

Siren Song:  
The Women Singers of Pakistan

Open on an early morning aerial shot of a bustling city.

Super Lower Third:

Lahore, Pakistan, 2012.

The camera glides on top of heritage buildings and streets to come to a posh residential area. We are now inside a palatial home, with arched doors and chandeliers, tastefully decorated with traditional furniture, sculptures and curios.

**Sara Zaman** sits on a stylish wooded settee singing in Urdu. Text translates the words:

We, the ones who do not remember the ritual of prayer  
We, the ones who do not remember  
Anything other than the warmth of love, do not know of any idol,  
Nor any God . . .<sup>1</sup>

The camera leaves Sara Zaman and travels over buildings, arched gates, bazaars to reach the older part of Lahore, the inner city. We are now in a *Haveli* (old house) with arched doorways and a painting of famed Urdu language poet Ghalib.

We find ourselves in the midst of an informal concert or *mehfil*, May 2012. A beautiful young woman **Sara Raza** is singing a Sufi or Sacred song '*Tere Ishq Nachaya*' to an enchanted audience of well-dressed men and women. They are in contrast to the people in the streets. They are obviously two different worlds.

As **Sara Raza** sings, text translates the words:

Your love made me dance ...<sup>2</sup>

**Fawzia Afzal-Khan** stands outside the *Haveli*. Strains of the song filter outside mixing with the sounds of the street. She walks down the street, stopping occasionally as she introduces the film.

Super Lower Third:

Fawzia Afzal-Khan  
Professor of English and Women's Studies  
Montclair State University

### Fawzia Afzal-Khan

I am Fawzia Afzal-Khan. This was the spirit of Lahore that I experienced while growing up in the late 60s and early 70s. Lahore was a cornucopia of music, offering a rich tableau ranging from pop, rock, jazz, western classical—Dizzy Gillespie and other jazz greats even visited Pakistan then! -- alongside a whole range of indigenous forms that had developed in the Indian subcontinent over a millennium.

And sure enough, I, too got the music bug. But it wasn't long before I realized, much to my

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<sup>1</sup> See Long Sample Reel **Segment# 1**

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B2VUx50RrMsZTE5LMG13V0paZXM>

<sup>2</sup> See Sample: <https://vimeo.com/176243026/f0d21e2cc5>

grave disappointment, that I could dabble with it at home and sing for family and friends, but public performance was strictly ruled out.

My life – and the lives of most women then -- was still determined by the mores that strongly discouraged women from such pursuits. The amazing women who did so anyway were more than a musical inspiration for me and others, they also impacted the evolving politics of Pakistan.

Join me in my journey back to Pakistan to pay tribute to some of these inspiring women singers who carried on their careers despite societal disapproval and state strictures. This is their story.

Super Title:

### **SIREN SONG: WOMEN SINGERS OF PAKISTAN**

Fade in:

Archival footage/photographs of Partition – train with people hanging and sitting on the roof. Crowded platforms and refugee camps.

We hear sounds of confusion, murmuring voices, babies crying.

We hear an archival radio broadcast describing what we see.

Grinberg, Paramount, Pathe Newsreels:

“August, 1947. The British are quitting India nearly 200 years after they took power. On the stroke of midnight August 15th, 1947, as independence from British colonial rule is declared, millions of people, traveling with their possessions, in bullock carts, cars, trucks and buses, clog the roads fleeing community violence, desperate to be on the right side of the new border, Muslims go west to the newly created state of Pakistan, Hindus east to the reduced territory of India.”<sup>3</sup>

#### **Fawzia Afzal-Khan (V.O.)**

On 15th August 1947, the Indian subcontinent was partitioned into three parts, East Pakistan-now Bangladesh- West Pakistan, and India. Flames of communal hatred spread across India and Pakistan and consumed over a million lives and displacing many more making it the bloodiest trans- national transfer of people in history.

We see old photos of Fawzia Afzal-Khan’s family from the period.

#### **Fawzia Afzal-Khan (V.O.)**

Among these millions were my mother and father who were forced to flee with their parents from India to the new Pakistan. They struggled to adapt to the new life as this new state lurched from decades of British colonial rule and lingering ancient customs into the modern world.

We see archival photos of people listening to music from an old record player and around radios.

#### **Fawzia Afzal-Khan (V.O.)**

Music forged a new identity by uniting diverse populations who had been brought

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<sup>3</sup> See Sample: <https://vimeo.com/176243026/f0d21e2cc5>

together in the aftermath of a brutal upheaval.

We see archival photos of the singer Noor Jahan. We hear a scratchy recording of her singing in the background.

### **Fawzia Afzal-Khan (V.O.)**

Women singers like Noor Jahan helped to heal the pain of Partition.

The singing grows louder. New photos show a large audience completely rapt by her performance.

### **Fawzia Afzal-Khan (V.O.)**

She was the voice that millions of Pakistanis worshipped.

Over the photos of the audience, we hear them erupt with shouts of approval and applause.

Cut to Fawzia Afzal-Khan standing outside an old movie house, the Plaza cinema, in her hometown of Lahore, Pakistan.

### **Fawzia Afzal-Khan**

Singers like Noor Jahan's fame, really came from movie theaters like these, out of the nascent film industry in India that we now call Bollywood. In her early career, she played onscreen film heroines, and also did the playback singing.

We see film clips of Noor Jahan as a young woman singing in a black and white film – "*Anmol Ghadi*" (trans: *Precious Moment*).

Super English translation of song:

"Young and Alive is my new love..."

### **Fawzia Afzal-Khan (V.O.)**

Noor Jahan was born in United India in 1926. She was already a star of the Bombay film industry, with 96 films to her credit when the news of Partition came in 1947.

Her decision to leave India and become part of the new Pakistan sent shockwaves through the Bombay film industry.

In Lahore where my parents were building their new life, the news of her decision was greeted with excitement. Having such a star make the same journey they did was reaffirming. What no one knew then was how coming to Lahore would propel her into the midst of the politics of Pakistan and raise her to even higher artistic heights, even as she would have to struggle against many prejudices and obstacles.

Change of music cues us to the introduction of a new character. We see a succession of photographs of Revolutionary Poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz from the 1940s-1980s, seen in his home in Lahore, Pakistan, in Beirut next to Yasser Arafat, in Moscow with Pablo Neruda, receiving the Lenin Peace Prize in 1962.<sup>4</sup>

### **Fawzia Afzal-Khan (V.O.)**

Faiz Ahmed Faiz, who was an established-though iconoclastic- poet and writer in

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<sup>4</sup> **Segment 3** in Long Sample Reel focuses on Faiz:

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B2VUx50RrMsZTE5LMG13V0paZXM>

British India, decided to remain in Lahore at the Partition. His decision surprised many, given that he was a communist and a known agnostic while at the core Pakistan was non-secular.

Black and white photographs of Karachi and Karachi Central jail from the 1950s mixed with graphic illustrations depicting the release of the revolutionary poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz from Central Karachi Jail, being received and garlanded by a group of close friends, including his friend, lawyer, and music aficionado, Raza Kazim.

### **Fawzia Afzal-Khan (V.O)**

It is 2nd April 1955. A small crowd has gathered outside Karachi Central jail to receive the poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz who had just been released. He had been booked for Rawalpindi conspiracy case in 1951 for conspiring to overthrow the government.

Later, friends and family gather at Faiz's house in Lahore, to celebrate his release after 4 years in prison.

Noor Jahan, also joined the party at his home, and Faiz, who had spent his time in jail listening to Noor Jahan singing his poems on the radio, requested her to sing. Faiz's lawyer and comrade Raza Kazim, who was also present, tells us what happened.

We see a new character, Raza Kazim, inside his recording room/music studio in the big Victorian-style house he has owned and lived in since the Partition of 1947 in the city of Lahore, where he has founded an Institute of Philosophy and Arts.

Super Lower Third:

Raza Kazim  
Lawyer, Activist

### **Raza Kazim**

Noor Jahan had come. She was very fond of Faiz Sahib because he treated her with respect, and she came to welcome him. Faiz rang and asked me to come over and I promptly got there with my tape recorder and microphone.

Photos show the meeting. Noor Jahan is singing.

Super translation:

Oh, my love, don't ask me for that love I once gave you . . .

### **Raza Kazim (V.O.)**

First Faiz recited some of the poems he had written during his period in prison and then Noor Jahan started singing. She picked out this poem, which goes back to Faiz's very young days in Amritsar when he was a junior lecturer in Islamia College and there was this girl, one of his students that he was desperately in love with. . .

We see photos of Faiz as a young man.

We see period photos of women in traditional dress out and about.

### **Raza Kazim (V.O.)**

You see what happened was that they lived down the same lane. She was walking down in a *burqa* and then she handed him her wedding card, an invitation to her wedding and Faiz of course took it, but he couldn't stop himself from saying to her, "I wish it had been my wedding" and she turned around and said as only a woman

could, “you never asked me.”

Faiz was absolutely crushed. You see that was their culture, that was their sensitivity, those were the constraints they lived with. They could never state their desire openly. That’s where this poem comes from...and Noor Jahan...I don’t know what she had in her heart when she sang this poem...as in “are you going to repeat the same thing with me?”

Fade to black and white movie clip.

Super Lower Third:

Qaidi (“Jail”), 1962

Noor Jahan is singing.

### **Fawzia Afzal-Khan (V.O.)**

In 1962 Noor Jahan recorded the same song for the film *Qaidi*. The song was a super-hit, and remains till today the favorite of millions of Pakistanis. And it became a song not just about thwarted romantic love, but a metaphor for love of the poor and for justice and freedom for all.

I think Noor Jahan and other women singers who sang Faiz sahib’s poetry, connected deeply with his critique of injustice as they faced daily oppression in their lives, being ostracized by “genteel” society, which enjoyed their music, but looked down upon them for being singers.

We watch Noor Jahan’s movie performance.

Super translation of song:

Oh, my love don’t ask me for  
The love I once gave you  
I thought life would shine  
Eternally on me only if I had you  
I had only your sorrows then, the  
Sorrows of this world meant  
Nothing to me...  
But things are different now...<sup>5</sup>

### **Fawzia Afzal-Khan**

Noor Jahan’s secular songs about love, emancipation, justice, which she delivered with both sensuality and sexuality up front and visible, helped to heal the pain of Partition and evoked a sexual and sensual timbre much like the songs of the great Egyptian singer Umm Kulsoum, or the performances of Marlene Dietrich.

Noor Jahan singing

Super Lower Third:

Mujhe Say “Pehli Si Mohabbat” by poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz

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<sup>5</sup> See Long Sample Reel, **segment 1**:

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B2VUx50RrMsZTE5LMG13V0paZXM>

"Don't Ask Me for the Love I once Gave you"

**Fawzia Afzal-Khan (V.O.)**

Noor Jahan was given the title of the Queen of Melody by her legions of fans. She is fondly referred to as "Madame" by all who adored her. And even today, 16 years after her death, she remains the reigning Melody Queen of Pakistan.

Change in music to discordant sounds of conflict indicates a shift to a new moment in the film.

We see archival photographs of tanks moving down streets, soldiers marching, newspaper headlines proclaiming "*Martial Law Declared. Political Parties Banned*"

Super Lower Third:

The 1958 Military Coup

The images and sounds fade to family photographs.

We see a black and white picture of a proud mother holding a newborn baby.

**Fawzia Afzal-Khan (V.O.)**

I was born in 1958. The same year the military coup d'état established General Ayub Khan as the President. The coup was welcomed by the people of Pakistan who hoped that strong central leadership would stabilize the economy and restore a stable form of democracy. And it did, resulting in a golden period in the arts and culture. Cinema and music flourished in the 1960s.

Photographs/footage of General Ayub Khan, seen in B and W photo with General Eisenhower and President John F. Kennedy

**Fawzia Afzal-Khan**

Little did the people know that the military coup they had so wholeheartedly supported was actually a turning point in their history as it set up a dangerous precedent against democracy and liberalism in the long run.

Successive governments sought legitimacy by making themselves the representatives of traditional patriarchy, which forced many limitations on women, particularly those from middle class families like myself who grew up with Noor Jahan's music and who wanted to emulate her.

Interior of Fawzia's mother's house in Lahore. Fawzia and her mother talk while looking through old photo albums containing photos of Fawzia singing on stage as a young girl<sup>6</sup>

**Fawzia Afzal-Khan (V.O.)**

Even after all these years, I still have this bone to pick up with my mother.

Fawzia with her mother at her home in Lahore, March 2015.

Super Lower Third:

Rashda Afzal, Fawzia's Mother

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<sup>6</sup> See Sample: <https://vimeo.com/176243026/f0d21e2cc5>

Retired College Professor

**Rashda Afzal**

You were allowed to sing, you were given the chance to have a music master, but we never did it on a public level perhaps.... we never had anyone be a professional singer in our family.

**Fawzia Afzal-Khan**

Well, so that's what I mean...that it was okay to learn in the privacy of the home, but performing publicly was not something you wanted for me.

**Rashda Afzal**

Well we don't know about these singers, their lifestyles...it's not our tradition....

We go back to the photo album. We see Rashda holding young Fawzia's hand.

**Fawzia Afzal-Khan (V.O.)**

Looking back, maybe my mother was just trying to protect me.

We see a photo of the woman singer, Ghazala Javed. One of her songs plays in the background.

Super English Translation:

The world is but a child's playground . . .

**Fawzia Afzal-Khan (V.O.)**

As recently as 2012, the singer Ghazala Javed was killed by her own brothers for singing in public. But she wasn't the only one. Other women singers have suffered her same fate. Although this response to women singing is inspired by contemporary extremist trends, it also has its roots in the Pakistani state's efforts to separate its identity from India, which had long embraced women singers.

Change in music to indicate a new character and shift to a new moment in film.

We are inside an old Pakistan movie theater. It shows its age. Tariq Ali sits near the front of a stage.

Super Lower Third:

Tariq Ali, Pakistani Historian  
Playwright, Novelist

**Tariq Ali**

It's a fact that the Indian subcontinent has a long history of professional female performers.

Images of women performers as depicted in miniature paintings from the *Akbarnama*.

Sounds of court music and temple dancing music.

**Tariq Ali**

*Akbarnama*, the official chronicle of the reign of Akbar, the third Mughal Emperor in 16th century India, carries detailed notes on varieties of women performers. Women performed in courts, private gatherings and temples. Some specialized in singing

while others sang and danced.

Popular film clips of Bollywood films showing lives of courtesans showing a court dancer and singer.

Super Lower Third:

Film clip from *Mughal e Azam* (The Great Mughal)

### **Tariq Ali (V.O.)**

But not everyone could become a singer or a dancer, even if they had the talent. They would have to be born into the caste of musicians. Music was an occupation ordained by birth. The rules were of course stricter for women.

However, things began to change in India towards the first half of the twentieth century. The Indian state actively encouraged learning in music as a way to define its own national identity at the time when agitation for Independence from the British Empire started. In the 1920s, institutes specializing in music sprang up everywhere giving respectability to the profession for the Hindu majority that would rule in post-colonial India.

We see archival footage showing scenes of political turmoil from the time: people rioting, police pushing crowds back with batons. Contrasted with photographs of women being trained in groups to sing inside music institutes

### **Tariq Ali**

But in newly created Pakistan women performing in public began to be frowned upon perhaps because Pakistan wanted to develop a different national identity from India, rooted in a narrow understanding of Islam. And because many of the women singers who moved to Pakistan after Partition in 1947 had their roots in the courtesan culture of the Indian royal courts, they became associated with prostitution and relegated to living in red light districts.

Change in music to cue in a new character.

We are in a cluttered NGO office. Phones ring in the background and there is the buzz of people busy at work. A slightly harried looking woman in business attire sits at her desk.

Super Lower Third:

Dr. Fouzia Saeed

Scholar and Women's Rights Activist

### **Dr. Fouzia Saeed**

Often of humble backgrounds, the musicians and singers belonged to two occupational ethnic groups or hereditary castes, derogatorily known as the *mirasis* and the *kanjars*.

Super Explanations of Terms:

**Mirasi:** "Low Class" singers

**Kanjar:** Prostitutes

Cut to a room filled with musical instruments. A woman in performance dress addresses the camera.

Super Lower Third:



Sara Zaman  
 Amateur Classical singer  
 Co-Founder, Department of Musicology, National College of Arts, Lahore

### **Sara Zaman**

With time it has become almost like an abuse to be called a *mirasi*, which is usually used with another suffix, which I would not like to use but it means the dregs of society.

Back to the room with Fawzia and her mother who continue to look at the scrapbook. They smile as they reminisce.

### **Fawzia Afzal-Khan (V.O.)**

Under such pressure, it is little wonder why “respectable” middle class families such as my own, discouraged me from my desires to become a singer.

Even the professional female singers when they married, usually to one of their patrons, were compelled to give up their singing profession and hide their backgrounds.

In the scrapbook we see a picture of Fawzia at the wedding of a friend.

And my friend Sara Zaman, who has managed to pursue her singing, for a long time was stopped from singing publicly by her in-laws after her marriage.

We are back on the streets of Lahore. Fawzia address the camera while behind her a shop owner sits outside his small store listening to singing on a radio.

### **Fawzia Afzal-Khan**

But while social and political pressures were put on women not to sing, audiences still craved their voices.

Change in Music to Cue new character and new moment in film

We are outside a beautiful red-brick building in Lahore. People go in and out.

Super name of building:

The Faiz Museum

Fawzia enters it. Cut to inside. Fawzia and Salima Hashmi walk through the museum.

### **Fawzia Afzal-Khan (V.O.)**

I caught up with Salima Hashmi, daughter of Faiz. She’s a leading visual artist of Pakistan as well as a women’s rights activist, and knew some of our great singers personally.

### **Fawzia Afzal-Khan**

What is the importance of music in Pakistan?

Super Lower Third:

Salima Hashmi  
 Visual Artist, Daughter of Poet Faiz, Women’s Rights Activist

**Salima Hashmi**

There is a lot of importance placed on music but there is a conflict between its importance at a state level and in people's lives. Unfortunately, the State has always pushed an anti-Music stance.

**Fawzia Afzal-Khan**

And how do women fit in it?

**Salima Hasmi**

It's through women that music has been carried forward. I know that's not the popular understanding but many of the greatest performers that I've seen in my lifetime have been women.<sup>7</sup>

Archival footage of Classical Raga Singer **Roshan Ara Begum**, "Queen of Music" Performing at the Open Air Theatre in Lawrence Gardens, Lahore, 1958.

**Salima Hasmi (V.O.)**

One of my fondest memories is sitting in front of Roshan Ara Begum and its almost daybreak and she's singing *Raga Bhairvi* and suddenly the rain drops fall in the open air theater and the crowds are not the elite of Lahore. . . . they are the people who've come from the inner city and they've come to listen to this queen of singers . . .

Fade in photographs of Iqbal Bano and Noor Jahan.

**Salima Hashmi**

I've also seen the great *ghazal* singers like Iqbal Bano and then of course the woman who personified the diva...Noor Jahan, and I've always felt that they held people in a much more firmer manner than the men ever could because... there's something they tapped into which was to do with their gender.

We see archival footage of people ecstatic at their singing.

**Salima Hashmi**

I don't know whether it's something I can explain quite clearly but if you've been in that audience and you've looked around, you know that they have embodied people's dreams and also their aspirations in a way perhaps the male singer while being wonderful and excellent could never do it in exactly the same way. It's something to do with the emotion I think.<sup>8</sup>

Change in music to cue in new singer, and new moment in film

**Fawzia Afzal-Khan**

And few could carry more emotion than Malika Pukhraj. Wow, could she take people's breaths away.

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<sup>7</sup> See Long Sample Reel **Segment 1:**

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B2VUx50RrMsZTE5LMG13V0paZXM>

<sup>8</sup> See Sample: <https://vimeo.com/176243026/f0d21e2cc5>

Malika Pukhraj singing on PTV (Pakistan Television circa 1950):

Super Translation of Song:

“My killer, my lover, stay with me...”<sup>9</sup>

Same song keeps playing softly in background as Manuel speaks.

Fade to faculty office at City University, NYC. Poster of Malika Pukhraj hangs on the wall behind a middle aged man.

Super Lower Third:

Peter Manuel

*Ghazal* Scholar, Professor of Ethnomusicology, John Jay College

### **Peter Manuel**

Malika Pukhraj’s contributions to the music of India and Pakistan are manifold and varied. . . . she even composed some of the music herself. She sang songs, based on a popular form of Urdu and Persian lyrical poetry called “*ghazal*”, that often had the double entendre: on the surface about love and romance, but deep down about social injustice.

Black and white and cheap color picture collage of Malika Pukhraj singing at various stages of her career, from the 1930s-1980s

She was also unique in singing free verse. And like another popular singer of that time, Noor Jahan, she too was enamored of the revolutionary Urdu language poet Faiz’s verse; his message of justice was deeply appealing.

We are in the family home of Malika Pukhraj in Lahore. A woman addresses the camera.

Super Lower Third:

Tahira Syed, 1958–

*Ghazal* Singer

Daughter of Malika Pukhraj

On a nearby table are photographs of Malika Pukhraj as court singer at the royal court of the last Maharaja of Kashmir, Hari Singh, from the 1930s.

### **Tahira Syed**

My mother was employed at the court of Kashmir-- prior to Partition, in the 1930s and early 40s. She was given a huge salary for those times and she got employment at the age of 9.

She was summoned to the court when the Maharaja heard there was a young prodigy who had been trained in Delhi. He was so impressed by her singing chops that he asked her to come and perform in his court so she was on duty every day since the tender age of 9, and soon became his favorite singer.

Malika Pukhraj singing

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<sup>9</sup> See Long Sample Reel **Segment 2**:

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B2VUx50RrMsZTE5LMG13V0paZXM>

*Abhi to mein jawanhoon* on Pakistan Television circa 1966

Super Subtitle:

“I am Young, I am Still Young”

### **Fawzia Afzal-Khan (V.O)**

Malika Pukhraj represents the bridge from the courtly past of the subcontinent to the modern age, in which, despite her humble beginnings, she became a media figure.

### **Tahira Syed**

Mummy would tell me all these stories about how the Maharaja, on the day of the Spring Festival, *Basant*, would bestow beautiful yellow dresses made of tissue spun with gold thread upon her, as well as gifts of diamond bracelets and fancy watches especially when he returned after state visits abroad.

Graphic illustrations of young girls dressed in traditional outfits of varying hues of yellow, wearing flowers and jewelry in their hair, rooftops of palatial homes with boys and men flying colorful kites.

Malika Pukhraj’s singing mixed with ambient sounds of the Maharaja speaking to his subjects from Kashmiri archives

### **Tahira Syed**

Sadly, mummy realized that the violence and hatred that was spreading on the eve of Partition, was also beginning to poison the Maharaja; so she decided to leave for Lahore in the newly created Pakistan with her family. Once here, she continued her career as a singer, but life was never as grand again as it had been back in Kashmir.

Malika Pukhraj singing her signature song, “*I Am Young, I am Still Young*,” in defiant style, taunting orthodox religious clergy.

Super English Translation:

“O Sheikh! Have you heard of beauty and youth being separate from the pleasures of free loving?”

### **Tahira Syed**

When I read mummy’s memoir, I realized how the young woman who became Malika Pukhraj-Malika—which means Empress—and Pukhraj—which is a precious stone—where society loved her music, yet saw female singers as disreputable, now began entertaining many different suitors and would-be lovers at her family home in Lahore. She did so in such a way as to suit her own interests best: she got them to bring her expensive gifts, toyed with their emotions, discarded them when she tired of them—but I know she was looking for the right man to marry. Marriage, after all, is what confers the ultimate status of “respectability” to a woman, especially in Pakistan, and especially to a “woman associated with singing.”

So when mummy, now a member of the respectable elite thanks to her marriage, decided after she’d raised four sons and two daughters that I should embark on a singing career, practically my whole family got up in arms!

A 19 year-old Tahira Syed singing on Pakistan Television, 1975.

Photographs of Malika Pukhraj with her daughter Tahira.

### Tahira Syed

I have four brothers and three of them were very, very annoyed and very offended that their sister would be on television. Even in the 1970s, music or singing was associated with a particular kind of woman, so it was very difficult for mother, I mean I was not even interested in singing, it was just my mother insisting on it; and all guns were directed at her for making me come into his field. It was very difficult at that time to come across as a decent woman or a decent girl also singing, also on TV performing.

And my mother had a very tough time trying to get around that. The family never really reconciled to it so it was just her way of you know, surreptitiously getting it done. The program would come on TV and they would all scream and shout all over again. But she was adamant and she just stuck to achieving her ambition for me. She passed away in 2004, but her spirit still guides me....

Tahira Syed singing a duet with her mother Malika Pukhraj.

Super English Translation:

“The spring is here again...”

Clips of Tahira Singing; Photographs of Tahira Syed with her mother.

### Tahira Syed (V.O.)

I never went anywhere alone. She accompanied me to every recording, every shoot, everything. And her, of course, insistence was, that I was not to do anything, which could be construed as being immoral because that would reflect on music. Despite her bold choices earlier in life, she was very conventional with me!

B&W footage of a very young and beautiful Tahira Syed, dressed in a long frock, performing an up-tempo song, “*This World Full of Joyous Love...*”<sup>10</sup>

Fade to **Sara Raza**, contemporary Sufi singer, holding on to her mother, as both sit in the gardens of an old monument in Lahore, May 2012.

### Fawzia Afzal-Khan

It was often the mothers who were the allies of their daughters, in going against the family tradition like Sara Raza’s mother, or, at times, like the mothers of Tahira Syed and Suraiyya Multanikar, enforcing their own tradition of being singing women, seeking a career in professional singing for their daughters despite opposition from the men in their families; none of these women came from the elite or even middle classes....perhaps that is why they were bolder?

**Sara Raza** Her mother sits next to her, arms entwined, listening to her daughter sing with a

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<sup>10</sup> See Long Sample Reel **Segment 2:**  
<https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B2VUx50RrMsZTE5LMG13V0paZXM>

smile on her face.<sup>11</sup>

Super English translation:

“ . . .O my Sufi saint, please help me cross the river...”

#### **Tariq Ali**

Sufi songs are poetry of the great mystic saints of the Indo-Pakistani region, who always criticized religious dogma be it that of Hinduism or Islam. They made fun of the clerics or mullahs, and corrupt state officials, and preached love born of syncreticism. THIS is the Islam of this region known as the Indian subcontinent.

Sara Raza with her mother.

#### **Sara Raza's Mother**

Once someone said: 'Look the showgirls have come!' We were so embarrassed. Even our family disapproved. They would ask me 'where all do you take your daughter?' But I myself enjoyed music.

#### **Sara Raza**

We are basically satisfied that music is a sacred thing—as sacred as the poetry of the great Sufi mystics.<sup>12</sup>

#### **Fawzia Afzal-Khan**

Many female singers of Pakistan have sung the poetry of the Sufi mystics of this region. I myself am descended, on my father's side, from the great 19<sup>th</sup> C. Sufi mystic Khwaja Ghulam Farid of Multan; I too love to sing sufi poetry, which is spiritual, not dogmatic at all.

Change in Music to indicate appearance of new singer:

#### **Suraiyya Multanikar**

I am a *Kafi* singer, this is the tradition of my native Multan, where we have been blessed with the poetry of venerated Sufi saints ...yet, my brothers were against my singing in the beginning, even though we come from a family of musicians, and this is devotional music....

We see Suraiyya Multanikar on PTV (Pakistan Television: circa 1976)/ Talking OC singing a famous Sufi poem in the Punjabi language by Khwaja Ghulam Farid, 19<sup>th</sup> C Sufi poet/saint of the city of Multan, in Punjab province, now in Pakistan.

Lower Third translates in English:

“How shall I describe the state your love has elevated me to...”

#### **Suraiyya Multanikar**

I was 11 years of age, and playing in the yard of the house. It was summertime. The

<sup>12</sup> See Long Sample Reel **Segment 2:**

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B2VUx50RrMsZTE5LMG13V0paZXM>

adults were sleeping off the afternoon heat. The *Ustads*, our music teachers, were highly respected then. One of them told my brothers: “A singer is immortal. We want to teach this child how to sing.” My eldest brother said which child? Pretending I didn’t exist! The teacher said, “the saint has said it is your sister, she is blessed.” My brother said “No, that time has passed” But the *ustad* said “I will sit in the alley and teach her!” Our house didn’t have a harmonium or a *tabla*. My brother said “we have nothing.” Elders were really respected then, not anymore... So the *ustad* said I will teach her outside your house and get my own *tablas* that will beat out a sacred rhythm, and my own harmonium to help her learn the scales, etc. So that’s how my singing routine started! And my mother gave her blessing....

Change in music to indicate new singer. **Aliya Rasheed**, another young contemporary singer, who is blind, singing *Dhrupad*—an Indian classical form of music.<sup>13</sup>

Camera pans the interior of her house, indicating her family’s very modest class background. Tea and a plate of biscuits are seen on a dining table lined with plastic, next to the two simple chairs on which Aliya and her mother are seated.

### **Fawzia Afzal-Khan**

*Dhrupad* is an ancient classical form of singing that was associated with the Hindu temples, so no one in Pakistan really sings it as it is seen to be a Hindu religious genre of music, even though it was popularized in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries by Muslim court musicians. It’s wonderful that Raza Kazim encouraged this young girl of limited means to go to India to learn it and keep the tradition alive in Pakistan.

### **Aliya Rasheed**

It was the year 2000. Raza *sahib* told me that I should go to India to learn this music. I said really? Wow! I spoke with my mother, I was so excited, but she said let me first talk to your father. He was working in the Middle East then as a laborer and said that how can she go so far? Obviously parents will think like that about how I will manage so far away, especially since I can’t see, and then they worry what will people say, etc. So then my mother told my father that, “Don’t worry, Aliya’s got a one year visa and it’s no big deal. She will learn and come back. She’s going with a group.”

### **Aliya Rasheed’s Mother**

So the year passed and he was in Dubai, and he called and asked if Aliya had returned. I told him that they’ve given her a visa for another year. He said, “how come they gave it. What happened to the people who went with her?” I said they’ve also got another year extension. Two years passed and he returned to Pakistan and asked again when Aliya was returning. At that point, I told him the truth. I said she had a 4 year visa and since you were not letting her go, I lied to you.

Now he is happy when he sees and hears her. I go with her often whenever she performs, even when I’m unwell. Now my husband says I was brave to do what I did!

Aliya Rasheed performing a *Dhrupad* composition, strumming the string base instrument,

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<sup>13</sup> See Long Sample Reel **Segment 2**:  
<https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B2VUx50RrMsZTE5LMG13V0paZXM>

*Tanpura*, for accompaniment.<sup>14</sup>

Cut to Fawzia inside a small music hall.

### **Fawzia Afzal-Khan**

So you see how it was often mothers of the lower socio-economic strata, who helped their daughters succeed as singers in such a patriarchal society. But in more elite circles, mothers have not typically encouraged their daughters to sing, and have participated in the culture of looking down on women who perform in public—like my own mother! Progressive male music aficionados like Raza Kazim as well as poets like Faiz Ahmed Faiz, who belonged to an earlier generation, were really the true supporters of our women singers, keeping their hopes and dreams alive by encouraging and respecting and recording them.

No wonder singers like Noor Jahan repaid the respect and friendship they received from justice-loving figures like Faiz by singing his verses even while he was in jail! This was a gesture of solidarity on the part of these women singers, in defiance of state authorities, and also a way of thumbing their noses at “genteel” society which tried to treat them as inferior just because of their profession.

Music cues change of scene.

Photographs of Faiz Ahmed Faiz with his generation of female singers, labeled with their names.

Photos/illustrations of Faiz with his lawyer and friend, Raza Kazim, both men smiling next to women singers they’ve recorded and supported.

We see photos of some of the women singers we’ve met so far. We see photos of women singers at Faiz’s funeral, November 20<sup>th</sup>, 1982, labelled as such, crying, looking distraught.

### **Fawzia Afzal-Khan**

At times women singers in Pakistan have resisted the state, singing out against oppression and injustice using the poetry of revolutionary poets like Faiz. At other times they’ve flirted with, and cajoled state authorities. And there is another paradox: Like music itself, these women singers including Madame Noor Jahan, and Malika Pukhraj and others, have been both reviled and adored by the public! “Madame” in fact, lived in a way that is unacceptable according to the social mores—taking lovers openly even while she was married—yet, people loved her; in the end, they forgave her everything. What’s this paradox about?

### **Salima Hashmi**

I think there’s a very deep rooted hypocrisy which is about women who perform and it’s not special to our culture or to our society. I think in our context, because women who performed went outside the domestic domain and therefore could not be controlled, including sexually--the issue becomes that of fear of women who cannot be controlled.

Music cues change of scene.

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<sup>14</sup> See Long Sample Reel **Segment 2**:  
<https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B2VUx50RrMsZTE5LMG13V0paZXM>



Fawzia walks through *Hira Mandi* (Red Light area of Lahore). Voices of singing girls heard practicing the scales; occasional sounds of ankle bells.

### Fawzia Afzal-Khan

Areas like Hira Mandi once boasted of many famous singers and dancers. But they slowly lost their glitter once the old singers associated with the courtesan era passed away. While Noor Jahan and others had left the area quite early on, once they achieved fame and wealth, it remained up until the late 1980s, the place from which female musical talent emerged.

Super Lower Third:

Raza Kazim,  
Music Supporter, lawyer and friend of Faiz

Old photographs of *Hira Mandi*. Graphic illustrations of singers, Graphic illustrations of dancers

### Raza Kazim

That tradition has been replaced by the cell phone...you can call “singing girls” up to come perform at your own home... rather than have an address to go to and with its own environment. No, I think *Hira Mandi* is an abandoned place now. I’ve visited *Hira Mandi* in its better days with some friends including Faiz Saab...those were the good old days. Pakistan of the 50s was a hypocritical society but at least it had some pleasures!

Sadly now that era is gone. The institution of *Hira Mandi*—the so-called Diamond Market—that you imagine, no longer exists, because everything has been “purified,” purified in a negative sense.

Photograph (circa 1970), of Tamancha Jaan, Singer.

Once I recorded Tamacha Jaan...the name was rather forbidding. The name means pistol!

She was named Tamancha Jaan because one of her lovers had shot another lover with a pistol. Because it was due to her that the shooting started, she was named Tamacha Jaan! When I met her in 1970, I was amazed to find one of the most civilized, one of the intelligent and most musically well trained singers...I have her recordings: that was a treat for me. Then there was her daughter who was born in 1947; not a patch on her mom – it spoke volumes about the different cultures in which both mother and daughter had been born and raised.

Raza Kazim plays a song by Tamancha Jaan.

Super Lower Third:

Tariq Ali  
Historian, Playwright, Novelist

### Tariq Ali

It is absolutely true that the state of Pakistan did not support musicians. Some popular forms like *ghazal* singing survived, but Hindustani classical music died a slow death; it was regarded with suspicion as a leftover of Indian—i.e., “Hindu” tradition—quite wrongly, of course.

Archival footage of Z.A. Bhutto being sworn in as Prime Minister, 1973

Super Lower Third:

Prime Minister Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, Leader of The Peoples' Party of Pakistan (PPP)

### **Tariq Ali**

Politically and culturally, things became worse with the two wars between India and Pakistan in 1965 and in 1971 respectively. The 1971 war led to the traumatic break-up of Pakistan, which led to the formation of Bangladesh.

Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto became the President of a truncated Pakistan in 1971, and later after establishing parliamentary democracy, he became the Prime Minister.

Tahira Syed singing on PTV (Pakistan Television), 1971.

Super English translation:

"We can achieve anything..."

Super Lower Third:

Tahira Syed,  
*Ghazal* Singer, daughter of Malika Pukhraj

### **Tahira Syed**

In the 70's just after the 1971 war and the debacle in Bangladesh, the mood was very, very low. People were depressed. They wanted nothing to do with sadness or sorrow plus we had the POWs so the mood of the country was so somber and so depressed that PTV was trying to have all these patriotic songs on TV which would uplift the people, uplift the masses so I remember I recorded this song which played like a million times called *Agar hai Jazba e Tameer...*<sup>15</sup>

We see footage of Tahira singing the song.

Super translation in English:

If the Nation-Building Spirit is Alive  
We Can Achieve Anything

Archival footage of Prime Minister Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, wearing a Mao cap at public rallies of his Peoples Party, seen wearing ordinary clothes and waving to the masses

Super Text:

Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto was Prime Minister of Pakistan from 1971-77.

He billed himself as an Islamic Socialist and the Slogan for his Peoples Party was "*Bread, Clothing, Shelter!*"

### **Tahira Syed**

And the sad state of Pakistan Television and Radio I would say, started at that time

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<sup>15</sup> See Long Sample Reel **Segment 2:**

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B2VUx50RrMsZTE5LMG13V0paZXM>

because all the officials in TV, Radio, etc., during Z.A. Bhutto's "democratic" and supposedly socialist government, were political appointees. PTV which had been the mother lode for all talent, for all music, drama, everything suddenly was reduced to being a mouthpiece for the government at Bhutto's time and all that was done or said on TV had to be focused on PPP (Pakistan's People's Party) and our great leader. I would say something like the Chinese revolution took place, and all the programs had to be edited or contrived to reflect on how great things had become since the new regime. That is what I remember. And everything was topsy-turvy...there were toadies and cronies of PPP everywhere. So that was not a good time.

We see famous women singers of the 1970s OC, labelled as such:

**Reshma**—Gypsy Singer

**Nayyara Noor**—New generation singer of Faiz' poems

**Madame Noor Jahan** -- Still the Reigning Melody Queen, recording popular melodies in Urdu and Punjabi for "Lollywood"—Pakistan's answer to the Bollywood Film Industry

### **Tahira Syed**

I would say the decline of PTV and all state owned media was going down at that time because these were not professionals running our media outlets, these were people who had no clue on what was needed. They just wanted to politicize TV and Radio and that is exactly what happened.

So you see, even our democratically elected leaders let us down! But female singers continued performing their music...and it must be said that due to liberal attitudes promoted by Bhutto, our shrine culture with its unorthodox Sufi music really flourished, as did a lot of film music. This was the heyday of our film industry.

We see images from the film industry of the time, focusing on musicals. Then there is an abrupt shift in music and we cut to newsreel images of Pakistan in turmoil again.

### **Tariq Ali**

Bhutto's secular regime ended with his assassination in 1977. Whatever you may have thought of him, he was not a religious ideologue. On 5th July 1977, chief of army staff General Zia-ul-Haq deposed Bhutto in a bloodless coup. He ruled as an Islamist zealot for the next 11 years. This was the third military dictatorship in less than four decades of Pakistan's creation.

Change in Music to Indicate new moment in Film.

Footage of General Zia-ul-Haq's address to the nation. Soldiers marching in Parade.

### **General Zia-ul-Haq**

This nation was created to fulfil Allah's commandments.<sup>16</sup>

Footage of empty Streets. Closed shops. Army soldiers outside the President House in Islamabad.

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<sup>16</sup> See Long Sample Reel **Segment 4:**

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B2VUx50RrMsZTE5LMG13V0paZXM>

Silence.

### **Fawzia Afzal-Khan (V.O.)**

The atmosphere changed almost overnight. Suddenly, music and drama programs at colleges and universities were canceled, we could no longer go about in jeans and t-shirts.

Archival Footage of women news anchors on TV with their heads covered. Images of “morality” police conducting street floggings during Zia-ul-Haq’s presidency.

Cut to Salima Hashmi.

Super Lower Third:

Salima Hashmi  
Daughter of Faiz

### **Salima Hashmi**

Well as we know those who sell religion would be much happier if we were unhappy, so consequently you know music is anathema to them, because you can’t be morose with music around! So therefore, of course, there is this huge contradiction between this one version of religion and what we know to be religion, which is a great patron of the arts. But the Pakistani state, unfortunately took the stance that music is bad, that it needs to be discouraged, and certainly classical music, the singing of our melodic *ragas* and of *dhrupad*, was actively discouraged during Zia’s time as it was seen to be “Hindu” music.

Shots of Pakistani landscape, both rural and urban.

Women doing various household chores, and farming, and singing at weddings in villages and towns, shrines dotted all over Pakistan....also mosques, women covered in burqas, shots of city streets with hardly any women to be seen.....rickshaws, trucks, gaudily decorated with pietistic sayings from the Quran.....shots of Army officers marching.

We see family photos of Fawzia from this time.

### **Fawzia Afzal-Khan (V.O.)**

I remember the sermons of the preachers during the 1980s when I would visit my parents on holidays from the States, blaring from loudspeakers during prayer times, exhorting people to turn away from music, which they described as un-Islamic; women were urged to cover themselves to stay away from sin.

### **Salima Hashmi**

There are written orders that you are not to invite so and so that you’re not to propagate music...and at first they reduced it to one hour a day on TV that you could have classical music, and pretty soon they squeezed that out also. I mean they would have done away with all music but you know there is, let’s face it, the president’s house liked a good *thumka* as much as anybody else. This is the lewd form of music, accompanied by vulgar dance moves. So it was private, performed behind closed doors for the officer class, and it was there, and consequently it survived.

But it survived in unfortunately this very debased manner, and therefore those long 11 dark years of Zia’s “Islamic” rule, smothered so much art, because people took to

other things.<sup>17</sup>

Super Lower Third:

Tahira Syed  
*Ghazal* (lyric poetry) Singer

### Tahira Syed

But strangely enough a lot of new musicians came up during Zia's time, which was probably the most repressive time. I would say it was a subversive activity on the part of those singers because they were all these young boys who would form groups and record these songs which were critical of the times and critical of the government and very soon they were banned. And there were quite a few female singers too, now emerging from even the "respectable" middle classes! And older, established singers like our great *ghazal* singer, Iqbal Bano, became bolder and started singing politically revolutionary songs by Faiz...quite a paradoxical scene—and dare I say—rather exciting!

Iqbal Bano sings a famous revolutionary poem written by Faiz Ahmed Faiz.

Iqbal Bano singing, "Hum Dekhain Gey"

English Subtitle:

"We will see...  
We will See the crowns  
Of the Tyrants trampled  
By the People..."

Photographs of people--largely women--protesting in the streets against the Law of Evidence which reduced women's testimony to half that of men; and against the Zina Ordinance which placed the burden of proof for rape on women.<sup>18</sup>

### Salima Hashmi

Iqbal Bano sang *Hum Dekhain Gey* during Zia's time...that evening in 1985 when we invited her to sing at Alhamra hall, was so galvanizing and inspirational! She did this whole concert and of course she ended it with *Hum Dekhain Gey* and for the first time it was such a big audience at AlHamra auditorium, and people just would not let her stop and she had to sing it over and over again and it was a magical moment. She was expressing in song, through my father's poetry, what a lot of us in the country were feeling!

The next morning, 6 o'clock the phone rings and it's Bano. She says, "are you awake," I said yes. I didn't say you woke me up! And she said I've never received such acclaim and felt so happy ever in my life.

Change in Music to indicate new singer. Nazia Hassan singing *Disco Diwane* with her brother Zoheb Hasan.

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<sup>17</sup> See Long Sample Reel **Segment 4**:  
<https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B2VUx50RrMsZTE5LMG13V0paZXM>

<sup>18</sup> See Long Sample Reel **segment 4**:  
<https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B2VUx50RrMsZTE5LMG13V0paZXM>

Super Lower Third:

Pop song:  
Disco Diwane (Crazy for Disco)

### **Fawzia Afzal-Khan (V.O.)**

It was such a paradoxical decade, the 1980s. Something else besides overt protest music rocked the music world of Pakistan and created waves across the border in India. It was a song by Nazia Hassan 'Disco Diwane' released in 1980. The song was a revival for music in Pakistan. It was a mega hit. But soon it was banned because it was considered too westernized and bringing in all the degeneracy of Disco music to our culture.

### **Tahira Syed**

I mean, music videos were banned from TV at that time and like our very famous Nazia Hasan and Zoheb Hasan, they were banned from TV because they were promoting vulgarity according to the censor at that time.

Change in music cues us to change in moment in film

Cut to Images from Sehwan Sufi shrine. This is the shrine of famous 13<sup>th</sup> C mystic poet and saint Lal Shahbaz Qalandar, in the interior of Sindh province.

### **Salima Hashmi**

At the height of Zia-ul-Haq's anti-culture, anti-music, anti-women, anti-everything rule, when all music and dance was forbidden, I went to Sehwan one night in the winter and when the drums started, everyone danced...the men danced, the women danced...and there I was dancing...it was raining and I was dancing in the rain...

Cut to Archival footage of Abida Parveen singing verses of 17<sup>th</sup> C mystical poet of Punjab province, Bulleh Shah, at his shrine in Kasur, Punjab.

Abida Parveen sings an overtly anti-clerical Sufi song: "Parh Parh Ilam Kitabaan da..."

Super English translation of song:

"You who think Knowledge  
Comes only from Holy Books...  
Look Inside the Human Heart..."

Fade Out.

### **Salima Hashmi**

I remember when I first heard Abida Parveen. There was a concert and she was singing and she was singing verses from Bulleh Shah's iconoclastic Sufi poetry, and as we know that it is so anti-clerical and I could see on the road, the buses had stopped...people had climbed onto the roofs of the buses and they were listening to this magnificent young woman singing her heart out and I turned to the commissioner who was sitting next to me and I said did the government pay for this concert so he gave a little giggle and he said yes. So you know there were people who helped music survive.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> **Segment 4:** <https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B2VUx50RrMsZTE5LMG13V0paZXM>

Fade Up:

Abida Parveen's passionate rendering of Sindhi Sufi poet Shahbaz Qalandar's world-famous song. Audiences rapt, swaying, clapping....

Super English Translation:

“Let Us all Lose ourselves in a Trance,  
Singing the praises of our beloved saint, Qalandar,  
Sing and dance to the beating of the drums, Dham, dhama dhum...”

We are inside a Sufi shrine. A woman addresses the camera.

Super Lower Third:

Shemeem Abbas  
Professor and Author of Female Voices in Sufi Ritual

### **Shemeem Abbas**

With the coming of General Zia to power, we had a very strange transition. He banned music and many female singers from performing publicly because he considered this un-Islamic, yet he encouraged and enjoyed women performing Sufi songs, which he saw as spiritual.

Archival footage of Sufi Singer Abida Parveen performing her most famous Anti-Clerical song from the poetry of Bulleh Shah:

“You who are busy fighting Satan,  
have you ever fought your own ill intentions?”

A compilation of Abida Parveen's Anti-Clerical Sufi songs plays in the background.

### **Shemeem Abbas**

And so we have the rise of a female singer like Abida who was singing, you know very, very forceful Sufi poetry. But ironically, this poetry and her songs were actually attacking the collusion between the state and the clerics and pointing out the hypocrisy of men who think music and poetry should be forbidden, yet they are corrupt and sinful in their own hearts!

And I have witnessed several of her concerts at that time.

One that I remember particularly was at the Institute of Folk Heritage in Islamabad, and I mean there were so many people there that she herself could not get into the auditorium. The road was blocked to the Institute and the concert was delayed by about two hours.

Footage of Abida Parveen removing her *chador* (body veil) and placing it on the floor in front of her.

### **Shemeem Abbas**

She arrived and that auditorium was jam- packed. It was an open-air performance. She just came, she sat, she was very calm, she took off her shawl and she put it right in front of her, as a statement of opposition to the State. And she was singing these

politically embedded songs from Sufi poetry that all these state officials were laughing at and they were enjoying it and everything and this was at the peak of Zia ul Haq's regime in 1985!

Archival footage of a government spokesman breaking into a television program to make an announcement:

### **Government Spokesperson**

General Zia-Ul-Haq killed in plane crash.

Fade to Black.

Motion graphic:

1988–1990; 1993–1996

ERA OF BENAZIR BHUTTO'S GOVERNMENTS

Archival footage of Benazir Bhutto at various official events, flanked by military personnel.

We hear some snippets of Benazir Bhutto's speeches addressing women of Pakistan.

### **Tahira Syed**

I think the country heaved a sigh of relief when Zia went and Benazir, daughter of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, was elected. And for sure the women of the country, the women who were aware of the change and who had expectations, were now completely charged up that things were going to improve and women were going to be emancipated and so much difference was going to be made...but sadly the only difference that was made was that there were women in police stations and apart from that there was no change. As the days went on, it became more and more obvious that nothing was going to change if there was a woman at the head of affairs or a man.

Unfortunately, fundamentalist laws were here to stay. Censorship of the arts continued.

We are at a large concert. A female pop singer, Hadiqa Kiyani, electrifies the crowd. Hair falls across her face. She is sensuous. Fans go crazy, screaming, "we love you!"

Super in name:

Hadiqa Kiyani Pop Singer

1993–Present

Subtitle of Song:

"Sweetheart"

### **Fawzia Afzal-Khan**

One of the most notorious cases that occurred during Benazir's time in office, was of contemporary pop singer Hadiqa Kiyani, who, in the heat of the moment, said 'I Love You' back to the crowd of her fans.

### **Hadiqa Kiyani**

In my case, I was banned because I said, 'I love you all'. You know I just said that to



all my fans. So that was a little hard time for me because I was banned for two years.<sup>20</sup>

Super Lower Third:

Shemeem Abbas  
Professor at Pace University, NY  
Author of *The Female Voice in Sufi Ritual*

### **Shemeem Abbas**

In 1998 I was the department chair of English Language and Applied Linguistics at the Open University in Islamabad. My work on Sufism outraged the Islamic clerics at the university and they brought blasphemy charges against me. The charges were dropped eventually, but the threats continued. In 2000, I decided I had no choice but to leave the country.

Footage of mobs burning cinemas down. Rioting in concerts.

### **Bearded man in street**

When I was young, I used to hear Lata Mangeshkar, Farida Khanum and Iqbal Bano but not now (he laughs)... Alhamdulillah (thanks be to God), I have no such desire. Islam doesn't permit singing and music. Music is the work of the devil.<sup>21</sup>

Super Lower Third:

Tariq Ali, Historian, Playwright, Novelist

### **Tariq Ali**

The blasphemy laws first installed by Zia ul Haq during the 1980s are still in place today and conviction still carries the death sentence. None of the leaders who have followed him in office have been able to get rid of these laws or lessen the fires of extremism burning in the country.

Zeb and Haniya singing popular Pashto-language song by acclaimed Female Pop and Folk Duo, Zeb and Haniya, telecast on Coke Studio in their first season in 2008, is heard: "Bibi Sanam Janam"

Montage of clips from Coke Studio—a very popular Music Show on Satellite TV to emerge in 2008, featuring various female artists.

Visuals of modern western instruments like drums and guitars, old eastern instruments like sitars and *tablas* (drums) and harmoniums (accordion-like instruments), all set up on a stage performance.

### **Tariq Ali**

Nevertheless, in 2008, Coke Studio Pakistan, a subsidiary of Coca-Cola Inc., was allowed by the government to start a music TV channel, bringing the rich musical heritage of the country, presented in a modern twist, to the public—a bold move countering the negative image of Pakistan both in the country and abroad.

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<sup>20</sup> See Sample: <https://vimeo.com/176243026/f0d21e2cc5>

<sup>21</sup> See Sample: <https://vimeo.com/176243026/f0d21e2cc5>

Women Singers of Coke Studio Performing with western instruments like guitars, drum sets etc. They perform standing up, swaying to the beat, in western style, not seated as in the traditional style.

Other popular Coke Studio songs that fuse Pakistani traditional folk, Sufi, and classical genres with jazz and blues influences, are heard performed by various female artists, including Meesha Shafi, Zoe Viccaji, Sanam Marvi and Tina Sani.

### **Shemeem Abbas**

And you know, we have a paradox, a real paradox now, of the corporate culture and multi-nationals, like Coke Studio, arriving on the scene and opening up a space for music to thrive in this new era of repression and extremism. Live concerts are being banned or bombed, but Coke Studio actually allows a space for singers especially to get their music out there to their fans.

Fawzia walks up the street outside Coke Studio in Karachi.

### **Fawzia Afzal-Khan (V.O.)**

Because Coke Studio is considered a “safe” and “westernized” space—young women from the so-called respectable middle classes are now pursuing their dreams to become singers. The government gets a steady revenue from these multinational companies, so the question of banning these lucrative shows watched by millions of fans doesn’t arise.

Clips of young Pakistani classical and Sufi music star Sara Raza, winning top prize on Indian TV music show, *Sur- Kushetra* (“Where Music Wins”) in 2012.

Fawzia is back on the street in Lahore where we first met her. She addresses the camera.

### **Fawzia Afzal-Khan**

We are now 69 years from Partition, and there are many positive signs that music is helping to bridge cultures, heal old wounds. One is that Indian, Bangladeshi and Pakistani musicians - for so long separated - are coming together. Sara Raza, a young Pakistani singer was one of the finalists on the Indian TV talent show *Sur-Kushetra* (“Where Music Wins”)—a first since 1947. One of the judges was Runa Laila from Bangladesh—who had once been a famous singer of Pakistan to rival Noor Jahan.

Runa Laila Singing

Super text:

Bangladeshi Singer Runa Laila sings lyrics of Pakistani Sufi poet/saint Shahbaz Qalandar:

“O let us celebrate our saint Qalandar, by singing his praises in a trance, Dama Dhum....”

Sara Raza Singing.

Abida Parveen performing same song, in New York, seated in front of a huge crowd in New York City’s Union Square In July, 2013.

Abida sings, “O Lal Meri Dama Dhum Mastt Qalandar”<sup>22</sup>

Aerial, then close-up shots of women singing at home and at weddings, in fields, kitchens, drawing-rooms in different cities and villages across Pakistan....

### **Shemeem Abbas**

But we’re not talking only about the stars here, we’re talking about women who’re performing in domestic households and this is where my work carried me also...women who come and perform at the birth or at a wedding and it’s the same songs that are being sung over and over again, they are the same songs ... *’laal meri’* or singing the *Sehra* (wedding songs) or singing you know whatever songs there are of joy you know the songs that are derived from the folk culture so I would say , I mean, these are not stars but they are still performing their role as performers and as entertainers and this culture of resilience and resistance to all types of control and oppression through music has always been very strong in Pakistan, and remains so to this day. And women have played such an important role in keeping this culture of democratic resistance alive.

Super Lower Third:

Salima Hashmi  
Visual Artist, Women’s Rights Activist  
Daughter of Poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz

### **Salima Hashmi**

You know I always say that the people don’t go anywhere...you know in spite of what some may say, they stay. And with them everything else stays. And I think there’s enormous resilience...an over-used word but there’s enormous resilience in our people. If there is one great asset in Pakistan, it’s the people, and I see it demonstrated over and over again even when they are cowering, even when there is worst of outrage, even when leaders let them down...whatever happens somehow there will be a moment in which one human being will prove that we’re ok.<sup>23</sup>

Abida Parveen singing Sufi song: “*Lal Meri..Dama Dhum*” in Coke Studio....

Cut to her singing the same song at Qalandar’s shrine in Sindh.

Cut to a multicultural crowd of listeners in NYC’s Union Square.

Abida Parveen singing, “*Lal Meri Dama Dhum...*”

Nescafe Basement’s (a recent multinational-sponsored music channel in Islamabad)-new Pakistani All-Female In-House Band, singing cover of John Newman’s “*Love Me Again.*”

Fawzia singing a Sufi song by Bulleh Shah, “*Ik Toona*” (“Spell”) with her jazz band, *The Neither East Nor West Ensemble*, in NYC, 2016.

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<sup>22</sup> See Long Sample Reel **segment 4**:  
<https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B2VUx50RrMsZTE5LMG13V0paZXM>

<sup>23</sup> See Long Sample Reel **segment 4**:  
<https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B2VUx50RrMsZTE5LMG13V0paZXM>

### Fawzia Afzal-Khan

In September, 1979, just a year after Zia-ul-Haq had taken over Pakistan through a military coup and executed Z.A Bhutto, I got my scholarship to come to the States to study for my PhD. The political and social atmosphere at home had become unbearable—all dramatic and musical arts activities in our colleges and universities were banned, repression was at an all-time high, student activists were being jailed.

We see photos of Fawzia in Boston and then New York.

I got to Boston, then later to New York after I finished my degree in 1986, and became a professor. Happily, I also found a way back to my first love, music. I discovered jazz! It was incredibly similar in structure and form to the classical *raga* music I had trained in through my teenage years, so I started performing with jazz musicians.

We see Fawzia performing in the USA and then also in Lahore.

I now combine Sufi lyrics with Pakistani classical and American jazz sounds to create a fusion that also brings sacred music of different faith traditions into a shared space. I often perform in my birth country too when I return for visits. And my mother attends my concerts in Lahore with pride!

So music really is a universal language through which we can connect to others and to our own deepest, spiritual, selves.

Fawzia is back on the Lahore street where we first met her.

### Fawzia Afzal-Khan

In my case, the story has had a happy ending, but with extremism on the rise, yes, some women singers from Northern areas of Pakistan have been killed in recent years. The recent murder of Qandeel Baluch has disturbed us all. Qandeel was this bold Pakistani woman who became a huge sensation on social media because of her provocative personality and performing style.<sup>24</sup> And recently, even a male singer of Sufi *Qawwalis*—was gunned down by the Taliban in Karachi. So at times like these the situation feels hopeless and depressing.

We see a montage of the various singers we have met.

### Fawzia Afzal-Khan (V.O.)

But you know, what gives me hope is the immense courage of these women singers of Pakistan who have shown throughout its history up till our present dangerous times—that you cannot kill music, you cannot kill life itself!

Archival footage of a Noor Jahan concert. She sings. She hits a high note, and the audience goes wild.

### Fawzia Afzal-Khan

You don't need to understand the words...music connects us at the level of the

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<sup>24</sup> See Sample: <https://vimeo.com/176243026/f0d21e2cc5>

soul...and we all hear its message.<sup>25</sup>

Noor Jahan concert is juxtaposed with footage of Wynton Marsalis, as he is about to play one of Noor Jahan's hit melodies with Pakistani jazz band, The Sachal Ensemble at NYC's Lincoln Center in 2014.

**Wynton Marsalis**

And the title of this song is "She ditched me." (He laughs.) Sometimes it's like that.<sup>26</sup>

His orchestra plays Noor Jahan's song. Everyone is rapt.

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<sup>25</sup> See End of Sample:

<https://vimeo.com/176243026/f0d21e2cc5>

<sup>26</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D3\\_EmGnlfQc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D3_EmGnlfQc)