

# Celebrating Love Through the Qawwali Song 'Tu Mere Rubaru Hai' in the Film Maqbool: Creating A Love Story Out of Bard's Tragedy

Amina Ambreen<sup>1</sup>, Pratima Chaitanya<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, Dept. of English & M.E.L. University of Allahabad

<sup>2</sup>Associate Professor, Dept. of English & M.E.L. University of Allahabad

## Abstract:

The Current Research Paper is intended to explore the Qawwali song 'Tu Mere Rubaru Hai' of the film *Maqbool*. Qawwali as an art form has been enacted in various Bollywood films including *Maqbool*. This song has been used as a tool for creating a background to the love affair of the characters Maqbool and Nimmi and Guddu and Sameera. *Maqbool* is the hindi film or bollywood adaptation of Shakespearean Tragedy Macbeth, and like any other Bollywood film, it has different genres of songs, Qawwali being one of them. Using the Piercian model of the semiotics, the research paper intends to study the song as a signifier of the love story developing between the characters of the film *Maqbool*. The lyrics of the song has been translated to be used and analysed in establishing the intended meaning and use of the song in the film.

**Keywords:** SUFISM, MUSIC, ADAPTATION, BOLLYWOOD, TRAGEDY, SEMIOTICS

Music in Indian Culture has its own prominence, it is diverse and rich with many forms and genres including classical (*Hindustani* and *Carnatic*), devotional (including *bhajans*, *kirtans*), folk, *qawwali*, *ghazals* and contemporary forms of music. Each region of India has its own musical traditions and style which adds to its diversity. Rooted in sufism, with love, devotion and spirituality, *Qawwali* is a form of Indian classical music, devotional and Islamic in nature. The intention is purely sublime, intended for a spiritual meeting with the divine. The *qawwali* has an essence of celebration, it celebrates the meeting of divinity and soul. They are sung to celebrate love, where lover and beloved are divine and human. Historians have said to believe *Qawwali* was introduced to India by Amir Khusro, the disciple of great sufi Saint Nizamuddin Auliya (Qureshi 1). This was part of Sufi tradition coming from mystics who used to move from one place to another, which helped them in the assimilation of local cultures, folktales, and stories thus making *qawwali* a rich process. During the period of the Delhi Sultanate, *qawwali* became a prominent form of music and leisure. As with any other form of art, *qawwali* has evolved over the years. *Qawwali*, earlier was performed in the shrines of Sufi saints and on the occasion of *urs*- the celebration of the meeting of the soul with the divine. It acts as a powerful tool to seek spiritual connection, by invoking love and submission to the divine through expressions that are poetic and musical in nature. These melodies and poetry convey human thoughts and emotions with a sense of longing for spiritualism by fostering a deep understanding of divinity and unity among the listeners. *Qawwali* as Qureshi says has been divided in to structures:

“The three functional components of *Qawwali* may be isolated in the following form: i. *Qawwali* serves to generate spiritual arousal. ii. *Qawwali* serves to convey a text message of mystical poetry. iii. *Qawwali* serves to satisfy listener’s diverse and changing spiritual requirements” (Qureshi 6).

Traditional *qawwali* and Bollywood *qawwali* have commonalities but they do have certain notable differences, such as:

### **Context, Theme, Relevance and Purpose:**

Traditional *Qawwali* is rooted in sufism, reflecting on its spirituality and invoking a sense of devotion to the divine, with the purpose to seek a connection with the divine and to spread the message and teachings of sufism. Bollywood *Qawwali* is a form of performance in the Indian Hindi Films, serving as entertainment and storytelling in romantic and dramatic contexts, it act as an enhancer to the storyline by adding a cultural flavour to it also conveying emotions, acting as a tragic or comic relief and adding to the cultural beauty.

**Lyrics:** Traditional *Qawwali* has lyrics that generally have themes of spirituality, divine love, mysticism, devotion of God, invocations to saints and holy figures. Deeply rooted in Sufism and Islam these *qawwalis* have the use of traditional instruments like harmonium and tabla following a distinct musical structure adhering to the poetic depth and its message of spirituality. Bollywood *Qawwali* incorporates traditional *qawwali* elements and the contemporary music as per the requirement in the films. The lyrics are often penned to suit the purpose of entertainment or to carry out the narrative. They may or may not have religious or spiritual connotations but are tailored to fit the plot or context of the film. It aims to enhance the cinematic experience of the audience. The range of Bollywood *Qawwali* is in accordance with the themes such as romantic, comic and dramatic adding to their versatility.

### **Audience, Choreography, Duration:**

Traditional *Qawwali* is performed at sufi shrines or gatherings, in front of devotees or an audience seeking a connection to the divine. They are not choreographed as they mostly do not require a dance performance. Traditional *Qawwali* is longer in duration and may stretch longer if anyone is experiencing *haal*<sup>1</sup>, a state of consciousness where humans meet the divine, thereby enhancing the spiritual experience. These *qawwali*’s are performed by trained *qawwals* who have learned from Ustads. Bollywood *Qawwali* has a wider audience reach, as they are presented through popular films ,they include dance sequences choreographed to enhance visual appeal. They are typically shorter in duration as to fit within the time frame of the film and its narrative. Actors and stars often take up the roles of *qawwals* adding to the star performances.

### **Research Methodology**

Using the Piercian model of the semiotics, which is a contrast to the Saussurean concept of the sign as a ‘self-contained dyad’ this triadic model described as three part structure containing *representamen*, *interpretant* and *an object*, where *representamen* is the form taken by the sign which can be words, images, sounds, acts or objects. *Interpretant* is the result after the interpretation of the sign or the sense derived after the sign. The *Object* is the signified on the far side of the sign. Applying this methodology, the song *tu mere rubaru hai* has been studied as a cluster of signs and symbols of the love story which is further developed in the film *Maqbool* (Griffin, 340).

<sup>1</sup> *Haal-o-qaal* : State, condition

*Maqbool* is the film adaptation of William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, the 2003 film has a collection of songs placed in between the narrative as the story line unfolds. *Tu mere rubaru* is the *qawwali* that serves as a celebration of love and spirituality, depicting the conflict and complexities between the characters, the sequence serves as a powerful backdrop to the emotions experienced by the characters. The song is set at a holy shrine adding to a spiritual ambience while capturing the emotions of the characters. Although the song is a Bollywood *Qawwali*, it is picturesque of traditional *qawwali*, the location is a holy shrine, originally sung by Daler Mehndi, Dominique Cerejo and Rakesh Pandit, it is picturised as a performance staged by *Qawwals* in the film. The song takes place at the end of scene 18 (Bhardwaj 40).

The song in itself depicts the journey that Nimmi decides to take on barefooted in order to achieve her goal. The signs are the testimonials of the love that is blooming between the characters of Nimmi and Maqbool and Sameera and Guddu. Nimmi walking barefoot on the concrete road signifies her advance to pursue Maqbool, enticing him to join her, she deliberately pricks her foot symbolising her defiance and courage to claim her love for Maqbool. Where Maqbool is cautious of people not seeing them together as lovers, Nimmi wants to hold his hand, when refused, she pricks herself over the nail. The nail piercing<sup>2</sup> Nimmi's foot is taken up in a close shot as a representamen, creating the image of pain, love and devotion of Nimmi towards Maqbool. The song is a catalyst to the relationship of Nimmi and Maqbool as jealousy is evident in Maqbool's eye when he sees Abba jee kissing Nimmi's injured foot<sup>3</sup>. The tragedy of *Macbeth* with the director's perspective now is a love triangle, the story of over vaulting ambition has now amalgamated with the emotions of jealousy and love and revenge through this song. Another series of signs that are depicted in the song are the hands raised<sup>4</sup> in form of the prayer where in between the hands lovers are seen to steal knowing glances at each other, the hands signifying the divine and human love and the synonymously relating with the word *rubaru* meaning *face to face*. The scene where the characters are seen sitting and enjoying the performance of *qawwali* focusing on Guddu and Sameera looking at each other and Nimmi and Maqbool sharing knowing glances<sup>5</sup> is also acting as a representamen to the dialogue exchange that happened before the beginning of the song, where Nimmi walking barefoot with Maqbool reveal about Guddu and Sameera's love affair. As the song progresses towards the end we see men dancing and finding themselves lost, this is termed *Sama*, where the soul meets the divine and human has lost the consciousness of the world and is seen lost in divinity.

Analysing the lyrics of the song we find the synonymity between the words and the action represented by the actors:

*Tu mere rubaru*<sup>6</sup> *hai* The lyrics imply that the beloved is in front of the lover, here beloved can be actress or the divine. The lyrics have dual meanings, one as an invocation to the divine and other as a declaration of love towards the heroine/actress. Though the song is played in the background as a *Qawwali*, each word is a reflection of love between Maqbool and Nimmi and Guddu and Sameera.

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<sup>2</sup> See image.1

<sup>3</sup> See image 2

<sup>4</sup> See image.3

<sup>5</sup> See image 4

<sup>6</sup> Ru ba ru is a Persian word meaning face to face, in presence of, nearby, in front of.

*Tu mere rubaru hai, Meri aankhon ki ibadat hai* (your presence in front of me is like a worship of my eyes ).

*Ye zameen hai Mohabbat ki , yahan mana hai khata karna* (this a land of love, here it is not meant to make mistakes)

*Sirf sajde mein girna hai, aur adab se dua krna hai* (bow down into prostration and pray with respect). The lyricist has used the lines *tu mere rubaru hai* multiple times in each para of the song which is further enacted by the actors portraying themselves as *qawwals*, signifying that lovers are face to face and worshipping the divine and their beloved simultaneously. The binding of the thread as shown in the song is signifying promises among the lovers and their prayers for the unfulfilled desires are binded within the threads of worship.

The second para of the song begins with the *mukhda*<sup>7</sup> as called, followed by the *antara*<sup>8</sup> *bas itni ijazat de, kadmon mein jabeen rakh dun* ( just allow me a little to put my forehead or prostrate at your feet ) *phir sir na uthe mera, ye jaan bhi wahin rakh dun* (then my head will not rise again and will keep this life there too), these lines signifying the nature of the love and sacrifice between the lovers, they, if allowed can lay their life at their feet, this way their love will be immortalised in the same way ,saints have left the worldly life and have met with the divine, which is the core idea of a *qawwali*. The next few lines are *ek baar to deedar de, mere saamne rehke bhi tu,ojhal hai tu, poshida hai, mere haal se khwabeeda hai* (just look at me once,despite being in front of me,you are hidden,you are unaware of my condition) the lines further have a great significance in creating the love story out of the spiritual ambience created by the *qawwals*, lover wants one look from the beloved, one look at the condition to bring them out of misery, these lines represent the search for the divine glimpse around the shrine, the grave acts as a curtain between the two worlds and the lover wants a look of mercy from the beloved, he wants to end his suffering. Here Nimmi desperately wants a look of love from Maqbool who is unaware of her condition. Nimmi is left in a vulnerable condition, she has no choice but to be with Abba ji, yet having a longing for Maqbool in her heart (Weinberg 40).

The latter half of the Song establishes Maqbool's feelings for Nimmi and his jealousy towards Abba ji , the following lines *ek masoom dil ki tajweez hai, ishq mein jaan de de badi chiz hai, deewana bana apna, deewangi yun bhi hai, pairon mein padi gardish aur sir mein junoon bhi hai* (make me crazy about yourself, there's a madness in this, there's numbness in my feet and passion in my head) these lines along with the shots are representamen of Maqbool's dilemma, he cannot resist Abba ji's kissing of Nimmi's feet , he looks away at the gross display of abba ji's affection, Nimmi seems to enjoy his Jealousy, her efforts in the beginning of the song are at last seem to have worked and we see the gradual establishment of love between the protagonists. The last few lines *yeh zindagi kuch bhi nahi, ye bandagi kuch bhi nhi* (this life is nothing, this worship is nothing.) seem to have created the *sama*, the falling of the dancing man ,who seems to have been lost in the *Sama* signifying the end to the namesake relationship of Abba ji and Nimmi. As the songs end, Abba ji is seen embracing Nimmi, as Maqbool looks on through the rear-view mirror, jealousy evident in his eyes. This marks the rising of Maqbool as a lover and Abba jee's potential successor.

<sup>7</sup> Mukhda is the chorus of the songs (the first few lines which keep repeating throughout the song)

<sup>8</sup> It is the second stanza of a composition, usually including and emphasising the upper notes of the Raag.

The song acts as a catalyst to the plot of the film and helps in establishing the seeds of love, jealousy and ambition in the heart of Maqbool, thus creating a love story between the characters of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, though illicit but much stronger than the original play itself.

### IMAGES



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