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Music Within the Temple Precincts: Harivallabh Sangeet Sammelan and Laxmi Narayan Raag Sabha

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Abstract

This paper looks at *Devi Talab Mandir* (Jalandhar) and *Durgiana Mandir* (Amritsar)—two significant temples wherein two very old and prestigious annual congregations of Hindustani music have been taking place for more than a century. The temple as the space for non-ritual, classical and somewhat non-religious music demands an inquiry since secularism is one of the typical tenets of modernity. While writing the history of these festivals, we shall not only unravel the process of Hinduization that Hindustani music has undergone but also analyse the history of negotiations between religion and secularism, which are unique to Indian modernity. The multivocal past of Harivallabh and the inclusion of *ghazal* and *qawwali* artists at the Lakshmi Narayan Raag Sabha provide a vantage point for me to problematise musical performance in its particular spatial setting within a temple precinct. The paper ends by raising some questions about the 'temple public' and 'music public'.

***Keywords*:** Music festivals, temple, secularism, modernity, public.

Introduction

Commenting upon the present music festivals, Edward Said has remarked, Reading the brief but intelligent article on festivals in Grove's Dictionary, you become aware of the deep divergence between premodern music festivals as symbolic rituals connected with religion and agriculture and modern music festivals as commemorations of great composers or as commercial and tourist attractions. From the great theatrical festivals of fifth-century Athens to the druidic Eisteddfod and the thirteenth-century Puy in France, the first type has now receded into a dim anthropological past. The

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second type is very much with us, too much so. With a few exceptions, its extraordinary proliferation and degradation have further weakened a musical life that seems to be getting more disablingly eccentric as time goes on. In this article, Said further describes how certain music festivals which started with an altogether different objective have become very repetitive in nature with regard to the music. Simultaneously, the bourgeois notion of leisure clearly gets reflected in the audience and venues of these festivals. The presence of star performers adds another dimension to the commercialised and bourgeois character of the present-day big musical gatherings. Thus, he aptly remarks that the festivals and the music presented here cannot be divorced from the social circumstances in which they take place (Said 23, 28).

Said's remarks, though made for the Western music festivals, in many ways resemble their Indian counterparts too. In this paper, we are talking specifically about two music festivals which are more than a century old and which take place in not any metropolitan city of India; rather, Jalandhar and Amritsar, two cities of East Punjab hosted these. Keeping in view the observations made by Said, I am trying to look at the history of these two musical events, from their modest religious beginnings to their present incarnations as great music extravaganzas. I will focus more on their spatial setting, the locale, organisers, and listeners while talking less about the performance history. Before talking about Harivallabh Sangeet Sammelan (Jalandhar) and Lakshmi Narayan Raag Sabha (Amritsar) in particular, let us try to understand what we generally mean by music festivals and the cultural setting in which the public performances of music begin. What were the antecedents of these gatherings? How did the public performances begin? Who were the organisers and what motives did they have? Who was the target audience and how did the listening public increase? How did the musicians respond to these new venues and audiences? Unfortunately, there is hardly any comprehensive study with regard to music entering the public sphere and the commencement of music festivals in India. Therefore, while finding answers to these questions, one has to rely upon fragmentary evidence like the writings of Aneesh Praadhan (2004) and Janaki Bakhle (2006) in the context of Western India and those of Lakshmi Subramanian (2006 and 2008) about Southern India. Keeping the

peculiarities of each region in mind, one can generalise these arguments with regard to the emergence of public music performances in India.

From the late nineteenth century, a new and multifaceted cultural sphere started emerging in India, which was literary, musical, oral, visual, and dramatic. Classical music, up till now one of the many entertainments for the highbrow and performed in aristocrats' mansions, courtesan salons, or temples, began to be heard by a relatively larger public in the urban centres. This was the time when cities like Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay provided new opportunities for patronage, whereas the patronage of the princely courts declined due to the establishment of British suzerainty over the Indian princes. This compelled hereditary musicians and courtesans to migrate to these cities in search of new sources of income and support. The traders, who had earned huge profits, emerged as new patrons of music in these cities. They used to organise *nautch* parties either at the salons of courtesans or at their mansions on different occasions in which the women musicians belonging to courtesan or devadasi background performed to entertain their British guests or Indian business associates.[1] We find that till the first half of the twentieth century, the musical soirees at the salons of the courtesans continued, which were open to all those who could afford the price of admission. Therefore, these singers at their residences performed music for the public, albeit a little public. However, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, some of the singers from courtesan backgrounds moved away from dance and focused totally on music and that too, on learning and singing *khyal*, instead of the genres like *thumri* and *dadra*, which were their fortes. They did so because the Indian intelligentsia, influenced by European writers and Victorian codes of morality, not only equated them with prostitutes but their hereditary and traditional music repertoire was also seen with stigma.

There were also some concerts of hereditary male musicians. They used to perform in informal gatherings called *daawat*s (invitation), organised by a wealthy or respected courtesan. There were Jumma gatherings, organised on Fridays, in which musicians and other connoisseurs used to be the audience. Sometimes these

performances became competitive and were called *dangal*s (wrestling arenas), wherein the musicians showcased their creative abilities. Some concerts were also organised in order to present an upcoming talented musician. Largely, in the late nineteenth century, affluent traders, businessmen, industrialists, and members of the intellectual elite held concerts at their homes on certain occasions for small intimate audiences of special guests, including friends, business associates and music lovers (Pradhan 34-47). Gradually, with the anticolonial movement gaining momentum, the attitude of the educated middle class towards music and its practitioners also began to change and some of the enlightened members of the educated elites began to take music as the symbol of India's glorious past. Hence, with a view to forge a national identity by proving India's glorious past to the British as well as Indians, along with according music and musicians a respectable place in society, they formed serious music clubs like Parsi Gayan Uttejak Mandali (1870) and Poona Gayan Samaj[2] (1874). These music clubs were supported by the industrial and commercial elites of the cities. Along with organising public performances, these also promoted music education for women and children. Generally, these performances used to be ticketed. Although it is difficult to explain what concert pattern was followed in the performances, the available evidence suggests that there were different patterns which depended upon the taste of the organisers and other members of these bodies. The organisers of Parsi Gayan Uttejak Mandali, for example, were not interested in improvisational aspects of music and they encouraged the performance of different compositions in one raga in a session (Bakhle 72, 80). The experience acquired from music clubs and from other individual organisers of ticketed concerts led to the formation of music circles in the twentieth century. These provided avenues for ticketed public performances on a larger scale and attracted a more cosmopolitan audience. Hence, these circles set a new and significant trend in concert organisation and audience profile. Musicians and other qualified listeners were the members of these circles. Therefore, the number of members and the audience was quite smaller in size as compared to that of present music-promoting bodies and events. There were some music circles formed by musicians too. One can mention the Bombay Music Art Society formed by Anjanibai Malpekar and Sangeet Pracharak Mandal by Vilayat Hussain Khan in the 1930s (Pradhan 350-1). Both

Bhatkhande and Paluskar, principal modernisers of Hindustani music, also organised annual music conferences in the second and third decades of the twentieth century.

Accordingly, the range of public performances expanded from *mehfils*, *dawats*, *jalsas* and *dangals* to concerts organised by music clubs and music circles and other institutions. These concerts and festivals not only enabled the relatively larger public to access the music of the professional hereditary musicians, but amateur and young artists, along with instrumentalists, also got new opportunities to perform in public. Grand concerts and festivals, available to everyone without tickets, were postindependence phenomena when the state, educational institutions and big business houses emerged as patrons of music. In the latter half of the twentieth century, music began to be performed in large auditoriums with sound amplification. The spread of music through educational institutions and radio increased the numbers of listening public many times and the attendance in these concerts began to multiply very quickly. All this affected the concert length, repertoire, use of instruments and many other aspects of performance. We have so far attempted here to identify different trajectories of classical music while coming out of its erstwhile performance venues and reaching the common public. This paper is an attempt to present the history of two mega-events of music for three reasons. First, both gatherings take place in a region which is not considered very 'musical', unlike Maharashtra, South India, or Bengal but their commencement is still concomitant to the classification and modernisation drive with regard to music, going on in Western and southern India.[3] Second, barring one exception in the case of Harivallabh in 1928, entry into both these festivals has been free for the audience since their beginning. The third and most important reason for choosing these two music festivals for study is their spatial setting. Harivallabh Sangeet Sammelan and Laxmi Narayan Raag Sabha, both assemble in the courtyards of the temples. Therefore, through the window of the spatial setting of these festivals, I intend to see the linkages between and problematics of modern classical music and Hindu religiosity.

For centuries, music has not only survived but flourished in temples of North and South India. The Haveli Sangeet or Pushti Marg Sangeet of the Krishnate temples of North India, the Periya Melam music performed in Vaishnavite as well as Saivite temples of South India and Kshetram Vadyam ensembles of Kerala, all are very significant music/s and to an extent, they also have grammars of their own (Ho 23-43; Saha 299-318; Tarada 108-151 and Groesbeck 87-112). Moreover, there have been not only interactions between these varieties of music and highbrow Hindustani and Carnatic music; they also have a lot of influence on the respective great traditions. In temples, music is performed while doing liturgical service to the deity enshrined in it and therefore, it is ritual and festival music. It has particular compositions, selective musical genres and repertoire, and musicians belonging to particular castes performing that. Although, as mentioned above, there are various points of interactions between temple-music and modern Hindustani and Carnatic classical music yet both traditions keep themselves at a distance from these types of music while making selective borrowings and eulogising the devotion to God in music. Rolf Groesbeck offers four defining traits of classical music on the basis of which scholars, performers and listeners differentiate it from the rest of the music traditions. First, legitimation with an ancient body of theoretical doctrine or *shastra*, often in Sanskrit; second, preservation by means of a disciplined oral tradition lasting several generations; third, explanation of melodic configurations in terms of the concept of raga and fourth, patronage by a small educated elite (Groesbeck 87). In contrast to the ritual and festival music performed in temples, here we are presenting the case study of two temples of modern East Punjab–Devi Talab Mandir (Jalandhar) and Durgiana Mandir (Amritsar) since these two very significant temples are also the sites where two of the very old and prestigious annual congregations of Hindustani music have been taking place for more than a century.[4] Shri Baba Harivallabh Sangeet Sammelan, happening since 1875, claims to be the oldest of the classical music festivals and the Shri Lakshmi Narayan Raag Sabha is thirty years younger than that. The Harivallabh Sangeet Sammelan takes place in the last week of December every year, and the Raag Sabha assembles on the occasion of Holi. The temple as the space for non-ritual, classical and somewhat non-religious music demands an inquiry since secularism is one of the typical tenets of modernity. I

argue while writing the history of these festivals, we are trying not only to unravel the process of Hinduization that Hindustani music has undergone but it is also an exercise of making a history of negotiations which are unique to Indian modernity. What made Jalandhar and Amritsar hold these Festivals, and that too, in the precincts of the temples? What were the different responses of Muslims and Sikhs to these at different times? What impact did the episodes like Partition and Khalistan movement—the troubled times in Punjab's history—have on the continuity of the festivals? The nationalist and reformist project accepted the genres like *thumri* and *dadra* which were the forte of hereditary women singers or *tawa'ifs* by interpreting them in Krishnaite idiom but how did the organisers negotiate with baijis singing in the precincts of the temples? What is the 'divine experience', the artists talk of while performing on these stages? We look at these and other questions by relying upon past souvenirs, old newspapers, and oral accounts.

The Cities and the Music Festivals

Before talking about the music festivals, some discussion about the locales where these two great events take place also becomes imperative since the cities play a very significant role in cultural production, distribution, and consumption. It is the urban environment and the special nature of life in a particular city that determines all human activity, including music in that (Nettl 1-17). Jalandhar is an ancient city with a modern face, and the city of Amritsar was founded by the fourth Sikh guru in the second half of the sixteenth century. Therefore, both the cities have their significant position from a historical, religious, educational, and industrial point of view in the region of Punjab. While looking at the religious distribution of the population of Jalandhar between 1901 and 1931, we find that Muslims constituted the largest number —45.88 per cent to 44.45 per cent— whereas the number of Hindus and Jains together declined from 40.21 per cent to 16.59 per cent. At the same time, the number of Sikhs rose from 20.37 per cent to 26.44 per cent. In Amritsar, too, Muslims remained the highest in number —46.44 per cent to 46.96 per cent— while Hindus, including Jains, witnessed a decline. In 1901 they constituted 27.58 per cent of the total population, whereas, in 1931, they remained only 15.72 per cent. The

number of Sikhs registered an increase from 25.88 per cent to 35.80 per cent. Here, one should quickly add that the number of Jains was too small to be counted separately.[5] While looking at the population figures, we notice that the Hindus kept decreasing in number in both the cities but they had access to education and also dominated in the fields of trade and business. Obviously, it was the factor of wealth and power that made them invest in temple construction and fine arts and hold these festivals. These activities were also undertaken by the Hindus in order to create a particular symbolic identity in a time when society was polarising on communal lines.

Since the beginning of both festivals, the organisers have largely been Punjabi Khatris, the wealthiest and the most dominant mercantile caste. One finds that in the late nineteenth century, Jalandhar was the city where the Muslims dominated in numbers but the Hindus dominated in education, wealth and power. Dayanand Saraswati's message transformed the region of Punjab since his preachings found a much greater acceptance among middle-class, often educated Hindus. Jalandhar was not an exception to this and the powerful Khatri *biradari*s of the city (mainly of Sondhis, Sehgals, Vattas, and Thapars) could not stop the young men like Devraj or his brother-in-law Munshi Ram (later known as Swami Shraddhanand) from following the iconoclastic practices of the Arya Samaj. By the early 1890s, both of them, with their Arya Samaji brethren, established a girls' school, the Arya Kanya Pathshala, to provide an education safe from missionary influence, which later became a fully developed high school (Kanya Mahavidyalaya) and, finally a women's college (Jones 101-2) Unlike Amritsar, it did not emerge as the centre of the Singh Sabha movement; rather, orthodox Hindu organisations like Sanatan Dharm Sabha were also active here since 1860s (Shastri 230). Therefore, a city dominated by Hindu elites only could encourage saints like Baba Harivallabh to take the initiative of starting an annual musical gathering in memory of his late guru. The story goes that Baba Harivallabh, the third in the line of the gaddi or sacred seat associated with the shrine, thought of commemorating the barsi (death anniversary) of his guru Tuljagiri around 1875 by inviting sadhus and saints who sang devotional songs in traditional Dhrupad style at his Samadhi.[6] The ceremony started with Hawan Yagya at the Samadhi of Tuljagiri followed by *bhandara* (free food)

for ascetics, saints, devotees, and the poor. The congregation lasted for two days. Another story told by Bhai Baldeep Singh, the exponent of Talwandi gharana of dhrupad is that the festival began in 1875 when Baba Harivallabh sent the *nazrana* (bestowal) of a *sawa* (one-and-a quarter) rupee to invite Miyan Kalandar Baksh Talwandi Wale to perform at the occasion.[7] The next year, many musicians from different towns of Punjab like Miyan Ahmed Baksh of Phillour, Mohammed Baksh of Haryana (Hoshiyarpur district), Vilayat Ali and Meera Baksh from Shyam Chourasi *Gharana*, along with those from Amritsar and Lahore also came to sing in the congregation (Bawra 22-3).[8] Congregations like these became a regular annual event year after year. Although the fame of this Sangeet Mela had spread far and wide during Baba Harivallabh's time, yet primarily sadhus and saints were invited to sing. After the demise of Baba Harivallabh in 1885 his disciple Pt. Tolo Ram became his successor (Shastri 63-4).[9] Tolo Ram kept the tradition alive by organising the musical gathering every year in memory of Tuljagiri—his Guru's Guru—but now the Sammelan came to be named after Harivallabh himself rather than his Guru. Thereafter, in addition to Punjab, singers from other parts of northern India were also called to sing in the gathering. Therefore, what began as an impromptu meeting of musicians, emerged as a performative space for eclectic, diverse, rich and inclusive music. Although the site of the raag mela was a Hindu temple, yet the power of music brought musicians and saints together across the boundaries of their respective faiths in its early phase.

Within twenty years of its beginning, the mela had acquired so much fame that it even attracted a person like Pt. Vishnu Digambar Paluskar to come here. It was Paluskar's visit somewhere in the initial years of the twentieth century that infused the classical music element in this mela (Bakhle 143).[10] Paluskar and later, the retinue of his disciples established and popularised classical music and modern *khyal* style at Harivallabh. His disciples like Vinayak Rao Patwardhan, Narayan Rao Vyas and Omkarnath Thakur kept coming to perform here for years (Kapuria 2023, forthcoming). After Paluskar's visit itself, Tolo Ram gave serious thought to inviting musicians from all over the country. For this purpose, he undertook a journey throughout India and invited renowned singers to the festival.

Henceforth, the participation of stalwarts like Bhaskar Rao Bakhle, Ram Krishna Bua Vaze and many others added new grandeur to the Sammelan. In 1919, Gandhi also visited the mela (Shastri 51). Hence Harivallabh Sangeet Mela had already acquired an unprecedented prestige amongst the musicians in 1910s and 1920s and was being given a place in journals and newspapers as early as 1912-3 (Neuman 105-6).[11] Yet Hindustani classical music was one of the many activities performed here. As mentioned earlier, it began as an assembly of sadhus and saints and till 1948 they used to come here in a great numbers. Various other activities like baintbazi or couplet-contest, devotional singing, qawwalis etc. were organised in different corners of the site; but the central and most widely known thing was the performances of classical singers who used to be called here from all parts of India.

It was nobody but Tolo Ram who turned this tradition into an institution when in 1922 Shri Baba Harivallabh Sangeet Mahasabha was formed. A young English teacher at Sain Das Anglo-Sanskrit High School, Jagannath Parti took the initiative to mobilise the educated middle-class elites and other notables of the city for this cause. Even after the formation of the Mahasabha, the mela had a multivocal character. Radha Kapuria ("Rethinking Musical Pasts" 80-83) refers to an invitation letter of 1924 which "affirms to the popularity of non-raga popular music such as the Punjabi kaafiyan, the shabd saakhi and 'devi ki bhetaan' amongst even the elite notables to whom the letter was addressed, and who were the foremost patrons of the annual fair. Despite the main attraction being classical and raga music, the reference to genres which are of these essentially non-classical items can thus be seen as a means to attract a larger audience via these more popular genres and draw them towards classical music through the backdoor, as it were." The changes brought by the institution reflect in a notice of November 1928, issued by the Mahasabha, one month before the festival. The notice forbids anyone to felicitate the artist on the stage personally; and the artists are also forbidden to receive any gift on the stage. The audiences were warned not to have cigarettes, make noise or pick up any fight (Shastri 128). According to Kapuria, "This notice captures in miniature how the space of performance at the Harivallabh was modernised and nationalised under the aegis of the

Sangeet Mahasabha, which was formally instituted six years previously in 1922." In 1928, Dwarkadas, a great devotee and disciple of Tolo Ram succeeded to the sacred gaddi. Although Dwarkadas carried on the tradition till he breathed his last in 1952, yet quite earlier, he nominated Seth Hukam Chand and Shri Ashwini Kumar as Trustees of Baba Harivallabh Sangeet Mahasabha to look after properties of the trust situated at Devi Talab.

Partition changed the total demographic and spatial complexion of the city due to the fact that the Muslim population evacuated their settlements which were occupied by the Hindus and Sikhs coming from the other side of the border. The 1951 census figures for the Jalandhar district show that the Hindu constituted 42.6 per cent and Sikhs, 56.4 per cent of the total population, whereas only 0.33 per cent Muslims remained.[12] With the transformation of the locale, the transformation in the nature of the mela was inevitable. Hence, with the migration of Muslims to Pakistan, the things like qawwalis also disappeared.[13] Moreover, many stalwart Muslim classical musicians also migrated from East Punjab to Pakistan after 1947. The artists like Amanat-Fateh Ali (Patiala), Salamat-Nazakat Ali (Sham Chaurasi) and Fateh-Mubarak Ali (Jalandhar), who were the regular performers in this gathering, left a gap not easy to be filled. This was also the time when Ashwini Kumar took charge as head of the trust in 1948. Kumar, a police officer and an ardent lover of Indian classical music also represented the newly emerging Indian state which, under the influence of Patel and, later Keskar, decided to do the best possible for the promotion and purification of Hindustani classical music.[14] It can be said that with the patronage of Ashwini Kumar, a new era began in the history of Harivallabh and it was transformed from an informal Raag Mela into a properly institutionalised Sangeet Sammelan. This new incarnation of the mela also witnessed a transformation of its audience which earlier comprised of ascetics, saints, and the common villagers. How the sadhus vanished from the scene cannot be guessed so easily. It is possible that a police officer becoming the head of this religious trust might not have suited their wishes. Moreover, Kumar not only opened the sammelan for women artistes to perform but now they could also sit in the audience and enjoy the music. This entry of women in the festival might also be against the wishes of some

sadhus because, at that time, women singers were quite far from the acceptance and respect that they are given today.

Kumar's era witnessed the modernisation of the festival in terms of financial support from the local industrialists and the state; meticulous management of the event; good remuneration to the performers; deployment of the state armed forces to handle the crowd etc. Kumar's ambitious drive also attempted to professionalise, or discipline, the Harivallabh's attendees too, transforming them into appreciative listeners, schooled in rapt and deliberative listening practices (Denora 146-7); Kumar's own words affirm this.

> In 1948, when I joined, I asked the citizens of Jalandhar to pay one Rupee . . . It was collected from their homes. Gradually they started feeling that it was their own mela. In five years only, the atmosphere was completely changed. An ordinary Paanwala would get up and tell the musician that he did not strike this proper shruti.

Here it is also worth mentioning that the present-day magnificence of Devi Talab Mandir took shape in his trusteeship only as the industrialists and the common people of the city themselves decided to get the renovation and beautification done by volunteering manually as well as financially. Although Kumar being a government servant, could not involve himself in any religious affair like temple construction, the foundation stone of the temple was laid by his mother only. With this, the iconography of the festival also changed and Goddess Saraswati became very prominent on the cover pages of the souvenirs. The demand for a new temple at the holy cite of Devi Talab might also have its origin in the desires of the Hindu elite of the city to register their symbolic presence amidst the Sikh-dominated politics of Punjab. In 1976, the sammelan celebrated its 101st anniversary, which lasted for nine days. Things were going very smoothly till 1982 but the sammelan had to be suspended for four-five years as there could be no public meeting after 6 pm, and no artist was willing to come to Punjab, which was then burning in flames of terrorism.[15] For these years, there used to be the performances of the local artists only and that too during the day-time. Hawan was positively done at the Samadhi of Baba Harivallabh (Bawra 149-55).[16] The sammelan could be revived only in 1989 with

the assistance of North Zone Cultural Center, Patiala when the Congress government with Beyant Singh as the chief minister came to power.[17] However, the relationship between the Mahasabha and the North Zone Cultural Centre was not cordial since its beginning. Henceforth, the Center withdrew its support in 1993. Since then, the Mahasabha has been organising the festival with financial grants coming from the state government, public sector corporations, local industrialists, newspaper-magnets, and donations. NZCC has also been sponsoring some of the artists for the last four-five years.[18] Thus, the Harivallabh began as a spontaneous gathering of saints and musicians and later became a cosmopolitan fair in which musicians from all parts of India participated.

As compared to Harivallabh, our knowledge about Shri Lakshmi Narayan Raag Sabha is very limited. It only comes from two sources: a small booklet produced by the organisers and interview of Lajpat Rai Khanna, a local businessman and the general secretary of the committee. Taking inspiration from Harivallabh Sammelan, the Raag Sabha was initiated by Gursahai Mal Kapoor (1866-1935) in 1905 along with his friends Natthuram Rangwale and Vadhava Mal Chopra. It was Kapoor only who thought of building the Durgiana temple and the foundation stone of this was laid down by Pt. Madan Mohan Malviya in 1924. In the absence of any solid evidence, these initiatives of Kapoor and his friends can be seen as steps of establishing the symbolic presence and authority of the Hindus in a primarily Sikh city. After Kapoor's demise, his nephew Madan Lal Kapoor, popularly known as Madomal served this missionary cause with the firm support of his wealthy Khatri team members till he died in 1973. Thereafter his son Deenanath Kapoor carried forward the tradition with the support of businessmen like Ram Lubhaya Kapoor, Lajpat Rai Khanna, and J.J. Mehra, etc. For almost a century, the Raag Sabha remained, therefore, an informal group of business magnates and music aficionados of Amritsar. Around 2005 some of the organisers and patrons were not very enthusiastic about continuing the Raag Sabha further; then, a lobby of lawyers under the leadership of Sudarshan Kapoor took the lead to hold the torch along with Lajpat Rai Khanna. This time the sabha was formally constituted and registered. Presently, the society receives grants from public sector banks, private educational institutions, and the

North Zone Cultural Centre, along with donation from local philanthropists. Although the turbulent 1980s had a disastrously negative impact upon Raag Sabha yet the booklet only states that before 1980 the Sabha used to be at Dussehra Ground as 40 to 50 thousand audiences used to enjoy classical music during Holi days here. No place was more suitable than any other for making the sitting arrangement for such a large gathering of listeners. But the black shadow of terrorism beginning around 1980 took in its grip the all-round progress of the city of Amritsar. At the same time, efforts were also made to discontinue the Raag Sabha. Due to the atmosphere of terror and fear, the number of performers and listeners both declined. Therefore, the Raag Sabha also had to be shifted to the Ved Katha Bhavan, which is inside the temple itself.

We find certain commonalities between the two festivals. First, both music festivals are organised by independent bodies, not directly linked to the respective temples. Although there can hardly be any doubt that some of the members may be active in both organisations yet, in the case of Harivallabh, there have been many disputes since the time when Ashwini Kumar stepped in. Secondly, there is hardly any Sikh representation in both committees. These committees are well-connected to power and also utilise media not only to popularise the festivals but also to propagate other things. Third, in both festivals, one finds the standard and normative concert pattern similar to that in any other metropolitan city. The Sikh tradition of music hardly gets any space on both stages. There is hardly any singer who prefers to sing a composition in Punjabi. Very rarely, the artists sing Shabads or poems written by Sikh gurus and other saint poets compiled in Shri Guru Granth Sahib. Fourth, along with both festivals, the classical music competitions for the young take place, though the Harivallabh one is taken as more prestigious. At the same time, one can identify certain marked differences between the two. As compared to the grandeur and lavishness of Harivallabh, the Raag Sabha is very modest. In Lajpat Rai Khanna's own words, "We don't have as much money as the Harivallabh committee has. We hold the entire four-day festival in the amount which they spend for just one evening."[19] Therefore the local and second-line artists get a good chance to perform here. Secondly, it has not received much coverage and limelight from the media as compared to the Harivallabh.

Although since the beginning, classical and semi-classical music has been performed on both platforms, yet the Raag Sabha is the stage where ghazal and qawwali are also welcomed. The booklet mentions the names of Shankar Shambhu, Habib Painter, Zafar Hussain, Babban Diwana, Rahmat Qawwal, Nazir Niazi and other renowned qawwali parties.

We can also compare the two festivals following the taxonomy proposed by Ivan Orosa Paleo and Nachoem M. Wijnberg (50-61). Although the main focus of the authors is to investigate the economic functions of the music festivals yet the taxonomy they propose with regard to the classification of music festivals is quite useful otherwise. Both the festivals show their competitive and non-competitive character as along with the performances of the established artists, the competitions for the young musicians are also organised. Both events are organised with a 'not for profit' purpose because no tickets are sold. As far as the range of the audience is concerned, like other classical music congregations, here too, it is wide but focused, as classical music has a niche audience. It is wide because it cuts across the class, religion and gender backgrounds of the audience. The format of both congregations is one-track, non-ranking and aural goods only. All the musicians perform on one stage and a fixed venue. However, with regard to ranking, the senior-junior hierarchy is followed throughout India as far as the festivals of classical music are concerned. Hence the festivals under study are no exceptions. With regard to organisation, Harivallabh stands higher than the Raag Sabha as it involves a well-structured organising body with different committees, a good network of publicity and a large number of sponsors, including the corporate houses, PSUs, the state government and individuals including NRIs. Both festivals showcase mainstream classical music but the Raag Sabha shows a higher degree of innovativeness since it provides relatively greater space to non-classical music and young artists. With regard to scope, both can be characterised as national festivals and at times, artists from abroad have also performed in these sammelans.

Temples, Music, Modernity and Nationalism

After giving a brief account of both the festivals and their history, we again come back to the question of how temples emerged as

performance venues of these musical extravaganzas. As Partha Chatterjee has pointed out that the societies of Asia and Africa are not 'perpetual consumers of modernity', experienced and defined by Europe and North America. Presenting a critique of Benedict Anderson, he argues that "the most powerful, as well as the most creative results of the nationalist imagination in Asia and Africa, are posited not on an identity but rather on a difference with the "modular" forms of the national society propagated by the modern West." In the case of the rise of anticolonial nationalism, he points out that nationalism creates its own domain of sovereignty within colonial society well before it initiates its political encounter with the imperial power. Nationalism acknowledges the superiority of the West but only in 'material' terms. A bourgeoning nation marks its identity on the basis of its 'spiritual' or inner domain. Then nationalism declares the domain of the 'spiritual' it's sovereign territory and refuses to permit the colonial regime to intervene in that. Thus, he argues that a nation imagines itself culturally and spiritually before it does so politically and constitutionally. Chatterjee elaborates that in the case of India, nationalism witnessed its imagination in the spheres of language, drama, novel, art, education, and family. Music can also be an area which is now being thought about in this direction. We have already talked about how the presence of Arya Samajis and Sanatanis facilitated the beginning of Harivallabh festival in Jalandhar. This was further strengthened by Paluskar's arrival on the scene. Similarly, Amritsar's Raag Sabha might also be an attempt of the Hindu middle class to patronise classical music like their Jalandhari counterparts. Following Partha Chatterjee and Aqil Bilgrami, Janaki Bakhle (258-9) has argued that while defining 'secularism' in the case of India, 'religion is not entirely separated from either public life or modern forms of cultural expression'. She points out that the modern history and development of North Indian classical music in the nineteenth century is a perfect example of Bilgrami's "secular re-enchantment". She further argues that musical forms like Qawwali, Kirtan, and Bhajan etc. are mystical, spiritual, and devotional in character and they also have their particular influence over Hindustani music. Moreover, even in the field of classical music, there is no rigid separation between religious and secular music based on content. Similarly, Meilu Ho talks of a continuum between the liturgical music of the Vaishnavite temples

and modern classical music. According to him, the reasons for the liturgical to the classical flow of influence can be inferred from many examples. These include the use of archaic versions of raga in liturgical compositions; the lives of sixteenth-century Vaishnava poet-singers and their song output as narrated in texts of the tradition; the availability of *kirtan* sources (and therefore knowledge of authorship and liturgical use) from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; the fact of overlapping compositions between the traditions; the testimonies of well-known singers acknowledging textual and musical sources; discussions with connoisseurs and scholars; the existence of famous gharana recordings from throughout the last century along with recent liturgically themed albums by contemporary singers; and the study of style (207-35).

Michiko Urita also talks of the transreligious and intercommunal nature of North Indian classical music and argues that its origins go back to multiple traditions like Bhakti movement, Sufism and Santism. Based on the interviews of musicians, he further argues that even the romantic element found in Hindustani music takes the performer and the listeners to something divine. He thus believes that despite having its historical roots in the Hindu tradition, and despite the current presence of Hindu elements, Hindustani classical music is also a product of Persian and Sufi musical culture, the patronage of Mughal emperors, and contributions made by legendary Muslim musicians. Thus, whether the past or present; elite or popular; Hindustani music and its associated social practices have always tended to transcend sectarian or communal boundaries, embodying pluralism and syncretism rather than exclusivity and chauvinism. According to him, the spiritual element shared origins and a common heritage result in the processes which make a practising musician and modern patrons think beyond sectarian boundaries (190-206). Thus bringing the case of music closer to contemporary debates about secularisation, and given the overwhelming presence of religiosity in the field of music, one can agree with Partha Chatterjee in claiming that a formulaic secularisation in at least this domain of Indian culture has failed (57-74). Janaki Bakhle describes how, in the twentieth century, music underwent a transformation from “one type of entertainment among many others in princely courts” to a high art form that occupied a critical position in the national imagination as a cultural symbol of 'an ancient and accomplished civilisation' (266).

This required a new pedagogy in order to prepare new middle-class women performers, new and respectable content and a modern history. This was the task that was undertaken by two great modernisers of Hindustani music, Bhatkhande and Paluskar. Both were Brahmins, and both came from Maharashtra. She further points out that the removal of religiosity from music was a non-issue for both Paluskar and Bhatkhande. Bhatkhande was a rational musicologist, and he tried to classify, categorise, and classicise music. On the other hand, Paluskar, the champion of devotional nationalism, endeavoured to cleanse it from debauchery and also to sacralise it. Finally, Paluskar's agenda —Hindu, gendered, religious, and secular— emerged triumphant in pedagogy as well as the performance of music. Thus, she attributes suffusing the public space of music with sanctity and piety to Paluskar's agenda of the Hinduisation of music.[20] While looking at Harivallabh and Raag Sabha, one can agree with Bakhle because Paluskar performed at Harivallabh for many years and Raag Sabha booklet also mentions his name first in the list of performers.

This brings us to the aspect of 'divine experience' which artists talk about while performing on the stages like these. This 'divinity' has a clear manifestation in the narratives of the musicians that I came across during my fieldwork. This has two-fold origins both being complementary to each other. Harivallabh started at a religious place with a feeling of devotion and bhakti for a guru and grew up under the influence of a cult figure who was to be declared triumphant in due course of history as far as the modernisation of Indian classical music is concerned. As Bakhle shows that in Paluskar's successful co-optation of the public sphere, one sees clearly how the commingling of religious instruction with musical education cemented the identification of the culture of the bourgeoisie as Hindu. Indian culture, in his understanding, was Hindu culture, and Paluskar's unapologetic and triumphant return of music to tradition accomplished the incorporation of music's culture under the same umbrella (332-3). Paluskar and his disciples had a long association with this mela and there are many stories of Paluskar's dedication towards this stage. Therefore, it seems that it manifests as a reverence for the musical guru as well as for Baba Harballabh, who is also considered an accomplished musician.[21] Modern institutions of

musical learning don't produce artists. Artistes come from the Guru-Shishya tradition, like that of Paluskar which believes that music comes by God's grace as well as that of guru. Harivallabh and Raag Sabha are the platforms where all the big gurus have performed. That's why the youngsters think it as a matter of great honour and take it as an opportunity given by God or Baba when they sit to sing/play there.

Conclusion

Both the festivals discussed here represented in their early phases a syncretic, inclusive, and pluralistic conglomeration of devotion, mysticism, and music. Even their spatial setting at the Hindu shrines did not blunt this pluralistic orientation. Later, the changes in the socio-political and cultural fabric of the cities in particular, and the Punjab and the Indian nation in general, also did not let music remain uninfluenced. Although both the music gatherings claim to represent and promote classical music only yet they have a multivocal history. Interestingly even today, the organisers of the Raag Sabha invite ghazal singers to perform in the temple premises whilst the performances of devotional songs set to film tunes at Devi Talab by local music groups in the temple do not let the listeners of Harivallabh enjoy the shehnai and dhrupad recitals Moreover, these days, even there are acrobats and folk artists also in the ground on all three days.[22] There have also been issues between the temple committee and the Harivallabh Mahasabha with regard to the ownership of the land. We will conclude this chapter with some unanswered questions which still need to be worked on. Deepa Reddy and John Zavos talk about 'temple publics' in the context of contemporary India and the globalised world. By the term, they mean that temples and the practices associated with them shape and invoke communities in different ways (241-60). While engaging with temples, we not simply act in public but also form a public. Hence temples emerge as "nodes around which people gather, communities assemble, and publics emerge in relation to questions of religion." (Reddy and Zavos 251). One can ask some fundamental questions in the case of both the 'temple publics' and music festivals as well. How did the idea of replicating the architecture of the Golden Temple emerge in the case of both the shrines and who financed their gold

and silver beautification? Are the 'temple publics' and the music publics the same? If not, then on what points do the two differ from each other? Seeking answers to these and other questions will lead to a more enriched understanding of religiosity and music in Punjab in particular and India more generally.

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Endnotes

1 According to a contemporary source, 'nautch' was a generic term encompassing specific music and dance forms like *nach, baithak, jalsa,* and *pachamba,* each of which determined the relative scope of music and dance in the performance. *Nach* was a combined performance of singing and dance, *baithak* was a vocal recital presented by the performer in a seated position; and *jalsa* saw the performer sing and sit in turns; while *pachamba* was a vocal recital by a songstress in a seated position, performed at the house of a leading member of her community. K. Raghunathji, 'Bombay Dancing Girls', in Jas Burgess (ed.), *The Indian Antiquary: A Journal of Oriental Research,* Vol. XIII (Delhi: Swati Publications, rpr., 1984 [1884]), 166, 170. Quoted in Aneesh Pradhan 339-58.

2 'Parsi Gayan Uttejak Mandali' was founded by Kaikhushroo Naoroji Kabraji, a member of the Bombay Municipal Corporation, a theatre activist and the editor of the Gujarati newspaper *Rast Goftar*. With regard to his views on women's music education, see Bakhle, *Two Men and Music*, 70-1. Balwant Trimbuck Sahasrabuddhe was the founder of Poona Gayan Samaj. About him and the activities of the Samaj, see Bakhle, 75-80.

3 I have discussed elsewhere at length why Punjab is thought of as a land of agriculture and not of culture. See Kumar 3-31. See also Kumar 23-27.

4 Devi Talab Mandir is counted among 51 Sakti Pithas and Durgiana Mandir also claims its antiquity because of being located at the site of a 700-year-old Sitala Mata temple and a Hanuman temple which is believed to be older than that. About the mythological significance, history, renovation and gold-beautification of Devi Talab Mandir see Jalandhari 1-70. About Durgiana Mandir see www.durgiana mandir.com, accessed June 24th, 2018.

5 Table No. 16---Religions, Census Reports, Part II, Punjab District Gazetteers, Volume IX, Part B., Jullundur District, Statistical Tables, 1935 (Superintendent, Government Publishing, Punjab, 1935), p. lix. Table no. 16---Religions, Census Reports, Part II, *Punjab District Gazetteers*, Volume IX, Part B., Amritsar District, Statistical Tables, 1933 (The Superintendent, Government Publishing, Punjab, 1934), p. xlix.

6 1875 is the most widely accepted date, since Bawra, Shastri and the official website of Shri Baba Harivallabh Mahasabha, all mention this as the year of its commencement. However, the 1911 issue of the Indian Music Journal ascribes its beginning in 1878, since it published a notice from Pandit ToloRam, then the Mahant that 34th Sammelan would take place in December 1911. Quoted in Dard Neuman (105).

7 Bhai Baldeep Singh, Interview by the researcher, 25 December, 2011.

8 Bawra can be called the principal chronicler of the festival. His two books present the accounts of each annual sammelan with the minutest details from the late 1960s to 2002. In contrast to the official narrative about the founder, he negates the fact that Baba Harivallabh was a great musician. Bawra, Harivallabh Darshan, 10-12.

9 Although Tolo Ram is mentioned as the successor of Baba Harivallabh yet Shastri gives another line of mahants of Devi Talab starting from Baba Himgiri to whom Maharaja Ranjit Singh had given the patta of this land. According to Shastri, Harivallabh was succeeded by Basant Giri, Madhav Giri, Shiv Giri and Moti Giri. Raghunath Giri was the last mahant who could not prove his mahantship in the court. It can be understood that after Harivallabh, there was a clear demarcation between his religious successors and musical successors but there was no dispute over the proprietary rights of land till the time of Dwarkadas.

10 According to Bawra (1998) it was 1901 whereas Shastri says that it was 1908. Kapuria (2018) also agrees with 1901. Janaki Bakhle however, believes that it was 1897.

11 Other than Neuman see also *The Tribune*, 17 December, 1913, p. 5. Although the Harivallabh website mentions the quotation about the notice of the event published in *The Tribune*, 1913 yet gives no date. I am grateful to Radha Kapuria for providing me with the exact reference.

12 Lakshmi Chandra Vashishta, B.A. (Hons), LL B, P.C.S., *Census of India 1951, Vol. VIII, Punjab, PEPSU, Himachal Pradesh, Bilaspur & Delhi, Part II-A—General Population, Age & Social Tables,* TABLE D-II, 298-9.

13 Kapuria (83), however suggests that the nationalisation of the festival along the Paluskarite lines had begun two decades before the Partition.

14 "When I came there in 1948, the mahant was dying; he had no money and there was nobody to help him. He asked me if I could carry the tradition further. I told him that I am a government servant but you are in charge of a religious or a semi-religious organisation, of which music is a part also." The *mahant* so requested Kumar to look after the property and carry forward the tradition of organising the *mela*. Ashwini Kumar, former Director General, BSF, DG, Punjab and Himachal Police, A very famous sportsman who led many Indian contingents abroad. He was also the vice-president of the International Olympic Committee and that of the International Hockey Federation too. Kumar, Interview by the researcher, New Delhi, 24 May, 2006. Submitted to the SARAI archives.

15 Rakesh Dada, interview by the researcher, Jalandhar, 16 March, 2006. Also, Dada, Harivallabh- A rich tradition of Musical geniuses.

16 The *sammelan* of 1983 lasted for a day only and in 1984, there was no *sammelan*; only *hawan* was done. I think that it is the regularity of this *hawan* only which makes the claim of continuity of the *sammelan* strong.

17 Rakesh Dada's interview gives detailed account of the suspension and revival of the *sammelan*. He said that Beyant Singh, the then Chief Minister, assigned the duty for three of his cabinet ministers to sit in the *sammelan* for one night each to let the music go on without any hindrance.

18 For a general survey of the festival, see Dada. Also see Kumar, 3-31; Kapuria (1-30). I find one major problem with Kapuria's article. She gives undue emphasis to the secular aspect of Kumar's personality whereas the interviews I conducted with him do not support this very much. With regard to developments after 1990s, also see Kapuria (1480-1490).

19 Lajpat Rai Khanna, interview by the researcher, Amritsar, 25 May, 2016.

20 Although 'secular' and 'religious' are opposite to each other but Bakhle demonstrates in her paper that Paluskar's agenda had both elements. His pedagogy was secular but semi-religious. She further argues that even Bhatkhande's non-religious pedagogy has been taken over by that of Paluskar which upholds unconditional acquiescence for guru.

21 Bawra (1998) doesn't agree with the fact that he was a great musician. He had learnt some music and could also sing some dhrupad compositions. Kumar, in his interview, also called him a singing minstrel. The official discourse, however depicts him as a great musician and musicologist. This has resulted in the biography of Harivallabh being taught in B.A. music syllabus of Punjab University.

22 For the last five years, I have seen that some local devotees organise a congregation on the temple premises every Friday. As the first day of the festival also falls on Friday, this becomes a nuisance for the listeners of classical recitals.

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