

## Sign, Simulacra and the Hyperreal in Coke Studio Sufi Singing

Kalsoom Qaisar<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

*This qualitative research seeks to inquire into the nature of the spiritual signified in Coke Studio (CS) Sufi singing (Pakistan). It examines CS singing as a site whereby sign is important for its materiality and not spiritual substance or the message it carries. The study inquires how and why CS singers admix (semi)romantic and worldly lyrics in their Sufi performance pivoting more on physical signifiers such as visual locale or heavy instrumentation. The selection of 10 songs is made out of a total of 32, rendered by CS singers on various Pakistani TV channels within a span of 9 seasons and 9 years. Assimilating insights of three theoretical views, a method is devised to analyze CS Sufi singing performance as a representational sign, one type of signs suggested by Dyer. The study demonstrates that CS singing, via its use of New Age discourses such as spirituality, genre fusion and plurality of style and text, portrays Sufi music as a discourse that may be adapted for any material end. The study has identified three main aspects of the problem of spiritual signified in CS Sufi singing: sign in this singing is largely (1) simulated in that it distances itself from the sacred ambience of Sufi music and demonstrates from mild to intense degrees of concealment and masquerading in its performance and thereby confuses the real with unreal or sacred with secular (2) it is fake, theatrical and entertaining and (3) it is largely exoteric with its focus on form, causing split between signifier and signified and thereby hyperreal.*

**Keywords:** Spiritual Signified, Physical Signifiers, Simulation, Theatrical, Hyperreal

### 1. Introduction

Disneyland seems a perfect model for Baudrillard to describe what he understands by simulation of contemporary signs. And yet if we say the analogy brings in a lucid explanation of the concept, it would probably be a simulated claim. The park, Disneyland, whereby real entertainment is sold out to masses through the phantasmagoric, the real and unreal seem at one page already even before

---

<sup>1</sup> PhD Scholar, NUML, Islamabad

Baudrillard (1981) himself crosses over the two realms- real and the simulated- by calling the park “real” America. Therefore, when he writes, “You park outside, queue up inside and are totally abandoned at the exit,” he seems to refer to the exit as the point whereby sign/referent relationship seems to liquidate. The new sign, simulacra, is free of reference, reality, truth or message and the more it distances from its representative truth or meaning, the hyperreal it becomes (pp. 413-14).

In the wake of the digitally mediated signs of the New Age media discourse, hyperreality and simulation seem relevant questions to be inquired. Dealing particularly with signs of the spiritual and esoteric such as Sufi music, neo-spirituality like other false signs, simulations, fakery and hyperreality of the New Age is a crucial concept to be taken into account. The present study as it seeks to inquire into the nature of the spiritual signified in Coke Studio (CS) Sufi singing (Pakistan), places the issue in this wider context. The study attempts to examine how CS singing is a sign which simulates Sufi music and uses it as a ploy to dupe the viewers into believing a didactic truth (Sufi poetry) within a lie in the similar fashion as Disney Land is used as a kind of ruse to confuse people between irreality and reality.

The study, via the semiotic inquiry, examines CS Sufi singing as a site whereby signs are simulated, used as a plaything and which tend to go hyperreal than reaching any signified end. A sample of 12 songs rendered by CS singers within a time frame of 9 years and 9 seasons is taken to study their singing performance as a representational sign, one type of signs as suggested by Dyer. It is inquired how and why singers admix (semi)romantic and worldly lyrics in their Sufi performance pivoting more on physical signifiers such as visual locale or heavy instrumentation. The concern is to examine their singing at its various levels of density and the inroads singers make in their performance. This is not simply to uncover how singers make a ludic play of Sufi text or truncate the text in various ways and rather oversimplify the notion of Sufi singing. What makes their singing problematic is that in doing so, the singers simulate the meaning as well as attempt to trivialize the genre, philosophy and pedagogy underpinning the Sufi music, and thereby disseminate the idea that every subjective or idiosyncratic interpretation of the esoteric within the ambit of Sufi music is to be considered adequate.

The question what Sufi music is in reality or the ambiance on which it is based logically comes up here. The studies reviewed below answer this question and

also focus on the New Age Sufi singing formats and the modern tendencies to rebrand Sufi music in various ways.

## 2. Sufi Music & the New Fusion Formats

Sufi music is underpinned with the notion of the sacred. It has pedagogical targets for those who seek to experience it in that way. Qawwali--a distinctly South Asian variety of Sufi music can be called a “ritualized performance of ecstatic Sufi poetry accompanied by music” (Rozeenal, 2007, p. 657). It is a unique genre of religious expression nurtured by the Chishti order in particular since 12<sup>th</sup> century in the Indian Subcontinent. In the Sufi path, “*Sama* is first and foremost a pedagogical tool — a ritual technology for the molding and shaping of a moral, virtuous self” (p. 657). To Qureshi (1986), the “authentic spiritual song”-Qawwali- provides a listening (*Sama*) experience to the devotees and, therefore, it enacts as a symbolic sign for them to transcend their conscious striving and be transported to a state of ecstasy-- a mystical station of union with God (p. 1).

What makes the Sufi music ritual sacred is due to what they call Sufi ambience, i.e. the observance of three rules, i.e., place, time and company. The ambience of Chishti assemblies is maintained and regulated by their spiritual teachers while disciples sit together and contemplate over what the singers perform out of *kalam* (poetic verses) usually accompanied by hand-clapping, *tabla* (drums), and harmonium. Chishtis believe that *kalam* is inherently powerful. They link the sequence of poetic verses with stages of the Sufi path known as *suluk* (Newell, 2007, pp. 668-69). In the contemporary scene, “Qawwals are often ignorant of these matters,” observes Rozeenal (p. 668). They are perhaps the “new breed of professional performers of Sufi music and Qawwali,” who use Sufi music for audience “who neither know the difference between genres nor care” (Bhattacharjee & Alam, 2012).

Islamic music or *Sama* enacts as a symbolic gateway to seek unity with God as Sufis believe. Newer discourse of Qawwali, however, seems more a construct meant to induce a “sense” of spirituality among participants via mediated sounds than a naturally inspirational activity whereby the listeners would get moved into active meditation through the power of sound and meaning, as notes Newell (2007). Many scholars note various inroads modern singers make in their performances in terms of purpose as well as environment of the traditional Sufi music. Lueg (2010), in his study of modern musical rites held in Turkey by Mevlevi Order, indicates how the Mevlevi Ceremony has been affected by its shift from the original function as a religious ritual within the intimate

environment of the Mevlevi lodge to the platform of government-controlled public performance in the secular environment” (para, 3). In its particular South Asian context, Qawwali has also lost most of its symbolic representation but as asserts Qureshi, the popular versions, filmi & techno Qawwali for instance, adapted for entertainment in clubs and on screen as a fancy, enjoyable item can never replace “live Qawwali in a Sufi assembly” (1999, p. 93).

A senior Chishti Sabiri disciple offers a critique of popular Qawwali: “Qawwali [filmi] is not *Sama*. With these Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan types . . . there is always lots of talk about wine, and the [drum] beats go up [in intensity].” Most of the pop singers are not trained for ritual etiquettes and mystical intricacies of the Sufi verses. In reality, “poetry and music are merely a medium for a higher goal: the inner concentration on the mystical quest” (as cited in Rozehnal, 2007, pp. 669-71). To Lewisohn (1997), ambience has to be there as a prior element in the *Sama* ritual. Modern art, however, is free of these essential elements and formal discipline as it might stifle the artist’s “creative genius” (1997, pp. 6-7). Nasr (2010), further elaborates this shift of focus concerning art which, in his view, is a random collection of diverse ideas with no ground in any specific culture or religion. Underpinning this view is the modern belief in an individual’s expression that is free of any restraint or limit. To him, the nature of this art is that people go to the “junkyard and pick up a few pieces . . . Well, this is art” (pp. 57-58). The New Age modernization offers only “Spiritually empty amusements” (Mattichak, 2011, p. 2).

The new tendency is to rebrand Sufi poetry as well as music for commodification purposes. In the USA, for instance, Rumi’s great poetic works are being taken out of the Islamic Sufi tradition and placed into an obscure sort of spiritual movement now termed as “New Sufism,” notes El-Zein (2010). Similarly, Whirling Dervishes of Turkey feature on many CD covers of so-called “Sufi” music recordings from Turkey. The title “Mevlevi” used on these albums has no connection with Mevlevi music (Uyar & Beşiroğlu, 2012, p. 146). By simply “rebranding their products,” these agencies use the titles for commodification (Craig & Porter, 2006, p. 137). The act of appropriation concerning music and mystical sounds becomes complex when agencies use digital sampling, namely, the borrowing of a sound (s) from one context and employing it in another (Degirmenci, 2013). Be it Pakistani, Turkish, Moroccan or any other context, the spiritual base of Sufi Music is lifted out of its traditional context to be customized for new markets and to fit in the more flexible slot of the New Age spiritualism or “religiosity.” Whereas **Pannke (2012) calls it “new-age nonsense”** as it is either

displacing the **reality of** signs or substituting them with fake copies/non-sense, Malpas views it as a clear shift “from a representational to a simulation-focused epistemology” (2012, p. 15).

Loytard relates the shift to what he calls a crisis of “legitimation” which began in last quarter of 20<sup>th</sup> century but entered a critical phase at the turn of 21<sup>st</sup> century, after 9/11 in particular. The 9/11 itself is a sign of simulacra which proffered numbers and digits disregarding the liaison between signs and values, substituting the spiritual meaning with the material (as cited in Lucy, 1997). Berger (2012) traces the post 9/11 as an era which transcends human barriers and is shorn of context and history as its locus is the “spontaneous personal fulfillment” (Braidotti, 2011, p. 17). This desire for personal fulfillment is satiated in Jameson’s words through the “marketing of images, lifestyles, and modes of being” or “forging” of personalities and commodification of knowledge, culture and even religion (pp. 17-18).

Berger (2010), pinpoints the act of forgery in another way by differentiating between signs of truth and falsehood. Citing Eco, he writes how “people can and often do lie with signs,” e.g. men and women who cross dress or who dye their black or brown hair as blond (p. 12). Similarly, Baudrillard (2010) traces signs which have lost their substance and are divested of their symbolic value relating it to the present scenario. The sign, he says, “masks the absence of a profound reality; it has not relation to any reality whatsoever: it is its own pure simulacrum” (p. 6). False signs in Baudrillard’s view are hyperreal in that they are bereft of any signification. Similarly, Dyer argued that signs in the present scenario are simulated in that they, per se, are meant for entertainment and pleasure. Being concerned with semiotics of the showbiz world of entertainment, Dyer’s theory offers useful theoretical insights as well as tools to study simulation. The present study, an inquiry of the showbiz media (CS singing), draws on his theory of entertainment in addition to using insights from Eco and Baudrillard theories.

### **3. Simulacra and Hyperreality**

Baudrillard (1981/83), hailed as one of the most influential critics on the postmodern plight, uses simulacra to explain the “relation of original to copy in which the copy substitutes itself for the original from which it becomes thereby indistinguishable” (pp. 541-42). He defines simulacra as a four-step process. At first step, simulation of an image shows a better reflection of the reality being imitated although already a reflection or copy whereas in the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase, it suggests a deeper penetration of the simulated image with the consequence that original

reality is perverted beyond recognition. The third phase marks the simulated image enacting as real- “simulation’s own act of disguising itself as the real”- leaving no scope for us to grasp the fundamental reality it once belonged to. Lastly, the simulated image has no relation to any reality whatsoever, “it is its own pure simulacrum.” Here the replicated image itself grows into a new reality, with no mark of reference to anything other than itself. It turns into an autonomous simulacra, a self-contained sign which exists within and by itself. Baudrillard calls it “Hyper-Real” in that it is neither real nor unreal but a perfect simulation, a new reality (p. 6).

In Baudrillard’s discussion, hyperreality is synonymous with the most developed form of *Simulation* --the autonomous simulacra which is free from any reference to the real or representation of truth and meaning (pp. 121–122). To further explain this collapse of meaning or the referential, Baudrillard calls it a separation of the signifier from the signified and uses the term “simulacrum” for this which grows into hyperreal at its 4<sup>th</sup> stage (Klages, 2006, p. 170). His use of the term “hyperreality” suggests that the sign is now more important than what it stands for. Brooker (1999) provides the context for this term saying that it may be associated with the effects of mass production and reproduction. This implies that an object, event, experience so reproduced replaces or is preferred to its original: that the copy is “more real than real,” as Baudrillard says that Disneyland is now the ultimate reality and the United States is an imitation of it. In the present capitalistic and consumer-driven societies where the designer label/brand is accepted as reality, whereas its functionality given a secondary consideration, the notion of simulacra/hyperreality is not hard to understand (as cited in Stubbs, 2011, p. 9).

Eco, in his theory of signs, also questions the nature of reality in that signs are being used to lie which implies that either signs are fake or they are being deployed to delude others.

#### **4. Fakery, Simulation & False Signs**

Eco (1976) suggested that since signs can/may be used to tell the truth, they can also be used to lie. He argued that If something cannot be used to tell a lie, logically it cannot be used to express the truth as well; rather it cannot be used “to tell” anything at all (p. 7). Eco’s theory of signs is significant in that it is suggestive of a wider scenario in the present times wherein the sham prevails as a predominant sign. Fakery, fraud, simulation and deception are some of the ways people use to lie and mislead others.

Berger (2004) elaborates Eco's theory of signs by specifying and defining ten broader areas of signs which people use to pretend, to simulate and to mislead others. His explanation is useful in that it makes any reader see its relevance to our routine discourses and we see people lying not only to hide their identities but to simulate and pretend to have specific beliefs and feelings which he calls theater. In the CS singing, for instance, the performance of the singers is not underpinned by a sense of the tradition and the words they sing (Sufi poetry) do not co-match with their bodily discourse, i.e. it lacks spiritual depth and devotion, I draw on Eco's term "theater" to highlight this incongruity.

Keeping the digital transgressions in view, the theatrical signs may also be traced in the TV advertisements, e.g. in candy ads. In these ads, the positive function of sweets is shown as real and a reality it appears out to be, the agencies thus play theater, by making viewers consume the fake as real. Theater also plays well in the new digital media, television and film. Masquerading is done in yet another way, that is, by using and substituting one's identity via the use of signs which represent another person's identity. This, in Berger's view, is impersonation which may be exerted by adopting overtly all signs belonging to some other person or may be the other sex, e.g. style or manner of talking, or dressing as, for instance, in CS, singers cross-dress or utilize Sufi singing resources for their own promotion. Substitution in Berger's view is not a simple or straightforward matter, it has the potential to "displace traditional ethnic and cultural traits" of the society one belongs to (p. 33). The consumer societies as we have currently grown out to be, we make many choices every day that center on our growing brand consciousness or lifestyles.

Both Baudrillard and Eco, therefore, deal with fake, false or simulated signs. Stubbs (2011) explains their concern in that Eco uses the term hyperreality to invoke what he understands as those specific situations in which the copy comes first, whereas for Baudrillard, it corresponds to a more general contemporary condition in which both, "representation and reality have been displaced by simulacra" (p. 2).

Dyer's (2000) idea of "escape" and "utopian entertainment" provides yet another kind of simulacra which he explores through his study of the 'showbiz' world. To him, utopia is something which elicits unreal as real, fantasizes pleasure and entertainment and thereby enacts simulation.

### **5. Simulation & Entertainment**

To Dyer (2000), every cultural production or work of art is characterized by an “élan of the musical, the allure of stars,” sensuality, excitement of action and thrill. The excitement of a show or work comes through the use of formal properties or what Dyer calls “affective code,” which “works at the level of sensibility ... and presents, head-on as it were, what utopia would feel like” (p. 2). To him, utopia is something which elicits unreal as real, fantasizes pleasure and entertainment and thereby enacts simulation. In his discussion on “showbiz,” Dyer examines “musicals,” e.g., music hall, variety, TV spectaculars, pantomime, etc. – that are usually summed up by the term ‘showbiz,’ and brings in the idea of “escape” that he sees closely attached to it. Showbiz, he says, are “the most thoroughly entertainment-oriented of all types of performance,” which let the viewers “escape” from the existing reality. It seems Dyer is using “showbiz” as a sign which elicits more signs such as desire, fantasy, pleasure and escape into a utopian world (p. 20).

While dealing with his theory of utopian entertainment, Dyer does not present a model in the fashion of the classic utopias, he instead critically examines it and brings in the embodied illustration of the concept. For instance, when he inquires how a song attains a top hit status, he puts a question what it is which “makes the number lovely,” and highlights the utopian undercurrents of these hit numbers such as the “lilting drive of the tunes” and “the use of editing to display” glamour stars, musicals, pinups, porn and dance music among many other tropes that are used in any art production. His reference to “actioned expansion in space” (pp. 2, 19-20) emphasizes the glitzy space a star or celebrity hankers after and the same captivates the imagination of the viewers with its embedded meaning of pleasure, fantasy and desire to be the same kind of celebrated person. Another aspect of his inquiry of the musical is the celebrated space the female artists are assigned in a cultural production. His observation that the “musical is unusual in assigning the experience of expansion to female characters,” (p. 2) provides me with a useful insight to develop and broaden the horizon of my argument of the celebrity space that is assigned to female singers in CS Sufi singing.

In many ways, Dyer’s theory problematizes the notion of entertainment- the notion which is normally defined in a stereotypical way, simple and straightforward manner. The theory, therefore, with its semiotic study of showbiz- the world of entertainment, is relevant to my work. Moreover, the study also draws on Dyer’s classification of signs- representational and non-representational. However, for the purpose of this article, only one unit, i.e., Music & Singing



Performance of CS singers of the representational category of signs is selected for detailed analysis. Prior to the analysis, it seems pertinent here to briefly introduce CS, Pakistan and address the question as to what makes CS singing a significant choice for this research.

### **6. Coke Studio, Pakistan**

CS, sponsored by Coca Cola, world's largest beverage company, and Frequency Media, is a Pakistani music television series which features live studio-recorded music performances by stars. Produced by Rohail Hyatt in 2008, it was taken up by the Strings Band in 2014. Led by its producers, "CS's musical output typically combines Sufi and folk poetry with pop and rock song lyrics and traditional musical formats with more contemporary and Western rhythms. A new set of songs and other footage is released every year in a series of 'Episodes' that together comprise a 'Season' ..." (Mukhtar, 2015, p. 30). The artists of each show or episode are usually backed by a house band, backing vocals and guest artists from countries such as Italy, Turkey and Morocco.

CS music performance is interesting in many ways. Singers perform in a multi-semiotic space whereby music, rhythm and instrumentation dominate. Sitting in (semi)circle, with stunning light, color and sound effects in the backdrop, singers perform with fusion of blows, plucks, clonks, strikes, throbs intermixed with electronic raps and taps and a lot more. In addition to its visual appeal, what makes CS singers more popular is the way they draw on a number of new discourses such as genre fusion, adaptation and plurality of style as well as text. They even make bold admixtures by using secular and spiritual lyrics in their Sufi songs. The innovative combinations of, for instance, hip hop, rock and pop music with *qawwali* or Sufi music is something they call "new music genre" which in the view of GM, Coca-Cola Pakistan, is meant to bridge barriers between East and West and thereby fuel optimism, "positivity" and "Open Happiness"—which is what Coca Cola stands for (Khan as cited in Moye, December 21, 2014). What the Cola executives claim to bring in Pakistan via CS music, i.e., "positivity," ironically does not match with their expansion plan in Pakistan (Zmuda, June 13, 2011, para, 2-4).

CS's immense popularity over a time of 9-10 years is certainly more than what we can call a game of numbers. This even amazed the Google officials who recently met CS team as they noticed, "How a show originating from a country where YouTube is blocked went so viral that it has 72 million downloads and is watched in 120 countries" (Ahmad, December 31, 2015; Sarfraz, December 27,

2015). Many of its Sufi numbers have been rated as the top hit songs. For instance, “Alif Allh Jugni” (radiant love of *Alif* Allah) by Lohar & Shafi, got 14 million views on YouTube, making it the most-watched online video in Coca-Cola history (Sisario, 2012; Moye, 2014).

With its novel musical and genre fusions as well as digital sampling techniques, CS has pioneered new cultural trends in the music industry of Pakistan. With its width and breath, international franchise, a large body of sponsors, amount of visibility and tremendous increase in popularity rate, CS makes a befitting choice for a scholarly inquiry. In addition to its musical and genre fusions, CS, by using digital sampling, has not only pioneered new entertainment trends in the music industry of Pakistan but has also made forays in the genre of Sufi music—something which has hardly engaged academia. Moreover, works done are mostly from the perspective of Qawwali. The present study, therefore, is significant in that it addresses this gap and argues for its being a serious issue.

## 7. Sample

The sample of the present study comprises 10 Sufi songs rendered by CS singers within a time frame of 9 years and 9 seasons. Out of a total of 32 Sufi numbers aired on Pakistani TV channels, 10 are selected on the basis of a four-unit criterion, in terms of gender, age, professional expertise and popularity. The rating/popularity taken from two popular social media sites, You Tube and Sound Cloud is given below along with sample details.

### 7.1 Sample Details

S.No	Season	Episode	Release	Artist(s)	Song/ <i>Kala'am</i>	Poet	Rating
1	2	1	June 14, 2009	Saeen Zahoor	<i>Aik Alif</i>	Bulleh Shah	24, 443
2	2	2	June 28, 2009	Ali Zafar	<i>Daastan-e-Ishq</i>	Bulleh Shah	11, 556.5
3	3	1	June 06, 2010	Arif Lohar Meesha Shafi	<i>Alif Allah Jugni</i>	Sultan Baho	74, 367.5
4	3	5	Aug. 01, 2010	Sanam Marvi	<i>Manzel-e-Sufi</i>	Sachal Sarmast	7,638.5
5	5	1	May 2012	Hadiqa Kiyani	<i>Kamli</i>	Bulleh Shah	1,272.5
6	5	2	May 2012	Atif Aslam Umair	<i>Charkha Neolakha</i>	Bulleh Shah	13,500.5

7	6	1	Oct. 2013	14,	Jaswal Fareeha Pervez	<i>Jogi Mairy Naal</i>	Bulleh Shah	8, 264
8	6	2	Oct. 2013	24,	Abrar-ul-Haq	<i>Ishq di Booti</i>	Sultan Baho	7,970.5
9	9	3	Aug. 2016	27,	Ahmed Jahanzeb Umair Jaswal	<i>Khaki Banda</i>	Bulleh Shah	22, 501.5
10	9	6	Sep. 2016	17,	Rizwan Butt Sara Haider	<i>Meri Meri</i>	Bulleh Shah	8,033

*Note.* Table above shows sample detail as well as rating (average) collected from two social media sites.

### 8. Structure of the Analysis of Songs

Drawing on Dyer's representational category of signs, the study analyses signs falling under one unit, i.e., Music & Singing Performance of CS singers which is further divided into 4 themes. Only one theme, i.e., sacred text, secular performance, carrying an in-depth study of 3 songs performed by 5 singers is selected for the present study as it conveniently fits within the scope of an article.

The analysis is structured on mainly two aspects: (1) song as an aesthetics rendition in general and (2) whether it carries the Sufi ethos of singing whereby both form (signifier) and meaning (signified) are taken into account. Analysis goes in line with the format of the songs, i.e., intro, bridge (middle) and the outro parts, slightly touching the verse-to-chorus structure and the role of male and female vocal ensemble (backing vocals/chorus) in the singing, if relevant.

### 9. Sacred Text, Secular Performance

The text of the songs as it speaks of Allah, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and Sufi saints, is sacred and evokes holiness. It thereby sets a line of thought for the viewers and so expectations from the singers. Many singers, however, treat the text in a way that gives a secular feeling and it seems as if, for them, the content and the manner of its presentation (singing performance) are two separate entities and it matters not what words are being sung and what underlying reality the words suggest. Three singing performances are analyzed below.

#### 9.1 Arif Lohar and Meesha Shafi

The song, *Alif Allah Jugni*/ radiant love of Alif Allah, Season 3, Episode 1 of CS, is performed by Lohar, Shafi & female vocal ensemble.

### 9.1.1 Theme & Structure of Song

The song starts with Sultan Bahoo's verses which talk of the disciple's love for his/her Mentor whose guidance leads the way to God. The rest of the song speaks of the radiant love (*Jugni*) of the Prophet (PBUH), of his companions and of all God-fearing people and the ending lines suggest to seek love of those who sought Allah's Love, since no salvation is possible otherwise.

The song contains 6 stanzas of varying length and a refrain- one stanza followed by a lyrical phrase that are repeated by the chorus at the end of each section of the song. Lyrics are a blend of the Sufi and folk lyrics based on the elusive *Jugni* which was popularized by Alam Lohar-- a famous folk singer from the region of Punjab, formerly British India. The ending verses of the song are borrowed from a famous *qawwali* track sung earlier by different singers. The song follows a verse-chorus form with *Jugni* providing the central motif, musical variation, style as well as thematic colors.

### 9.1.2 Singing Performance

Cool music rhythm opens the composition of the song: the clank of *Chimta* (tongs which is a percussion instrument) as the distinct sound in fusion with a light, though audible, drum beat and a sleek tinkling of *Ektara* (one-string instrument) by a music player who is



clad in green. The rhythm continues and precisely after 21 seconds, Lohar, with *chimta* in hands, clad in dark black *kurta* (loose shirt) and a red stole around his neck, appears. He is clanking the *chimta* in his usual folksy way, in a skilled manner to make a start. He demonstrates some level of seriousness but the undercurrents of what he sings give a feel of funk and groove which in the next few seconds become more evident when the female co-vocalist and the other musical groups join in.

Figure 1: Lohar & Shafi singing Alif Allah Jugni with an air of jubilation, their gestures & bodily actions demonstrate a contrast with the Sufi lyrics they sing

Lohar begins the song with Bahoo's famous verses, *Alif Allah chambe di booti mere murshid mann wich laai – hu/My master has planted the fragrant seeds of love in my heart, in Stanza 1, Verse 1* [See Appendix A]. His musical and vocal composition of these verses demonstrates seriousness and focus on the content or emphasis on words makes us reflect over the meaning of words for a while. The seriousness however, does not continue as a viewer would expect it to be like because the next few seconds reveal the artist in his usual style of performance, i.e. in his usual, a little rowdy and entertaining style, something which one would never see in a serious Sufi singing, for instance, in that of Saeen Zahoor or Abida Perveen's songs [both are renowned Pakistani Sufi singers].

In Lohar's case, what he sings, i.e. the lyrics imbued with sacred meanings demonstrate a contrast to what his actions, i.e. his gestures and bodily language imply or speak of and which engage us in some other way leaving little space for us to concentrate on the signified meaning embedded in the verses. With this funny flavor, the song seems more a *Jugni* performance in its typical sense, a display of folk singing and its musical aspects, e.g., rhythm, beat and choral features also fit well into this genre. The vocalist's own outlook, e.g. long, wavy hair in lieu with fashion and style, a peculiar wild smile in eyes, flickering apparel and bodily actions all indicate a bubbly tinge, an air of materiality and a desire for starship that fits into the folk or funk but not Sufi singing [See Figure 1]. As a consequence, a gap is created between what was supposed to be the intended focus (the signified reality) and the view of reality (materiality) which is being demonstrated. The signifiers therefore point out a discourse which is not compatible with what is mystical and meditative.

Seen at exoteric level, however, some aspects of Lahor's song seem significant in terms of the meaning that are traditionally assigned to them such as the use of *chimta* or even *Jugni* (spirit/radiance) which has a symbolic and historical significance (Gummi, 1997, p. 151). *Chimta* clanking has been/is associated with our folk traditions and may be regarded as a representation of modest singing and in this very context may be related to Sufi singing as well. Moreover, the green robe as the *Ektara* player [Intro of the song] in the video is clad in, may be interpreted within a wider religious and devotional context. Green, being the dome color (built above the tomb of the Prophet Muhammad, PBUH) and also the color used on many Sufi tombs, may perhaps be regarded to be Sufic in nature as well as an emblem of veneration of those who sought Allah's Love. This aspect is good but as all Sufis maintain that the exoteric is only one dimension, the outward or the apparent and unless it comes as a reflection of the esoteric or the inward, it

will remain superficial and meaningless. In Lohar's song, the esoteric remains absent. The other aspect *Jugni* which, in simple terms, is a folk song of Punjab (Bai, 2014) but authors such as Gummi (1997), Sidhu (n.d.) and Dutt (2011) trace the origin and definition(s) of the term. Sidhu (n.d.) traces its origin from North India about 2000 years back but Dutt (2011) states that *Jugni* came into being in 1906 as a song of protest against the British imperial rule. These authors trace *Jugni* as an elusive figure which fits into any situation- from literal to allegorical. For instance, a Pakistani Punjabi film titled as *Jugni* (2011), released in 2011, reveals the story of three men seeking love of one woman, 'Jugni' -- the heroine of the film. The *jugni* in the film evokes literal meanings- the sexual allure of a woman. In the song under study, it is suggestive of allegorical meanings.

As the lyrics of this song clearly speak, *Jugni* is used as a metaphor of the sacred, namely, it is associated with Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Hazrat Ali (cousin & son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad & the 4<sup>th</sup> caliph) and Sufi saints and all sacred names are narrated in the song in terms of their radiance/spirit (*Jugni*) in the refrain sung by the chorus [Stanza 1-6]. The lyrics of the song evoke holiness and the meaning is easy to read and this sets a line of thought for the viewers and so expectations from the singers. For instance, the lyrics which are sung time and again by the chorus, *Ae we Nabi Paak di jugni ji, Ae we maula Ali waali jugni ji/* the Spirit of the Holy Prophet, the spirit of Ali and his followers, it would be natural to expect the vocalists, the musical chords and every outward manifestation in the Studio turning to its lowest or subdued so as to let the esoteric light of the words flow outward and touch the listeners. And that could give a memorable mystical experience to the listeners/viewers. Moreover, the choral singing of the lyrical phrase- *dum gutkoon/my heart flutters the moment I think of you, my God-* could be made a mystically enjoyable experience. Instead we see fun in the rhythm of *dum gutkoon*, and excitement, thrill in the vocal diction of the female vocalist (Shafi) and other vocal ensemble when they repeat lyrics after Lohar such as 'So I recite the *Kalma* when I think of God' (Stanza 2, Verse 2). Words are not meant for any serious reflection in the performance nor do the music and instrumentation direct us towards that.

Choral singing is another feature that is done in two different styles in the song, first by the main vocalists and second by the backing vocals. Other than various contexts, this style is also seen in religious and devotional songs whereby the singing is done in the chanting manner. In this *Alif Allah* song, chorus appears after the 'Jugni' with the singing of Verse 4, *Peer meriya jugni ji/I have the spirit of my guide*, followed by a sequence of its repetition in various ways. This

element, though adds eloquence and a unique touch to the song nonetheless becomes an explicit sign of glee and excitement evident in the bodily actions of CS singers [Figure 1] and not matching with what the 'Jugni' itself is speaking, as stated above. This *Jugni* is far from being any symbolic quest for the radiance of the Prophets and Sufis and it is nothing but as the CS singers call a 'fusion number ... with the alluring intervention of *Dum Gutkoon*' or simply a narrative device that is in keeping with the age-old narrative style used in Punjabi folk music (Dutt, 2011).

Religious symbols of Sufi poetry or of lyrics taken from other sources are consumed by many CS singers for fun and celebration of their singing style, or for projection of the self and starship. This suggests that here signs signify what is false as they do not represent what was intended for or at least what could be read through their selection of Sufi text. Signs, therefore, are packed with lies using Eco's terms as what they represent is the physicality of signifiers and not the spiritual signified, Sufi lyrics are meant for. CS singing performance reveals even various shades of pretense and insincerity, if analyzed via Baudrillard's simulation. For instance by using Sufi poetry (some famous verses) in their performance, Coke singers tend to convey the message that they cling to the spiritual traditions though perhaps in their own way. Simulation is seen in its intense form at the level of their performance which lacks seriousness essential for this kind of singing as the ancient Sufis guide us. In addition, it is the lurid setting of CS, heavy instrumentation, digital spin of light and color that let the fantastic/simulacra mediate, take over and come in the way to perceive truth or meaning embedded in the Sufi text being sung. CS singing, therefore, is a sign which simulates Sufi music and uses it as a ploy to confuse people between reality and irreality and dupe them into believing a didactic truth (Sufi poetry) within a lie. It thereby is hyperreal. The New Age movement as it has given rise to these trends such as the worship of the self which is a form of neo-paganism which appropriates and consumes religious symbolism for its survival. This worship of the self, a progeny of the New Age movement, is a form of Neo-paganism which survives through appropriation and consumption of religious symbolism. The symbols become entities free of any reference or meaning (loss of the signified meaning) to be used for any purpose (Ghilan, 2014).

In the song under study, it seems as if the content and the manner of its presentation (singing performance) are two separate entities and it matters not what words are being sung and what underlying reality the words suggest. Quite the opposite, for example, when the lyrics talk of this world as an ephemeral place

as, *Chad duniya de janjaal*/Remove yourselves from worldly concerns [Stanza 3, Verse 2], the demonstration at every level becomes superficial and even secular: sounds become faster, music heightened, beat and rhythm more intense and the vocalists lead to turn their performance into a sensational event, an experience of fun and entertainment [See the video song on CS website]. Again this is a demonstration of the spiritual in secular terms. The outro of the song ‘jugni ji’ is made in the typical *thumri* (a light romantic form) style, in a very fast tempo and repeated thrice, no less an amusing touch is given to the song, a celebration of the secular through spiritual. This entails that inner and outer signs conflict with each other and the external glaze plays a role to conceal the reality and takes the viewer away from it. Jugni is made to wear a secular robe and is used only as a musical motif or an expressionistic groove to be repeated with variations. “Showbiz,” using Dyer’s term, seems the most noteworthy sign in the overall discourse of this song as is the case with CS performance in general. It is a sign which elicits other signs such as fantasy, pleasure and fun. And the more the pleasure, the more space for simulacra is created.

## 9.2 Fareeha Pervez

The Sufi song *Jogi Mery Naal*/I want to go along with *Jogi*, a CS production Season 6, Episode 1, is performed by Fareeha Pervez.

### 9.2.1 Theme & Structure of Song

The song talks of a mystical notion of how the being desires to be connected back to its Essence. The poet, speaking in a female voice, longs for the company of the Mentor (*Jogi*) and desires to surrender her will to her spiritual authority.

The Song contains 4 stanzas of differing length with a refrain—a couplet sung by chorus and a single line that is given special emphasis by Pervez as she repeats it a number of times in the bridge section. The bridge contains various effects: vocal by Khan, verse with repetitive focus by Pervez and instrumental with twofold rhythm that come mainly by two instruments—trumpet and *dhol* (double-sided barrel drum). Song is not precisely a solo but accompanied by Muazzam Ali Khan, a famous Qawwal, with his melodic variations which he renders in bridge and outro.



### 9.2.2 Singing Performance

The song by Pervez seems a unique and interesting case to study. It is unique in its lyrical composition: soft, melodic and an articulate singing which is expressive of her professional skill as an artist. Her style though not classical, is definitely rooted in the semi-



classical tradition, e.g. *ghazal* singing but she seems good at

Figure 2: Fareeha Pervez shows up with the beauty of her singing art- her glides & jerks- but is least expressive in terms of a spiritual performance

improvisation and has the knack of doing the funks and grooves of pop music also and her present performance is not an exception. Hence a straightforward labeling for her singing art would not suffice. The air of composure that she presents herself with is peculiar of her shows, a feature she shares with all celebrated classical singers. Hadiqa Kiyani, an equally renowned Pakistani singer, does not demonstrate this kind of composure in her Sufi song *Kamli/Crazy* [See CS website].

More than playing, it is the celebration of notes (*swaras*) which is valued by the masters in the Indian classical singing, as is seen in Abida Perveen's performance or that of Saen Zahoor. Fareeha Pervez performs a bit of it and with a considerable ease interspersing her singing with a little spice of ornamentation so as not to let the viewers overly taste it. Kiyani, in contrast, makes her music a little more spicy by using, e.g. a number of jerks (*khatkas*) and even with less variation and it seems as if the mute spaces (notes) are also getting consumed and this is how an insipid impression is created. Sufi singing, I believe, needs not a loud but a subtle use of musical embellishment.

In the song under study, Fareeha Pervez appears in the same peculiar style and musical voice. The composition unfolds the beauty of her art, the way she combines notes and their variant sounds into modulations, enhancing the beauty of her melodies with glides, jerks and with pacing up (ascending) or slowing

down (descending) of the notes and gracing the show with the beauty of her art as well as demeanor. Consider, for instance, the beginning of the song, the vocalization of the opening part of the raga/*Asthai* (Stanza 1, Verse 1) ‘Ni men jaana Jogi dey naal/I have to go along with Jogi,’ her style is evocative but measured and the pitch and volume of her voice moderately falls between middle and former part of the higher octave (upper Sa in the Indian classical scale) and thus notably good and appealing. Again Kiyani’s loud and vividly marked hand movements while repeating the line ‘Ni men kamli aan/O, I am crazy’ makes a contrast and thereby what she sings gets reduced to a rhyming effect only or a formulaic piece designed to enact a musical exercise.

In the song under study, Fareeha’s skill of improvisation is also noticeable in the ending section of the song where she ventures for a blend of classical and modern *ghazel* style and instead of ending with intense and faster tempo the way as e.g. Abrar-ul-Haq does in his song *Ishq Di Booti*/the Seed of God’s Love, she makes it likeable and unique. She reverses the order of the theme line, ‘Ni men jaana /Jogi dey naal’ and thus shifts emphasis onto the latter part as shown through the slash, on ‘Jogi dey naal’ and even treating ‘Jogi dey’ as a separate entity repeating it thrice. The meaning is easy to infer that it is none other than ‘Jogi’ whose companionship (*naal*) is being intended for and who is the object of the speaker’s veneration and love. The vocalist thus elaborates the theme of love, love as an experience of both fulfilment and longing, of beauty and tragedy--a story poignant ever and also makes it appealing and moving for the viewer via its rhythm, music and style. The show, therefore, seems filled with a gusto of stylistic and aesthetic connotations and thereby her singing is likeable to a great extent.

Coming to the rhythmic aspect of Pervez’s performance and what function, if any, it seems to play in the delivery of meanings the lyrics are filled with. As a listener when I closed my eyes and listened to the song just aurally, what I heard was the strokes, the rocking beat and rhythm of the percussion and other musical ensembles which were clearly perceived to be the overpowering feature of the song. On the other hand, when I listened to it with opened eyes, what appealed to me most was the artist herself, her feminine charms, her glamorous outfit and the music of her voice and hence I tended to view it in that way [See Figure 2]. Musicality and rhythm are the two key words I would use to speak about this song. Music is sensually appealing here, typical of CS, and never engages viewers spiritually rather it diverts their attention away from grasping the realities underpinning the text. It seems a good creative exercise for the singer to explore

*swaras* (notes) and improvise on them which contributes to make it good in aesthetic terms or more as a sophisticated piece of entertainment.

Moreover, visually powerful as the Studio is, it does evoke sensory pleasure in various ways. In various songs such as Kiyani's song *Kamli*, this peculiar feature is centrally present and even a louder form of the fused music, sounds and tunes of various instruments which play a role in downplaying the Sufi lyrics reducing them to an ordinary plaything. The light drone sound using in the intro section [Stanza 1/Appendix B] is later intermixed with heavy jingles, beats, blows and clonks creating an impact so loud that the drone effect is greatly undermined. Moreover this aural mediation of sounds is further heightened with an overly use of visual elements, the mise en scene, the fluid lights do have a visual appeal but not any mystical implication. These, in fact are distracting elements which curtail and do not facilitate any mystical reading of the text, rather the viewer is led to another discourse which is materially appealing or a discourse of pleasure and entertainment. In this sense, even Pervez's performance not only lacks subtle power needed to evoke the meaning underneath the verses sung, rather it disrupts the meaning on account of the digital elements in the Studio. Her show appears to be more a discourse of glamor, beauty and the promotion of celebrity culture which in Dyer's (2002) words could be termed as an 'élan of the musical, the allure of stars' (p. 2).

In Pervez's show, rhythm stands out as an amusing feature in various ways. For instance, some funky tunes, blend of keyboard, percussion and horn, provide the bass line for the song which nonetheless distract us from focusing on the content. The song starts with a keyboard stroke to let the vocalist take on and then comes in an exciting sample of recorded sounds to be intermixed with various sounds of brass, string and *dhol* instruments forming a full-fledged musical context for the show. Minus the Moroccan, there is the Serbian House Band, three ever-present vocals including the famous Rachel Vacciji who provide backing to the lead vocalist. Last, not the least, the most amusing feature of the show comes around the second half of its composition (bridge) which is highly evocative in terms of the music and rhythm which lasts for about 1 minute, from 00: 02: 42 to 00: 01: 40 out of the total span of the song being 00: 07: 03. The tunes of the musical ensemble, of trumpet and *dhol* in particular form a groovy combination almost to a magical extent so much so that it carries Vacciji, one of the backing vocalists, to dance, or perhaps make her dance to the tune. Caught in a moment of thrill and excitement, she brings in fun and sensation. The musical variations or

permutations of Moazzam Khan, the Qawwal, do not seem to fit anywhere except that they add an interesting groove in the overall musical setting.

There is yet another aspect of Pervez's performance which indicates that she presents a spiritual text in a style which is very secular. Consider, for instance, her body language, the hand movement in particular which though fits into the classical style of singing is not expressive in terms of a spiritual performance. Hers is a highly stylized way of presentation, a celebration of the 'female celebrity space' (2002, p. 2), and used as a sign of pleasure, fantasy and entertainment by the CS itself. Female agency thus plays an important role in the Studio singing and also enacts as a discursive sign for the agency to promote the liberal agenda of the New Age.

### **9.3 Ahmad Jahanzeb and Umair Jaswal**

**The song *Khaki Bandah*/Human made of mere clay, CS production Season 9, Episode 3, is a duet performed by Jahanzeb & Jaswal.**

#### **9.3.1 Theme & Structure of Song**

**The song** centers on the idea of a sincere effort on part of man to adorn the soul through examining the self, solitary vigil and weeping for Allah's forgiveness while keeping away from the glitters of material world. Man is made of mere clay and the desire to become invincible or godly would be inane.

**Song contains 11 stanzas of varying length with 2 used as refrain and sung in various ways by Jahanzeb and by chorus afterwards.** Lyrics that Jahanzeb sings are written by Shuja Haider, the director of the song, and interlaced with Bulleh Shah's verses rendered by Jaswal. The couplet, a rhymed expression which comes from the register of film and also used in famous Indian musical numbers, makes a contrast to the Sufi verses in terms of the density of thought and stanzaic structure. Chorus which enters as a pre-bridge section also enacts various voice effects, whispering and miming for instance, not seen in other songs. Instrumental sections play various innovative effects. Outro contains numerous flavors: voices, overlapping voice and instrumental effects, mimes and flickers of light and color—the features more often seen in CS singing. The song is an instance of innovative fusions of texts, styles and genres.

### 9.3.2 Singing Performance

A guitar strum, cool and rhythmic, opens the composition of the video song and in 2 seconds, is colored with more melodic flair played by Ustad Tanveer Husain on mandolin-- a stringed instrument from the lute family.



In few seconds, this riff raff is developed and shaped into a melodic pattern carrying the rhythm of rain and cheer of sunshine and continues for 56 seconds of the track of more than 8 minutes and 43 seconds (00:08:43). This music pattern establishes the mood, the rhythm and ambience of the song and is mingled with more music and overlapping sounds played on guitars, bass, drums, keyboard, and percussions played by the house band and guest musicians. The string section, however, joins in the coming few moments to fill in the silence in between the singing and add new flairs of music.

Figure 3: Jahanzeb & Jaswal showcase through a notanki/hilarious, entertaining singing & bodily swings; Jaswal [on right] moves to and fro in his signature rocky style

Amidst this play of music, beat and rhythm, the posture as well as the manner in which Umair Jaswal moves to and fro in his signature rocky style [See Figure 3], is worthy to note. The dress Jaswal is clad in is informal- jeans and jacket- but the stole-flowery and silky- knotted from front and loosely woven around his neck gives him a classically stunning outlook. At precisely 0:01:10, when he vocalizes verse 1 in Stanza 1 [Appendix C] of the song, *khaki banda, kr da phire khudai*/A mere human made of clay, who goes around acting as if he's as invincible as God, equally powerful and energetic are his vocals which make a great appeal also. His style is energetic and delivery of words is lucid and unequivocal, still what it does not contain is depth and spiritual ambience that one would look forward while listening to a Sufi track.

The track "Khaki Banda" seen as a whole, i.e., inclusive of Ahmad Jahanzeb's singing performance as a co-vocalist, seems to acquire even more a secular color. The lyrics that Jahanzeb sings are the ones written by Shuja Haider (director of

song) and interlaced with Bulleh Shah's poetry in order to make the song innovative and stylistically appealing [Stanza 2, 4, 6, 8, 11]. The inserted parts do have innovative quality but also have the drive to drag the listener away from any meditative thought since they are inherently sensual and come from the register of film and also used in famous Indian musical numbers. They do not fit well with the Punjabi Sufi poetry that is a specific genre on account of lyrical and thematic composition. Punjabi Sufi poetry in the words of Ghaffar (2007), 'is rich not only in meaning but also in auditory sensations which make the verse flower ... it is a layered verse and moves at several levels. Music and words, imagery and structure, fuse into an organic, poetic whole' (pp. 1, 9). The fusion of any other text into Sufi poetry would make little sense because it is hard to create poetry which is dense and a 'play with the sounds and meanings of words simultaneously using various tones and pitches of meanings' as argues Ghaffar (p. 9).

Lyrics fused by singers of this song are far from being a text which is dense or is underpinned with thought and meaning. For instance, the structure 'sitrangi re,' part of the refrain, that throbs in the centre of the song, is picked up from a famous Indian musical film *Sitrangi* (2012) and employed to hook viewers and listeners and thereby feed them with something memorable. The expression 'sitrangi,' used in rhyme with 'notanki,' seems to have been adjusted well in the lyrics and attempt is made to assign them spiritual meaning. This, however, is ironical because both words in terms of their common usage, the register they come from and thereby the meaning attached to them, all suggest the worldly flavor they are underpinned with. The lyrics fused this way, per se, communicate giggles, fun and smiles than anything serious or worth-reflective. Moreover, the vocalist, Jahanzeb, has the professional knack to deliver words in a way that would make viewers/listeners read between the lines, i.e., the funk and the lure, sweetness and romance embedded in the novel text. Eventually what the track outthrows is fun and hilarity whereby music becomes more sweet, alluring and frolicsome, sounds whether acoustic or electronic overlap, beats intense and hilarious, flutes jazzy-sweet and strings atmospheric and romantic. This suggests that here signs constitute what is false (Eco's term) as they are focused on the physicality of signifiers and not the spiritual signified, Sufi lyrics are meant for.

Amidst the virile voices of singers, Ahad Niyani, the drummer and Sajid Ali, the flutist among others [post-bridge sections] get almost supercharged releasing plethora of emotional energy and amidst the magic of amusement, the backing vocals showcase their style through *notanki*/hilarious or entertaining claps and bodily swings. All this is wonderfully mesmerizing, cheerful and imbued with

romantic sunshine but far away from any kind of spiritual milieu or the atmosphere a Sufi text is meant for. Sufi poetry as says Ghaffar (2007) wherein, 'Music intermeshes with words. So does meaning' (p. 20), whereas the text that singers employ in this song, not only demeans Sufi lyrics being sung in between but also corrupts meaning underlying the verses. Concerning how Punjabi Sufi text has been corrupted, Ghaffar (2007) further highlights as under:

People such as minstrels, bards, and *qawwals* add, deduct and synthesize various poems (often fusing verses by different poets) in order to convey 'message' or to fit the verse into the music they have composed. They sometimes add the products of their own creative urges in their presentations ... its consequence has been the corruption of the original texts. (p. 7)

The track *Khaki Banda* with its innovative pieces, visual dynamics, and overlapping music is certainly a commercial success but in doing so what it attempts to emphasize is the secular and not spiritual that lies embedded in the Sufi lyrics. Their treatment renders the meaningful text ineffective or a plaything to be used at surface level. In this way, what they attempt to do, in line with the New Agers, is to co-match the secular and the spiritual- the signs which essentially diverge from each other. For instance, *satrangi* which connotes romance and heart-fluttering things and may be understood as a sign of materiality and self-indulgence is placed parallel to *khaki banda* which refers to the mortality of human beings and asks for a critical analysis of who we are and keep searching for the path of righteousness. This kind of treatment of the genre of Sufi music on part of CS singers causes split between the signifier (poetry) and signified meaning (message) in their singing performance. Since their focus is not on communicating the meaning of Sufi lyrics, words remain empty signifiers and thereby enact distraction from the signified meaning or reality emphasized by Sufis. And as Baudrillard pinpoints: the more the distraction, the more simulacra governs larger space for itself and reality foiled.

The bridge section of the song is very musical- an awesome show of sounds, tunes, riffs and runs and improvisations though all is in keeping with the key tone and texture of the track set earlier. Amidst this rush of overlapping musical sounds, the flutist singles out and plays magically. Music is now intense, pace and volume of tunes is accelerated hastening towards the outro of the song whereby both the singers as well as backing vocals take over. All this is artistically impressive but highly distracting for listeners making it hard for anyone to grasp the inner meaning of the song lyrics. The switch or transition to the outro is

seamless and smooth with carefully intricate instrumentation which grabs the attention of viewers, though for a while. The ending of 'khaki banda' carries some kind of spiritual pull as it seems to have less affectation and both singers vocalize in their own way though their body language does not really match with the manner of vocalization but the vocal ensemble makes an interesting mime play which makes it dramatic and almost dumb voicing of words *khaki, khaki*, numbs the effect and is marked as a stylistic groove and the last touch is also abrupt and dramatic.

### 10. Concluding Discussion

The present research has attempted to inquire into the problematic nature of spiritual signified in Coke Studio Sufi singing. It has examined how sign in the CS singing is more important than what it stands for and it is the form, not meaning, which is forefronted in singing. CS Sufi singing is largely confined to the exoteric and it is the music, rhythm and instrumentation which dominate and thereby eclipse the spiritual reality or message Sufi verses contain. As a consequence, the sublime poetic text is truncated into merely an aesthetic and stylistic articulation. CS singing, therefore, is a sign which simulates Sufi music and uses it as a ploy to confuse people between reality and unreality and dupe them into believing a didactic truth (Sufi poetry) within a lie. It thereby is hyperreal.

The study has demonstrated that CS singing upends any difference between Sufi singing and any other kind of singing meant solely for pleasure and fun. The performance of CS singers is not underpinned by a sense of the tradition and the words they sing (Sufi poetry) do not co-match with their bodily discourse, i.e. words do not serve any purpose here as they are intended for by Sufi poets. Moreover, singers intermix Sufi poetry with (semi)romantic and worldly lyrics which implies that they treat this content as a plaything to be trimmed and truncated any way. This kind of treatment of the genre of Sufi music on part of CS singers creates gap between the signifier (poetry) and signified meaning (message) in their singing performance. Since their focus is not on communicating the meaning of Sufi lyrics, words remain empty signifiers and thereby enact distraction from the signified meaning or reality emphasized by Sufis. And as Baudrillard pinpoints: the more the distraction, the more simulacra governs larger space for itself and reality foiled.

My study has argued that CS sign is largely simulated because it distances itself from the sacred ambience of Sufi music and demonstrates from mild to intense degrees of concealment and masquerading in its performance and thereby it



confuses the real with the unreal or sacred with secular. Simulation occurs in various forms in CS Sufi singing. For instance by using Sufi poetry (some famous verses) in their performance, the singers tend to convey this message that they cling to the spiritual traditions though perhaps in their own way. At the level of text selection, therefore, reality does have some reflection. However simulation is seen in its intense form at the level of performance which lacks seriousness and devotion essential for this kind of singing as the ancient Sufis guide us. In addition, it is the lurid setting of CS, heavy instrumentation, digital spin of light and color that let the fantastic/simulacra mediate, take over and come in the way to perceive truth or meaning embedded within the Sufi text being sung.

### Notes

1. See the video songs/text on [www.cokestudio.com.pk](http://www.cokestudio.com.pk)
2. Appendix A1 (original) & A2 (translation): doc attached
3. Appendix B1 (original) & B2 (translation): doc attached
4. Appendix C1 (original) & C2 (translation): doc attached
5. Appendix D1 Average Rating of songs
6. Appendix D2 Website links

### References

- Ahmad, R. (2015, December 31). Even Google officials were surprised at Coke Studio's popularity on Youtube. Retrieved May 6, 2018, from <https://www.techjuice.pk/19324-2/>
- Baudrillard, J. (1983). *Simulations*. (Paul Foss, Trans.) New York: Semiotext(e)
- Baudrillard, J. (1994). *Simulacra and Simulation*. (S. F. Glaser, Trans.) Michigan: University of Michigan Press. doi:0472065211
- Baudrillard, J. (2010). *America*. Verso
- Berger, A. A. (2012). *Media Analysis Techniques*. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications.
- Bhattacharjee, A., & Alam, S. (2012). The origin and journey of qawwali: From sacred ritual to entertainment? *Journal of Creative Communications*, 7(3), 209-225. Retrieved from <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0973258613512439>
- Braidotti, R. (2011). *Nomadic subjects: Embodiment and sexual difference in contemporary feminist*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Degirmenci, K. (2013). *Creating Global Music in Turkey*. Lanham: Lexington Books.
- Dyer, R. (2000). *Stars*. London: British Film Institute.

- Dyer, R. (2002). *Only entertainment*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Eco, U. (1976). *A Theory of Semiotics*. Indiana University Press, 1976. doi:0253359554
- El-Zein, A. (2010, July 14). Spiritual Consumption in the United States: The Rumi phenomenon [Published online]. *Journal of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 11(1), 71-85 .
- Gummi, S. K. (1997). Jugni. In S. Bhutta, *Saanjh Vichar* (pp. 51-57). Lahore: A.H. Publishers.
- Kellner, D. (2007, March 7). *Jean Baudrillard*. Retrieved from The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Winter 2015 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.): <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2015/entries/ baudrillard/>
- Lewisohn, L. (1997). The sacred meditation of Islam: sama' in the Persian Sufi tradition. *British Journal of Ethnomeditation*, 6, 1-33.
- Lovesey, O. (2011). The 'world' before globalisation: Moroccan elements in the Incredible String Band's. *Popular Music*, 30(1), 127-143.
- Malpas, J. (2012). *Perspectives on human suffering*. New York: Springer.
- Miller, D. (1992). The young and the restless in Trinidad: A case of the local and the global in mass consumption. In R. a. Silverstone (Ed.), *Consuming technologies: Media and information in domestic space*. London: Routledge.
- Moye, J. (2014, December 21). 'Music transcends everything': Coke Studio fuses genres and cultures, creates International franchise. Retrieved from <https://www.coca-colacompany.com>
- Mukhtar, N. (2015). Using love to fathom religious difference – contemporary formats of Sufi poetry in Pakistan. *Contemporary South Asia*, 23 (1 ), 26-44.
- Nandikesvara. (1917). *The mirror of gesture, being the Abhinaya darpana of Nandikesvara*. (A. Coomaraswamy, & G. K. Duggirala, Trans.) Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Nandyala, D. (2014). *Swarika - Madhyama Purna: Hindustani Classical Music Handbook*. Swar Music School.
- Nasr, S. H. (2001). *The need for a sacred science*. Lahore: Sohail academy.
- Netland, H. (2001). *Encountering religious pluralism: the challenge to Christian faith & mission*. InterVarsity Press.
- Newell, J. R. (2007). *Experiencing qawwali: Sound as spiritual power in Sufi India [Unpublished PhD dissertation, Graduate School of Vanderbilt University ]*.
- NewsBytes (Producer). (2016, May 11). *Documentary on Coke Studio origin* [Motion Picture]. Retrieved March 10, 2018, from

- <https://www.thenews.com.pk/magazine/instep-today/143350-Documentary-on-Coke-Studio-origin>
- Piatt, J. M. (2014). *Memory, Social Authority, and Composition in Damascene Dhikr (PhD Dissertation)*.
- Pannke, P. (2012). Sufism and New-Age Nonsense. *The Dawn*. Retrieved from <https://www.dawn.com/news/762460>
- Qureshi, R. (1986). *Sufi Music of India and Pakistan: Sound, Context and Meaning in Qawwali*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Qureshi, R. (2008). His master's voice? exploring qawwali and 'Gramophone Culture' in South Asia. *Popular Music*, 18(1), 63-98. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/853569>
- Rozehnal, R. (October 2007). A 'proving ground' for spiritual mastery: The Chishti Sabiri musical assembly. *The Muslim World*, 97, 657-677.
- Saran, A. (2005). *On the theories of secularism and modernization*. Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies. doi:9788187127673
- Sarfraz, H. (2015, December 27). I'm 75 now. I want to retire: Anwar Maqsood. Retrieved January 6, 2018, from <https://tribune.com.pk>
- Sidhu, B. S. (2013, September). *Jugni [Blog post]*. Retrieved from Balraj Singh Sidhu U.K. Author & Lyricist: <http://balraj-lekh.blogspot.co.uk/2013/09/jugni.html>
- Sisario, B. (2012, April 26). Jugni, got "eight million views on You Tube". Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/27/arts/music/arif-lohar-performs-at-asia-society.html>
- Stubbs, E. (2011). *Intersections: Baudrillard's hyperreality and Lyotard's metanarratives in selected Tatantino visual tropes*. University of South Africa.
- Uyar, Y. M., & Beşiroğlu, Ş. Ş. (fall 2012). Recent representations of the music of the Mevlevi Order of Sufism. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Music Studies*, 6(2), 137-150.
- Wolny, R. W. (2017). Hyperreality and Simulacrum: Jean Baudrillard and European Postmodernism. *European Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 8(1), 76-80.
- Zmuda, N. (2011, June 13). Pakistan's image hits positive note thanks to 'Coke Studio'. Retrieved July 7, 2017, from <http://adage.com/article/global-news/pakistan-s-image-hits-positive-note-coke-studio/228100/>