

Comparative Analysis of Ghazals and Nazrul's Ghazal: Exploring Musical and Cultural Dimensions



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Abstract

This research aims to identify and examine the differences and similarities between the two genres, Nazrul's Ghazal and the traditional Ghazal. Addressing a notable research gap, this study conducts a comprehensive comparative analysis between traditional Ghazal and Nazrul's Ghazal, focusing explicitly on four carefully selected samples sourced from platforms like YouTube and Spotify. The methodology employed involves the identification of samples in terms of commonalities in rāg and time signature, facilitating a nuanced comparative analysis. Parameters such as melodic ornamentation, lyrical themes, and performance dynamics are scrutinised to unveil each genre's unique musical and cultural nuances. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the commonalities and differences in Ghazal and Nazrul's Ghazal, shedding light on their evolving trajectories, cultural significance, performance structure and musical components.

Keywords: Ghazal, Kāzi Nazrul Islam, Musical Genre, Structural Analysis, performance structure, cultural significance

Research Paper

Introduction

Ghazal and Nazrul's Ghazal are two cherished genres with unique qualities that deeply connect with culture and traditional arts. A poetic form of music, Ghazal can be understood as a light classical genre. Generated from Arabic verses, Ghazals are usually in Urdu or Persian. Ghazal in Arabic means 'Talking to a beautiful young lady' (Sarade). This genre scales from 'devotional' to 'earthly' and from 'serious' to 'popular' in behaviour (Qureshi, 458). On the other hand, Nazrul's Ghazal is one of the compositional forms that Kāzi Nazrul Islam incorporated into his style of compositions. This research has explored the roots, structure, themes, and melodies of both Ghazal and Nazrul's Ghazal in a comprehensible and accessible manner.

While there are independent studies on Nazrul sangēt and Ghazal, there is a notable research gap in the literature related to the detailed comparative and

analytical studies of Nazrul's Ghazal and traditional Ghazal in juxtaposition. The present study addresses this gap by examining the differences and similarities between the two genres, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding. This study is specifically limited to the comparative study of four samples, two from both styles. Hence, it is an effort to discover the distinctive musical elements, suggesting that while sharing structural similarities and differences, Nazrul's Ghazal, with its unique style of Bengali cultural nuances, exhibits noticeable variations from traditional ghazals.

Ghazal: History and Evolution

Developed from Qasida^[1] Ghazal originated from Arabia in the 7th century. Qasida were long poems that had up to 100 couplets^[2], were usually written for a tribe or a ruler and did not include love or romance, but the opening lines of Qasida called Nasib were made in a romantic theme or a stylish form. With time, Nasib

evolved and was presented as a short poem. As a result, these short poems soon came to be known as Ghazal.

Ghazal became a poetic genre in the Umayyad era (661-750) and continued developing in the Abbasid Era (Jalajel). Ghazal came to Persia in the 8th century. The Persian Ghazal came to be different from that of the Arabian. They created their own shape of Ghazal, keeping the Arabic one in its original form. They developed and reconditioned the form of Matlā and developed the pattern of Radīf. Persian Ghazal defined the number of shēr to be presented, i.e., fifteen.

Poetic and Musical structure

The ghazal is structured as a short poem with rhyming couplets called bayt or shēr. To be identified as a ghazal, it must have at least five such couplets and not carry more than fifteen. If it exceeds more than fifteen sets of couplets, it is then said to be a Qasida. A Ghazal typically has seven to twelve couplets. A unique feature of Ghazal is rhyming in the lyrics. This is also referred to as Qāfiyā and Radīf. The first shēr, which is non-rhythmic and said before the performance of the Ghazal, is Qatā.

Ghazal follows several strict rules while being made.

1. Matlā - It is the first shēr of the Ghazal. It should have both Qāfiyā and Radīf, and this rhyming and refrain structure sets the tone for Ghazal.
2. Radīf - It is a refrain word or a phrase. It says in the Matlā that the second line of all couplets must have the same refrain word or phrase.
3. Qāfiyā - The preceding word or phrase after the Radīf with a rhyme pattern ending the same is Qāfiya.
4. Maqtā - Maqtā is the last shēr of the ghazal.
5. Behar - It is a metrical pattern or syllabic count that a ghazal must follow.
6. Misrā - e - ūlā - The first line in the couplet.
7. Misrā - e - sani - It is the second line in the couplet.

Hazrat Amir Khusrau set the culture of performing ghazals in India. Ghazal registers its sthāi as the first shēr of the poem. The Matlā is used as the sthayi, and the other shēr s are used as the antarā. The antarā is set to a higher pitch than that of sthāi, which gives it a higher contrast. The rhyming lines are also rhymed with the swar in the composition. The melodic structure of ghazal includes ornamentations of Hindustani Classical Music such as mēnd, gamak and murkī.

Theme of the composition

Ghazal, being a poetic form, engulfs a variety of themes. The composer composes the tune according to the theme and the words used. While the theme is mainly about love, the phase of love matters in the tune that touches the listeners' hearts. The ghazal's main themes are love and romance, longing and distance, betrayal from the lover, pain and suffering, nature and beauty, and incomplete love.

Kāzi Nazrul Islam And Nazrul Sangēt

Kāzi Nazrul, the national poet of Bangladesh, was born on May 24, 1899, in Churulia, a small village in the Bardhaman district of West Bengal, India, and passed away on August 29, 1976. Nazrul composed many Bengali songs inspired by Urdu and Farsi words. As he passed from lower primary school in 1909 to Maktab at the age of ten, he learned Farsi from Maulavi Kāzi Fazle Ahmed, who used to teach at the Maktab (Goswami,). Nazrul wrote about 3500 songs of many varieties and dealt with many emotions (Shabham,). Nazrul sangēt is a musical form written and composed by a prominent Bengali poet, Kāzi Nazrul Islam. The total number of songs he composed altogether is said to be Nazrul sangēt. His musical journey started in early childhood when he participated in and travelled with the music team Leto Gaaner Dol. We find the ten-year-old Nazrul in the 'leto' dance troupe and jātra (rural opera) party. He was a prolific musician who introduced the patterns and the style of Ghazal which was popularised in Bengal (Goswami). Though the genre is rich in terms of content narrated in the music observing the musical tune, khayāl is the signature of Nazrul sangēt. (Pervez,7).

History

Despite having bad health and financial problems, Nazrul went through a creative phase after the birth of his son Bulbul. He named his son Bulbul after a songbird and he himself became the songbird. By the end of 1926 and the birth of Bulbul, he started composing Ghazals and devoted his time to composing music. He composed numerous ghazals during the period of 1926-1930.

Nazrul's literary work evolved a lot during his army joining in August-September 1917. During this time, he was fascinated by Hafiz-E-Siraji reciting his Diwan-E-Hafiz, and he learned Persian from Hafiz. During his time in the army in the Karachi base, with literature, he also improved his musical perspective. The influence of Persian literature can be seen in various sub-genres of Nazrul's ghazals. The 197 Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam



from the original Persian into Bengali was first translated by Kāzi Nazrul Islam. Having the command in the Persian language, Nazrul transformed Rubaiyat into a proper ghazal with traditional rhythm and rāg essence. With all these dimensions added by Nazrul in his Ghazals, he is known to be the creator of Bengali ghazal.

Types of Nazrul's ghazal

Among all Nazrul's ghazals, we can see two types: one is about earthly love, and the second is spiritual love (devoted to god). Besides, we can see some experimental ghazals in his compositions, like (Bengali+Urdu) and (Bengali+Hindi).

Musical setting of Nazrul Ghazal

As ghazals are written, Nazrul also follows the same structure. Like ghazal, Nazrul ghazal starts with alap to create the ambience of the dhun of the composition. After the alap is sung, the sthāi is started, elaborated in many variations. The sthāi is followed by the antarā sung in a higher octave than the sthāi. Nazrul composed his ghazals in different rāg moods. The melodic composition is composed according to the feel of the lyrics. We can see the frequent use of murkīyas. Artists are free to sing rāg based Vistār when singing the antarā.

As accompaniment, harmonium and tabla are the main. Harmonium plays an important role in Nazrul sangēt. There is a particular pattern to play the harmonium in Nazrul sangēt. In modern times now we can see that sarangee, esraj, sitar, sarod, keyboard are played while performing.

Performance Structure

The performance of Nazrul's Ghazal is an affluent and culturally significant experience. Here are some key details about the performance:

Lyricism: Nazrul's poems and songs are usually based on profound and revolutionary themes. The lyrics of Nazrul's ghazal are inspired by various experiences of Kāzi Nazrul Islam. The theme of Nazrul's Ghazal lyrics is mainly an emotion of earthly love and spirituality.

Vocalists: The lead role in Nazrul's Ghazal is played by the vocalist, who is a skilled and trained singer. It's common to have both male and female singers as performers.

Improvisation: Skilled singers often add improvisational elements to their performances. This can include bol-taan,^[3] and taan^[4] to showcase their skills and virtuosity.

Costumes and Attire: Performers may wear traditional attire, reflecting the cultural and regional influences of their presentation. This can include colourful sarees, dhotis, kurta-pājamās, and other traditional clothing.

The performances are not just musical events; they are cultural celebrations that aim to preserve the rich heritage of Kāzi Nazrul Islam's poetry and music while connecting with audiences deeply, emotionally, and intellectually. The genre continues to be a cherished part of Bengali culture and a testament to the enduring legacy of Nazrul's artistic contributions.

Methodology

The researchers identified four samples, two from Ghazal and Nazrul's Ghazal, respectively, from internet-based applications such as YouTube and Spotify. The samples taken ensured that they share commonalities in terms of rāg and time signature. A comprehensive comparative analysis was conducted on these selected musical compositions. This method facilitated an in-depth exploration and identification of the nuanced similarities and differences between the musical pieces under scrutiny. The phrases of rāg taken, the theka used, the accent in the words, all these parameters led to a proper comparison and analysis of the samples.

The table given below shows the four samples taken in the research.

Fig 1

GHAZAL	NAZRUL'S GHAZAL
1.Ranjish hi sahi	1.Eso bodhu phire eso
Rāg - Yaman	Rāg - Yaman
Tāla - dādra	Tāla - dādra
Time signature - 6/8	Time signature - 6/8
BPM - 145 (approx)	BPM - 133 (approx)
Performer - Mehdi Hassan	Performer - Purabi Dutta
2. Ye dil ye pagal dil mera	2. Nishi bhor holo jagiya
Rāg - Bhairavi	Rāg - Bhairavi
Tāla - Keherwa	Tāla - Keherwa
Time signature - 8/4	Time signature - 8/4
BPM - 200 (approx)	BPM - 192(approx)
Performer - Ustad Gulam Ali	Performer - Priyanka Gope



Results and discussion

Examining our sample materials provided a comprehensive insight into two distinct musical forms. Maintaining constancy in terms of rāg (melodic framework) and tala (rhythmic cycle) facilitated a comparative analysis of the musical expression of the two. While making the comparison, similar and unfamiliar connections were explored in the two genres. Notably, both Ghazal and Nazrul’s Ghazal start with a brief ālap, setting the tone and establishing the thematic essence of the musical piece or the rāg. Both genres have Harmonium and tabla as compulsory instruments in the musical instrument. The poetic structure of a ghazal allows for diverse compositions by various artists in various ways. Still, since Nazrul’s Ghazal is already a composition composed by Kāzi Nazrul Islam, it cannot be re-composed or re-tuned. This distinction highlights the fundamental difference between the nature of the traditional ghazal and the fixed composition characteristic of Nazrul’s Ghazal. Furthermore, the comparison has been given in the table below.

Comparison table. Fig 2

Similarities	Differences
The very compulsory instruments used in both are, Harmonium and a Tabla.	Even when both the compositions are in the same Tāla, ghazal seems to be slightly slower as it gives more tension or sustain in the words, while Nazrul’s ghazal releases the words fast.
In the lyrical system, both tend to rhyme the words.	There are no rules for creating a Nazrul’s ghazal like Ghazal has.
The similar theme Both the genre has is love, romance and pain.	The language used in Ghazal is usually Urdu and Farsi while Nazrul’s ghazal is only written in Bengali words.
The singer in both the music sings the composition with a good use of murkī and spontaneous use of throat.	Sometimes a part in the composition is sung without any rhythm support in both the cases.
The performances can be solo and duet in both.	Ghazal uses pen names sometimes in the lyrics where Nazrul’s ghazal does not include pen name.

Ghazal's lyrics are written with pride and talk about the lover's betrayal. The lyrics of Nazrul’s Ghazal are written with metaphoric and diplomatic expression, and we can find both love and sorrow in the song.

Analysis of the Musical Parameters

First sample analysis. Fig. 3

PARAMETERS	GHAZAL	NAZRUL’S GHAZAL
Mēnd	Notation - P M D PM PR Phrase- Dhukha ne Notation - NRND, M, NDPM Phrase - Chhodke k jane k Liye aa	Notation - S, SMG Phrase - Eso bodhu Notation - NR, PM P, R Phrase - Bholo obhimaan
Murkī	Notation - SSNDN S Phrase - Aa fir se Notation - M DPMP Phrase- Dukhane ke liye aa	Notation - PMDPMP, R, RGR, SNRSNS Phrase - Bholo Bholo Obhimaan Notation - PMDPM, MG, M, PNDNDPM Phrase - Dibo E Chorone
Khatkā	Notation - S NSNN Phrase - Ranjish Notation - SNS P RG Phrase - He sahi	Notation - MNDNDPM, D PMP M,G, g, G Phrase - Phire Eso Notation -MNDN,DPM, DND, DPP Phrase - Chorene Dari
Rāg Phrases	Notation - SNS, GMP RG Phrase- Ranjish hi sahi Notation - PM, DPMP, R Phrase- Dil hi dukhane ke	Notation - NR, PP, R, RGRS Phrase - Bholo Bholo Obhimaan Notation - S N R S N S , N D , MDND, P, MGR Phrase- Mor tonu mono pran



Second sample analysis. Fig. 4

PARAMETERS	GHAZAL	NAZRUL'S GHAZAL
Mēnd	Notation - MPD, PMGRSN GRS Phrase - Wo kya huwa Awargi	Notation - PDPDM PD DS NDPM Phrase - Nishi Bhor Holo
	Notation - GPDSN Phrase - Aawaaj ne	Notation - S SRSR SD Phrase - Bulbuli
Murkī	Notation - S S GRSRSN Phrase - Dil ye Pagal	Notation - PD SNDPM MPDPPMG S Phrase - Bhor holo jagiya
	Notation - P P DPMPMG Phrase - Kal shab mujhe	Notation - N D P D N S N D PDPNDPMGM Phrase - Gulbodoni jage
Khatka	Notation - SRS SNP Phrase- Dil Mera	Notation - P MG PM D DPMPM GSGRE Phrase- Porano Piya
	Notation - G GR RS SRSN Phrase- Awargi	Notation - DNDNSR SS Phrase- Sho hage
Rāg Phrases	Notation - GPDSN, D, M, G, R, RGMPGRS Phrase- Aawaaj ne chaunkaa diyaa	Notation - S G M P D P M G SGRS Phrase - Porano Piya
	Notation - GP NDNS DP G RS Phrase - Kyu bujh gaya awargi	Notation - S SRSN DP DNS NDP DPNDPMGM Phrase - Kto Gulbodoni jage

From Fig 1, here are the results after comparing the samples.

1. The beginning phrase in the melody of matlā and in the time signature gives the distinctive identification to ghazal. In the Ghazal Ranjish hi Sahi, the time signature adopted here is 6/8, and the Tāla is dādra, a 6-beats cycle Tāla. Here, we find that the beginning phrase of the ghazal (Ranjish hi sahi) starts from the 5th beat of the cycle. Also, in Nazrul's Ghazal Eso Bodhu Phire Eso, the time signature is 6/8, and the Tāla is dādra. Here, the beginning phrase starts from the third beat of the cycle. This way of starting and the way of completing the Tāla cycle gives Ghazal and Nazrul's Ghazal a distinct identity from other musical genres like Dhrupad, khayāl, Thumri, Kajri, etc.
2. Generally, in Ghazal and Nazrul's Ghazal, the ālap taken is sung in a short duration where nayas or resting point in the notes is not much done.
3. The art of singing Ghazal and Nazrul's Ghazal are among the important differences this research has discovered. On listening and observing the music of both the genres with similar rāg and Tāla, we discovered that the accent on the words or the sustain given in the words of the ghazal is much slower than that of words in Nazrul's Ghazal. This property of releasing the words makes Ghazal at a slower pace than Nazrul's Ghazal even when both have tempo closer to each other.
4. In a Ghazal, usually, it starts with a part called 'shēr' or 'qatā pesh-e-Khidmat'. This part is like an introduction to the song and is sung without any musical rhythm. It sets the mood for the whole song, like a summary of what the song will be about. However, in the Ghazal songs written by Kāzi Nazrul Islam, this beginning part, 'shēr', is missing. Sometimes, in the middle part, called Sanchari, there are moments when the musical rhythm disappears. But after this part, the rhythm comes back, and the last part (antarā) is sung in the same rhythm as the song starts. So, in Nazrul's Ghazal, there's no initial 'shēr' part, and sometimes the music rhythm pauses in the middle (Sanchari), but it returns later, so the ending part, antarā sounds like the beginning.

Conclusion

This research has explored the distinct realms of Ghazal and Nazrul's Ghazal, both deeply established in cultural traditions. Ghazal, born in Arabia and nurtured in Persia,



is a structured, emotionally diverse poetic music. In contrast, Nazrul sangīt, pioneered by Bengali poet Kāzi Nazrul Islam, blends Bengali language and music, offering a wide variety of emotions. While they share elements such as instruments and themes, they differ in tempo and language. These two forms continue to captivate audiences, each contributing unique cultural richness to the music world.

Footnotes

1. Old form of writing Arabic poetry based on mourning or praise.
2. Pairs of two lines in poetry which come next to each other, especially in terms of similar rhyming and length.
3. Rapid rhythmic vocal improvisations using the lyrics of the composition.
4. Speedy melodic runs in vocal and instrumental music

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