately produces an energetic response from them (Lichte 34). When Parveen brings forth her phenomenal body and its energy, it appears as embodied minds which the audience experience in the form of circulating energy. This circulating energy, in this regard, is perceived as a transformative power and is eventually felt as a life force. This can also be termed as the radical concept of presence. The energy brought forward by Parveen and audience circulates in the space and can be felt by all. This energetic exchange between Abida Parveen and spectators affects the entire set of audiences [live or Video on demand (VOD)], thus creating the performance. This is further reinforced by how "[t]he experience of recorded music as performance derives not only from our direct somatic experience of the sound and our sense of the physical gestures the musicians made to produce it but also from various forms of cultural knowledge, including knowledge of the performance conventions of particular genres of music and the performance styles of specific performers. As an audience, we acquire these kinds of knowledge from our experience of live performances and the visual culture that surrounds music" (Auslander 26). Sufi music through the centuries has seen many performers, each one added a touch of their own while retaining the original format. Sufi music needed a performer like Abida Parveen who molds herself according to the world- a world that leaves behind anyone who refuses to grow with it. In this challenging world of social media, Abida Parveen has played an immense role in growing herself with the growth of the world. A musical career of 49 years

and an artist not labeled as outdated is something that is not only commendable on a personal level but a much-needed feat for the future of Sufi music. The diversity in her performance, the way she becomes what she is performing, the space she creates for her audience and herself added to her career. The ethnomusical elements in her performances and the spatiality is what has contributed to the Sufi milieu and has aided the diaspora to connect to their roots. Thus, Sufi performances have an impact on the audience that make them transcend into a world that is away from this one.

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