

Independent University

Bangladesh (IUB)

IUB Academic Repository

Department of English and Modern Languages

Thesis, M.A. (EL)

2026-04

Qawwali and the quest for divine truth

Hossain, Rabiah Binthe

Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB)

<https://ar.iub.edu.bd/handle/11348/1565>

Downloaded from IUB Academic Repository

Qawwali and the Quest for Divine Truth

By

Rabiah Binthe Hossain

ID: 2432592

Supervised by

Dr. Sarker Hasan Al Zayed

A thesis submitted to the Department of English and Modern Languages in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in English Literature

Department of English and Modern Languages

Independent University, Bangladesh

April 2026



© 2026. Independent University, Bangladesh

All rights reserved.

Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my/our own original work while completing degree at Independent University, Bangladesh.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

Student's Full Name & Signature

(Signature)



Rabiah Binthe Hossain

ID: 2432592

Approval

The thesis titled “Qawwali and the Quest for Divine Truth” submitted by

1. Rabiah Binthe Hossain (Student ID: 2432592)

of Spring, 2026 has been accepted as satisfactory in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts in English Literature on 13 April 2026.

Examining Committee:



Supervisor:

Dr. Sarker Hasan Al Zayed

(Member)

Professor,

Department of English and Modern Language



External Expert:

Dr. Farzana Akhter

Professor & Dean,

East West University

Departmental Head:

Dr. Naureen Rahnuma

(Chair)

Assistant Professor & Head,

Department of English and Modern Language

Abstract

This thesis examines how Sufi devotional expression, particularly within the qawwali tradition, reorients faith away from fear and reward toward an overwhelming attachment to divine love. Through readings of “Chaap Tilak,” “Saqla Aur Pila,” “Tu Kuja Man Kuja,” and “Tajdar-e-Haram,” it traces how motifs of wine, intoxication, annihilation (*fanaa*), and distance operate as symbolic modes through which nearness to the Divine is articulated. Rather than opposing Islamic orthodoxy, these texts inhabit a liminal theological space in which inward experience unsettles the certainty of outward structures. Drawing on frameworks such as transgression and apophatic thought, this study shows that qawwali does not resolve doctrinal tension but sustains it, allowing metaphor to carry meanings that exceed rational and juridical language. Within this framework, heaven is no longer the final horizon of devotion. Instead, faith emerges as an ongoing movement shaped by longing, where nearness to the Divine is sought not as arrival but as continuous orientation.

Keywords: Sufism; Qawwali; Divine Love; Ishq-e-Haqiqi; Ishq-e-Ilahi; Fanaa; Sufi Poetry; Islamic Theology; Transgression; Apophatic Theology; Devotional Literature; Mysticism

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my namesake, whose legacy has shaped my understanding of Sufism, and through it, my perception of Divine love and the Oneness of Allah. It is through this inheritance that I have come to seek closeness to Him.

Acknowledgement

While writing my undergraduate thesis, I was overwhelmed by the pressure of it all. I did not know how to write a thesis, how to approach it, or where to even begin. Because of that, I ended up writing my acknowledgment in a hurry, and I have always regretted not being able to fully express what I truly felt. At the time, I thought I had to be strictly professional, that there was no room for sincerity.

Now, at the end of this journey, I realise that this might be one of the last things I write as a student here. So, I choose to write this the way I should have before: with honesty.

First and foremost, my greatest and purest acknowledgment is to the Almighty. Without Him, I am nothing, and it is through His will alone that this dissertation came into being.

Choosing this topic was particularly challenging, given its niche position within English literature. However, theological literature has always remained close to my heart. Throughout this journey, I owe my deepest gratitude to my mentor and supervisor, Dr. Sarker Hasan Al Zayed. He created a space where I could express myself in ways I had never thought possible within academia, while still guiding me with the discipline required of a student. A mentor is not merely someone who teaches, but someone who instills in you the belief that you are worthy of respect, and he did that for me. Despite my many shortcomings, he never made me feel small or judged. I am aware that he is selective in choosing the students he supervises, and I will always remain grateful that he chose me. No words of praise would be sufficient to capture the extent of his influence. In moments of difficulty, I often find myself recalling his encouraging words, and in doing so, I am reminded that I am capable, that I can continue.

I am also deeply grateful to Prof. Dr. Md. Ahmed Ahsanuzzaman, my guru, who has played a significant role in shaping my confidence as a literature student and has provided me

with opportunities that have impacted my life in ways I cannot fully articulate. His sudden flashes of humor, though often unexpected, reflect a warmth that makes his guidance all the more memorable!

My eternal thanks also go to Dr. Md. Shaiful Islam, whose support has touched me in ways he may not even realise. I will always carry that gratitude with me. His constant encouragement and ever-smiling presence have been a source of comfort and motivation throughout my journey. I have always felt inspired to do better, knowing that he would be quietly rooting for me wherever he is. He is, truly, a kind and generous soul.

I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to Prof. Dr. Md. Mahmudul Hasan, who, despite not being my direct teacher, generously gave me his time. His kindness, along with his deep engagement with Islamic theology, has influenced me in ways I cannot fully articulate. His work has been a source of inspiration for me and remains one of the reasons I was drawn toward working on Islamic literature.

I am also deeply grateful to Rajib Bhowmick sir, who, despite my own doubts about my abilities, guided me with patience and generosity, even if only for a semester. It has always felt as though I had been under his wing for much longer. He made me believe that I am capable of something meaningful, and that I deserve the good that comes my way, something I had long struggled to believe in myself.

Lastly, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Shamim Zaman Vi, whose beautiful Urdu writing first revealed to me the true elegance of the language. It is largely because of him that I continue to engage with texts in Urdu, whether through translations or original renditions. He also helped me understand several texts whose meanings I struggled to grasp, and

has always shown me immense kindness and warmth, despite being such an accomplished writer himself.

Above all, my greatest acknowledgment is for my family. Without them, I truly would be nothing, and saying more almost feels insufficient. To my mother, who had always hoped to see me walk this path of Islamic literature: this, in so many ways, is for her. To my father, whose support has always been steady, present in the ways that matter most. To my brother, for his eternal patience! For listening to thoughts that never seemed to end, and for being a constant I could rely on without question. And to my sister, whose love has never wavered, who holds me close even when I am hardest to love, and who, in her own way, reminds me that I am worthy of being here.

I am also deeply grateful to Meraj Bhai, our family driver, who drove me to and from university each day without a word of complaint, becoming a significant part of this journey. To my nanny, Lilu, who continues to care for me with a tenderness that makes me feel like I am still a child. And to Shumon, whose help at home allowed me the ease and peace of mind to focus on my work without worry.

As this marks the end of my time at Independent University, Bangladesh, I feel a deep sense of attachment to this place. To everyone I have mentioned, each of you has shaped me in ways I will never forget. Your kindness has stayed with me. And in the end, I remain simply what all of this has made me.

“Indeed, Sufis do not know why they love God. They believe it is God’s grace that has allowed them to love Him.”

—Amira Shamma Abdin

Contents

Chapter 1	11
Introduction	11
Sufism and the Islamic Tradition	11
The Qawwali Tradition of Devotional Music	18
Selection of Qawwalis and Justification	19
Ishq-e Haqiqi and Ishq-e Ilahi	20
Love, Proximity, and the Limits of Doctrine	22
On the Ethics of Limits and Listening	23
Chapter 2	25
Key Symbols of the Sufi Poetic Tradition	25
Chapter 3	33
Discussion	33
The Prohibition of Wine as the Foundation of Sufi Metaphor.....	33
The concept of Fanaa and the Mystical Gaze in Khusrau's "Chaap Tilak"	36
Foucault's Transgression and Divine Intimacy in "Saqla Aur Pila"	43
Apophatic Proximity and the Poetics of Distance in "Tu Kuja Man Kuja"	49
Beyond Reward and Fear in "Tajdar-e-Haram"	55
Chapter 5	62
Conclusion.....	62
Works Cited	69

Chapter 1

Introduction

Sufism and the Islamic Tradition

In scholarly terms, Sufism may be understood as recognizing that human existence operates across two dimensions: the physical and the mental, or, more broadly, the outward and the inward. Tasawwuf, or Sufism, represents the inward and experiential dimension of Islam. It is concerned with the purification of the self, the cultivation of sincerity, and the desire for an intimate closeness with the Creator. This then raises an important question: what becomes of a person who has moved beyond the fear of hell and the desire for heaven? If they remain religious, what motivates them to continue? While Islamic jurisprudence governs outward actions and theology defines belief, Sufism focuses on transforming the inner state of a person through disciplined spiritual practice (Chishti 13).

As an organized movement, Sufism is often understood to have emerged among certain Muslims as a response to developments in the early Umayyad period (661–750). During this time, the consolidation of political power and the expansion of administrative structures marked the transformation of the early Muslim community into a more complex imperial system (Hawting 1). Within this evolving political framework, tensions began to surface around the nature of religious authority and governance. Muslim tradition, as Hawting notes, retrospectively distinguishes between the ideal of the caliph as “khalifat rasul Allah,” a successor to the Prophet (SA) entrusted with the welfare of the community, and the perception of Umayyad rulers as exercising a more centralized, and at times contested, form of authority (12). The caliphate, in

this formulation, was not to function as an unchecked political office but was to be conceptually bound to the preservation of religious order, with interpretive authority increasingly associated with the emerging class of scholars (Afifah and Munahar).

This transformation prompted concern among early ascetic figures, such as Ḥasan al-Baṣri and other pietist thinkers, who argued that religious life was becoming overly formalized, outward, and entangled with structures of power (Mohideen et al. 56). Their critique centered on the conviction that external observance alone could not guarantee spiritual authenticity. Rather, they emphasized the necessity of an inward mode of engagement: a cultivation of the self which was grounded in ethical discipline, remembrance of God, and a deeply personal negotiation of one's relationship with the divine and the world (Karamustafa 2). This inward turn was not limited to the self alone, but extended to the interpretation of revelation itself. Alongside the cultivation of the inner life emerged a parallel effort to discern the inner meanings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah through forms of interpretive reflection often described as "istinbat" (2). In this context, knowledge of the self and knowledge of divine truth became intertwined, both understood as unfolding from within rather than being exhausted by outward forms. Over time, this orientation was further shaped by the idea that such knowledge was not simply attained through effort, but granted, accessible most fully to those regarded as God's "awliya" or beloved, whose proximity to the divine enabled a deeper apprehension of both the "nafs" of self and revelation (5).

This inward orientation of the "self" is reflected even in the term Sufi itself. The word is most commonly traced to the Arabic *sūf* (wool), associated with early Muslim devotees who were known for wearing coarse woollen garments ("Origins of the word 'Sufism'"). Alongside this, other etymological associations deepen its significance: some link the term to the ahl al-

suffa, the “People of the Bench,” a group of early Muslims who lived in close proximity to the Prophet (SA) in Medina, while others trace it to the expression *safa*, a word that signifies purity (“Origins of the word ‘Sufism’”). Taken together, these derivations gesture toward a shared emphasis on simplicity, proximity, and inner refinement. The term Sufi, therefore, does not point to a single origin, but rather points toward a cluster of meanings that converge upon an inwardly oriented mode of being, where the cultivation of the self becomes central to the experience of the divine.

It is perhaps the emphasis on such inward experience, discipline, and spiritual states that has led to the frequent mischaracterisation of Sufism as an “ecstatic mystical cult” by non-Sufis (“What Is Sufism?”). Because Sufism prioritises inward and spiritual experience over visible conformity, it is often misunderstood as an extension of the religion of Islam, and not a separate sect or philosophy. Historically, Sufism evolved within Islamic orthodoxy rather than in opposition to it. By the eleventh century, scholars such as Al-Ghazali articulated a synthesis in the various volumes of *Ihya Ulum Id Din (The Revival of Religious Learning)* completed in 1106 CE, where mystical practice was understood as the inward fulfillment of Islamic law (3). This synthesis helps subsidize the conceptual framework in which Shariah regulates action, Tariqah provides the spiritual method, and Haqiqah signifies ultimate truth. Within this triadic structure, religious practice becomes a means rather than an end, oriented toward experiential knowledge of the Divine, or Marifah (Ali)—the concept which will be examined more closely later in a separate chapter.

Within the distinctive modes of Sufi expression, a defining feature of Sufi discourse is its reliance on symbolic and poetic language, rooted in the belief that divine reality cannot be fully apprehended through rational argument or legal terminology alone. Consequently, metaphor

becomes a necessary medium for articulating spiritual states that exceed ordinary cognition. Images of intoxication, annihilation, and madness recur not as endorsements of moral transgression, but as figurations of ego-dissolution or *fanaa*, the surrendering of the ego to the divine creator. These metaphors situate Sufi discourse within a liminal theological space, neither rejecting religious law nor confining itself to religion's literal parameters, allowing spiritual experience to be articulated without doctrinal rigidity.

Divine Love and the Question of Music in Islamic Thought

The Qur'an does not explicitly declare music to be unlawful or prohibited in the same direct manner as it addresses other moral transgressions. However, certain verses have been interpreted by early scholars in ways that bring music into ethical debate. For instance, in Surah Luqman (31:6), the phrase “lahw al-hadith” (“idle talk” or “diverting speech”) has been understood by some scholars as referring to singing. Ibn Mas‘ud is reported to have asserted the following: “This—by Allah—refers to singing,” thereby linking the verse to forms of auditory distraction that leads one away from the path of God (Ibn Kathir 571). Similarly, another renowned scholar, Qatadah ibn Di‘ama, interprets the “purchase” of such speech not necessarily as a literal transaction, but as an inclination toward and preference for that which distracts from truth. In some readings, this has even been extended to practices such as acquiring singing slave girls, further associating the verse with musical entertainment (Ibn Kathir 571). These interpretations, while influential, remain part of a broader exegetical tradition in which the meaning of “lahw al-hadith” is debated rather than fixed.

However, setting aside tafsir momentarily, and only referring to the Holy Qur'an, certain practices, such as the consumption of wine and gambling, are treated with particular gravity and

finality, as opposed to the idea of music. This is most evident in the verse of Surah al-Ma'idah announcing their absolute prohibition: "intoxicants, gambling, [sacrificing on] stone altars [to other than Allah], and divining arrows are but defilement from the work of Satan, so avoid it that you may be successful" (5:90–91). The language employed here is decisive and unambiguous, leaving little room for interpretive uncertainty. It is significant that at the time of revelation, music, drinking, gambling, and other social practices were already well-established within the Arab speaking communities. If music were to be categorically unlawful in the same sense as intoxicants or gambling, its absence from explicit Qur'ānic prohibition raises an important interpretive question. Whether the prominence of "wine" and "gambling" as named vices, contrasted with the silence surrounding "music," suggests the presence of a conceptual grey area rather than an unequivocal condemnation. It is within this ambiguity that later scholars, particularly al-Ghazali, situate their discussions.

Al-Ghazali argues that the permissibility of music depends not on sound itself but on its moral and spiritual effects. As he states, "Words which are easily understood and sweet sounds with rhythm are not unlawful when they are separately lawful; they cannot be unlawful when they are united" (165). Here, Ghazali establishes a crucial principle: the lawful (halal) or unlawful (haram) status of music is not inherent to sound, but derived from the elements it brings together. If the words are permissible and the sounds themselves are not prohibited, their combination does not suddenly render them unlawful. In this way, he shifts the evaluative framework from the form of music to its content and context, where meaning, intention, and use become central.

This formulation reframes the debate by redirecting attention away from sound as an isolated object and toward its ethical and experiential effects. Music, in this view, does not

independently generate moral corruption; rather, it intensifies and gives expression to what is already present within the listener. This psychological and spiritual mechanism is further clarified when Ghazali writes: “[t]here is no path of sound entering into the heart without the door of ear. The feelings that lie hidden in heart are brought out by sweet, melodious and rhymed sounds” (162). Music, therefore, functions as a revelatory medium rather than a corrupting one: it exposes latent dispositions rather than creating them. If immoral inclinations emerge, the fault lies not in sound itself but in the moral state of the heart that receives it.

Despite such arguments, music has often been regarded with suspicion within orthodox religious discourse. Yet traditions such as Qawwali deliberately move against this restraint by privileging spiritual experience and experiential knowledge of God. Rather than defending music as lawful or unlawful, Qawwali aligns itself with a higher spiritual objective: intimacy with the Divine. This shift does not deny ethical boundaries; rather, it subordinates them to the primacy of divine love and inner transformation. This hierarchy becomes clearer when examined through the lens of “Ishq-e-haqiqi”, the love of God for God’s own sake. Even Ghazali concedes that music is permissible only when it does not provoke immoral desires, reinforcing that ethical caution remains essential (15). However, Sufi discourse consistently elevates divine love above external acts, suggesting that outward forms are secondary to inward orientation.

An interesting example of this principle can be found in the example of Umar ibn al-Khattab, one of the most prominent companions of the Prophet Muhammad (SA). During the ritual of tawaf, those performing the Hajj kiss the Black Stone (Hajar al-Aswad) in adherence to the Sunnah. Umar ibn al-Khattab, upon kissing the stone, remarked: “No doubt, I know that you are a stone and can neither benefit anyone nor harm anyone. Had I not seen Allah’s Messenger (pbuh) kissing you I would not have kissed you” (Sahih al-Bukhari 1597). Although reports exist

suggesting that the Black Stone descended from Heaven, Umar's statement deliberately strips the object of inherent sacred power. The act is preserved not because of the stone itself, but because of love and obedience to the Prophet (SA). This moment demonstrates a critical Sufi insight: material forms possess no independent spiritual efficacy. Meaning, therefore, arises not out of the objecthood of the object but rather solely from its divine orientation.

A similar ethic underlies the teachings of Rabia al-Adawiyya (c. 716–801 CE), a foundational figure in early Sufism and the doctrine of divine love (*maḥabba*). Rabia famously rejected worship motivated by fear of Hell or desire for Paradise, insisting instead upon devotion rooted entirely in love for God. As quoted in Farid al-Din Attar's *Memorial of the Friends of God*, she declares: "I want to put out the fires of Hell, and burn down the rewards of Paradise. They block the way to Allah. I do not want to worship from fear of punishment or for the promise of reward, but simply for the love of Allah" (113). Rabia's statement encapsulates the Sufi conviction that all external incentives, even Paradise itself, are secondary when compared to direct communion with the Divine. Within this framework, heaven ceases to function as a destination and becomes, at best, an incidental outcome. The true end of the spiritual path is not reward, forgiveness, or fear, but the realization of divine love.

Returning to the question of music, this perspective clarifies why Sufis refrain from defending music on purely theological grounds. The issue is not whether music is unequivocally lawful or unlawful, but whether it serves as a means toward or away from God. If divine love reigns supreme, then all practices: ritual, sound, movement, or silence, are evaluated according to their capacity to orient the heart toward God. In this sense, music is neither vindicated nor condemned outright; it is absorbed into a larger theology where love of God, rather than fear of transgression, occupies the highest spiritual priority.

The Qawwali Tradition of Devotional Music

Qawwali developed as a devotional musical form within South Asian Sufism, functioning as a performative extension of mystical poetry and spiritual listening (*Sama*). Closely associated with the Chishtiyya, qawwali reflects the Chishti emphasis on love, humility, and accessibility in devotional practice. Unlike purely textual traditions of Sufism, qawwali translates mystical concepts into embodied, communal experience through sound, rhythm, and repetition. The poetic foundations of qawwali are often attributed to Amir Khusrau, whose works synthesized Persian literary conventions with Indic musical forms (Kuthoo 243). Building on this foundational tradition, qawwali has continued to evolve through later poetic contributions. This thesis, therefore, engages with poets such as Muzaffar Warsi and Payam Sihalvi, whose compositions remain central to the qawwali repertoire and continue to be widely performed.

This synthesis of Persian poetic traditions and Indic musical forms enabled complex metaphysical ideas to be communicated in vernacular languages, fostering emotional resonance among diverse audiences. Qawwali performances typically unfold through gradual rhythmic escalation, call-and-response structures, and repeated refrains, creating an immersive environment conducive to heightened spiritual concentration. Central to qawwali is the concept of *sama*, understood not as entertainment but as a disciplined mode of listening that can awaken the “mind” (Ghazali 166). In Sufi conceptual universe, sound is not considered to produce spiritual states; rather, it reveals what is already present within the listener. Qawwali thus functions as a catalyst for remembrance, enabling participants to move beyond intellectual engagement toward affective and experiential awareness of the Divine. Within this performative context, poetic metaphors of intoxication and surrender acquire their full meaning, enacted through bodily and emotional participation rather than interpreted solely at the level of text.

In contemporary contexts, qawwali has increasingly been detached from its ritual and theological foundations, often consumed as a cultural or musical artifact. While such circulation has expanded its reach, it has also contributed to interpretive flattening, where symbolic language is appreciated aesthetically but divorced from its spiritual intent. Understanding qawwali as a devotional practice rather than a musical genre is therefore essential to recovering its theological significance within Sufi tradition.

Selection of Qawwalis and Justification

The selection of qawwali texts in this thesis is guided by their shared occupation of a liminal spiritual space, one in which paradise is consciously rejected in favour of an exclusive devotion to God as the ultimate object of love. Within this space, actions conventionally understood as sinful, such as the drinking of wine, are reconfigured through metaphor, where wine signifies divine love rather than worldly intoxication. While such anomalies can be articulated through poetry alone, qawwali helps contour a uniquely musical, mystical, and contemplative medium that curates a deep ruffling with this liminality through sound, rhythm, repetition, and collective affect.

The selected compositions represent this spiritual tension and reorientation. “Tajdar-e-Haram” by Payam Sihalvi explicitly rejects the promise of heaven, instead expressing a yearning for Madinah as a site of proximity to the Prophet (SA). “Saqiya Aur Pila” invokes the imagery of wine-drinking, where wine operates as a metaphor for divine love, echoing the sacrificial devotion of Hussain (AS) at Qarbala, whose acceptance of this “intoxication” culminates in the offering of his life. “Chaap Tilak” by Amir Khusrau articulates the annihilation of the self (*fanaa*), where the beloved’s gaze effaces personal identity altogether. Finally, “Tu Kuja Man

Kuja” by Muzaffar Warsi meditates on the tension between divine transcendence and human humility, encapsulated in the question of distance and closeness, “Where You are, and where I am.”

Ishq-e Haqiqi and Ishq-e Ilahi

The concept of *ishq* occupies a central position in Sufi metaphysics (Lumbard 345), and, perhaps even more prominently, within Qawwali traditions, where it functions both as a spiritual force and as a mode of knowing. It has come to be regarded as “a central theme for the most important figures of the Persian Sufi tradition, such as Farid al-Din ‘Attar (d. 617/1220) and Jalal al-Din Rumi (d. 627/1273)”—figures whose works have also been discussed in this thesis (Lumbard 347). As a concept, *ishq* signifies an overwhelming, consuming passion that destabilizes rational control and unsettles personal autonomy; it has, accordingly, been described as a “deep frenzied love” (Narang 162).

Sufi poets deliberately mobilize *ishq* to articulate a mode of devotion that exceeds moderation, suggesting that proximity to the divine necessitates vulnerability, excess, and the relinquishment of selfhood. Within this framework, the terms *Ishq-e-Haqiqi* and *Ishq-e-Ilahi* evoke complementary dimensions of divine love. Yet, as has been observed, “the Sufi concept of human-divine love was too daring in respect of the transcendence and oneness of God” (Qamber 63), pointing to the theological tension embedded within such expressions of intimacy. The two ideas are important to this thesis because they provide the conceptual framework through which the selected qawwalis can be understood. But it is important that they are not confused with each other, since both have distinct meanings as discussed in this section. These terms explain how intense, often excessive expressions of love in qawwali move beyond human attachment and are

ultimately directed toward the Divine. Ishq-e-Haqiqi allows worldly imagery such as longing, intoxication, and devotion to function as symbolic language, while Ishq-e-Ilahi clarifies God as the final object of this love. Together, they help justify the use of paradoxical and emotionally charged imagery in qawwali and support the thesis's focus on devotion that prioritizes surrender and closeness to God over rational restraint or moral binaries.

Ishq e Haqiqi, commonly translated as “true love” or “love of ultimate truth,” refers to an orientation toward Al-Haq, the Absolute Reality. In Islamic theology, Al Haq is one of the divine names of God, identifying God as truth itself rather than as a distant metaphysical principle. Consequently, love of truth in Sufi discourse is inseparable from love of God. Ishq e Ilahi, by contrast, foregrounds the relational and devotional aspects of this love, emphasizing intimacy, longing, and surrender to the Divine as beloved. While the two terms appear distinct in emphasis, one ontological, the other affective, Sufi metaphysics collapses the distinction by asserting that God and truth are ontologically unified. This conceptual overlap allows Sufi poetry to oscillate between abstraction and intimacy, speaking of God without confining the Divine within doctrinal fixity.

In qawwali poetry, this oscillation becomes a deliberate poetic strategy. The beloved may appear alternately as God, truth, the Prophet (SA), or an unnamed presence, precisely because *ishq* resists singular definition. Love functions here not merely as an emotional state but as an epistemological method: to love is to know, and to know is to surrender. The frequent invocation of intoxication within this context must therefore be understood as symbolic of ego-annihilation, rather than moral excess. Wine becomes the metaphor through which the seeker loses rational mastery and enters a state of receptivity to divine presence. It helps to understand how Divine love is not pursued for reward, nor restrained by fear of punishment; it is embraced as an all-

consuming force that transforms the seeker's being. This conceptual framework provides the theoretical foundation for the textual analyses that follow in subsequent chapters.

Love, Proximity, and the Limits of Doctrine

This study asks: how do Sufi devotional texts, particularly in the form of qawwali, inhabit a theological space in which heaven is symbolically displaced and divine love emerges as the primary orientation of faith? This question arises from a longstanding tension within Islamic intellectual and devotional traditions between outward religious structures and inward spiritual experience. While Islamic jurisprudence offers a comprehensive framework governing lawful action, it does not encompass the full range of religious meaning-making. Sufi devotional texts engage this tension by foregrounding interior states such as love, longing, and intimacy with the Divine, often shifting attention away from fear of punishment and hope of reward as primary motivators of faith. The symbolic displacement of heaven in these texts does not constitute a denial of doctrine; rather, it functions as a rhetorical and devotional strategy that critiques transactional models of religion and reorients the believer toward divine love as an end in itself.

This reorientation is articulated through a dense network of metaphor and poetic displacement, through which abstract theological concepts are rendered affectively and experientially accessible. Divine love is frequently mediated through devotion to the Prophet Muhammad (SA) and the symbolic geography of Madina, allowing for an indirect mode of expression that sustains reverence while avoiding doctrinal reduction. Within this framework, the Divine is approached through layered imagery, emotional intensity, and symbolic substitution. Such strategies position qawwali texts within a theological space, one that neither departs from

Islamic orthodoxy nor remains confined to its strictly literal parameters, but instead articulates an inward theology that coexists with, yet exceeds, juridical formulations.

Focusing on the concept of proximity, this study addresses a gap in existing scholarship, which has often approached qawwali primarily as a musical or socio-cultural form rather than as a site of theological and literary production. By reading these texts as discourses in which heaven is decentered in favour of divine love, the analysis offers a more nuanced understanding of how Sufi devotion negotiates law, metaphor, and spiritual desire. It proposes that these texts privilege love, longing, and nearness to the Divine, often mediated through the Prophet (SA) and spaces such as Madina over a transactional framework of reward and punishment. In doing so, they draw upon metaphor as a legitimate theological mode, one that is deeply embedded within broader Islamic traditions, including Qur'anic discourse itself.

The chapter that follows brings into conversation the selection of qawwalis, in order to examine how these themes are articulated across different compositions. Through close textual analysis and comparative reading, it attends to recurring motifs such as longing, intoxication, annihilation, and orientation, as well as the symbolic displacement of heaven and the centrality of divine love. By situating these texts within Sufi thought and engaging relevant theoretical frameworks, the study seeks to demonstrate how qawwali operates as a complex site of theological reflection, one that sustains a dynamic interplay between doctrine, devotion, and poetic expression.

On the Ethics of Limits and Listening

This study is primarily limited by its focus on Sufi devotional texts associated with the qawwali tradition, rather than on performance practice, musical structure, or audience reception. While qawwali is commonly encountered as a sonic and communal experience, this thesis approaches it as a textual and theological discourse. Consequently, the embodied, musical, and performative dimensions of qawwali are not examined in detail. This delimitation is intentional, as the study seeks to analyse how devotional meaning is constructed through language, metaphor, and symbolic displacement rather than through ethnographic or musicological methodologies. A further limitation concerns the nature and availability of the primary texts themselves. Qawwali does not exist as a fixed or closed textual canon; rather, it is a fluid and accumulative tradition in which verses circulate across compositions, performers, and historical moments. Many qawwals draw selectively from earlier poetic sources, often combining lines from different poets within a single performance. For instance, compositions attributed to Sabri Brothers frequently incorporate verses by Amir Khusrau, alongside lines attributed to Bulleh Shah and other Sufi poets. As a result, establishing the precise authorship, original context, or textual integrity of individual verses can be challenging. Variations across recordings, transcriptions, and oral transmission further complicate efforts to verify textual authenticity.

Chapter 2

Key Symbols of the Sufi Poetic Tradition

The discussion of key symbols within the Sufi poetic tradition cannot be confined within the expectations of a purely conventional academic survey. Accordingly, the literature review for this study adopts a more flexible and conceptually driven approach, and this departure is deliberate, shaped by the nature of the inquiry itself. Rather than positioning this thesis as primarily theoretical, the aim is to develop a more conceptually driven framework. In this context, existing theoretical and critical discussions are engaged with selectively, allowing them to be clarified and set aside; by doing so, the study is able to move beyond extensive theoretical engagement and instead focus more directly on its own analytical and interpretive concerns in the chapters that follow.

From this perspective, the move toward Sufi texts becomes necessary, as they offer a space in which these concepts are not only articulated but given form. The symbolic language of Sufi poetry, in particular, plays a crucial role in shaping this analysis. Ibn al-Farid, for instance, articulates in his poem “Khamiriyah” or “The Wine Song” the metaphor of “wine” as a pre-eternal, spiritual intoxication, one that precedes material existence itself. In his celebrated verses, this wine is not earthly but primordial, evoked as an experience of nearness to the Beloved that exists before creation, preserved only as a trace within the consciousness of those capable of perceiving it. The imagery of celestial elements: moon, sun, and stars, further elevates this wine beyond the material, situating it within a metaphysical cosmology of divine presence. Scholarly interpretations frequently align this symbolism with what is described as “God’s wine” (Abdin 95), suggesting that continuous worldly self-denial leads to a form of spiritual annihilation of the self (Abdin 95). This reading closely mirrors the argument developed in Chapter 2, “The

Prohibition of Wine as the Foundation of Sufi Metaphor,” in which renunciation becomes the very condition that makes transcendence possible.

However, while the critic foregrounds annihilation as central to this metaphor, there remains a noticeable gap in addressing the experiential dimension of unveiling. The emphasis on self-annihilation does not fully account for what may be understood as the lifting of the veil: a moment of revelation that transforms absence into presence. Even within Ibn al-Farid’s imagery, the reference to a “flashing gleam” in Homerin’s translation gestures toward this threshold of unveiling, while Sefi’s translation renders it as “radiance” (236). Though phrased differently, both invoke a form of light that is not immediately accessible, but must be unveiled. This same movement toward unveiling appears in the chosen text “Saqiya aur Pila,” where the emergence of this light becomes central to the experience of intoxication and proximity. Thus, while the discourse on annihilation remains well established, the question of unveiling persists as an underexplored yet crucial dimension of the Sufi metaphorical tradition.

Alongside wine, the concept of “Ishq-e-Haqiqi,” has also been widely examined in existing scholarship. The terms Ishq-e-Haqiqi, often translated as “love for heaven,” and Ishq-e-Majazi, or “love for earth” (Goodyear and Raza 123), are frequently positioned in parallel. However, this parallel positioning does not always hold upon closer reading. In Mirza Ghalib’s ghazal “Kal Ke Liye Kar Aaj Na Khisaat Sharaab Mein,” the line, “I am equidistant from my own reality / In proportion to the illusion of Otherness,” points toward a more unstable relationship between these categories. As Goodyear and Raza note, the verse invokes haqiqat while also indirectly engaging the distinction between *ishq-e-haqiqi* and *ishq-e-majazi*, ultimately suggesting that the poet’s desire for both cannot be neatly separated (123). Rather than

existing as clear opposites, the sacred and the worldly appear entangled, producing a sense of distance from both.

Similarly, it can be observed in the poetic expressions attributed to Mughal Emperor Nur-ud-din Muhammad Jahangir. In *The Jahangirnama* (1999), the speaker describes himself in a poem as “drunk in union with the beloved and disconsolate in separation” (103), capturing a simultaneous experience of fulfillment and loss. This movement between union and separation has been interpreted within a Sufi framework, where *ishq-e majazi* comes to signify a deeper, spiritual devotion, paralleling *ishq-e haqiqi* as well (Sharma 516), having both expressions, once again, seated together. In this reading, *ishq-e-majazi* is not simply opposed to *ishq-e-haqiqi*, but is often understood as leading into it. However, what remains insufficiently addressed is the role of *Ishq-e-Ilahi* within this framework. While both Mirza Ghalib and Jahangir present these forms of love in parallel or overlapping terms, critical readings tend to identify *ishq-e-majazi* and *ishq-e-haqiqi* without fully relating them to *Ishq-e-Ilahi*. As a result, although the presence of divine love is implicitly acknowledged, it is not consistently integrated into the broader conceptual structure of love that these texts evoke.

As outlined in the preceding chapter, “*Ishq e Ilahi and Ishq e Haqiqi*”, the tendency to align or merge these concepts, points to a gap in the existing scholarship. While *Ishq-e-Haqiqi* is frequently discussed alongside both worldly love and divine love, it is not always clearly distinguished from *Ishq-e-Ilahi* (the love of God). This thesis argues that such distinctions are necessary. Rather than treating these forms of love as interchangeable or part of a single continuum, it becomes important to separate them analytically in order to better understand their specific functions within the poetic and spiritual framework.

The origins of qawwali, like its conceptual framework, have also been widely discussed in existing scholarship. These accounts establish their historical and linguistic foundations, which remain important for understanding their development. In his essay on the institution of qawwali, Gopi Chand Narang attributes its widespread popularity to its deep resonance with the collective psyche. He argues that qawwali is “to be found in the depths of the collective subconscious of the people and in the ability of the qawwali to fulfill the emotional and spiritual demands of the common psyche” (171). This emphasis on emotional and spiritual fulfillment provides a useful starting point for understanding its appeal. Scholarly discussions of qawwali also trace its linguistic and cultural origins. Even in this essay, the clarification that “In Arabic qawwal does not mean ‘a singer’, but rather ‘one who speaks volubly’ or ‘a storyteller’. When it was adopted by Urdu, its semantic boundaries shifted and the term qawwal was exclusively applied to a person who sang qawwalis” (160), explaining what qawwali is and how it evolved, situating it within a broader historical and linguistic context.

However, while these discussions establish both the meaning and the appeal of qawwali, they often remain limited to the idea of fulfillment, particularly the notion that qawwali satisfies or “quenches” the spiritual needs of its audience. This thesis builds on that foundation by extending the argument further. Rather than viewing qawwali merely as a medium that fulfills an existing spiritual demand, it proposes that qawwali actively reorients the listener toward a deeper pursuit of truth. In this sense, it does not simply quench a spiritual thirst, but transforms it, shifting from momentary fulfillment toward a sustained longing for spiritual illumination, as explored in Chapters 2 and 3.

The concept of wine remains central to these discussions and cannot be overlooked, particularly given the range of metaphorical meanings it carries within Sufi discourse. Abu Yazid

al-Bistami, as cited by Akhtar Qambar, illustrates this through the recurring imagery of intoxication: “The lexicon and imagery of *ishq* had a special appeal for the Persian-speaking Sufis of the love-intoxicated school of Abu Yazid Bistami of Khorasan. ‘I have drunk,’ he says, ‘the potion of wine, goblet after goblet. It is not exhausted and my thirst has not been slaked’” (62). This notion of thirst, one that persists despite repeated “drinking,” sort of complicates the idea of fulfillment discussed earlier. Rather than signaling completion or satisfaction, the metaphor of wine here points toward an intensification of longing. The more one partakes, the deeper the desire becomes. In this sense, wine does not simply function as a symbol of spiritual attainment, but as a marker of an ongoing, unfulfilled pursuit.

This directly aligns with the argument advanced in this thesis: that spiritual experience, whether articulated through *ishq* or performed through *qawwali*, does not culminate in a final state of fulfillment. Instead, it sustains and deepens a condition of seeking, where thirst is not quenched, but continually renewed.

The figures of speech used to address the beloved or, implicitly, the Divine also warrant attention. Qambar notes that “some terms and figures of speech selected at random [are] used pre-eminently by non-Sufi love poets but when adopted by Sufis, they carry mystical suggestions” (62). Among these, the figure of the *saqi*, or cupbearer, holds particular significance. As discussed in this chapter, the cupbearer is a central figure in the structure of *qawwali*, often the one who offers the wine of spiritual experience. However, despite its symbolic importance, the *saqi* remains relatively understated in this thesis. Rather than focusing on the intermediary who offers the wine, greater attention is given to what lies beyond the act of offering itself, that is, the experience of reception, transformation, and the movement toward the Divine. In this way, the *saqi* is acknowledged as a necessary medium, but not the focal point.

The emphasis instead shifts to the seeker's condition and the nature of the longing that the wine and its giver ultimately sustain.

While examining the concept of *Ishq-e-Majazi*, it is important to consider how worldly love has been articulated within Sufi discourse. In Chapter 3, the notion of qibla-circumambulation is introduced, where the Prophet (SA) is described as the yearner's "kaaba." This imagery becomes particularly significant when read alongside Aziz Nasafi's stages of worldly love, as discussed by Shafique N Virani. In stage two, it is stated: "The first is such that the lover is in remembrance of his beloved every day. He becomes a constant presence in her lane and makes her house the direction for his prayers (qibla). Every day he circumambulates the beloved's house..." (315). Here, the beloved is elevated to a sacred center, effectively transforming worldly love into an act structured through devotional language and ritual. But as noted in Chapter 3, the act of attributing such sacred centrality, particularly the notion of a kaaba, to any figure other than the Divine remains theologically problematic. This tension reveals the limits of *Ishq-e-Majazi*: while it adopts the language and gestures of devotion, it ultimately redirects them toward a worldly object. Thus, although worldly love may imitate the form of spiritual orientation, it does not fully attain its essence. Instead, it exposes a displacement, where the structure of devotion is preserved, but its true object is deferred.

This thesis, however, approaches such imagery through a metaphorical framework. The act of circumambulation, when directed toward the beloved, is not read as an attempt to ascribe divinity or to associate partners with Allah, but as a symbolic expression of orientation and longing. In this sense, the circling of the beloved signifies a continuous movement around a perceived center of meaning, one that reflects the structure of devotion without claiming its theological equivalence. Thus, the metaphor does not collapse the distinction between the Divine

and the worldly, but instead preserves it. The beloved becomes a site through which the language of devotion is rehearsed, while the true center remains distinct, elevated, and ultimately unattainable within the worldly frame. In this way, *Ishq-e-Majazi* does not replace or rival divine love, but gestures toward it through form, repetition, and desire.

Yet, to gesture toward the Divine in this way is not passive; it requires a transformation of the self. In that case, it is essential to understand the role of self-annihilation in both qawwali and Sufi thought, as it recurs throughout Chapters 2 and 3. This recurrence is not incidental, but foundational to the spiritual framework being examined. As noted, “Sufis have thus long realized that there can be no ‘I’ at all if action is to have any moral worth; ascetical self-renunciation must finally yield to God’s possession of the soul” (Heck 258): within this context, the instances of self-annihilation reflected in the selected qawwalis do not just signify loss of self, but point toward a deeper process of spiritual reorientation. The dissolution of the self becomes a necessary condition for divine proximity, in which meaning and moral value are no longer grounded in the individual but in the Divine.

In this way, the discourse across Sufi poetry, qawwali, and critical scholarship converges on a shared movement: a sustained turning away from the self and toward the Divine. Whether articulated through wine, love, metaphor, or performance, each framework gestures toward a condition in which the self is gradually displaced from the center of meaning. What emerges, then, is not a singular conclusion, but a pattern, one that consistently privileges longing over fulfillment, movement over arrival, and surrender over possession.

It is within this pattern that the present study situates itself, not as a departure from existing scholarship, but as an extension of it, seeking to clarify, reframe, and draw together

these strands in order to better understand how the language of devotion operates across text and performance.

Chapter 3

Discussion

The Prohibition of Wine as the Foundation of Sufi Metaphor

The repeated appearance of wine imagery in Sufi devotional poetry becomes meaningful only when read against the unequivocal Quranic prohibition of intoxicants. Rather than existing in tension with Islamic theology, the metaphor of wine emerges precisely because its “literal” consumption is forbidden. The prohibition establishes a moral and theological boundary, and Sufi poetry eventually occupies the symbolic space created by that boundary. For this reason, the metaphor of wine in Sufi devotional literature must first be situated within the Quranic discourse on intoxicants, which unfolds through a gradual process of moral clarification and spiritual pedagogy.

A significant early restriction appears in Surah al-Nisa: “O believers! Do not approach prayer while intoxicated” (4:43). At first glance, the verse appears to regulate behaviour only during ritual worship, but a closer theological reading would reveal that the verse establishes a deeper relationship between intoxication and spiritual consciousness. The prohibition is not just concerned with the physical act of drinking; rather, it foregrounds the condition of awareness required for prayer, or Salah. By forbidding believers from approaching prayer while intoxicated, the verse implicitly defines intoxication as a state that disrupts awareness, comprehension, and intentionality. Thus, intoxication is framed as the “antithesis” of the spiritual attentiveness required for divine encounter. This emphasis becomes clearer when read alongside the exegetical tradition surrounding the concept of al-khamr. While commonly translated as “wine,” the term

khamr derives from the root “kh-m-r,” meaning “to cover” or “to veil” (Arshad and Mokhtar). Linguistically, khamr therefore signifies a veil or shroud that covers. This etymology is crucial because the Quranic concern is not limited to a specific beverage but to the veiling of consciousness itself. It is recorded by Imam Muslim, that the Prophet Muhammad (SA) said, “An intoxicant is something that puts a curtain on one’s intellect” (Abdullahi and Zakari 1938), and the Companion of the Prophet Muhammad (SA), Umar ibn Al-Khattab, similarly articulated this expansive interpretation when he stated that “khamr includes all that intoxicates the mind” (qtd. in Ibn Kathir 605). Preserved in classical tafsir literature, this formulation universalises the prohibition by shifting the focus from the substance itself to the state it produces. The problem then, is not wine as an object, but intoxication as a condition that obscures rational and spiritual perception. Within the Quranic worldview, the human intellect is a divinely entrusted faculty through which moral responsibility and spiritual recognition become possible. Anything that clouds this faculty threatens the believer’s ability to perceive truth and maintain ethical accountability. Seen in this spectrum, the Quranic prohibition does more than regulate social behaviour; it constructs a symbolic opposition between sobriety and heedlessness, awareness and veiling, presence and absence. This binary becomes foundational for later Sufi reinterpretation. When Sufi poets speak of wine, intoxication, and drunkenness, they do so within a theological framework that already understands intoxication as a transformation of consciousness. Their poetic vocabulary does not reject the Quranic prohibition; rather, it reorients the concept toward a different kind of intoxication, one that does not veil awareness of God but overwhelms the self with divine presence.

As the discussion moves beyond the broader understanding of khamr as an intoxicant, the prohibition becomes explicit and decisive in Surah al-Maidah, verses 90–91: “O believers!

Intoxicants, gambling, idols, and drawing lots for decisions are all evil of Satan's handiwork. So shun them so you may be successful." The verse that follows reinforces the spiritual danger associated with intoxicants: "Satan's plan is to stir up hostility and hatred between you with intoxicants and gambling and to prevent you from remembering Allah and praying" (5:91). These verses directly associate intoxicants with Satan's work and identify them as forces that obstruct remembrance of Allah and prayer. Intoxication is therefore framed not merely as a personal vice but as a spiritual danger with social and religious consequences. Alongside these decisive prohibitions, the Qur'ān also presents a nuanced perspective in Surah al-Baqarah: "They ask you O Prophet about intoxicants and gambling. Say, 'There is great evil in both, as well as some benefit for people—but the evil outweighs the benefit'" (2:219). This verse introduces an important interpretive complexity by acknowledging that intoxicants contain "some benefit."

The seriousness of Satan's influence is emphasized elsewhere in the same Surah: "He [satan] only incites you to commit evil and indecency, and to claim against Allah what you do not know" (2:169). The acknowledgement of benefit in verse 2:219, therefore, invites further interpretation through tafsir literature. Ibn Kathir explains that the benefit of intoxicants "is material, including benefit for the body, digesting the food, getting rid of the excrements, sharpening the mind, bringing about a joyous sensation, and financially benefiting from their sale" (606). The Quranic discourse thus presents a clear prohibition while simultaneously acknowledging the presence of material and temporary benefits. Although the harm outweighs the benefit, the existence of both elements introduces a conceptual tension that later becomes significant for Sufi metaphorical interpretation. The metaphor of wine draws precisely upon this duality: attraction and danger, pleasure and loss of control. By appropriating the language of intoxication, Sufi poetry harnesses an already powerful cultural symbol and redirects it toward

divine love. The metaphor of wine, therefore, does not emerge despite Islamic prohibition but because of it; the forbidden substance becomes an ideal symbol for an experience that exceeds ordinary religious language.

The concept of *Fanaa* and the Mystical Gaze in Khusrau's "Chaap Tilak"

Composed during the lifetime of Amir Khusrau (1253–1325), "Chaap Tilak" provides a foundational example of how wine imagery operates within a Sufi framework of self-annihilation (*fanaa*). But before turning to a closer reading, it is important to look at it in its overall form. "Chaap Tilak" describes a moment of overwhelming love in which the speaker feels completely transformed by the beloved. Through images of a single glance, intoxication, and union, the poem portrays how the speaker's identity, sense of self, and even physical adornment are altered. The beloved's presence is so powerful that it erases boundaries, leaving the speaker feeling claimed, changed, and deeply connected. The poem moves through this experience of being captivated and remade, presenting love as something that takes hold suddenly and leaves a lasting imprint on the self.

The title itself already signals the erasure of identity, as chaap (mark) and tilak (sacred sign of identity) together evoke the removal of social, religious, and personal markers. What is ultimately at stake in the poem is therefore not romantic attachment but the dissolution of selfhood. This movement toward the dissolution of selfhood can be further understood through Sigmund Freud's description of the "oceanic feeling" (9); although borrowed from psychoanalysis, it is still an interesting lens through which this erasure of identity can be understood. In *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930), Freud defines this sensation as "a feeling of indissoluble connection, of belonging inseparably to the external world as a whole (9)." Although Freud approaches this experience from a psychoanalytic rather than a theological

perspective, his formulation closely parallels the Sufi concept of *fanaa*. Both describe a state in which the boundaries of the individual self are dissolved and replaced by an overwhelming sense of unity. Within this framework, the loss of personal markers suggested by “chaap” and “tilak” no longer appear as deprivation but as expansion. The self is not destroyed in a nihilistic sense; rather, it is absorbed into a larger totality that exceeds individual identity. Freud interprets this dissolution as a regression beyond the ego, while Sufi metaphysics understands it as spiritual union with the Divine. Read together, these perspectives elucidate how the poem’s emphasis on the removal of identity marks signals not loss but transformation into a state of boundless belonging. It is precisely this experiential dissolution that the poem proceeds to dramatize through using the language of intoxication. The opening declaration, “By making me drink the wine of love, you intoxicated me with just a glance,” initially resembles the language of romantic lyric poetry and appears to situate the poem within a familiar lover-beloved dynamic. However, the invocation of “Nijam” immediately reorients the poem into a Sufi devotional context by referring to Nizamuddin Auliya, Khusrau’s spiritual master. The beloved is thus revealed not as a romantic partner but as a spiritual guide who mediates divine love, and the poem consequently shifts from romance to devotion, from earthly attachment to spiritual submission. Within this framework, the wine cannot be understood literally; it must be read metaphorically as the symbol of spiritual transformation. The act of drinking represents the willing acceptance of that transformation, while intoxication signifies the dissolution of the ego. The beloved’s glance becomes the catalyst for awakening, suggesting that spiritual change occurs not through gradual intellectual effort but through an overwhelming encounter that undoes identity in a single moment of proximity.

This metaphor acquires greater intensity when read against the Quranic prohibition of intoxicants discussed earlier. Because physical intoxication is explicitly forbidden, its symbolic redeployment gains heightened theological force. The forbidden substance becomes the most fitting symbol for an experience that destabilizes the self, and the metaphor therefore does not trivialize prohibition but radicalizes it. Just as physical wine disrupts ordinary consciousness, divine love disrupts the illusion of autonomous identity. The imagery that follows deepens this movement toward annihilation as the poem repeatedly insists that transformation occurs “by just a glance,” emphasizing immediacy rather than gradual development. The self does not slowly evolve; it is overwhelmed. The metaphor of the “wine of love-potion” transforms the Quranic association of intoxication with loss of rational control into a symbol of heightened spiritual awareness, where the collapse of rational autonomy becomes a necessary stage of mystical union. This transformation is further intensified through the cloth-dyer metaphor, which introduces the idea of irreversible change. Dyeing cannot be undone once the fabric has been immersed, and to be “dyed” in the beloved therefore signifies ontological transformation rather than emotional attachment. The lover does not colour themselves but is coloured by the beloved, and identity is no longer self-constructed but divinely re-inscribed. The bridal imagery completes this movement toward the dissolution of the ego, by framing the relationship as one of belonging rather than autonomy. To be made a bride is to enter a relational union in which the ego no longer exists independently but is absorbed into proximity with the beloved. This aligns directly with the Sufi concept of *fanaa*, in which the individual self is effaced in nearness to the Divine. Wine, dye, and marriage then operate together as a network of metaphors articulating the same theological claim. The intoxication of love does not lead to forgetfulness of God, as condemned in Quranic discourse, but to overwhelming absorption in the Divine. The term associated with

spiritual heedlessness is deliberately transformed into a sign of heightened awareness, allowing Sufi poetry to inhabit the liminal space between prohibition and devotion and to use the language of the forbidden to articulate the experience of nearness.

The significance of “Chaap Tilak” becomes even more apparent when its transmission through qawwali performance is considered. As a living devotional tradition, qawwali is rarely textually fixed, and verses are frequently rearranged, expanded, and embellished across performances. Despite this fluidity, the poem’s metaphysical core remains remarkably stable, and the logic of annihilation continues to structure modern adaptations.

The *Coke Studio Pakistan* rendition performed by Abida Parveen and Rahat Fateh Ali Khan reframes divine love as an existential risk by declaring that body, mind, and wealth are all placed at stake in the game of love. Although the metaphor shifts from intoxication to gambling, the underlying structure remains unchanged because nothing remains untouched by divine love. The added lyrics follow “Body mind wealth the wager has begun/Khusro says I played the game of love with the beloved./If I win the beloved is mine, if I lose I am still with the beloved;” the significance of this passage becomes clearer when attention is given to the expression “baaji” (02:29-02:56). In Urdu and Hindi, the phrase “baaji lagana” literally means to place a wager, to gamble, or to put something at stake, and it is commonly used in everyday language to describe betting, risk, and games of chance. The presence of this term, therefore, introduces a deliberate metaphor of wagering into the devotional framework of the song. Love is not portrayed as a passive emotional state but as an active and risky undertaking in which the lover consciously places everything on the line. By choosing a word rooted in the vocabulary of risk and uncertainty, the lyrics frame divine love as an act of total existential commitment, where the self

becomes the stake in a spiritual game whose outcome ultimately dissolves the distinction between loss and gain.

The performance further clarifies that authentic love can only be recognized through the companionship of the spiritual guide, making explicit what was already implicit in Khusrau's invocation of Nizamuddin Auliya. Mystical annihilation, therefore, appears as discipline, transmitted through spiritual lineage. Wedding imagery returns to signal consummated union, while paradoxical reflections on victory and defeat collapse binary categories into surrender and emphasize that the self is lost regardless of outcome. The recurring refrain that identity has been stolen simply through the meeting of the eyes replaces wine with the gaze as the agent of annihilation. Multiple metaphors consequently converge on the same theological conclusion: proximity dissolves the ego. The meeting of the eyes becomes the emotional and symbolic center of this rendition, and both singers explore different spiritual intensities within this moment of encounter.

This idea becomes clearer when placed beside Khusrau's declaration in the poem, "I give my whole life to you Oh, Nijam"—that gesture introduces the idea of blending, the moment in which the lover dissolves into the beloved. In earlier chapters, this process has already been described through the Sufi concept of *fanaa*, or self annihilation. Here, the metaphor deepens: Khusrau does not just devote himself to Nizamuddin, he moves toward Freud's "oceanic" blending with him. In this context, the beloved can be imagined as a star, a guiding light that orients the seeker through spiritual darkness. The star is not presented as a personal claim to truth, but as a reflection of the Sufi concept of *Ishq e Haqiqi*, the love of divine truth discussed earlier in the introduction. What may appear as devotion to a human guide, therefore, becomes a movement toward transcendence, into some abstract and beautiful. This relationship is

articulated within Sufi tradition through the interesting concept of “Shaykh e fanaa”—where the “Shaykh” is the teacher, and “*fanaa*,” as talked about earlier, signifies the annihilation of the self. The seeker reaches unity with God through devotion to the spiritual guide who acts as mediator on the path. Historical examples of this relationship are widely recognized, most notably the bond between Shams Tabriz and Jalaluddin Rumi. In the case of Chaap Tilak, Khusrau’s guide is Nizamuddin Auliya, whose presence functions as the guiding star toward divine union.

This framework clarifies the significance of the *Coke Studio* version, which introduces the line “Raini Chadhi Rasool Di” (06:40-07:11), meaning the night to celebrate the Prophet (SA) has risen. Often attributed to another poem associated with Khusrau, this line evokes a moment in which the poet tells his mother that he has found a spiritual guide and describes how the night fills with light and color. By incorporating this verse, the performance creates an intertextual bridge between devotion to the Shaykh and devotion to the Prophet (SA). The symbolism, therefore, expands outward: the beloved is no longer confined to a single figure but becomes a pathway toward divine truth. Through this layering, the rendition ultimately reveals that Nizamuddin functions as a metaphorical conduit toward the divine. The gaze, the teacher, and the Prophet (SA) are brought into a unified symbolic field in which proximity to the beloved leads inevitably to the dissolution of the self. The lover moves toward the star, and in that movement, the self disappears.

Extended independent renditions such as Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan’s, not only glorify the “river” (06:33) metaphor as an addition to the setting, but also intensify the language of intoxication and rupture, where drowning becomes the condition of crossing, further clarifying the mechanics of annihilation and reinforcing the logic already present in the imagery of intoxication. Just as intoxication requires full consumption, the river requires full immersion, and

both versions insist that partial surrender is insufficient. Further, they continue, “He threw a pebble, my water pot shattered/My garment was soaked” (06:33-06:52)—the idea of the shattered water pot functions symbolically as the breaking of the ego container; the vessel that once carried ordinary water can no longer hold the wine of divine love. Similarly, the shift from blood to wine flowing through the veins marks a total ontological transformation—“From his intoxicated eyes such conviction arose/That wine became religion, the cup became sacred law.”—here, the body itself becomes an altered substance. This does not signal rebellion against theology, as expected through a cursory reading, but rather the interiorization of it. Divine law is no longer presented as an external prescription imposed upon the believer but as an embodied intoxication, internalized and lived through experience. For the Sufis, spirituality and mysticism are not abstract doctrines but states of transformation in which law becomes the inward enlightenment. What often appears as a gray area for observers is therefore not ambiguity but a shift in locus, from outward regulation to inward realization.

As discussed earlier, this rendition also invokes the image of the star as a guiding light, where the convergence of the “star” into the architecture of paradise recalls the cosmological symbolism of unity emerging from multiplicity. Across the performance, the gaze continues to operate as the catalyst morphing the ego into absoluteness, but Khan expands it into a total restructuring of faith, identity, and embodiment. The difficult path to the riverbank records that annihilation is not effortless ecstasy but disciplined travelling under the protection of Nizam. Thus, the performance deepens the metaphysical structure already present in Khusrau: The ego is dismantled, and faith is reconstituted, and union becomes possible only through total immersion.

Foucault's Transgression and Divine Intimacy in "Saqia Aur Pila"

Before turning to "Saqia Aur Pila" (1975), it is important to clarify that, unlike Amir Khusraw's "Chaap Tilak," which exists in numerous versions and adaptations, this qawwali is not widely reinterpreted by contemporary singers and music studios. "Saqia Aur Pila" is generally attributed to the Sabri Brothers, although, as is common in the qawwali tradition, performances often involve the addition or omission of verses depending on the setting. For this reason, the present discussion focuses on the core verses most frequently performed by these singers. While the previous subchapter introduced the metaphor of wine through "Chaap Tilak," the present section turns more directly to the substance of this wine and the fascination surrounding it. To understand why wine emerges so persistently in Sufi expression, the relationship between the scholar Jalaluddin Rumi and Shams of Tabriz provides a useful elucidatory example. Annemarie Schimmel, in *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (1975), portrays Shams of Tabriz as an "overpowering person of strange behavior" who shocked others with his remarks and harsh words (313). This characterization helps explain why Sufi tradition preserves numerous teaching anecdotes in which Shams unsettles Rumi's attachment to scholarly reputation and social identity. One well-known narrative recounts how Shams asked Rumi to buy and drink wine, an act that would have endangered his standing as a jurist and religious scholar. As Rumi lifted the bottle in complete surrender, he looked up with the gesture of drinking, and the sky is said to have transformed into an unveiling of divine knowledge, symbolizing the shift from literal intoxication to spiritual intoxication. The metaphor of wine, therefore, is not foreign to mystical discourse; rather, it emerges as a familiar symbol used to express the brilliance and overwhelming nature of divine truth.

Seen in this light, the repeated invocation of wine in qawwali is not incidental but deeply rooted in a long-standing mystical vocabulary. “Saqla Aur Pila,” therefore, does not introduce a new metaphor; rather, it elaborates on an already established symbolic tradition by exploring what this “wine” consists of and why the seeker longs for it so intensely.

While wine metaphors are imperative to understand qawwali and its articulation of intimacy with Allah, they are not the only conceptual layer at work. Another key idea present in “Saqla Aur Pila,” and in many Sufi qawwalis more broadly, is the notion of transgression. To an ordinary listener, these verses can sound unsettling, almost inappropriate. The language appears excessive, even “out of pocket,” because it revolves around actions that are clearly prohibited within Islamic law. However, these are not careless provocations; they are deliberate metaphors that derive their intensity precisely from the fact that they approach what is forbidden. This is where Michel Foucault’s idea of transgression comes into play. In *Preface to Transgression* (1963) he explains that transgression is not simply the opposite of a limit, nor is it a straightforward violation of law; rather, it exists in relation to the limit in a way that continuously exposes and redefines it. The boundary and the crossing of that boundary are intertwined; one cannot exist meaningfully without the other (35). The distance between this “other” in this case is the spatiality between the “Saqi” and the narrator. When read through this skeleton, “Saqla Aur Pila” no longer appears as a reckless glorification of intoxication; instead, it becomes a movement toward the very edge of theological language. Who, then, is the saqi? And what is this intoxicating drink that must be consumed endlessly? The metaphor destabilizes the literal meaning to gesture toward something beyond it. In this spiral between prohibition and longing, transgression emerges not as rebellion against divine law, but as a symbolic crossing that gestures toward absolute truth and the overwhelming force of divine love. “Saqla Aur Pila” can

be read as a text that deliberately presses against theological boundaries to redefine what knowing and loving God means. The repeated plea, “pour more... pour more...” (“Saia Aur Pila” Sabri Brothers 04:20) is not excessive for its own sake. It stages an intensification. The speaker does not ask for moderation; he asks for annihilation. He desires intoxication to the extent that he would forget even himself– this is not a collapse into moral disorder but a rejection of partial experience. The heart does not want measured piety; it wants total transformation, and that transformation is achieved through this divine transgression.

The line “After drinking, to return to consciousness is forbidden” (08:43-08:46), sharpens this logic: the irony is pointed out that the real prohibition is not drinking, but returning to ordinary consciousness after having tasted something higher; here, transgression becomes epistemological. The crossing of the limit is not about lawlessness; it is about refusing to reduce divine experience to rational containment. To “come back to one’s senses” would mean returning to a limited mode of knowing; the text, therefore, critiques a purely rational religious framework without dismissing religion itself. It insists that there exists a form of knowledge that exceeds doctrinal comprehension, a knowledge accessed through surrender rather than control. This is further reinforced in the insistence that the wine cannot be given to the “kamzarf,” (08:52) or the small-hearted. The metaphor introduces hierarchy and discipline; not everyone is ready to receive what is being poured. The tavern itself is not alive just yet, and neither is it very generous, hence the repeated refrain. It is structured around transmission, and the saqi is not a random server but a mediator, who is skeptical, and decides to wait until the divine wine is mentioned to be able to pour it. Up until the closing moments of the qawwali, it remains uncertain whether the promised wine has ever actually been poured, because the voice continues to ask for it until the very end. Yet when he says “pour more,” it suggests that he is already

drinking something. What, then, fills his cup? It may be something other than the wine first described, or perhaps it is that very wine, so overwhelming that he cannot have enough of it. The ambiguity destabilizes any fixed reading. The seeker does not generate meaning on his own; he receives it through relation, through the act of being given. In this way, transgression is not an isolated revolt but a guided passage. The crossing occurs under the supervision of spiritual authority, where even excess is mediated, and intoxication itself becomes an initiated experience rather than a solitary act of defiance.

The lines, “People drink the blood of others; I only drink wine” (09:50-10:21) immediately reposition the moral terrain of intoxication. The speaker contrasts his visible “sin” with the far more violent, normalized consumption embedded within society itself. While others metaphorically devour one another through cruelty, exploitation, and emotional harm, he insists that his transgression is comparatively harmless. The accusation of immorality is thus inverted. What appears corrupt here: the act of drinking, becomes ethically minor when placed beside the quiet brutality of a world that survives on each other’s blood. The lover’s intoxication is not an act of violence but an act of withdrawal, and he seeks it from the only entity that would surpass all worldly emotions, and let him breathe the air of divine intimacy. In turning toward this higher source, he is not escaping reality but reorienting himself toward a truer one. The intoxication he desires is a state in which the suffocating contradictions of the world fall away and the self dissolves into something vast, unfragmented, and merciful. Here, longing is no longer mocked or deferred; it is absorbed. In this breath of the divine, he finds not just forgetfulness, but release. The idea of this worldly withdrawal is further justified when he calls it “two-faced” and remarks that if one asks for love, one receives only longing (09:21-09:24). Love circulates in language, but not in reality. To him, the world speaks endlessly of devotion yet offers only absence.

Fulfillment is replaced with the idea of an “unending ache” (09:24). The duplicity is not simply social but existential; it shapes how desire itself functions. The lover’s frustration is not that love is difficult, but that it is promised and withheld simultaneously. In such a world, longing becomes permanent, almost institutionalized.

The movement of the text expands decisively with the invocation of Karbala, where the metaphor leaves the realm of interior mysticism and enters sacred history. The “wine” is no longer confined to the language of personal ecstasy; it becomes inseparable from endurance and moral steadfastness. With the introduction of Imam Hussain (AS), the imagery acquires historical gravity: longing is no longer metaphorical but embodied. The progression that began as a request for intoxication now unfolds as a movement toward ultimate witness. The language intensifies from desire, to conviction, to sacrifice, pressing against the limit not merely of prohibition but of existence itself. What was once symbolic begins to stand before the reader as lived truth, preparing the ground for the full unveiling that follows:

The opening request for wine is therefore the symbolic lifting of a veil, the act of asking already gestures toward an unveiling, as though a curtain is slowly being drawn aside. This unveiling can be explained through Michel Foucault’s notion of the “flashing line” of transgression, where he explains that transgression does not simply invert limits or mock them, nor does it convert what lies beyond “an invisible and uncrossable line” into “a glittering expanse” (35). Yet in this text, the lifting of the curtain produces precisely that radiance: the “glittering expanse” becomes the manifestation of divine truth. What is revealed is not rebellion but submission of the highest order. This revelation reaches its theological apex in the evocation of Karbala: “Why would he ask his enemies for water, when he had already drunk the luminous wine?/Having drunk the cup of “La Ilaha,” in the fervor of divine love, he offered his head”

(23:28-24:03). The paradox is deliberate in these lines, because Imam Hussain (AS), though physically wounded, bleeding, and deprived of water for three days, is described as already having drunk the “wine of light” (22:55-23:52). His thirst is bodily; but his fulfillment is spiritual. He does not ask his enemies for water because he has already consumed the cup of *La ilaha illallah*, the ultimate intoxication of divine unity. This “wine” signifies absolute conviction, a state in which worldly deprivation holds no authority over spiritual certainty. Thus, the boundary being pressed is not merely between prohibition and indulgence but between survival and surrender. In Imam Hussain’s (AS) martyrdom, transgression becomes transcendence: the self is not annihilated at the end of his will, but offered in unwavering obedience to divine will. The curtain lifts fully here, revealing pure radiant submission.

The repeated invocations: “in charity of the blood... in charity of Fatima AS... in charity of Asghar...” situate the plea within sacred continuity, and the language used is stretched to its furthest reach so that it may contain a devotion that ordinary expression cannot sustain (“Saqla Aur Pila” 08:28-09:11). The concept of devotion, as well, is not purely a spiritual impulse but something inherited, remembered, and transmitted. The poem approaches the Divine through those who bore suffering most completely, using the event of Karbala as an example to elucidate that the love of God is inseparable from loyalty to those who upheld that love under trial; nearness is achieved through allegiance. By the end, the request has changed in meaning. What is sought is not emotional intensity but stability, and the capacity to endure deprivation without compromise. The earlier cry against restraint no longer signals restlessness; it reflects a longing for completion, for a certainty strong enough to withstand fear, thirst, and loss.

Apophatic Proximity and the Poetics of Distance in “Tu Kuja Man Kuja”

While the previous chapter explored the dimension of “intoxication” within the qawwalis discussed earlier, this chapter turns toward the notion of “closeness.” More specifically, it examines the love for the Prophet (SA), and the form of proximity that such love makes possible. At first glance, this focus may seem curious. Why emphasize closeness to the Prophet rather than directly to Allah? Yet, as the Qur’an declares: “Say, [O Prophet], ‘If you love Allah, then follow me...’ (3:31). In this sense, following the Prophet (SA) becomes the very pathway through which love for Allah is realized. And yet, there is a paradox here. For the Prophet (SA) is, at once, both the bridge and the distance. He is the means through which divine love becomes accessible, yet his station remains infinitely beyond the reach of the ordinary believer.

This paradox resonates with what is often described in apophatic traditions of theology, where nearness to the sacred is not achieved through full comprehension or arrival, but through an increasing awareness of what remains beyond reach (Scott and Citron 1). As articulated by thinkers across traditions, insists not only that God exceeds all positive description, but that even negation fails to adequately capture the Divine. As Michael Scott and Gabriel Citron argue, statements such as “God is not...” do not successfully represent God any more than affirmative claims do; rather, they expose the inadequacy of language itself (5). In this sense, apophasis moves beyond refining religious speech and begins to unsettle it altogether, revealing that both assertion and denial ultimately misrepresent what is, by nature, beyond comprehension. This framework offers a subsidiary lens through which to interpret “Tu Kuja Man Kuja,” a qawwali most often attributed to Amir Khusrau in the thirteenth century, with additional verses sometimes associated with Muzaffar Warsi. Within this frame, the text does not attempt to define the relationship between the lover and the Prophet (SA) in fixed terms, nor does it resolve the

distance it names. Instead, it performs a kind of devotional un-saying: a recognition that no articulation, whether of proximity or separation, can fully account for the glorious status of the Prophet (SA) or Allah's. Much like apophatic discourse, the qawwali operates through a language that gestures toward what it cannot contain, where each utterance simultaneously affirms devotion and withdraws from claiming adequacy. The result of which is a heightened mode of expression, one that circles its subject without ever presuming to grasp it fully. The closer one draws, the more one confronts the limits of one's own position. The lover is thus caught in a tension: to draw near is to become more aware of one's distance. It is precisely this tension that qawwali in general articulates so powerfully. The language of devotion does not collapse the distance between the lover and the beloved; rather, yet again, heightens it.

This heightened awareness of distance finds one of its clearest articulations with the initial and returning refrain, "Where are You, and where am I?"—is deceptively simple, yet it structures the devotional logic of the piece, marking an unbridgeable gap between the station of the Prophet (SA), and the position of the believer. Rather than attempting to overcome this divide, the qawwali dwells within it, presenting distance not as separation, but as the condition through which love and devotion are expressed. By acknowledging one's own unworthiness alongside the exalted status of the Prophet (SA), the composition constructs a form of closeness rooted in reverence, self-effacement, and continual orientation toward the beloved.

What is particularly interesting, however, is that this distance does not produce despair; instead, it enables a mode of relation, or closeness. The speaker does not seek to transcend the gap, but returns to it and inhabits it. In this sense, distance itself becomes relational. This is where "Tu Kuja Man Kuja" diverges from more familiar mystical formulations of union. There is no claim to annihilation or merging. The self is not dissolved into the beloved. It remains

aware of its own lack, its limitations, and its subordinate position. The Prophet (SA), by contrast, is consistently elevated through imagery of light, elevation, and divine selection, reinforcing a hierarchy that remains intact throughout. Yet, it is this hierarchy that makes a certain form of intimacy possible. The refrain functions as a positioning of the self: each repetition re-situates the speaker in relation to the Prophet (SA) in the acknowledgment of distance, without attempting to collapse it. Closeness, therefore, is not achieved through proximity in any literal sense, but through orientation: a sustained turning towards the Prophet (SA) through love, praise, and self-effacement.

In this way, the qawwali redefines proximity. To be close is not to reach the Prophet (SA), but to remain consciously, insistently turned towards him, fully aware that the distance remains.

Although numerous verses within “Tu Kuja Man Kuja” invite close appreciation, it is useful to briefly acknowledge a few lyrical articulations before turning to what is most conceptually striking. Throughout the qawwali, the poetic voice repeatedly stages a contrast between the self and the Prophet (SA), a contrast that intensifies as the composition unfolds. The self is rendered as insubstantial, in fact, at times reduced to mere perception, while the Prophet (SA), is affirmed as reality itself. This asymmetry is further deepened through images of abasement: the speaker casts themselves as dust, lowly and contingent, in contrast to the Prophet’s (SA) elevated and divinely chosen status. Similarly, the invocation of “*lazim*,” that which is incumbent or obligatory, unveils the sending of blessings upon the Prophet (SA), is not just an act of devotion, but a necessary orientation of the believer’s being. In Muzaffar Warsi’s rendition, these expressions are marked by a tone of tenderness and reverence, reinforcing the devotional hierarchy that structures the piece.

However, a particularly interesting complication emerges in the *Coke Studio Pakistan* version performed by Shiraz Uppal and Razaqat Ali Khan. In this rendition, the line “You are the Kaaba of Love, and I circuit around you” (07:40-07:50) introduces a striking metaphor that appears, at first glance, theologically unsettling. The comparison of the Prophet (SA) to the Kaaba invokes Quranic imagery, particularly the verse: “And We entrusted Abraham and Ishmael to purify My House for those who circle it...” (2:125). Within this scriptural framework, the Kaaba is explicitly designated as the House of Allah, the focal point of ritual devotion and circumambulation. How, then, can the Prophet (SA) be described as “the Kaaba”? The answer lies not in a literal sense, but in the logic of devotional poetics. Unlike formulations that would limit the metaphor, such as “my Kaaba,” said out of personal longing, the absence of possessive qualification universalizes the image, elevating it from personal sentiment to a broader symbolic register. Here, the Prophet (SA) is not being equated with the Kaaba in a doctrinal sense; rather, he is positioned as the axis of the lover’s orientation. Just as the Kaaba functions as the physical center toward which one turns in prayer and pilgrimage, the Prophet (SA) then becomes, in the language of love, the spiritual center toward which the heart inclines. This metaphor thus intensifies, rather than disrupts, the structure of distance outlined earlier. The act of “circling” is not trying to imply arrival or union; it signifies continuous movement around a center that remains distinct and elevated. The lover does not reach the Kaaba but orbits it, maintaining both proximity and separation simultaneously. In this sense, the metaphor preserves transcendence while allowing for intimacy. The Prophet (SA) remains categorically beyond the believer, yet becomes the locus through which devotion is organized and expressed.

Read in this light, the line does not collapse theological boundaries but operates within a long-standing tradition of Sufi-inflected praise poetry, where spatial and ritual metaphors are

reimagined to articulate affective realities. The Kaaba, as a symbol, is not displaced but refracted: its function as a center of orientation is transferred into the domain of love.

Consequently, the qawwali continues to uphold the paradox identified earlier, where closeness is achieved through a sustained, conscious turning toward that which remains forever beyond reach.

A further variation of this dynamic appears in the cover by Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, where the same oscillation between distance and devotion is preserved, yet articulated through a different metaphorical register. In one version, the line “What is the bond between a king and a beggar?” (Khan), the relationship between the Prophet (SA) and the believer is recast in terms of sovereignty and destitution. The believer is figured as a faqir (beggar), emptied of status and possession, while the Prophet (SA) is elevated to the status of kingship. At first glance, this raises a similar theological tension: the Qur’an declares unequivocally: “Exalted is Allah, the True King...” (20:114), affirming that ultimate sovereignty belongs to Allah alone. How, then, can the Prophet (SA) be described as a “king” within the poetic framework of the qawwali? Does it risk a blurring of divine and prophetic stations? Yet, as with the Kaaba metaphor, the answer lies in attending closely to the language of devotion rather than reading it as a doctrinal claim. The “kingship” attributed to the Prophet (SA) is not ontological, but relational and symbolic. It gestures toward a form of spiritual authority and honor, bestowed through which the Prophet (SA) occupies the highest conceivable rank within creation, while still remaining entirely subordinate to the Divine. The metaphor of the king, therefore, functions to dramatize hierarchy, not to redefine theology.

Moreover, the pairing of “king” and “beggar” intensifies the asymmetry that structures the devotional voice. The question itself, “What is the bond...?” ratifies the improbability of the

relationship. What connection could possibly exist between absolute wealth and utter poverty, between sovereignty and need? And yet, it is precisely within this impossibility that love takes shape. The believer, fully aware of their own lack, does not claim equivalence but persists in relation. In this way, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan's rendition extends the same paradox articulated earlier: Is closeness achieved by collapsing difference, or by inhabiting it? The Prophet (SA) remains elevated, the believer remains lowly, and yet a bond, tenuous, asymmetrical, but deeply affective is nonetheless sustained.

In this framework, metaphors that might initially appear theologically unstable reveal themselves as part of a broader devotional logic, operating less at the level of doctrine, and more of self-awareness and the effect it lingers. The Prophet (SA) becomes the axis through which love, reverence, and longing are directed. The language of excess, of circling, of kingship, of absolute praise, does not seek to redefine theological boundaries. It is more to express the intensity of a relationship that cannot be contained within ordinary speech.

Ultimately, "Tu Kuja Man Kuja" holds on to the tension between closeness and distance, letting it remain part of the devotional experience. Closeness takes shape through a continual turning toward the Prophet (SA), carried out with an awareness of one's own limitation. Within this state, longing lingers and nearness is felt as something that keeps drawing the self forward without ever quite settling. It is in this ongoing movement that the depth and sincerity of love come through most clearly.

Beyond Reward and Fear in “Tajdar-e-Haram”

While the previous chapter examined the dynamics of distance and proximity through “Tu Kuja Man Kuja,” this chapter turns toward a related, yet distinct, articulation of devotion in “Tajdar-e-Haram” by Payam Sihalvi likely composed in the twentieth century, which does not have a definitively recorded date. If the former dwelt within the paradox of distance as the very condition of closeness, the latter appears, at first glance, to move toward a more direct language of supplication. And yet, upon closer reading, it becomes evident that this apparent directness conceals a similar tension, through the language of desire, orientation, and destiny.

The title itself, Tajdar-e-Haram, often translated as “King of the Holy Sanctuary,” immediately situates the Prophet (SA) within a spatial and symbolic framework. The “Haram,” as a site of sanctity, is not situated as a physical enclosure, but more a locus of orientation, most prominently the Kaaba, understood as the “House of God,” and the Prophet’s Mosque in Madina (Çevik). To refer to the Prophet (SA) as the “crown-bearer” of this sanctuary does not, therefore, suggest divinity, but rather a form of relational centrality: he becomes the axis through which the meaning of these sacred spaces is apprehended. The title does not collapse the distinction between the Divine and the Prophet (SA); instead, it situates the Prophet (SA) at the heart of a devotional geography that remains, ultimately, oriented toward Allah.

This is how the central plea of “Tajdar-e-Haram” must be understood. In the *Coke Studio Pakistan* rendition by Atif Aslam, where the opening verses remain identical to the original, the speaker situates themselves within a condition of lack: “I have no one of my own; I am overwhelmed by sorrow” (02:44-02:57), a dispossession that exceeds the material and enters the realm of the existential. Yet this lack does not dissolve into abstraction. It is oriented,

deliberately and insistently, toward a specific horizon. What is sought is neither simple relief nor salvation in its conventional theological sense, but something more radical: a rewriting of destiny itself. As the qawwali progresses, it springs the listeners with the line: “Paradise itself is acceptable, but for me—O writer of destiny—write Madina instead” (01:02-01:21). At first glance, this formulation appears to introduce a theological tension. To privilege Madina over Jannah seems to unsettle an established hierarchy, elevating a created space above the ultimate reward promised by Allah. Such a reading, however, risks reducing the poetic movement of the verse to a literal opposition. The distinction being drawn is not between two equivalent destinations, but between two modes of proximity. Within the structure of belief, Jannah signifies fulfillment. Madina, as it emerges in the qawwali, operates differently. It is less an end-point than a direction toward which the self is continually turned towards. This distinction becomes clearer in the way Madina is described as a space in which existential anxieties lose their force: “In Madina, there is no sorrow of life, nor any fear of death” (06:21-06:31). The verse gathers together the two pressures that define human experience: the weight of living and the inevitability of death, and suspends them within a single utterance. “Gham-i hayaat” gestures toward the quiet accumulation of worldly burdens, while “khauf-i qaza” names the constant awareness of an ending that cannot be deferred. Their disappearance signals a shift in the texture of experience itself. In the presence evoked by Madina, the self is no longer held in tension between these two conditions; it is steadied, eased, and momentarily unburdened.

Madina thus comes into view as a space shaped by nearness, where the affective weight of existence is softened through orientation toward the Prophet (SA). The verse carries a sense of interior quieting, as though the anxieties that ordinarily structure perception recede in the presence of a more encompassing mercy. What emerges is an experience of being held within

that proximity, where sorrow loosens its grip and fear falls silent through a reordering of how the self inhabits the world.

In approaching this question of proximity, again, it becomes necessary to turn to Michel Foucault's formulation of transgression and the limit. Foucault asks: "But can the limit have a life of its own outside the act that gloriously passes through it and negates it? What becomes of it after this act and what might it have been before?" (34). This provocation allows us to rethink the movement of "Tajdar-e-Haram" not as a simple crossing, but as a transformation of the limit itself. The "limit" here, understood as the constraints of doctrinal structure or the boundedness of human existence does not merely disappear in the act of transgression. Rather, it is revealed as the very site through which proximity becomes possible.

In this sense, the limit's "life outside" the act of negation can be read as proximity itself: not something that lies beyond the limit, but something disclosed through its undoing. What appears as restriction is, retrospectively, the condition for an unveiling. The "before" of the limit marks distance, while its transgression inaugurates a mode of nearness that was always latent within it. This is further clarified when Foucault writes that "the limit opens violently onto the limitless... fulfilled by this alien plenitude which invades it to the core of its being" (34). Such a violent opening can be understood, within the qawwali's affective register, as the irruption of *ishq-e-haqiqi*, the form of divine love that exceeds containment and reorients desire itself. It is precisely this overwhelming plenitude that renders the preference for Madina over Jannah intelligible: not as a rejection of paradise, but as a turning toward the site where proximity is most intensely experienced. Understood in this way, the invocation of Madina does not displace Jannah so much as reconfigure its meaning. Paradise is not rejected; instead, the speaker turns toward that which renders paradise intelligible and desirable in the first place. The longing

expressed here is not structured around reward, but around nearness, yet a nearness that never settles into possession.

It is at this juncture that the question of shirk acquires particular urgency. The address of the Prophet (SA) as Tajdar-e-Haram, alongside the repeated invocation of his “nigah-e-karam,” a gaze filled with mercy that transforms or uplifts the one upon whom it falls (01:50-01:53), raises the possibility of attributing to him a form of agency that properly belongs to Allah alone. Does this language of appeal risk compromise the integrity of tawhid, the oneness of Allah? Does the redirection of desire toward Madina, coupled with reliance on the Prophet’s (SA) intercessory presence, blur the boundary between devotion and divinization? Such concerns, while not unfounded at the level of surface reading, begin to recede when the structure of address within the text is examined more closely. Although the language appears, at moments, to be directed toward the Prophet (SA), the act of supplication remains anchored elsewhere. This is most evident in the invocation of “katib-e-taqdeer” (01:10-01:13), the writer of destiny, implicitly understood as Allah. The plea for Madina is therefore not an appeal to the Prophet (SA) as an autonomous source of power, but a supplication directed to Allah through a language shaped by love for the Prophet (SA). What emerges is more of a layered relational structure. The Prophet (SA) does not function as an alternative to Allah, which is absolutely unacceptable to even write, but as a mediating axis through which longing is articulated without being resolved. This is reinforced by the speaker’s persistent self-positioning as insufficient, helpless, abandoned, and in need. The line “If I were to leave your threshold empty-handed” (02:22-02:28) definitely does not assert entitlement; it registers the anxiety of remaining unfulfilled within a framework that continues to presuppose divine sovereignty.

In this respect, the qawwali sustains a tension analogous to that identified earlier, though it manifests differently. Where “Tu Kuja Man Kuja” foregrounds distance as the condition of closeness, “Tajdar-e-Haram” foregrounds desire as orientation, without resolving the interval between seeker and sought. The longing for Madina does not collapse theological boundaries; rather, it intensifies the paradox of proximity. The plea is articulated, yet fulfillment remains deferred.

The charge of shirk, then, cannot be sustained within the internal logic of the text. The Prophet (SA) is not divinized, Madina is not absolutized, and Allah remains the ultimate locus of power. What the qawwali offers instead is a mode of devotion in which love reorganizes the structure of desire without destabilizing the principles of faith. In this sense, “Tajdar-e-Haram” does not depart from the theological tensions explored earlier; it rearticulates them, with an asking that simultaneously gestures toward nearness and acknowledges its ultimate incompleteness.

It is important to mention that Jannah, within the structure of belief, represents fulfillment. Madina, however, as it appears in the qawwali, signifies something else: orientation. It is less a destination than a direction. It is useful to revisit this lyric in order to trace how it is further reinforced by the way Madina is described, not as a place of reward alone, but as a space in which existential anxieties dissolve: “gham-i hayaat nah khauf-i qaza madeene mein” (06:21-06:31). This symbolic weight is not constructed in isolation. The significance of Madina is already embedded within the Qur’anic imagination, where the inhabitants of the city are described as those “who established their homes [in Al-Madinah]... and love those who emigrated to them” (59:9). Here, Madina is not simply a location, but a space structured by hospitality, ethical relation, and collective care. Reading this ayah alongside the qawwali- the

framing complicates any attempt to reduce the speaker's desire to mere preference, as the sense of hospitality and profound happiness associated and expected with Madina makes this longing feel natural.

In addition to “Tajdar-e-Haram”, it is useful to briefly bring into conversation another qawwali, “Saia Aur Pila,” particularly in relation to how longing is articulated across compositions. Toward the latter part of Saia Aur Pila, there emerges a recurring motif that, while phrased differently, resonates closely with the structure of desire found in Tajdar-e-Haram. One such instance is the reference to “jaam-e-Madina”, (13:26) the “wine of Madina,” which situates Madina not even as a destination, but as something to be internalized, consumed, and embodied. This metaphor becomes further intensified in the line “saans mera nabi nabi bole” (14:14-14:54), where the act of breathing itself is reconfigured as remembrance. Here, devotion is no longer expressed as an external act, but as something that permeates the most basic function of life. The body, in this sense, becomes a site of repetition, where each breath reiterates attachment to the Prophet (SA).

Read alongside Tajdar-e-Haram, particularly the repeated refrain “aao madine chalein” (05:44-06:02), where the speaker asks to journey to Madina repeatedly, an interesting parallel begins to emerge. At first glance, both appear to gesture toward movement, toward Madina as a physical destination. Yet, as with the earlier discussion, this movement is less geographical than orientational. The call to “go” does not necessarily imply arrival; but it sustains a direction of longing. What is particularly impressive is that both compositions, despite their differing metaphors, converge upon a similar restructuring of desire. In Tajdar-e-Haram, the longing is articulated through the language of journey and supplication, of setting out toward Madina. In Saia Aur Pila, however, this same longing is internalized: Madina is no longer only where one

goes, but what one carries within, as “wine,” as breath, as repetition. The distinction, then, is not between two different desires, but between two modes of expressing the same condition. One moves outward, toward a horizon; the other turns inward, embedding devotion within the body itself. Yet neither resolves the distance that structures this longing. To walk toward Madina is not to reach it fully, just as to carry its “wine” within oneself does not collapse the gap between the lover and the beloved.

It is also necessary to acknowledge the aesthetic force through which this devotional logic is carried. Whether in the rendition by Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, the Sabri brothers or the reinterpretation by Atif Aslam for *Coke Studio Pakistan*, the qawwali is animated by a vocal intensity that gives palpable life to its longing. Each performance, in its own register, breathes vitality into the text, allowing its affective and spiritual dimensions to unfold with renewed immediacy. While the composition offers multiple layers that invite sustained analysis, this discussion has remained attentive to the Madina verse as a particularly resonant moment, one that appears in all the iterations and crystallizes the devotional movement most powerfully. It is here that the emotional, theological, and poetic strands converge with striking clarity, making it, for me, the most compelling articulation of the qawwali’s central impulse.

“Tajdar-e-Haram” resists any reading that would confine it to a straightforward articulation of devotion or reward. Instead, it unfolds as a poetics of inhabitable longing, where distance itself becomes a site of intimacy and nearness is continually felt without ever settling into completion.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

In naming this thesis, I was first drawn to Homi K. Bhabha's idea of the "liminal space." He describes the "liminal space" as a shifting, "temporal moment" where cultures, identities, and meanings meet, overlap, and begin to transform. It is within this unsettled space that new, hybrid forms emerge, quietly troubling anything that once appeared fixed or certain (4). There was something deeply compelling in this instability, in the way it allowed meaning to remain open, in motion, but never fully contained. It offered a language for transition, for states that resist closure, and also for experiences that exist between articulation and any mode of silence. For a time, it felt like the right threshold through which to approach this work. But as the writing deepened, the term began to fall away on its own. What I encountered instead was something more intimate, an unveiling of the ways the soul turns toward Allah (SWT) and the Prophet (SA), and how that turning reshapes music, longing, and meaning itself.

This work carries a visible attachment to its subject; that was never something I wished to conceal. Still, I have tried to hold that attachment with care, allowing space for thought, for distance, and for disagreement. And disagreement will come. There are readings within this thesis, particularly in Chapter 3, where "Tajdar-e-Haram" is approached through a convergence of the Kaaba and the Prophet (SA), that may unsettle certain theological boundaries, and may even be named as "shirk." I do not turn away from that discomfort. It belongs to the kind of nearness this work attempts to trace. There will also be those who read this engagement with Sufi practice and qawwali and question its place within Islam, where music itself becomes a point of unease. I understand that hesitation. What this study offers, however, is not a redefinition of what is permitted or forbidden, but an attention to what is felt, expressed, and

lived within these traditions. The limitations of this work make that position clear: I do not claim authority over doctrine, only a responsibility toward interpretation.

Perhaps the most persistent critique will be that this work leans too closely toward my own understanding of spirituality and mysticism. And in some ways, it does. But that closeness is also where the work found its voice, within a space where analysis and experience are not easily separated.

This concluding chapter returns to these tensions with openness. It does not seek to escape them. It sits with them, and navigates through them, what this study has come to understand, offering its reflections to the field of literature with the same care, uncertainty, and devotion that shaped it.

It becomes necessary, at this stage, to return to the question of music and its contested position within Islamic thought. As noted in the introduction, Surah Luqman (31:6) has been interpreted, particularly by Ibn Kathir— as a warning against engagement in distracting forms of entertainment, with some readings extending this to include music, with the threat of a “humiliating punishment” as stated in the Qur’an. Within such interpretations, music is often categorized as impermissible. Yet, the practice of qawwali complicates this position in subtle but significant ways. While it makes use of instruments such as the harmonium and is structured around rhythmic clapping, it also incorporates the tabla, an instrument whose function, in certain contexts, parallels that of the duff. The duff, as noted by classical juristic discussions and compilations such as *Al-Mawsu‘a al-Fiqhiyya*, has been regarded by many scholars as an exception to the broader prohibition of musical instruments, given its presence during the time of the Prophet (SA), and its use without his objection (Sedick).

Accordingly, the use of percussion in qawwali traditions is not entirely distinct from Islamic heritage. Frequent usage of the tabla suggests a continuity, however interpretive, rather than a total break, creating a space where legal prudence and devotional expression coexist.

Now, moving into the discussion portion, Chapter 2 comes into focus. What this chapter has traced, across its movement from Quranic prohibition to Sufi articulation, is the way a single concept of “intoxication” undergoes a reorientation without ever losing sight of its theological origin. The Qur’anic discourse establishes intoxication as a condition of veiling, one that disrupts awareness and distances the believer from remembrance. That foundation remains intact throughout; it is neither denied nor diminished. Yet, as Sufi poets begin to engage this vocabulary, the same language is drawn inward and made to carry a different kind of intensity that speaks to an experience of nearness, of a sort of overwhelming presence, of a consciousness so altered that the boundaries of the self begin to loosen. The metaphor of wine, therefore, emerges from within the structure of prohibition itself, shaped by it, and continues to carry its weight even as it is transformed into something more experiential, more intimate, and more difficult to contain within fixed interpretive frames.

In “Chaap Tilak,” this transformation unfolds through the gradual undoing of identity. The removal of marks, the insistence on the beloved’s gaze, the language of dye, union, and surrender, all converge toward a state where the self no longer holds its previous coherence. What begins as an encounter becomes a reconstitution of being. The metaphor of intoxication here does not signal disorder; it signals a reordering, where the self is displaced from its locus and drawn into proximity with something larger than itself. This movement continues through performance, where qawwali carries the text into a collective space, allowing repetition, sound, and rhythm to intensify what the written word initiates. The addition of metaphors such as

gambling, the emphasis on risk, and the presence of the spiritual guide deepen this structure further, presenting self-dilution as something both overwhelming and disciplined, immediate and transmitted. The seeker does not arrive alone; the path is shaped through relation, through lineage, through a gaze that both unsettles and orients.

This trajectory expands in “Saqla Aur Pila,” where the language of intoxication moves closer to the threshold of transgression. The repeated call for wine, the refusal of moderation, the insistence on excess, all seem to approach the limits of what can be articulated within theological language. Yet the movement of the text does not abandon those limits; it circles them, presses against them, and in doing so reveals the intensity they hold. Through the framework of transgression, the act of crossing becomes a way of encountering what lies at the edge of understanding. The desire expressed here is not for indulgence but for a state in which partial awareness becomes unbearable, where anything less than total immersion feels insufficient. The seeker asks to be undone completely, to be carried beyond the stability of the self into a space where knowing is no longer governed by control, but by surrender.

As the text moves toward Karbala, the metaphor acquires a different gravity. The language of wine is no longer held within the interior experience of the seeker alone; it enters history, memory, and sacrifice. The figure of Imam Hussain (AS) transforms the symbolic structure into something lived, where endurance, conviction, and submission become inseparable from the idea of divine intimacy. The “wine” in this moment is not excess, but certainty, an inward fullness that remains untouched by outward deprivation. The imagery that once spoke of longing now carries the weight of witness, where the self is offered without hesitation. What was earlier articulated through metaphor stands here as embodied truth, grounding the language of intoxication in an event that continues to shape devotional consciousness.

Taken together, these readings reveal that Sufi engagement with wine imagery does not move away from Islamic thought, but remains deeply entangled within it. The metaphors draw from a shared theological vocabulary, even as they extend its expressive possibilities. What appears, at first glance, as a space of ambiguity or tension gradually unfolds as a mode of articulation that attempts to speak of experiences that resist direct expression. Intoxication, in this context, becomes a language for proximity, for transformation, for the unsettling of the self in the presence of the Divine. It carries within it the memory of prohibition, the pull of longing, and the demand for surrender, allowing Sufi poetry to hold together elements that might otherwise remain separate.

As the discussion moves forward, the movement across its chapters gathers into a sustained reflection on how Sufi devotional expression engages with Islamic thought through language, experience, and longing. The earlier discussions traced how the Qur'anic discourse on intoxication establishes a framework of awareness that defines intoxication as a condition that veils perception and disrupts presence before God. That foundation continues to speak through the Sufi texts examined, where the same vocabulary is taken inward and made to speak of a transformation that unsettles the self and alters its relation to the Divine.

Chapter 3 extends these concerns by turning to the question of proximity, particularly as shaped by love for the Prophet (SA). In “Tu Kuja Man Kuja,” this proximity is articulated through a heightened awareness of distance, where the refrain continuously repositions the self in relation to the Prophet (SA). The gap between the believer and the beloved remains present, and it is within that awareness that devotion finds its expression. The act of turning, repeated and sustained, becomes the form through which closeness is experienced. The imagery of circling, of elevation, and of self-effacement does not dissolve the hierarchy that structures the relationship;

it makes that hierarchy visible and meaningful, allowing intimacy to take shape through recognition rather than arrival. This idea of movement deepens in “Tajdar-e-Haram,” where longing gathers around the figure of Madina and begins to reshape the orientation of desire itself. The speaker’s plea emerges from a condition of existential lack, yet it remains directed, carrying with it a clear sense of where that longing is placed. Madina appears not only as a space of devotion, but as a horizon through which the pressures of life and the inevitability of death lose their intensity. The language of supplication holds together vulnerability and hope, allowing the self to remain within a state of asking that is sustained rather than resolved. The presence of the Prophet (SA) gives form to this longing, guiding its direction while maintaining the structure of belief in which all power rests with Allah. In this way, the devotional voice remains attentive to theological boundaries even as it moves within an affective intensity that stretches language toward its limits.

What this study offers, then, is an understanding of Sufi expression as a mode of articulation that remains attentive to both structure and experience. The metaphors do not function as replacements for theology, nor do they exist outside it. They emerge from within a shared vocabulary, extending it toward forms of meaning that remain difficult to capture directly. The self, within this framework, is continually repositioned, drawn toward the Divine, aware of its own limits, and sustained through a movement of longing that does not come to rest.

The conclusion, therefore, does not seek to close this movement. The ideas traced here continue to unfold beyond the scope of this study, carried forward through texts, performances, and lived expressions of devotion. What remains is a sense of ongoing orientation, where language reaches toward what exceeds it, and where the experience of nearness continues to be shaped through distance, attention, and the enduring pull of longing. At this point of closure, it

becomes necessary to return briefly to one of the central theoretical threads that has been a part of this study. In Michel Foucault's notion of transgression, he writes that its role is "to measure the excessive distance that it opens at the heart of the limit and to trace the flashing line that causes the limit to arise" (35). Read in light of the analyses undertaken here, the "limit" may be understood as the domain of prohibition, while the "flashing line" gestures toward the moment of unveiling that has recurred across the texts examined.

This relationship clarifies how devotional expression operates within these qawwalis. The limit is not erased; it becomes perceptible through the very act that presses against it. In this sense, what appears as excess or intensity within Sufi poetics carries a structuring awareness of boundaries, even as it moves toward what lies beyond it. The unveiling, then, does not stand apart from prohibition, but emerges through it, allowing longing, language, and devotion to take on a form that remains both grounded and expansive.

Works Cited

- Abdullahi, Ja'afar Agaji, and Garba Zakari. "Juristic Approach to the Concept of Intoxicant (Khamr) and Its Punishment." *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, vol. 7, no. 7, 2023, pp. 1938–1946. <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2023.70852>.
- Afifah, Diana Elfiyatul, and Munahar. "Deconstructing the Concept of Caliphate in Modern Thought: A Critical Analysis of Theocracy and Islamic Democracy." *Proceeding International Conference on Islam, Law, and Society (INCOILS)*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2026, <https://doi.org/10.70062/incoils.v5i1.411>.
- Ali, Mumtaz Ali Tajddin S. "Shariah, Tariqah, Haqiqah and Marifah." *Asginans*, 9 Feb. 2025, <https://www.asginans.com/post/shariah-tariqah-haqiqah-and-marifah>.
- Al-Ghazzali, Imam. *Ihya Ulum al-Din: Revival of Religious Learnings*. Translated by Fazl-ul-Karim, vol. 1, Darul-Ishaat, 1993.
- . *Ihya Ulum al-Din: Revival of Religious Learnings*. Translated by Fazl-ul-Karim, vol. 2, Darul-Ishaat, 1993.
- Arshad, Syariena, and Nur Fadhilah Khairil Mokhtar. "Alcohol – Halal or Haram? What Is Alcohol and Khamar?" *Halal Products Research Institute*, Universiti Putra Malaysia, 9 July 2018, https://halal.upm.edu.my/artikel/alcohol__halal_or_haram_what_is_alcohol_and_khamar_-42087.
- Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 1994.
- Chishti, Amatullah Armstrong. *The Lamp of Love: Journeying with the Sabri Brothers*. Oxford University Press, 2006.

Coke Studio Pakistan. "Coke Studio Season 7: Chaap Tilak, Abida Parveen & Rahat Fateh Ali Khan." *YouTube*, 15 Nov. 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7SDrjwtfKMk>.

---. "Coke Studio Season 8: Tajdar-e-Haram, Atif Aslam." *YouTube*, 4 Aug. 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a18py61_F_w.

---. "Coke Studio Season 9: Tu Kuja Man Kuja, Shiraz Uppal & Razaqat Ali Khan." *YouTube*, 13 Aug. 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZQMn5wIoAno>.

Freud, Sigmund. *Civilization and Its Discontents*. Translated by James Strachey, W. W. Norton, 1961.

Foucault, Michel. "A Preface to Transgression." *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, edited by Donald F. Bouchard, Cornell University Press, 1977, pp. 29–52.

Ghalib, Mirza. "Kal ke liye kar aaj na khissat sharab mein." *Rekhta*, <https://www.rekhta.org/ghazals/kal-ke-liye-kar-aaj-na-khissat-sharaab-men-mirza-ghazals>. Accessed 13 Apr. 2026.

Goodyear, Sara Suleri, and Azra Raza. "Ghalib and the Art of the 'Ghazal.'" *Transition*, no. 99, 2008, pp. 112–25. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20204265>. Accessed 12 Apr. 2026.

Hawting, G. R. *The First Dynasty of Islam: The Umayyad Caliphate AD 661–750*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2000.

Heck, Paul L. "Mysticism as Morality: The Case of Sufism." *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, vol. 34, no. 2, 2006, pp. 253–86. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40022682>. Accessed 13 Apr. 2026.

- Ibn al-Farid, Umar. "In Memory of the Beloved." *Poetry Chaikhana*, <https://www.poetry-chaikhana.com/Poets/I/IbnalFaridUm/Inmemoryofth/index.html>.
- . "Khamriyyah (The Wine Song)." Translated by A. Sefi, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies*, University of London, vol. 2, no. 2, 1922, pp. 235–248.
- Ibn Kathir. *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*. Vol. 7, Darussalam, 2000.
- Jahāngīr. *The Jahangirnama: Memoirs of Jahangir, Emperor of India*. Translated by Wheeler M. Thackston, Oxford University Press, 1999. Rare Book Society of India, https://www.rarebooksocietyofindia.org/book_archive/196174216674_10154605730416675.pdf.
- Karamustafa, Ahmet T. *Sufism: The Formative Period*. Edinburgh University Press, 2007.
- Khusrau, Amir. "Chaap Tilak." *AllPoetry*, <https://allpoetry.com/Chaap-Tilak>.
- Kuthoo, Bilal Ahmad. "The Poetry of Amir Khusrau: An Embodiment of Sufism and 'Divine Love.'" *The Criterion: An International Journal in English*, vol. 8, no. 4, 2017.
- Lumbard, Joseph E. B. "From 'Ḥubb' to 'Ishq': The Development of Love in Early Sufism." *Journal of Islamic Studies*, vol. 18, no. 3, 2007, pp. 345–85. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26200249>. Accessed 12 Apr. 2026.
- Mohideen, Hassan Lafeer Meera, et al. "Spiritual Thoughts of Imaam Al-Hasan Al-Basri: A Descriptive Study." *International Journal of Arts and Humanities*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2025, pp. 53–60.
- Narang, Gopi Chand, and David Matthews. "The Indo-Islamic Cultural Fusion and the Institution of the Qawwali." *Indian Literature*, vol. 58, no. 4 (282), 2014, pp. 160–71. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44753803>. Accessed 13 Apr. 2026.

“Origins of the Word ‘Sufism.’” *School of Sufi Teaching*,

<https://www.schoolofsufiteaching.org/sufism/origins.html>.

Oriental Star Agencies Ltd. “Chaap Tilak Sab Cheen - Ustad Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan - OSA Official HD Video.” *YouTube*, 8 Apr. 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f3dnF-GmscM>.

Oriental Star Agencies Ltd. “Tu Kuja Man Kuja (Original Full Length): Ustad Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, OSA Official HD Video.” *YouTube*, 24 Apr. 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XGE0Z6co31Y>.

Qamber, Akhtar. “Shama-va-Parvanah in Ishq e-Haqiqi.” *India International Centre Quarterly*, vol. 18, no. 4, 1991, pp. 58–72. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23002245>. Accessed 13 Apr. 2026.

Schimmel, Annemarie. *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*. University of North Carolina Press, 1975.

Scott, Michael, and Gabriel Citron. “What Is Apophaticism? Ways of Talking About an Ineffable God.” *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, vol. 8, no. 4, 2016, pp. 23–49. <https://doi.org/10.24204/ejpr.v8i4.1716>.

Sedick, Irshaad. “Is the Duff or Any Other Instrument (to Accompany Dhikr and Nasheed) Allowed in the Masjid?” *SeekersGuidance*, 24 Dec. 2022, <https://seekersguidance.org/answers/general-answers-feeds/is-the-duff-or-any-other-instrument-to-accompany-dhikr-and-nasheed-allowed-in-the-masjid/>.

Sharma, Nitika. “An Emperor’s Poetic World: Persian Poetry at Jahāngīr’s Court.” *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, vol. 81, 2022, pp. 515–23. *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27388795>. Accessed 12 Apr. 2026.

The Qur’an. Translated by Mustafa Khattab, *The Clear Quran*, Book of Signs Foundation, 2015.

The Sabri Brothers. “Saqia Aur Pila.” *YouTube*, 1 May 2015,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ybdcdf36DsQ>.

Virani, Shafique N. “The Dear One of Nasaf: ‘Azīz Nasafī’s ‘Epistle on Love.’” *Iran & the Caucasus*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2009, pp. 311–17. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25703809>.
Accessed 13 Apr. 2026.

“What Is Sufism?” *Idries Shah Foundation*, <https://idriesshahfoundation.org/what-is-sufism>.