

# Musical Forms of Kashmir: An Overview

Waseem Ahmad Bhat

Ph.D Scholar, Faculty of Music & Fine Arts, University of Delhi, Delhi, India

Email - waseemdu89@gmail.com

**Abstract:** *Music exists in all human societies of the world. It may be in the most primitive stage of development or in an ultra-modern stage, the music has its own essential functions in societies. The universal emergence of music has given development to many types of musical instruments. Kashmir province is renowned worldwide for its rich and distinct cultural heritage. Music forms an important part of Kashmir's cultural heritage. Music is connected with almost all the functions and celebrations of Kashmiri society and culture like birth, marriage, death, harvesting etc. There are two different musical forms prevalent in Kashmir at present namely Sufiana Mausiqi and Traditional Music.*

**Key Words:** *Sufiana Mausiqi, Chakri, Ruff, Ladishah, Bhand Pather.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

Kashmir has been remarkable advancement and liberal patronage of music during the ancient period, which is clearly depicted by the tiles found during the excavations at Harwan. The tiles and some sculptures bear the pictures of dancing and singing persons and also of the ladies playing of the rhythmic instrument. The historical facts bear enough evidence that music and dancing had been popular in Kashmir in very old times (Dhar Sunita). The two important texts that contain a good deal of information on the music in Ancient Kashmir are Nilamatapurana and Rajatarangini. The earliest references to the art of music in Kashmir are found in Nilamatapurana. Nilamatapurana is regarded as the Kashmiri Purana referred to by Kalhan as one of the sources of ancient history of Kashmir. It dates at least to 6th or 7th century A.D. There are a number of verses in Nilamatapurana mentioning the state of music in Ancient Kashmir. Nilamatapurana says that religious music was attached with the temples and it played an important part in the cultural life of Kashmir. As in the rest of India, classical dancing in Kashmir had a religious background. The Nilamatapurana lays down that singing, dance, and instrumental music were to take place in some of the religious festivities. It is said that Hindu music is divine origin. In fact, it is considered as divinity itself. The temple dancers called Nartakis were attached to temples from very early times.

In ancient Kashmir like other arts, music thrived under the patronage of kings. In Kalhana's Raj Tarangini, chronicle of kings of Kashmir is given the first reference is about king Jalanka. He was a great lover of music. During medieval period of Kashmir (1339-1819 A.D.) in Muslim era, Zain-ul-Abidin, Sultan Shah and Hassan Shah were great lovers of music. According to Srivara, author of Zaina-Rag Tarangini, musical festivals used to be held in Kashmir. It is during this period that Raja of Gwalior had sent all standard books on Indian music, which influenced Kashmiri music. Srivara was also a reputed musician and rose to the head of Music Department in King Hassan Shah's reign and provided lot of useful service to Kashmiri music. King Hassan Shah also introduced Rabab, the Persian musical instrument, to Kashmiri music. Even during this Muslim era, there were eminent and talented musicians like Sooni Bhat, Sridhar Bhat, Ajodhya Bhat and Kshakara, who developed Kashmiri music. It is because of their efforts that Kashmiri music shows stray resemblance to the Indian and Persian music (Sharma Manorma).

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

Based on the review of primary as well as secondary historical texts and discussions with leading musicians of Kashmir, the article attempts to explore the history, theory and playing of musical instruments that are used with of Kashmiri music.

Kashmir is the only place where music has two categories i.e., Sufiana (Classical music of Kashmir) and Folk music (Traditional music of Kashmir). With the inception of Islam in Kashmir, the older musical traditions appeared in the new form due to the intercultural synthesis that took place between the indigenous music of Kashmir and the music of Persia, Central Asia and India. During the period of Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin (1420-70 A.D), a new musical genre was born due to the intercultural synthesis of the music of Kashmir, Persia, Central Asia and Turkistan, which is known as Sufiana Mausiqi and is regarded as the classical music of Kashmir. The music of Kashmir at present consists of Sufiana Mausiqi (classical music), Chakri, Ruff, Naindai bathe, Vanvun, Chalant, Ladishah and Bhand Pather.

## 3. SUFIANA MAUSIQI (CLASSICAL MUSIC OF KASHMIR):

The Sufiana Mausiqi of Kashmir is known as classical music of Kashmir. It has its deep roots in the Hindustani classical music tradition but influenced by Iranian and central Asian music. Some people wrongly call it Sufiana Kalaam which is not the correct word. Sufiana Kalaam means Sufi text or poetry, which therefore refers to the text part only and not a musical form. Therefore the proper word is Sufiana Mausiqi. It is generally believed that during the time of Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin (1420-70) artists and musicians were invited from Central Asia, Persia and different parts of India who brought with them their music and musical instruments. As a result of which intercultural musical exchange took place and a new musical genre took shape which is known as the Sufiana Mausiqi, the classical music of Kashmir. (Mir Shabir)

Sufiana Mausiqi generally known as Saazandar Gyawun is the classical rendering in which lyric predominates the Maqam (Mode). The Swaras (Musical Note) make their presence felt and there is no clear-cut recurring pattern of Swaras that could pervade in each song of the Maqam (Ram Chandrakausika).

Sufiana Mausiqi is a composed choral music. Five to twelve musicians sing together and also play on various instruments. Instead of Raga, the Persian Maqams are used. The Hindustani time theory is followed for the Persian Maqams in the Sufiana Mausiqi. The Sufiana song texts are basically mystical Sufi poems in Persian, Kashmiri and Urdu by poets such as Jalalluddin Rumi, Hafiz Sheerazi, Mehmood Gami and Dr. Iqbal. Four musical instruments are used with Sufiana Mausiqi: the Santoor or trapezoidal zither, Sehtar or long-necked lute, Saaz-e-Kashmir or spike fiddle, Wasul or Tabla (percussion instrument).

#### **4. FOLK MUSIC OF KASHMIR:**

Music that originates in traditional popular culture or that is written in such a style. Folk music is typically of unknown authorship and is transmitted orally from generation to generation. Folk music is the music of common masses. It is not bound by a set of typical rules and regulations as is found in classical music. It is not the property of elite class only but every body's music.

Folk music of Kashmir had been a spontaneous creation, associated with usual merry-making celebrations and an automatic expression of joy and delight. History of medieval time has remained close to the orbit of Indian artistic and cultural influences. Many classical musicians, singers, scholars and craftsmen adorned the courts of many great kings and music was no exception to it. Music of lute and flute was a luxury of kings and high nobles and decorated the royal courts as against the popular theatrical performances, under an open sky for the common people. In the History of Kashmir by P.N.K. Bamzai, there is reference to king Kalasa, who created taste for light Kashmiri music. This popular folk music has possibly shaped itself to survive during the early medieval period. However, its history like that of folk chorus or (Chakri) is traceable to the time of Kalhan that is 12th century A.D. It was king Bhikasacara 1120-1121 A.D. who occupied himself in playing earthen pots, brass vessels and other such instruments in accompaniment of folk music.

The music of Kashmir at present consists of Sufiana Mausiqi (classical music), Chakri, Ruff, Naindai bathe, Vanvun, Chalant, Ladishah (folk music).

#### **5. CHAKRI:**

One of the major folk musical forms of Kashmir is Chakri. In Chakri a group of five to six musicians sing together. The group leader sings the first verse which is repeated by the group members in unison. The same procedure is followed till the end. The musical instruments used with Chakri is Nout, Sarangi, Tumbakhnari, Rabab, and Harmonium. Chakri is one of the most popular forms of music in Kashmir.

#### **6. RUFF:**

Ruff is a popular traditional song and dance form of Kashmir which graces all the festive occasions such as Ramzan, Eid and marriages. It is called „Row“ in capital and 'Ruff' in villages. The dance is performed by a group of women facing each other. Usually two or four groups are formed, each group consisting of three to four girls. These groups face each other and each girl puts her arms on the shoulders of other girl. These girls bring their feet to and fro in a proper Laya. The footwork of Ruff is both visual as well as an artistic treat. The Ruff songs are generally in question answer form. "One groups questions and other answers, musically while dancing Ruff".

#### **7. LADDISHAH:**

Laddishah is type of Satirical ballad in which a man stirs the iron rings strung on an iron known as Chimta or Dhukar, and make witty comments on the social issues. This song which criticises the existing government or any other higher authority makes the people laugh but at the same time reflects the society's condition. The approach of Laddishah is humours and entertaining but bitter at the same time. In the beginning of the song, the Laddishah starts with a line in which he makes fun of himself.

“Laddishah, Laddishah Draar’ kin Pyow,  
Pyawaane Pyawaane Haptan Khyow

(Laddishah, Laddishah! Fell off the window! And a Grizzly bit him just as he fell!)”

## **8. NAINDGYAWUN**

Naindgyawun is related to farmer folk song. After the Paddy is sown in Kashmir, the weeding is done to remove the weeds from the Paddy field. This removal of weeds in Kashmir is known as Naindai or Nainduh. While busy in removing the weeds, the farmers or labourers sing folk songs to lessen the burden of labour. These songs are known as Naindai Bathe.

## **9. BHAND PATHER-TRADITIONAL FOLK THEATRE**

Bhand Pather is the regional folk theater of Kashmir. Like other regional folk theatre of India, its emergence was a consequence of the decline of classical Sanskrit theater and development of regional languages. The word Bhand, it has its origin in the Sanskrit “Bhanda” which means to jest or to mimic. A character in Sanskrit plays is called ‘Patra’. The word Pather also means play. The Kashmiri word Pathur too carries the same meaning. Jashan, which has evolved from Avestic word ‘Yasna’ means festival. Bhand Jashan is very popular among Kashmiris and attracted large audiences. It is staged in the precincts of shrines and public places. At shrines there would be somber display of religious devotionals, while elsewhere there would be joyful singing, music and theatrical performances by Bhand artists. It provides good entertainment to people through mimicry and clowning Bhand artists would make people laugh. Bhand play integrated dance, music and dialogue. Besides being comedians and mimic artists the Bhand used to be good dancers and musicians. Bhand Jashan witnessed regular participation of Bacha Nagma dancers, Hafiz Nagma performers and Bhand Jashan actors.

Bhand Pather has an elaborate musical orchestra comprising Swarnai, Dhol, and Nagara. On occasions Bhand groups played an instrument called Saaz-e-Kashmir. At times Tabla or ‘Tassa Joure’ is also played. (Bhat Waseem)

## **10. CONCLUSION:**

In conclusion it can be stated that the music of Kashmir is very rich and sundry. Kashmir has its own classical music which is known as Sufiana Mausiqi. Sufiana Mausiqi is influenced by Persian and was born in 14<sup>th</sup> century during the reign of Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin. Traditional music of Kashmir which includes Chakri, Ruff, Ladishah, and Bhand Pather is related to festival occasion, marriage ceremonies, harvest, and ministerial songs.

## **REFERENCES:**

1. Dhar, D. S. (2003). The Traditional Music of Kashmir. New Delhi: Kanishka Publisher & Distributors.
2. Mir, S. A. (2015). Sufiana Mausiqi of Kashmir. B. R. Rhythms.
3. Sharma, D. M. (2007). Musical Heritage of India. APH Publishing New Delhi.

## **WEBSITES:**

- <http://www.sangeetgalaxy.co.in/>
- <http://rupkatha.com/sufiana-mausiqi/>
- <http://bbyasir.blogspot.in/2009/10/folk-theatre-of-kashmir.html>
- <https://saxonianfolkways.wordpress.com/category/kashmir-sufiana/page/2/>