

## **Resonating Romance in Ethnomusicology: Studying Metaphoric Language Styles in Select Kashmiri Romantic Song Texts**

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*This research delves into the realm of ethnomusicology, specifically focusing on the resonating romance within the musicscape of Kashmir. The study aims to examine the metaphoric language styles employed in select Kashmiri romantic song texts, unraveling the nuanced expressions of love and cultural identity embedded in the lyrics. As the 'musicscape' of Kashmir plays a vital role in preserving cultural values, this research identifies noticeable gaps in its representation, propagation, and the crucial aspect of 'enculturation' among the younger generation. Drawing on Merriam's concept of 'enculturation,' the study seeks to understand how Kashmiri music serves as a vehicle for transmitting cultural values to the youth. With a primary emphasis on song texts, the research employs a stylistic exploration to analyze the figurative language used in romantic lyrics. By doing so, it aims to shed light on the intricate interplay between musical expression and cultural identity, contributing valuable insights to the broader field of ethnomusicology. This research not only addresses the lacunae in the representation of Kashmiri musicscape but also advocates for the significance of preserving and transmitting cultural values through the lyrical narratives of romantic song texts. By conducting an analysis of select song*

*texts, this study aspires to contribute to the broader field of ethnomusicology, while also celebrating the artistic heritage of Kashmir.*

**Key words:** ethnomusicology, music-scape, enculturation, Kashmiri songs

## **Introduction**

The scope of literature in general and the term “text” in particular have been redesigned and expanded with the emergence of the postmodern school of thought and the multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary academic era that followed. In the modern day, the text is no longer confined to a written work or spoken literary genre; rather, it has come to include various artefacts and manifestations of culture, including movies, pictures, artwork, buildings, landscapes, and most importantly, music. One such field that (con)textualizes the art form and validates the study of music as a literary genre is ethnomusicology.

Originating from the Greek terms *ethnos*, which means “nation,” *mousikē*, which means “music,” and *logos*, which means “study” (Rice, 2017, pp. 19–24), ethnomusicology examines music as a means of cultural transmission and testimony. It places music within its cultural framework and concurrently examines its relationships with other musical forms. According to the Harvard Dictionary of Music, “Ethnomusicology is an approach to the study of any music, not only in terms of itself but also in relation to its cultural context” (Willi, 1946, p. 298). As a result, it covers a wide range of topics and examines music from sociocultural, historical, and comparative perspectives, developing into a multidisciplinary, transdisciplinary field of study. Additionally, it unintentionally aims to dispel the myth that literature is only a theoretical academic field with little to no application in the classroom—a notion that has been inferred from the design of the majority of our curricula.

The goal of ethnomusicology is to strike a balance between field work—which entails direct observation, documentation, and analysis of many aspects of music—and lab work, which is the theoretical study of musical notation, song texts, vocals, tracing

databases, historical records, etc. Merriam appears to combine and balance the two levels by integrating lab work into the larger process and field research. Merriam asserts that the type(s) of fieldwork a person chooses to conduct will decide and impact all aspects and endeavours of a project, even though ethnomusicologists like as Burnett Nettle place greater emphasis on the former. In doing so, it is also the intention to integrate and create links between the disciplines of Cultural Studies and Ethnomusicology. One of the major proponents of cultural studies, Cary Nelson, states in *Manifesto of a Tenured Radical* that cultural studies has a historicizing impulse that is in dialogue with a knowledge of the modern re-articulation of older texts, contexts, and social practices (Nelson & Cary, 1997, p. 67).

There have been glaring gaps in the attempt to connect this to Kashmir's "musicscape" in terms of its portrayal, dissemination, and what Merriam refers to as its "enculturation" into the younger generation as a means of passing down cultural values. Beyond just considering music's sound and historical background, ethnomusicology examines how music is a part of culture and how it reflects it. It is an umbrella subject that can accommodate a wide range of alternative theoretical (sub-)frameworks and research directions because of its extensibility and flexibility.

Of these, the Song texts are the main subject of this study. As Merriam notes, "the study of this interrelationship is thus a task for the joint energies of the ethnomusicologist and the linguist" (Merriam & Alan, 2006, p.187), demonstrating the close connection between language and music. The political, social, and cultural fabric of the Kashmir valley is intricately woven with the long and illustrious history of Kashmiri music. The Kashmiri Romantic Song Texts are not just beautiful melodies; they also capture the emotional and cultural climate of the area. The purpose of this study is to clarify the songs' literary strategies, metaphorical aspects, and cultural importance. This study aims to celebrate Kashmir's creative legacy while also making a contribution to the field of ethnomusicology by analysing a few chosen songs.

## **Stylistic Analysis of Figurative Devices in Kashmiri Romantic Song Lyrics**

In examining the characteristics of song texts, Merriam observes that “not only are music and language interrelated in the formation of song texts, but also that the language of texts tends to take special forms” (Merriam & Alan, 2006, p. 190). It is possible to analyse these “special forms” by using the inter-discipline of stylistics. It has also been referred to as “close textual reading,” “literary linguistics,” “rhetoric,” “poetics,” “literary philology,” and “literary linguistics” (Stockwell & Whiteley, 2015).

The primary objectives of stylistic analysis are to assist readers in developing insightful interpretations of the text and, more broadly, to increase language awareness and understanding (Sharma, 2019, p. 7). To assess the linguistic-cum-poetic features of Kashmiri culture in general and music in particular, a stylistic analysis of the figurative elements employed in popular Kashmiri romantic lyrics may be helpful. These song texts have figurative components that enhance their emotional and melodic impact, giving the musical performance a refined charm. Analysing the underlying psychological framework or “ethos” of a certain culture might go beyond this manifestation of universal cultural values seen in song texts (Merriam & Alan, 2006, p. 205). The different figurative devices that are frequently used in the romantic musicscape of Kashmir are listed below:

### **Metaphor**

One of the most common literary elements found in Kashmiri romantic song verses is metaphor. It is a deep and moving literary device that is deeply ingrained in Kashmiri romance ballads, adding layers of meaning and imagery to them. In Kashmiri romance songs, metaphors play a significant role by adding vivid imagery and linguistic elaboration to the lyrics. Metaphor is defined as a figure of speech in A Dictionary of Literary and Thematic Terms as where something (A) is identified with something else (B) to give A a quality connected with B (Quinn, 2006, p257).

In her work *Key Terms in Literary Theory*, Marry Klages offers a simpler definition of the term and explains Metaphor as “the creation of an association of similarity and identity between two

otherwise unlike objects or ideas: the statement “love is a rose” equates the idea of love with the flower, creating a connection between the two” (Klages, 2006, p.53).

Consider the song “Betino Ye Durer Chon Zaray” written by Rasool Mir:

*Sharmanda karthas aftarbo,  
Qandharich zun.  
Kaji chani gajisay, lajisa daray  
Bal marayo.*

I, the full moon of Qandhara, am ashamed,  
Of your brilliance, my sun,  
Waiting, wilting in your remembrance,  
I will wither away young (Shah)

In this instance, the sun and moon are represented by the beloved and lover, respectively. This song’s metaphor of the beloved as the sun and the lover as the moon represents the lover’s reliance on the radiant nature of the beloved as well as their unfulfilled desire. It highlights the beauty and splendour that the lover believes the beloved to be, while simultaneously infusing the atmosphere with love and longing. Rashid Hafiz wrote the song, and the usage of instruments like the rabab highlights the lines’ allegorical meaning. These lines are also referenced in the song “Do Jahan,” which was directed by Vishal Bhardwaj for the movie Haider. Shradda Kapoor’s voice subtly gives the metaphor a feminine touch.

Similarly, the metaphor of a budding rose has been employed to express the visage of the beloved in the song “Chon Rokh Posh,” penned by the singer-lyricist-poet Ghulam Nabi Dolwal “Janbaz” Kishtwari, which Waqar Khan, Rashid Jahangir, and Ali Saiffudin individually composed:

*Choun Rokh Poshwun Gulab Chuna  
Gulshanan manz su intikhaab Chuna,  
Your face is rose in bloom, is it not?  
Chosen one among gardens, is it not? (Razdan)*

The choice of the rose, a representation of passion and love, expresses the depth of the feelings evoked by the beloved’s presence

in addition to their physical attractiveness. These metaphors are emotional vehicles that convey feelings of adoration, desire, and love. The songs transcend the limits of regular existence and usher in a new era of transcendent love by elevating the ordinary to the extraordinary through metaphor.

### **Symbolism/Allegory**

Kashmiri romantic songs have levels of meaning and complexity that come from the closely linked figurative tropes of symbolism and allegory. Originating from the Greek word “allegoria,” which translates to “speaking otherwise,” this literary device employs elaborate metaphors. Allegory is a literary device in which characters, abstract concepts, or events are represented more symbolically than they would be in a literal sense (Wheeler). Allegory is defined as “a story in verse or prose with a double meaning: a primary or surface meaning; and a secondary or under-the-surface meaning” by the *Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*. Thus, it’s a story that can be read, comprehended, and analysed on two levels—and occasionally on three or four levels as well. The format could be graphic, literary, or both (Cuddon, 1999, p.22).

In the world of Kashmiri romantic songs, allegory is used to craft stories that, by utilising symbols, reveal more profound truths about human existence and love. For example, the metaphor of pottery in “Meha Ker Cxe kith posh daswaanai,” one of the most well-known Habba Khatoon songs, invites listeners to reflect on the nature and essence of love as well as the purpose of life. She continues,

*Rang rang thurnay kraalan baanay*  
*Byon byon korr nakh naqash*  
*Kyenh draay hyel kyel, Kyenh jaananay,*  
*Chhav myaen daanay posh,*  
 The Potter made different types of clay pots  
 With immaculate designs and shapes  
 Some turned out less perfectly shaped  
 Come and enjoy my pomegranate bloom (SonicHits)  
 Alternative Translation:  
 Pots of hues on the potter’s wheel  
 With so many designs he drew on them

Save for a few, all dented and bent  
Come my love, revel in the blooms (Matoo)

Here, the allegory of a potter (Kral) creating pots with different patterns and shapes serves to illustrate the multiplicity of love. Every pot has a distinct shape and design that symbolises a different aspect of love. Some pots have formed faults, which emphasises the idea that love can have flaws just like pottery. The fundamental question of existence as well as the complexities of love are explored via the symbolism of pottery. The following interpretation of this allegorical verse is provided by SonicHits, a collaborative compilation of song meanings and lyrics, which highlights the latter in the song's composition by singer-songwriter Vibha Saraf: "The earth's creation is compared to the potter moulding various types of pots with intricate designs and shapes." The pots were all perfect in their own ways, while having their own special flaws, as mentioned in the second to last line. Thus, the Kral also takes on the role of the Divine, giving the verse (and consequently, the song as a whole) a spiritual flavour. The song, which is part of the album "Thow Nam Rumu Rumai", was composed by Shaista and Ajaz Sahir in addition to Saraf.

Kashmiri romantic songs contain symbolism and metaphor, which heightens the emotional impact and encourages reflection. They invite listeners to delve deeper into the complex dynamics of human emotion and the varied dimensions of love.

## **Hyperbole**

Kashmiri romantic songs gain a theatrical flare and a touch of emotional intensity via the use of hyperbole, a figure of speech that is characterised by extravagant exaggeration for emphasis or impact. "A trope employing deliberate, emphatic exaggeration, usually for comic or ironic effect. Some critics refer to hyperbole as overstatement" is how Murfin and Ray define hyperbole in *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms* (199). Hyperbole is used to emphasise the intensity of love and longing in Kashmiri romantic ballads. It functions as a rhetorical device to express the depth of emotions in a way that goes beyond language. Think about the lyrics to the song "Rinde Poshe Maal," which was penned by Rasul Mir and has been

covered by Wahid Jilani, Manzoor Ah. Shah, Ajaz Rah, and Rashid Hafiz.

*Zal wankan bal yeli lagi shumar,  
Pachh lagnas ganzran lacch tai hazara.  
Tami shayi no moklan payi lolo,  
Rinde poshmaal gindaney drayi lolo. (Shah)*  
When count is taken of thy braids,  
lacs of fortnights it'll take.  
Once begun there is no escape from there.  
Lo, the gay love goes out to frolic. (Bhat, R.L)

Here, counting the beloved's braids is shown in an exaggerated manner as a laborious undertaking that would require lacs, or hundreds of thousands, of fortnights. This dramatic exaggeration highlights the idea that love is limitless and infinite in addition to the lover's devotion. It turns an insignificant gesture into a grandiose proclamation of the immensity of love. In Kashmiri romantic songs, hyperbole is a potent weapon that intensifies emotions and captures the grandeur of love, rather than just an exercise in exaggeration. These songs express the depth of romantic emotions and the indescribable quality of the experience of love through exaggeration.

### **Allusion**

Allusions abound in the lyrical universe of Kashmiri romance ballads, lending these poetic-musical narratives depth and cultural richness. In the context of romantic Kashmiri songs, references are deftly incorporated into the lyrics. These references offer insights on Kashmir's customs, mythology, and legacy while acting as windows into the country's cultural and historical tapestry. Allusion has been skillfully used in the opening words of the well-known romantic song "Harmukh Bartal" by Habba Khatoon, a classic romantic ballad, with corresponding renditions by Jan Nisar Lone and Sniti Mishra, Manzoor Shah, Adil Hameed, and Sheikh Imran.

*Harmukh bar tal praraey (zaagaey) Madano  
Yee Dapham tee (yee) laagyoo*  
I will wait at the gates of Harmukh, for you my love  
Whatever you ask, I will offer. (Razdan)



Here, the Harmukh Mountain in Kashmir is mentioned. Tucked away high in the magnificent Himalayas, Mount Harmukh is a soaring monolith that guards the tranquil Gangabal Lake. Its snow-capped peak, at 16,890 feet, pierces the clouds, watching over the valley below (Kashmir Life). As a result, the song gives listeners a clear picture of Kashmir's picturesque surroundings as well as an understanding of the valley's unique topography. Similar to this, the last few words of the previously mentioned Gulman Nabi Dolwal song contain an allusion that suggests Kashmir's peculiar musical style:

*Jaanbaazaz asar novi saazas*  
*nati prathkeasi'nis Rabaab chuna*  
Jaanbaz's music casts a potent spell  
else everyone has a Rabaab, is it not? (Razdan)

The word "Rabaab" alludes to a traditional musical instrument. The Rabab, which comes from Afghanistan and is loved by artists in Kashmir, is an essential component of the traditional music of the area. It is distinguished by its bulging body, recessed waist, and four to six strings with side pegs. Made from Kashmir's highly valued walnut wood, which symbolises both musical prowess and cultural legacy ("THE RABAB" p.1). This reference enhances the song's melodic quality while strengthening the relationship between passion and music in Kashmiri culture. With its beautiful tones, the Rabab comes to represent the outpouring of love. When Ali Saiffudin and Rashid Jahngir sing the song with Rabab, it makes the meta-musicality and allusive nature more apparent.

### **Poetry and Music: Fusion of Two 'Sister-Arts' In the Making of Song**

It is important to note that the majority of traditional songs from Kashmir are based on the poetry of the traditional romantic poets from Kashmir, such as Rasul Mir, Habba Khatoon, Bashir Dada, and others. Henry Purcell and John Dryden wrote the five-act semi-opera *King Arthur*. Purcell's lyrics brilliantly convey the deep relationship between poetry and music:

Music and poetry have ever been acknowledged Sisters,  
which walking hand in hand, support each other; As Poetry is the

harmony of Words, so Musick is that of Notes; and as Poetry is a Rise above Prose and Oratory, so is Musick the exaltation of Poetry. Both of them may excel apart, but sure they are most excellent when they are join'd... (qtd. in Riggle).

The blending of poetry and music has existed since ancient times and is not a new occurrence. Throughout Kashmir, the oral tradition of expressing poetic forms as songs and sayings persists, even in the oldest known sources of poetry, such as the love poems of Habba Khatoon or the mystic rhymes of Lal Ded. Poetry and music have a long history that dates back to ancient Rome and beyond, and this connection has persisted through many cultural manifestations.

In *Art Song: Linking Poetry and Music*, Carol Kimball explores the history of two sister arts that have been entwined. She draws attention to the fact that poetry has origins in vocal art that date back as far as music itself. Poems were originally recited or sung as a way to arouse the senses and uphold cultural norms. Lyric poets and troubadours over time added to this interaction by penning lines that were accompanied by lutes or lyres. Poetry and music separated into several artistic genres when writing progressively took the place of oral traditions. “The majority of art song composers possess a deep appreciation for literature and an astute understanding of the kinds of poems that captivate them as composers,” the author observes (Kimball, 2013, pp. 19, 27). Along similar lines, the award-winning Kashmiri folk singer Rashid Hafiz discusses choosing the appropriate verses. Hafiz has played a significant role in introducing the folk music to the younger generation. According to Hafiz, a singer should not choose poetry only for the purpose of creating a song; rather, this procedure is extremely important. He says “For us Kalam (poetry) is paramount. We choose the words very carefully. It shouldn’t be anything which is done for the sake of doing the song” (Ganie, 2023). Kimball well brings out the perspectives of composers on the fusion of music and poetry in the creation of a song. Notably, American classical composer Libby Larsen emphasizes the meticulous craftsmanship of great poetry and the responsibility of a composer to discover the inherent music within a poem:

Great poetry already has its meticulously crafted music—strong and intact. I feel that I have a serious responsibility to work as diligently as I can to discover the music of the poem (or prose) as the first part of my process. If I do that work well, I move through the discovery of poetic devices to discover the melodic contour, meter (usually polymeter), syntax, counterpoint, and musical form of the poem (20).

The main goal of this research was to investigate the second finding that Larsen indicated, with an emphasis on the study of poetic devices in the context of stylistics and ethnomusicology as a whole. These artists' complex explanations of the relationship between poetry and music highlight the enduring bond between these "sister arts."

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this study examined the stylistic elements of romantic songs from Kashmir, utilising literary strategies such as personification, metaphors, allusions, and pathetic fallacies. The study stressed the significance of comprehending music within its cultural and social contexts through the lens of ethnomusicology, influenced by influential theorists like Allen Merriam. The goal of the literary device study was to improve our understanding of how musical expressions carry cultural meanings. Personification and pathetic fallacies created emotional landscapes that resonated with the larger cultural milieu, while metaphors and allusions served as links between language and cultural notions.

By using an interdisciplinary framework like ethnomusicology, we were able to better comprehend the artistic aspects of Kashmiri music and the complex interrelationship between creative writing and cultural communication. Understanding music as a conduit for cultural meaning is essential to understanding literature, music, and culture in the Kashmiri heritage as a whole. The purpose of this study was to highlight the cultural diversity seen in romantic songs and to highlight their significance as dynamic cultural assets. Subsequent study endeavours may go deeper into various literary and cultural facets, including the socio-historical background of the instruments employed and the ways in which music interacts with other cultural components like attire and celebrations.

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