

Entangled Drum Histories: Friction, Embodiment, and the Making of Religious Sound in North India

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Received 2025-09-23/Revised 2026-05-05 /Accepted 2026-05-06.

ABSTRACT—This paper examines the historical and performative entanglements between *tablā*, the dominant percussion instrument of North India, and *jorī*, a paired drum preserved within the *Nāmdhārī* Sikh community of Punjab. While previous studies have treated these instruments in terms of their historical origins or musical functions, this study argues that their relationship is best understood through forms of frictional entanglement, in which bodily technique, material conditions, aesthetic orientations, and religious practice do not align but actively interfere with one another.

Drawing on long-term engagement as a performer, ethnographic fieldwork among *Nāmdhārī* musicians, and historical analysis, the paper demonstrates that the transition between *tablā* and *jorī* is not seamless but structured by multiple forms of resistance. Techniques cultivated in one tradition do not transfer smoothly to the other, revealing the limits of embodied musical knowledge. More broadly, the differences between these instruments produce distinct sonic and temporal orientations that shape divergent modes of musical and religious experience.

By foregrounding these layered forms of friction, the article reconceptualizes entanglement, not as harmonious interconnectedness but as a dynamic process of constraint, interference, and transformation. Rather than treating percussion instruments as passive tools, this

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paper argues that they actively shape religious subjectivity and sonic worlds in North India.

Keywords: *Tablā*, *Jorī*, *Nāmdhārī* Sikhs, Hybrid Musical Cultures, North Indian Percussion, Embodied Practice

Introduction

In contemporary Sikh devotional practice, the choice between *tablā* and *jorī* is never a neutral musical decision. While *tablā* has become the standardized accompaniment in mainstream gurdwara kīrtan, *jorī* continues to index claims to authenticity, continuity, and embodied discipline within the Nāmdhārī Sikh community. The divergence between these instruments cannot be reduced to organological or technical differences alone; rather, it constitutes distinct modes through which religious subjectivity is enacted, negotiated, and sustained in performance.

This article pursues two interrelated objectives. First, it traces the historical and performative relations between *tablā* and *jorī*, situating their divergence within the nineteenth- and twentieth-century reconfiguration of Sikh devotional space, under colonial modernity and institutional reform. Second, it develops a theoretical framework to account for how these relations are not merely historical but actively reproduced through embodied musical practice and material engagement. To address these objectives, the study advances a framework based on three modes of entanglement: historical, organological, and embodied.

In recent years, the concept of “entanglement” has gained traction in ethnomusicology to capture the dynamic relationships through which multiple elements—such as the materiality of instruments, the performer’s body, sonic resonance, historical memory, and religious ethos—become inseparably intertwined, not by simply symbiotically coexisting, but by shaping, constraining and transforming one another in musical practice. For example, in the edited volume *Intimate Entanglements in the Ethnography of Performance: Race, Gender, Vulnerability* (Lawrence and Kisliuk 2023), Carol A. Muller explores the formation of intimacy and subjectivity in ethnomusicological fieldwork through the notion of “intimate entanglements,” framing deep listening as a form

of erotics—a sensual and transformative engagement that entangles sound, body, and researcher.

The notion of “entangled drum histories” employed in this paper similarly refers to the process by which *tablā* and *jorī* are not merely coexisting or influencing each other, but are deeply entangled within historical contexts, material forms, bodily techniques, and religious practices, thereby mutually shaping one another.

By foregrounding three modes, the article argues that the *tablā*–*jorī* distinction is not a simple binary of “classical versus devotional” or “mainstream versus marginalized” but a dynamic site where religious identity, material agency, and historical memory are continuously constituted and transformed. In doing so, the study repositions North Indian percussion traditions as polyphonic histories shaped by religious sensibilities and embodied epistemologies.

Analytical Framework and Scope

Building on this conceptualization, the study treats entanglement not as a descriptive metaphor but as an analytical framework through which the relations between *tablā* and *jorī* can systematically be examined. Each of the three modes of entanglement operates as a distinct yet interconnected lens, enabling a multi-layered analysis of musical practice across historical, material, bodily, and historiographical dimensions.

Historical entanglement functions as a vertical axis of analysis, tracing how colonial modernity, reform movements, and institutional standardization reorganized Sikh devotional practice. Rather than presenting a linear narrative of instrumental evolution, this perspective highlights the contingent and uneven processes through which *tablā* became dominant in mainstream *kīrtan* while *jorī* was retained within specific communities.

Organological and embodied entanglements together constitute a horizontal axis that examines how material transformations reconfigure musical practice. Changes in instrument morphology, tuning systems,

and preparation techniques are approached as processes that reshape not only sonic output but also bodily technique, gesture, temporality, and forms of discipline. In this sense, instruments are understood as structuring conditions of action that actively delimit and generate possibilities of performance.

By combining these analytical elements, this study seeks to illuminate the polyphonic historiography of North Indian percussion music, revealing the complex, overlapping histories that have shaped the contemporary soundscape of Sikh *kīrtan* and beyond.

Historical Entanglement

Singh Sabha Reformation and Gurmat Sangit Movement

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries marked a decisive historical reconfiguration of Sikh devotional practice, particularly in the performance of *kīrtan*. As Bob van der Linden has shown, Singh Sabha Reformation played a central role in this process. Faced with colonial modernity and the need to articulate a distinct Sikh identity vis-à-vis assertive Hindu, Muslim, and Christian communities, Singh Sabha reformers pursued a project of rationalization and canonization. They standardized the *Guru Granth Sahib*, institutionalized *kīrtan* training through SGPC²-affiliated colleges and missionary schools, marginalized the long-standing participation of Muslim *rabābī* musicians, and promoted harmonium as the standard accompanying instrument. These changes produced what Van der Linden terms a Singh Sabha “moral language” that aligned with the British civilizing mission while distancing Sikh practice from shared Punjabi popular culture³.

This reformist impulse extended into more specified musical

2 The Siromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) began training ragis at the Shahid Sikh Missionary College in Amritsar from 1927 onwards. By the end of the twentieth century, six similar Sikh music educational institutions existed in northern India. [Van der Linden 2025: 36]

3 Linden’s notion of “moral languages” denotes the modern moral vocabulary and ethical framework produced by Singh Sabha reformation. This concept offers an analytical lens that transcends the reductive nineteenth-century opposition between “religion” and “secularity.”

reformation such as the Gurmat Sangīt movement, which emerged in the early twentieth century as a direct continuation of Singh Sabha ideology. Initially focused on restoring a “pure” form of kīrtan based strictly on the rāgas of the Guru Granth Sahib, the movement gradually developed a stronger revivalist character. While the harmonium–tablā combination became the mainstream standard, several scholars and practitioners began to argue for the revival of older, more traditional instruments such as taus (bowed string instrument) and jorī. Prominent among them was Dr. Gurnam Singh (1959-), who advocated the reintroduction of these instruments as part of an authentic Gurmat performance practice. Later figures such as Bhai Baldeep Singh (1969-) further advanced this revivalist strand.

However, as Van der Linden rightly points out, these revivalist efforts often amount to an act of “reverse Orientalism” — a romanticized reconstruction of a lost past that reflects modern concerns more than historical continuity.

Divergent Instrumental Genealogies

While the emergence and development of tablā have been extensively discussed in the context of North Indian classical music, by the nineteenth century it had become closely associated with processes of urbanization, pedagogical systematization, and aesthetic refinement within Hindustani music [Kippen 2010, 470–476]. Its consolidation in major centres such as Delhi, Lucknow, Bombay and Banaras was accompanied by the formalization of repertoire, the codification of technique, and the gradual emergence of clearly defined gharānā styles. In this sense, tablā came to embody a particular configuration of musical knowledge—one oriented toward standardization, transmissibility, and alignment with courtly and later institutional frameworks.

By contrast, jorī developed along a markedly different trajectory. While drawing on the broader pakḥāwaj lineage, it remained embedded in regional and devotional contexts in Punjab, where it was shaped by local patronage networks and performative practices.

One of the earliest books on Hindustani music, written by A. H. Fox Strangways, includes a photograph of this instrument [Fox

Strangways 1914: Plate12].



Figure 1 One of the earliest published photographs of jorī (early twentieth century). From Fox Strangways (1914).

The man identified as Bhai Santu in Amritsar is clearly playing jorī in these images. However, the author mistakenly identified the instrument as tablā. This misunderstanding suggests that the distinction between the two instruments was still quite vague at the time.

Rather than undergoing the same degree of codification and institutionalization seen in tablā tradition, jorī continued to be transmitted primarily through oral, apprenticeship-based modes of learning. These were closely tied to specific lineages such as Baksh family and to the liturgical settings of Sikh devotional music. This relative emphasis on embodied transmission enabled jorī to sustain a distinct relationship between instrument, performer, and community [Jasdeep Singh 2020: 3–4, 6].

In the early eighteenth-century Lala Bhawani Das (c.1700–1768) taught the hybrid *dukkar baaj* style—the direct precursor of *jorī*—to Miyan Qadar Baksh 1st (c.1700) in Lahore (Jasdeep Singh 2020: 4). His descendants, notably Miyan Faqīr Baksh (1850–1906) and Miyan Qadar Baksh 2nd (1902–1960), became the chief exponents and transmitters of the instrument (Jasdeep Singh 2020:6). Crucially, members of the Baksh Lineage trained numerous *rabābī* performers who carried the tradition into Sikh devotional contexts. The pivotal link was Bhai Nasira (1902–1964), who first learned *jorī* from his uncle Bhai Chirag and later received advanced training directly from Miyan Qadar Baksh 2nd (Jasdeep Singh 2020:13). This lineage found its institutional channel into the *Nāmdhārī* community through a deliberate act of patronage: Satguru Pratap Singh (1882–1959), the fourteenth spiritual leader of the *Nāmdhārī* Sikhs, established the *Namdhari Sangeet Vidyalaya* at Bhaini Sahib in 1928. In a significant departure from earlier practice, in which *rabābī* musicians had been engaged solely as performers, Satguru Pratap Singh invited Bhai Nasira and Bhai Taba—two of Amritsar’s most celebrated *rabābī* musicians—to serve as resident teachers of both vocal and instrumental music. This institutional arrangement transformed *jorī* from an externally patronised art into an internally cultivated discipline within the *Nāmdhārī* tradition.

In the *Nāmdhārī* Sikh community, *jorī* tradition found a particularly congenial home. Rather than aligning with the Singh Sabha movement’s emphasis on standardization, the *Nāmdhārī* tradition continued to recognise living human Gurus and preserved a more flexible, embodied approach to devotional music. It functioned not merely as an accompanying instrument but as a medium of devotional expression and spiritual discipline closely tied to the living Guru. Satguru Jagjit Singh (1920–2012) actively nurtured this tradition throughout his life.



Figure 2 Satguru Jagjit Singh Ji playing the jori. From Jayagovind (2017).

He maintained daily Asa di Vaar kīrtan combined with nām simran as a fixed part of the routine, insisted on the exclusive use of tanti saaj (stringed instruments), demanded correct pronunciation of Gurbānī, and ensured that love, devotion, and bairāg (renunciation) remained visible in every performance. He also composed Gurbani bandishes in classical style and patronised the training of young musicians, thereby preserving jori's distinctive place within Nāmdhārī kīrtan even as broader classical music moved toward greater standardisation [Sharada Jayagovind 2017: 5–7; Jasdeep Singh 2020: 17].

Organological Entanglement

Structural and Material Entanglement between *Tablā* and *Jorī*

The structural difference between *tablā* and *jorī* reflects a significant divergence in their acoustic intentions and performance techniques. While *tablā* set comprises a smaller, higher-pitched *dāyān* (right drum, typically 5½ to 6 inches in head diameter) and a larger *bāyān* (bass/left drum) designed for sharp articulation, tonal modulation, and rapid interplay, *jorī* consists of a significantly larger pair of drums with a deeper, rounder sound. *Dāyān* of *jorī* is usually 7 inches or more in head diameter. *Dhāmā* (bass/left drum) of *jorī* has a head diameter like that of *tablā* *bāyān*, but its body is markedly straighter and more cylindrical, in contrast to the distinctly bulbous, rounded body of the *tablā* *bāyān*.

This morphological difference produces a striking contrast in the onset and sustain of the sound. When struck with controlled wrist pressure from the left hand, *tablā* *bāyān* exhibits a clear temporal modulation: the pitch bend, creating a characteristic “talking” or gliding effect. By comparison, the *jorī* *dhāmā* delivers a more immediate and sustained pitch with less modulation, giving the impression of a single, stable tone that lingers.

Thus, while *tablā* offers a clear, articulate tone and rich, evolving bass modulation that adds dynamic colour and interplay, *jorī* produces a deep, resonant sound whose onset remains remarkably stable providing a continuous, unchanging foundation that is especially well suited to the meditative and vocal-centered aesthetics of *kīrtan*.

These acoustic distinctions lie in the preparation and manipulation of the bass drum's tone. Unlike the *tablā*, which employs concentric *syāhī* (black paste on membrane) permanently affixed to the drumhead to produce elegant resonance, *jorī*—like the *pakhāwaj*—does not have a fixed *syāhī* on *dhāmā*. Instead, players use a paste of *ātā* (wheat flour mixed with water), applied during performance to the membrane. The quantity and distribution of *ātā* can be modified in real time, enabling the performer to craft a desired depth and resonance: a generous application results in a deeper bass, while its removal yields a lighter tone. This allows *jorī* players to create dynamic soundscapes that are both

physically engaged and sonically expressive.

This on-the-spot adjustability of timbre and resonance is a distinctive feature of *jorī*. Acoustically and timbrally, *jorī* offers a far more fluid and malleable sonic character. This flexibility also produces significant differences in the embodied dimension of performance, shaping distinct bodily techniques, gestures, and tactile relationships between the player and the instrument.



Figure 3 ātā (tuning paste for adjusting bass resonance)



Figure 4 Application of ātā to the dhāmā for adjusting bass resonance.



Figure 5 Increasing the amount of ātā enhances the bass resonance.



Figure 6 A jori drum set fully prepared for performance.

This material asymmetry is not a neutral technical difference, but a generative site of entanglement. The fixed *syāhī* of the *tablā* can be seen as a crystallization of the very standardization and precision that *jorī* deliberately resists through its on-the-spot *ātā* practice. Conversely, the expressive potential of *jorī*'s adjustable timbre gains its full salience precisely against the backdrop of the *tablā*'s more fixed and elegant resonance. In this way, the organological identity of each instrument is not self-contained; Rather than existing as isolated forms, the two instruments are better understood as mutually informing traditions within a shared but differentiated field of practice.

Embodied Entanglement

Fundamental Features of Strokes

In terms of playing technique, *tablā* and *jorī* also differ markedly. The most fundamental and apparent distinction lies in their primary strokes. For *tablā*, the characteristic *nā* (or *tā*) stroke is produced by placing the finger on *syāhī* to dampen the fundamental frequency while striking the outermost edge of the drumhead—known as the *kinār* or *chānti*—with the index finger⁴. In contrast, the representative stroke on *jorī* is known as *thāp*. This is executed by aligning the fingers and striking the drumhead slightly in front of *syāhī* using a chopping motion with the side of the hand. Because *jorī* uses the entire side of the palm, the resulting sound is significantly larger, more expansive, and fuller-bodied than *tablā*'s *nā*⁵.

Importantly, the execution of *thāp* is much more subtle than *nā* stroke on *tablā*. Since the player does not place their fingers on the drumhead in advance, they must use the wrist to bring the side of the hand into contact with the *syāhī* at a precise angle. By snapping the hand in this way and carefully damping the unwanted fundamental tone, the performer produces a sharply articulated yet rounded, full-bodied sound characteristic of the *jorī*. However, mastering this technique is

⁴ For a detailed analysis of *tablā* acoustics, see Roda (2013: 262–266).

⁵ Figure 1 is described by the author as illustrating the *nā* (or *tā*) stroke of *tablā*; however, judging from the hand position, it clearly corresponds to the *thāp* stroke of *jorī*.

extremely difficult, and incorporating the thāp stroke fluidly within fast passages is an even greater challenge.

The playing technique of bass drum also indicates a fundamental divergence. As mentioned earlier, tablā players frequently press and slide the wrist along the rim of bāyān to achieve gliding pitch modulations, which are essential in generating groove and melodic fluidity. In contrast, jorī employs a binary approach of open and closed strokes on dhamā, relying more on rhythmic phrasing than on melodic inflection. This results in a style that is less about pitch modulation and more about alternating between sustained bass tones and muted articulations. Whereas tablā foregrounds tonal character, jorī emphasizes metrical character.

In both cases, the instrument is not a passive tool, but an active participant that co-determines the performer's physicality, the perceived temporality, the dynamic intensity, and the very way sonic space is produced and experienced in performance.

Movement of the playing style

The gestures and physicality of playing tablā and jorī differ in ways that reflect broader cultural and performative logics. Tablā players typically adopt an upright posture, with fingers curled and strikes executed through precise, rapid fingertip movements. By contrast, jorī is traditionally played with a flatter hand position, broader arm arcs, and higher elbow lift, resulting in more sweeping and flowing gestures. These distinctions are not merely ergonomic; they carry symbolic weight. Tablā's controlled posture aligns with courtly precision and dance accompaniment, whereas jorī's open, expansive bodily engagement often conveys a meditative or communal ethos, especially in gurdwara kīrtan settings. The wider movements also shape phrasing, producing a more fluid, less staccato rhythmic delivery.



*Figure 7 Playing technique of the jori using the full palm.
Photo courtesy of Gian.*



*Figure 8 Gian Singh performing on the pakhāwaj.
Photo courtesy of Gian.*

Rather than focusing on abstract theories of bodily knowledge transmission, the following anecdote shared by Gian Singh offers a vivid illustration. According to him, the term *pakhāwaj* does not merely denote the instrument's structure but refers to a distinctive way of playing. In Punjabi usage, *jorī* is sometimes called *jorī pakhāwaj* because, as he described, “when someone plays the *jorī*, their elbows rise higher than in *tablā* playing, and it looks as if a bird is spreading its wings.” This folk etymology, which prioritizes the visual impression of bodily movement over conventional derivations (such as *pakkā awāj* meaning “refined sound”), underscores how performance practice itself becomes a source of naming and meaning. Such bodily distinctions not only shape sonic output but also influence how performers and listeners inhabit the musical and spiritual space.

Comparison of Repertoires, Lineages, and Embodied Practices

The vocabulary of *tablā* and *jorī* performance is structured around

bol—onomatopoeic syllables that encode specific strokes and timbres. In solo performance, these bols are organized into certain structures. The following comparison is based on Gian Singh's response regarding what constitutes a complete solo repertoire for *tablā* and *jorī*. It should be noted that this list represents an idealized framework rather than a fixed performance sequence. In actual recitals, a selection of these elements is typically emphasized, depending on the context and the musician's interpretive choices⁶.

Comparing the solo structures of Punjab *gharāna* *tablā* and *jorī*, several key differences and shared features emerge. Both traditions begin with foundational elements such as *uthān*⁷ and *tihāi*⁸. However, *jorī* repertoire places a distinct emphasis on phrases categorized as *thā de bol*, *ek arse de bol*, and *do arse de bol*. These bols, which are organized around single-beat (*ek arse*) or two-beat (*do arse*) units, form a rhythmic vocabulary that is particularly characteristic of *jorī* tradition within Sikh devotional performance. Whereas *tablā* solos in Punjab *gharānā* are rooted in well-established Hindustani idioms such as *peshkāṛ*, *kāyda*, *gat-kāyda*, and *rela*, *jorī* vocabulary also includes unique improvisatory categories such as *pakkī dugun de bol*, and *shand ang*. The latter refers to a distinctive aesthetic and expressive sensibility unique to the *jorī* tradition.

Furthermore, *jorī* repertoire incorporates distinctly religious and devotional elements that are rarely found in classical *tablā* solos. These include structurally rich motifs such as *singhā avlokan* and *madhubār shand*, as well as compositions inspired by verses from the *Guru Granth Sahib* and the *Dasam Granth*. Such elements reflect the deep integration of Sikh devotional literature and aesthetics into *jorī* performance practice. The inclusion of *stutī* (devotional praise) as an optional opening or interlude further demonstrates *jorī*'s embeddedness within Sikh

6 The following analysis is primarily based on knowledge transmitted through the author's teacher, Gian Singh. While it reflects a particular lineage-specific perspective, a broader comparative examination of this repertoire remains an important area for future research.

7 The *uthān* is often described as a repertoire element characteristic of the Varanasi *gharānā* in *tablā* performance. In this sense, it is noteworthy that Gian Singh's repertoire begins with *uthān*. Some studies have suggested a close historical relationship between the Punjab and Varanasi *gharānās* (see Kippen 2010: 468).

8 The *tihāi* is a cadential figure widely found in both *tablā* and *jorī* repertoires, consisting of the repetition of a phrase three times to articulate structural closure.

liturgical performance. In this way, *jorī* solo structure does not merely replicate Hindustani classical forms but actively entextualizes Sikh devotional themes, transforming abstract rhythmic patterns into vehicles for religious expression and communal memory.

Despite these divergences, both instruments share common formal elements such as *tihāi*, *chakradār*, and *layakāri*-based variations. However, the terminology and expressive logic often differ, suggesting distinct orientations in performance: *tablā* toward more abstract rhythmic structuring, and *jorī* toward more layered and contextually embedded forms of rhythmic expression.

	<i>Tablā</i> solo repertoire	<i>Jorī</i> solo repertoire
1	<i>uthān, mukhrā, mohrā, tihāi</i>	<i>uthān, paran, laykāri of thekā, moharā</i>
2	<i>peshkār</i>	<i>thā de bol, ek arse de bol, do arse de bol</i>
3	<i>kāyda in barābar ki laya & other laya (laykāri)</i>	<i>sheran tihāi and paran rachnā</i>
4	<i>gat kāyda</i>	<i>dugun de bol, tihāi and paran rachnā</i>
5	<i>chala, chalan, rau rela (angustāna), bhānt, farshband</i>	<i>pakkī dugun de bol</i>
6	<i>anāgat & aūt concept</i>	<i>barat, prastār, vistār, chalan, chalā, shand rela with layakāri</i>
7	<i>gopuchā yāti, pipplika yāti, mrdanga yāti</i>	<i>layakāri de bol – ār di laya, ti gun di laya, chou gun di laya, koad di laya, beād di laya</i>
8	<i>bandish (tukra, gat, paran, farmaisi, kamali nauhakā, chakardār, chakardār gat, dopali, tripali, choupali, toda, parmelu, baraiyān ke bol)</i>	<i>shand ang tihāiyān and rachnā improvisation</i>
9	<i>laggī, laran and larī</i>	<i>chowkrī, shikdī</i>
10	<i>swar jawāb, salami paran classical kathak</i>	<i>rela tipallī, choupallī, do mohim gat</i>
11	<i>jugalbandi - padant is mandatory for some of the bandish & other bols</i>	<i>ek ashri shand, singha avlokan shand, chachar shand, madhubar shand</i>
12		<i>nauhakā, kamali chakardār, farmaishi chakardār</i>
13		<i>stuti (beginning or middle)</i>

Table 1 Comparative Table of Solo Repertoires for tablā and jorī

Such phrases should not be understood as pre-existing formal units; rather, they emerge through processes of entanglement. Within the broader orientation of Hindustani music—often associated with courtly refinement and the technical elaboration of phrases—*jorī* does not simply reproduce *tablā*-based idioms. Instead, its repertoire takes shape through the interaction of the instrument's expansive and resonant

sonic character, the ethos of devotional community, and the embodied practices of individual performers. It is through this interplay that such phrases are not merely transmitted but actively constituted as repertoire.

These processes of entanglement become particularly evident at the level of embodied practice. Having trained extensively in *tablā* before taking up *jorī*, the author encountered a form of somatic interference in which previously acquired techniques actively disrupted the execution of *jorī* strokes. Fine-grained fingertip precision cultivated in *tablā* practice resisted broader and more forceful motions required for *jorī*, producing unintended dampening and loss of resonance.

Such moments of interference reveal that the relationship between *tablā* and *jorī* is not one of smooth continuity, but of friction. It is precisely this proximity-in-difference that constitutes their entanglement—not as harmonious integration, but as productive tension in which bodily knowledge is simultaneously activated and destabilized.

Conclusion

The historiography of *tablā* has long oscillated between myth and method. Popular narratives trace its origin to Amir Khusrau Dehlavi or to the Mughal-era bifurcation of the *pakhāwaj*⁹, yet these genealogies remain largely speculative and symbolically overdetermined. What is consistently omitted are the complex, intersecting circuits of influence that shaped the instrument — from *naqqārā* traditions in Islamic ceremonial contexts to older regional drum practices that predate its classical canonization¹⁰. Colonial ethnomusicological frameworks further reinforced *tablā*'s elevation to “classical” status while marginalizing other percussive voices.

9 A popular folk narrative recounts that *tablā* originated when a defeated *pakhāwaj* player, enraged after losing in a *dangal* (a musical contest or duel), broke instrument in frustration, thereby producing two separate drums. While clearly apocryphal, such accounts illustrate broader tendency to explain origin of *tablā* through dramatic, personalized events rather than through historically verifiable processes.

10 For a discussion of the musical relationship between *naqqārā* and *tablā*, see Stewart (1974). Connections between regional ritual drums and classical traditions are briefly addressed in Wolf (2017).

In this regard, *jorī* serves as a critical counterpoint. Rather than a mere historical remnant, it reveals an active process of recontextualization: rhythmic knowledge that was once embedded in *pakhāwaj* traditions was detached and negotiated in Sikh religious reform movements and finally re-embedded into *Nāmdhārī* devotional practice. This entanglement allows *jorī* to carry distinctly Sikh religious motifs and embodied sensibilities while remaining open to new performative and social contexts.

A reimagined history of North Indian drumming must therefore be polyphonic — embracing plurality, tension, and contradiction rather than privileging a singular, centralized *tablā*-centric narrative. Such a polyphonic approach attends to the many percussive voices that have contributed to a vibrant, contested field of rhythmic practice, challenging the classical/folk, sacred/secular, and urban/rural binaries.

In the end, the title *Entangled Drum Histories* is more than a convenient label. It points toward a methodological and ontological orientation in which percussion instruments, performing bodies, sonic textures, collective memories, and religious subjectivities are understood as deeply intertwined. Musical practice, in this view, is not a passive reflection of pre-existing cultural or religious forms, but an active and constitutive element in the ongoing shaping of religious life in South Asia.

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Appendix A

Pakkī Dugun de Bol (Jorī Solo Repertoire) transcribed by the author.

□

dha--dhi--ma-dhetTa-kttk Ta-dhe Tak-n dhaget Tak-n dhaget
Taknedhe ttkradhe tetkat gadigena

□

Kat tettetTakey tkttkTa- Kay tkttak Take-na dhagetet Take-na dhagetet

Takenadhe tetkradhe tetkat gadhigena

□

dhetitTakenadhet dhettTa- Kay tkttk Tak-n dhagetet Tak-n dhagetete
Takendhe tetkradhet tetkat gadhigena

□

dha dhun-Ta dha dhun-Ta nattTa key tktetak take-na dhagetet take-
na dhagetet
takenadhe tetkradhe tkt gadhigena

□

dhetdhettake-n dhedhet take-n dhetetake-n dhetetake-n dhetdhet
takendhe tkradhe tkt gadhigena

□

dhetadheta kradhetet dhetkradhetet dhet kradhe tete kradhetet dhet-
dhet kradhetet
takendhe tkradhe tkt gadhigena

□ tihāi

dhetadheta kradhetet dhetkradhetet katgadhigena dha- gadhigena dha-
gadhigena dha- □

kradhetet dhetkradhetet katgadhigena dha- gadhigena dha- gadhigena
dha- □

kradhetet dhetkradhetet katgadhigena dha- gadhigena dha- gadhigena
dha-

Performance Video

A performance of the *pakkī dugun de bāol* by the author is available
on Instagram.

Scan the QR code below (*This video is intended as a supplemental aural illustration to the notated transcription.*)



Glossary

Āsā dī Vār kīrtan — A morning hymn from the Guru Granth Sahib, traditionally performed in a specific melodic mode (*rāga Āsā*); a central liturgical practice in Sikh devotional life.

Bairāg — A devotional disposition of renunciation, longing, and detachment; considered an essential emotional quality in Sikh musical performance.

Dukkar bāj — A hybrid drumming style that served as the direct precursor to *jorī*, combining elements of multiple percussive traditions in Punjab.

Gurbāñī bandish — A composed piece or melodic–rhythmic setting based on verses from the Guru Granth Sahib or other Sikh sacred texts, performed in classical style.

Gurmat Sangīt — Literally “music according to Gurmat (Guru’s teaching)”; a term used to denote a normative, reform-oriented approach to Sikh devotional music emphasizing *rāga*-based performance.

Harmonium — A hand-pumped reed organ introduced during the colonial period that became the standard accompanying instru-

ment in mainstream Sikh kīrtan following Singh Sabha reform.

Kīrtan — The devotional practice of singing sacred hymns (*Gurbānī*) from the Guru Granth Sahib; the central musical and spiritual practice in Sikh worship.

Nām simran — The meditative repetition of the divine name; a core spiritual discipline in Sikh practice, often performed in conjunction with kīrtan.

Rabābī — Muslim hereditary musicians who traditionally performed kīrtan in Sikh gurdwaras; gradually marginalized following Singh Sabha reform in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Rāgī — A Sikh musician trained to perform kīrtan using the *rāga* system; the primary role in liturgical Sikh music-making.

Satguru Jagjit Singh (1920–2012) — The sixteenth spiritual leader of the *Nāmdhārī* Sikh community; a key patron of *jorī* and traditional *kīrtan* practice, who actively preserved *tanti saaj* performance and composed *Gurbānī bandishes* in classical style.

Amir Khusrau Dehlavi (c.1253–1325) — A celebrated Sufi poet, musician, and scholar of the Delhi Sultanate period, popularly credited in legend with the invention of *tablā*, though this attribution remains historically unverified.

Singh Sabha — A Sikh reform movement originating in the 1870s that sought to define and standardize Sikh religious identity and practice in response to colonial modernity and competing religious communities.

Taus — A peacock-shaped bowed string instrument associated with Sikh devotional music; revived by figures such as Bhai Baldeep Singh as part of the Gurmat Sangīt movement