

Light classical forms of North Indian music

Ghazal

Originated in Persia (c.10th Century)

Ghazal means “song” in Persian

Ghazals were written by Persian mystics and poets such as Rumi (13th Century)

Language – Urdu

Mood – love and devotion

Poetry structured into couplets (e.g. AA, AB, AC, etc) with at least 10 lines overall

Poetry often introduced slowly and repeated to allow the listener to understand the story and meaning

Zoo mani mani – “double meaning” of the poetry, which revolves around the love between a man and woman as a symbol for one’s love and devotion to God. Related to this is the mystical Islamic concept of unattainable love.

Tal – dadra (6 beats) and keharwa (8 beats)

Tempo – moderate overall, with double-time feel *laggi* sections for building excitement and allowing the tabla player to feature a little

Tabla player often pauses after an accentuated “hit”, allowing the vocalist to sing a break

Instrumentation – solo voice, tabla, harmonium (often played by the vocalist), sarangi

Performance practice – throw money on stage to show your appreciation!

Gharana – not applicable for light classical

Voice type – light and sweet preferred

Virtuosity – not required; the poetry and mood are more important

Bhajan

From the word “bajana”, meaning “devotion”

Hindi language

Poetry is based on the idea of divine love only, without the explicit element of sexual desire present in Ghazal

Has origins in Dhruwad (ancient classical music), as established in the Sam Veda scriptures

Instrumentation – solo voice, tabla, harmonium (often played by the vocalist)

The name of the poet often appears in the last line of the poetry

Kirtan

Traditional religious practice which gave birth to the Bhajan form

A holy man would interpret the Vedic scriptures and present them in a manner which was comprehensible to the people – a musical preaching

Instrumentation – solo voice, pakhawaj (now replaced by the tabla), ektari (one-stringed instrument), *tal* bells

Qawali

Originated in Persia (c.8th Century) and flourished in India from the 13th Century.

Sufi Islamic aspect shared with Ghazal, in that the poetry concerns love, devotion, and longing for the divine.

Language – Urdu

The objective in Qawali is to reach a trance-like state (“wajad”)

Instrumentation – usually eight or nine Muslim men (called a “party”), tabla, dholak, harmonium, hand-clapping and sometimes sarangi

Call-and-response passages are commonly lead by a solo singer and answered by the remaining ensemble.

Today Qawali is more synonymous with the music of Pakistan than India (where Urdu is the national language and Islam the predominant religion)

Dhun

Instrumental version of a folk song

Light raga

Tal – dadra (6 beats) and keharwa (8 beats)

Classical Indian instrumental concerts and recordings often finish with a light, refreshing Dhun.

Thumri

Most common vocal form of Light Classical Indian music performed by Classical vocalists

Braj language (a dialect of Hindi)

Romantic and devotional poetry, usually revolving around a girl's love of Lord Krishna

The poetry consists of a small number of lines (2 or 4 couplets) which are repeated with differing ornamentation and elaboration to bring about different shades of meaning and mood

Ras – Shringara (romantic and devotional, possibly with erotic overtones)

Notably used as the musical accompaniment for Kathak dance, which choreographs the story as it unfolds

Tempo – moderate overall, with double-time feel *laggi* sections for building excitement and allowing the tabla player to feature a little