

Name of the Element: Qawwali.

Community: Muslim, Mirasi.

Region: Qawwali is sung all over India.

Brief Description: Traditionally Qawwali is a devotional music. It belongs to a tradition of Islamic mysticism and contains the compositions of the Sufi saints. The salient feature of Qawwali is an elaborate verbal code sung to the beat of the Dholak. Its repertoire comes from the different saintly lineages, and also those which reflect regional styles and languages. It extends to the larger network of social and ideological base. Apart from religious functions, it is also sung during the birth and other lifecycle ceremonies. The singers are supported by musical instruments such as the Harmonium, Sarangi, Sitar, Tabla and Dholak. The rendition starts with Hamd (in praise of Allah), Qual (the sayings of the Prophet Mohammad), Naat (in praise of the Prophet), (in praise of the Saints) and ends with Rang (in praise of the Chishti lineage). The rhythm and music have a powerful impact on the listeners, and create an atmosphere of piety. Qawwali is sung as an offering (haazri) to Allah and to the Pirs (saints). The knowledge and style of singing is transmitted orally, from generation to generation, and that is how the tradition has been kept alive. The singers' quest is for unity with God, a spiritual experience which transcends his consciousness with mystical love, and transforms him into a state of ecstasy. The rhythm and poetry culminates in a vibrant performance. It combines in itself the religious, mythological and festive aspects of the community, and is an expression of its aesthetic and creative aspirations of the community.