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REVIEWER'S REPORT

Manuscript No.: JNHST- 123

Title: Epistemologies of Sacred Sound: Oral Transmission and Performance Practice in T?rtam V???

Recommendation:
Accept after minor revision

Rating	Excel.	Good	Fair	Poor
Originality		✔		
Techn. Quality			✔	
Clarity			✔	
Significance	✔			

Reviewer's ID: **Abdul Haseeb Mir**

Detailed Reviewer's Report

This manuscript provides a qualitative, interpretive case study exploring the oral-aural transmission, performance practice, and musicological dimensions of *Tārtam Vāṇī* (also referred to within the Nijanand Sampradāya as *Kuljam Swaroop* or *Tārtam Sāgar*). The author argues that oral transmission and musical performance are foundational mechanisms—rather than passive or secondary media—for interpreting and sustaining this multilingual sacred text.

The paper synthesizes theoretical perspectives from Hindustani vocal pedagogy (e.g., *guru-śiṣya paramparā*, embodied memory) and sacred sonic theology with close readings of two representative case studies:

- **Case Study 1 ("Gun ketekahūm mere piu jī"):** Analyzes a textual selection from *Prakāś Hindustānī* (Chapter 36), evaluating devotional language (e.g., *atiśayokti* or hyperbole, indirect praise), linguistic syntax (Hindustani, Braj, devotional terms), and reported musical features (Kalyan-associated framework, Keharwātāla, tonic C).
- **Case Study 2 ("Sāth Jī Jāgiye"):** Conducts a detailed performance analysis of a publicly available recording attributed to Shravan Dhital (from *Kīrtan Prakaraṇ*), examining the opening sargam, sarangi/keyboard interludes, Dādrātāla (6-beat cycle), sthāyī-antara structural design, and the progressive theme of spiritual awakening (*jāganī*).

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The paper concludes by examining how digital dissemination affects living traditions and outlines a community-centered framework for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage through intergenerational learning, ethical documentation, and community governance.

Key Strengths

1. **Analytical Transparency and Methodological Honesty:** The author explicitly acknowledges the study's scope and empirical limitations, clearly stating that interpretations rely on provided recordings, metadata, and textual transcriptions rather than primary ethnographic field interviews.
2. **Clear Bridge Between Text and Musicology:** The manuscript connects devotional poetic figures (such as *atiśayokti*) directly to musical performance choices (such as *meend* or pitch glides, refrain returns, and rhythmic pulses).
3. **Refined Structural Breakdown:** The performance timeline (Section 7.7) cleanly maps out timestamps, formal sections (sthāyī, antaras, interludes), and analytical functions for the recording of "Sāth Jī Jāgiye".

Recommendations for Improvement

While the manuscript is conceptually well grounded and clearly written, the author should address the following minor recommendations before final publication:

1. **Remove Table Formatting to Meet Journal Submission Preferences:**

The manuscript currently contains formatted tables in Section 5 (Transmission Settings) and Section 7.7 (Performance Timeline). Convert these tabular structures into clean narrative prose or itemized bullet points to align with text-only publication standards.

2. **Refine Raga Attribution Caveats:**

In Section 7.2 and Section 7.4, the author notes that short swara sequences (e.g., "Nisa Dha" or komal/shuddha Gandhar shifts) are insufficient to definitively classify *Rāga Jog* or *Rāga-Miśra* without wider context. Expand this by 2–3 sentences to explicitly clarify how modal flexibility functions in Hindustani light-classical and devotional (*kīrtan/bhajan*) genres compared to strict classical *rāga-dārdhya* rules.

3. **Deduplicate and Clean Up Reference List:**
    - Remove duplicate bibliographic entries (e.g., line 293 lists a duplicate entry for *Noone, 2020*, and lines 295–303 contain repeated URL links for *Padmavatipuri Dham*).
    - Ensure uniform citation details across all entries.
4. **Standardize Bibliography to APA 7th Edition:**

Audit the entire Reference section to guarantee full compliance with APA 7th Edition rules, standardizing author names, publication dates, journal volume/issue numbers, page ranges, and active DOIs.

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Final Evaluation and Verdict

This manuscript presents a thoughtful, well-analyzed, and valuable contribution to ethnomusicology, South Asian devotional studies, and intangible cultural heritage safeguarding. The framework effectively highlights how oral-aural transmission sustains living sacred traditions.

The manuscript is **accepted with minor revisions**. Converting tables into prose, expanding slightly on light-classical raga flexibility in devotional music, deduplicating references, and standardizing the reference list will render the paper fully ready for publication.