

# SAZNAWAZ GHARANA, THE GREAT MAESTROS OF SUFIYANA MOUSIQI OF KASHMIR

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**Abstract:** Kashmir's classical music is a combination of music from central Asia, Persia, Turkey and India. People think that in the time of Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin, artists came to Kashmir from central Asia and Persia, and brought their art, music, musical instruments, and culture with them, and that resulted in the birth of the beautiful Sufiyana Mousiqi, presently known as Kashmiri classical music.

**Key Words:** Sufiyana Mousiqi, Gharana, Saznawaz, Kashmir.

## 1. INTRODUCTION :

Sufiyana Mousiqi holds an important place in the tradition of Kashmiri music. It runs its own system and has gained sufficient popularity. Some held the opinion that its origin was Kashmir but that does not have any basis 'Sufiyana' means belonging to 'Sufis' and 'Kalaam' means saying. Kashmiri music drew nearer to both Indian and Persian music and in course of time, developed its own idiom. Sufiyana Kalaam became the traditional classical music of Kashmir. It is melodic in concept and lays stress on the diction of songs and is sung in chorus (like the Persian and Turkish counterparts). The Ustaaad and accompanying musicians are both vocalists and instrumentalists they sing in unison the verses, known as 'Beath' an integral part of the whole musical structure of 'muqam' (melody of raga) it matches with Persian and its muqam corresponds to Indian ragas. The relationship can possibly be believed as Mahabharata was translated by a Mullah in Kashmir and Persian devotional hymns were written by a Hindu. Thus it becomes clear that Sufiyana Kalaam cannot be categorized with the folk music of Kashmir. Folk songs are written by the people for the people and of the people. These characteristics are not found in Sufiyana Kalaam. It is limited to those who get training in it (under guru shishya parampara). It is out of the understanding for a common man<sup>1</sup>.

## 2. Research Methodology:

Using primary data as well as secondary data historical texts and discussions with leading musicians of Saznawaz gharana, the most prominent Sufiyana Gharana of Kashmir is Saznawaz gharana located in the heart of Srinagar District of Kashmir. This gharana is known by the name of its leading musician, Ustaaad Ramzan Joo (1881-1971). The last leading musician of this gharana was Ustaaad Ghulam Mohammad Saaznawaz who died recently in February 2014. This is the oldest and the main Sufiyana Mousiqi Gharana. The present Khalifa of this gharana is Shabir Ahmad Saaznawaz, the elder son of late Ustaaad Ghulam Mohammad Saaznawaz. There are currently four prominent musicians of this gharana, Shabir Ahmad Saaznawaz, Mushtaq Ahmad Saaznawaz, Rafiq Ahmad Saaznawaz (sons of Ghulam Mohammad Saaznawaz).

## 3. GHARANA:

The concept of Guru-shishya Parampara may refer to a person, family, as a place or region, but its distinctive style of presentation relates to the ancient concept of Guru-shishya Parampara. The word Gharana derives from the Hindi/Urdu word "Ghar," meaning "house or family"<sup>2</sup>. Each Gharana has its own style of presentation. Different styles of presentation of the same Muqam (raag) defines different Gharanas from each other.

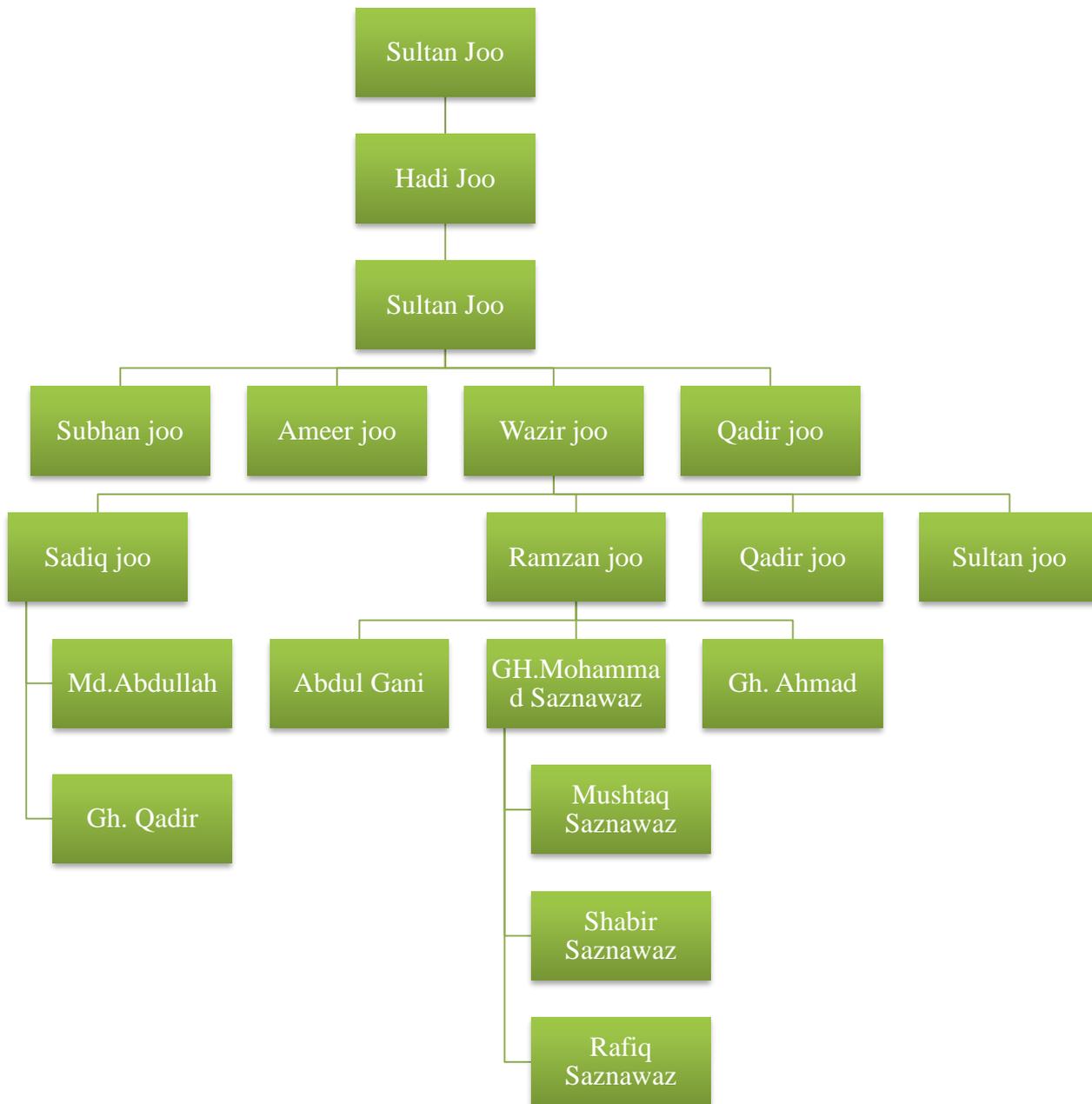
Here we are talking about the Gharana which is famously known as 'Saznawaz Gharana' or 'Ustaaad Ramzan Joo Gharana'. Music is the subject related to one's soul, mind, heart and connection with super natural power. Gharana

<sup>1</sup> Noor Mohammad, Sufiyana Mousiqi pg no. 25-27

<sup>2</sup> Pandith Nikhil Ghosh, Sangit Mahabharati, The Oxford Encyclopedia Of The Music Of India, Vol. 1, P. 355

is related to classical form of music only. If an artist belongs to any Gharana he is being monitored with special skills and pre-described qualities of classical music.

**Family Tree of Saznawaz Gharana:**



**Sultan Joo:** As we know Muslims came from middle-east to Kashmir. Ustaad Hadi Joo son of Ustaad Sultan Joo came from the same place along with the transformation of this art form Iran to Kashmir Ustaad Kaba Joo was also a good and learned Ustaad of that time. He had good command on Saz-e-Kashmir. Ustaad Sultan Joo used to visit Maharaja Ranbir Singhs palace every Sunday he used to perform his art at Maharaja’s Royal court. He used to perform with all his finest instruments of sufiyana music i.e., Santoor, Sitar, Tabla, Saz-e-Kashmir and Madham.

The speciality of this man was he used to keep all the five musical instruments in front of him. Whenever he used to be at home, he could play anyone instrument he wished, depending upon the mood and need. He was certainly the man of choice he was romantic and adventurous too. He enjoyed all his five instruments because the way he used to work hard. It was a well known quality of this Gharana, the one who commanded all the five instruments were been called as Panjhatharyi<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> During the interview of Mushtaq Saznawaz 12.Feb.2022

Ustaad Sultan Joo was an impressive person of unique qualities he used to be one of the greatest Saaz-e-Kashmir player of his time everyone would like him during his time. One of the very important think about his playing is that he had some two or three sons to call his sons he used to play a different melody so he was not calling his sons by their names instead he used to play melody on Saaz-e-Kashmir that was corresponding to the particular son so it was, one to the particular son so it was one son had one type of melody for calling another son another type of melody. He does not used to call his sons by their names. Whenever he had to call his sons he has playing a melody that was corresponding to the particular and son was coming into his presence. We are not saying that he was master of all five instruments, but the way he played these five instruments while singing, he had undoubtedly the full control over them. He educated all his four sons (Ustaad Subhan Joo, Wazir Joo, Ameer Joo, and Qadir Joo). He gave them the knowledge of music especially Sufiyana Mousiqui.

Mostly he himself used to play santoor. He had one of the student namely Mohd Abdullah Shah who had not any relationship with him. It shows us how he taught people who were not from his Gharana. Wazir Joo son of Ustaad Sultan Joo was also known as Panjathyari because he too had knowledge and playing techniques, he had a full access on all the five instruments even especially during the time of singing. So he was being referred as the Master of all instruments. As he spends the maximum time on the instruments so it became his hobby and passion. He had a unique and versatile love towards Sufiyana Mousiqui. Everything revolving in his mind was music since his day with one instrument and ended with the same that means he usually used to give maximum time and understanding towards this art and culture. He became very prominent due to his hold on all five instruments. For example if any musical concert he used to visit, it was the only when people demanded him the more. He had long list of fans so that it was the reason people demanded him to start first. He was assigned the job of a team leader he used to start singing and other co-artists used to accompany him. Generally Ustaad Wazir Joo used to sing for saints and they mostly used to call him for artful singing and performances. All saints liked him because the way he produced his songs with relevant pitch and voice. He became famous for his meaningful lyrics, the melodious voice and the respect for Sufiyana Music. One day Ustaad Ramzan Joonarrated an episode to his son that a musical concert happened at Safakadal in Pandith Vaid Lal's home. Pandith Vaid Lal Dhar was a rich man of the times, so he occasionally used to have some gatherings at home, where music was the primary entertainment. In this function Suraj BAL, the renowned Sitarist was also present. Dr. BAL remained stunt. Dr. BAL got his level of playing more excited by seeing such a great performances and his hair too danced in air. Then the artists accepted Ustaad Wazir Joo as a great artist. People of the time usually used to quote him and he was famous for his reference. He became the man of every lip and throat. He got his name and fame due to his hard work, his art was discussed by every learned member. The way he worked for his art was significantly tough because he made it easy because he worked days and nights. Ustaad's greatest quality was he never used to sitidle. Whenever he got the time, he used to practice. Finally his hardwork gifted him the fruit of fame in all over the valley. He was a sober kind of artist. The deep sigh and the long vision for music and art, which he always kept at first priority, became his life time achievement. Artists of such caliber are never forgotten. They are immortal; their teachings are followed by all the generations.

Ustaad Wazir Joo was a man of multi dimensional attitude. The reason for this attitude was perhaps his hard work and understanding of classical music. Wazir Joo was this much well known well versed in playing the instrument like we can say one day he has a concert (Mehfil) at some where he used to be only santoor player of his time in Kashmir. One day there had a concert (Mehfil) somewhere one of his accompanists he used to be the student of his father namely Fira Kak who was playing sitar. He requested Ustaad Wazir Joo tone up your santoor, Wazir Joo was playing Santoor and Fira Kak was playing sitar. Santoor had 100 strings and Kashmiri sitar only three main strings and Fira Kak again requested Ustaad Wazir Joo to tone up your santoor he replayed I will not tone because time is very less and for me I think it is good. He insists you will have to tone it, he said no I will not when he insists him again and again he said ok fine I am going to tone it up but you will not be able to tone your two strings. When he toned the santoor in such away he tones only 24 strings. How much he had to tone 100 strings but he toned it. He was this much tricky he applied logic in such away he toned only 24 strings and told him to tone. He does not understand what he did finally he couldn't tone the 2 strings this was the power of spiritual as well as he was in playing he was good educated in terms of his music. Here it shows how controlful he was with his art. It means he had the extreme quality of understanding of different kinds of strings of santoor as well as sitar.

One day Ramzan Joo in his concert (Mehfil) met his father's lover he told Ramzan Joo that, "I have heard hundreds of songs of "Muqam Shahnaz" by your father. While as I have listed little less from you. What is the reason? Their lived a wise man at Chhatabal in Srinagar. His name was Pir Ahemad Shah; he lived very long up to 130 years. He usually used to listen Ustaad Wazir Joo and Fira Kak. Once in a full crowded gathering Soneh Moet- the God lover

listened them and he became so emotional that he tore his clothes while saying Wazir Joo you are not touching in Santoor but you are touching my heart. It was nothing but he love and attraction towards such a great music.

Amir Joo - the eldest son of Sultan Joo and Qadir Joo the youngest son. Ustaaad Ameer Joo played Kashmir sitar and Tabla. In Fateh Kadel Srinagar he had his disciple, he used to go and teach him especially they taught him Tabla. There was a shop besides his house, where Qadir Lala the shopkeeper used to sit. He used to listen to him and narrated to each and every one<sup>4</sup>.

According to Qadir Lala the shopkeeper, Ustaaad Ameer Joo has implanted a Chinar Tree. This Chinar Tree will spread skillful branches, leaves and leaflets and then Ustaaad Ameer Joo will flew on the tops of these branches and the beauty of skill will transfer to the whole of the Chinar the life and the society. By the passage of time Qadir Lala became fond of Sufiyana music and the same time he discussed the importance of such skill with his nears and dears.

In Tabla there was no competitor of such a great artist. He had a great knowledge and command on tabla. He as such used to entertain tabla with all the notes of crusts and troughs. Once there was a festival in a park at Anantnag (South Kashmir) one of the richest men namely Bahar Shalla was also present in this function. There was already a local singer in this function. His name was Gaffar Joo.

Both Ustaaad Ameer Joo and Gaffar Joo were singing together. But somehow people were not satisfied. Then Bahar Shalla interened and asked both the singers to perform separately. First Gaffar Joo started singing, he too was a good singer, but he was not liked so much, the reason being he had used "Mukhamas Taal". This Taal is very much tough for the general listeners to understand and enjoy. Now, Ustaaad Ameer Joo started singing, people too started singing with him because he used the simple Taal which were entertainingly accepted by the audience. Finally Bahar Shalla announced Greater (Ustaaad Ameer Joo). The quality of a greater singer is visible through the faces of the audience and the public as a whole.

Ustaaad Wazir Joo died before Ustaaad Ameer Joo. After the death of Ustaaad Wazir Joo, till 12 years santoor remained unformed. Then Ustaaad Ameer Joo taught his nephew Sideh Joo how to play santoor. Let's have a look how did Ustaaad Sideh

Joo learned Santoor. On musical function someone replied that now nobody is left who will play santoor. It literally shocked Ustaaad Ameer Joo on reaching home, he told his nephew Sideh Joo get the Santoor down which was hanged on the wall. He re-maintained it and balanced the way it needed and fit for playing. Sideh Joo was intelligent and hardworking nephew of Ustaaad Amir Joo. His mind was sharp enough to understand the musical instrumental language. He was the person of versatile caliber of dynamic teacher. He then taught to his brother "Ramzan Joo". Ustaaad Ramzan Joo learned santoor in a very short span of time and he too became the master of this art<sup>5</sup>. While as Ustaaad Sideh Joo's art of santoor playing was different and unique. He was a master of stylish art of sufiyana music.

Ustaaad Saznawaz received Sufiyana musical knowledge from my uncle Ustaaad Sideh Joo and my father Ramzan Joo. I was young as six or seven years of age when I used to perform with Ustaaad Sideh Joo. One day tears came out of his (Sideh Joo's) eyes while singing that. He joyfully used to tell me that he will teach me open heartedly. It is the quality of a good teacher that he expressed every art and artistry to his fellow students. As we know art is not taught indirectly but directly in the same way, instead Sideh Joo was a good Tabla Player. He had used to play dougun, chagun and aathgun. Ustaaad Sideh Joo used to perform outside the state also. Outside Kashmir a Nawab liked his style of singing and he asked him if he could manage a Tabla player from Kashmir, who plays Tabla on Sufiyana music. Ustaaad Sideh Joo was not satisfied by his sons in terms of presenting that music informed his brother Ustaaad Ramzan Joo and asked him to come but he refused to go outside the valley. Their lived a non-Kashmiri Tabla Player. Simus was famous also a good and famous artist. If anybody related to classical music, from outside, definitely he visited him and it was regarded as incomplete visit if they did not hear table from him. Ustaaad Sideh Joo used to sung at "Faquir Obah Sahab" at his residence at Nawa Kadal, Ustaaad Sideh Joo Sung a "Muqam" namely "Raast" in Yak Taal, there were few stanza's like

Mae kori tus kit hi haye duste Dustae, Vasiye Gastai Yiyum nai

There was Persian couplet like

"Agar bar Khez ki az dustam ki badaldar banshinam Zi jami khazar mae nosham zibagi wasali gul chinum."

Our Uncle Qadir Joo used to have some little kind of drugs. After having this he used to sing while keeping his eyes shut. The one who used to massage his feet he gets pleased. Rahim Shah had not learned the Sufiyana music from any prominent teacher. Once Rahim Shah massaged Qadir Joo's feet and at the same time, he requested which swars are been used in Muqam-e-Bahar? Qadir Joo replied nicely.

<sup>4</sup> During the interview of Kaiser Mushtaq Saznawaz 20 March.2022

<sup>5</sup> During the interview of Mohammad Rafiq 20 March.2022

Sideh Joo died in 1958, good teacher is intelligent enough to express their anguish to the students for the benefit of their wellbeing. Ustaad Sideh Joo was a kind teacher and one of the most learned musicians.

Ustaad Ramzan Joo had learned his Sufiyana music mostly from Abdullah Shah. Ustaad Abdullah Shah had got his education from Ramzan Joo's grandfather. Ustaad Sultan Joo, Ustaad Ramzan Joo was expert in basics of musical art and was one of the great artists of his time especially in music. Even though Ustaad Md. Abdullah Tibat-Baqqal had not got Sufiyana classical music teaching from anybody but he always used to say that he used to sit in functions of Ustaad Ramzan Joo and used to memorize his songs. When Ustaad Md. Abdullah Tibat Baqqal got his Sangeet academy award he declared Ustaad Ramzan Joo his teacher<sup>6</sup>.

**Ustaad Mohd. Ramzan Joo:** was the son of Ustaad Wazir Joo was born in the year 1881 at Kaka Saeb Jamallata, Srinagar Kashmir and died in the year 1971. Ustaad Ramzan Joo, belonging to the family of great musicians and being brother of maestros Ustaad Sideh Joo, is ranked as a top class artist in sufiyana Kalaam and acquired this art from his ancestors. He would always participate in spiritual gatherings and getting in touch with other highly acclaimed singers and artists benefited him to learn and master the art singing especially sufiyana Kalaam and its spirituality any financial promoting this art which he did with great success and imparted training and whatever he had learnt to younger generation. He was a great santoor player, but was adept in playing sitar as well.

**Ustaad Ghulam Mohammad Saznawaz:** was born in year 1940 at Dana Mazar Safakadal Srinagar Kashmir. He is the son of the great Sufiyana music maestro Ustaad Ramzan Joo who learned the Sufiyana music from Ustaad Wazir Joo, Uncle Ustaad Ameer Joo, and his brother Ustaad Sidiq Joo ancestor of the Ghulam Mohammad Saznawaz were the masters of the sufiyana music (the classical music of Kashmir).

Ustaad Ghulam Mohammad Saznawaz belongs to the family of Ustaad Hadi Joo, who came to the Kashmir during the times of Mughal. Saznawaz learned this art right from his childhood when he was only 6 years old under the guidance of his father Ustaad Ramzan Joo and his uncle Sidiq Joo. Though being group members of father and uncle, Saznawaz attained fame very quickly as his father and uncle were already well recognized Sufiyana maestros.

Sufiyana master which can play all the five instruments like santoor, sitar, tabla, Saz-e-Kashmir and Madham used in Sufiyana orchestra is called Panjtharyari. He knows all the muqaams (Ragas) and difficult talas (brandish) like Mukhamas, neemsakeel, neemdaur etc. used in Sufiyana Mousiqui. He has a great control on laikari (rhythm). Saznawaz loves to sing Persian poetry. He has an attractive voice as a result of which people like him very much. Saznawaz was initially employed in Radio Kashmir as staff artist. There are so many achievements and records of Saznawaz in the Radio Kashmir. Because of his hard work he becomes most popular musician of the valley. He has performed in hundreds of programs in and out of the state. Ustaad Saznawaz has been honored by many appreciations and awards by state as well as central government like 'Sanod' appreciation by Sidiq Memorial Committee, Sangeet Natak Academy Award by central government. Tulsi award by Madhya Pradesh Government Shakir and Aslam award by state government Sher-e-Kashmir Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Award by Sopori academy (SAMAPA) and also so many appreciations from the state government. Saznawaz was honored as 'Man of the year 2001' by American biographical institute (ABI). At present, Saznawaz is heading an institution of name Saznawaz Sufiyana Training Institute (SSTI) where many of the students come to learn this art without any remuneration. Saznawaz is teaching these students free of cost in order to keep this heritage alive that he has inherited from his maestros. Saznawaz has three sons, Mushtaq Saznawaz, Shabir Saznawaz and Rafiq Saznawaz. Mushtaq and Shabir both are 'A' grade sufiyana artists. Shabir has got an award from Sangeet Natak Academy, New Delhi recently.

**Mushtaq Ahmad Saznawaz:** is the son of most prominent musician of the Kashmir Ustaad Ghulam Mohammad Saznawaz. Mushtaq Ahmad Saznawaz was born in the year 1962 at Danamazar Safakadal Srinagar Kashmir. He received early training from his father Ustaad Ghulam Mohammad Saznawaz and gained an ample experience in playing all the instruments used in Sufiyana Music especially "Saz-e-Kashmir" which is the essential instrument used in Sufiyana music. Mushtaq Saznawaz is specialist in playing Saz-e-Kashmir. Mushtaq Ahmad Saznawaz belongs to the reputed gharana of Kashmir (Saznawaz Gharana). He attained grade 'A' in the field of Sufiyana music in the year 2000 through the music audition board of New Delhi.

Mushtaq Ahmad Saznawaz has participated in hundreds of musical programs organized by Doordarshan Kendra, Srinagar, All India Radio, J&k Academy of Art Culture and Languages, Sangeet Natak information in and out of the State. He has also sung in various cassette formats and also in the CD "Vijdan" released by the department of information Srinagar. Recently Mushtaq Saznawaz performed in the "Josh-e-Aman" at New Delhi through the Department of Information.

<sup>6</sup> During the interview of Furqan Saznawaz 12 Feb. 2022

Mushtaq Saznawaz has produced musical programmes of five episodes for Doordarshan Kendra Srinagar. He is also running training programmes under “Saznawaz Training Institute”. In order to keep this art alive he is presently working as Santoor player / vocal Sufiyana in the department of information.

**Shabir Ahmad Saznawaz:** is the son of most popular musician of Kashmir Ustead Ghulam Mohammad Saznawaz. Shabir Ahmad Saznawaz is the resident of Dana Mazar Safa Kadal Srinagar Kashmir. He has received early training from his father Ghulam Mohammad Saznawaz, who has received many awards from State and Central government. Shabir Ahmad Saznawaz, received first training in Tabla/ Vocal from his father and gained ample experience in the field of classical music of Kashmir. Shabir Ahmad Saznawaz belongs to the reputed Sufiyana Gharana of Kashmir (Saznawaz Gharana). He is the first his father who attained grade ‘A’ in Sufiyana from All India Radio in the year 1995. He has been awarded recently by Sangeet Natak Academy ‘Ustead Bismillah Khan’ Yuva Puraskar.

**Mohammad Rafiq Saznawaz.** Mohammad Rafiq Saznawaz is the son of Ustead Saznawaz. Mohammad Rafiq Saznawaz is learning Sufiyana music under the guidance of his father. He is capable of playing Tabla and Santoor. He has been approved by music audition board of New Delhi<sup>7</sup>.

#### 4. CONCLUSION:

Saznawaz Gharana, a family in Downtown area of Srinagar is safeguarding Kashmiri Sufiyana music and the family’s eighth generation remains well connected to its musical roots. Kashmir is one of the few regions of India which has a distinct regional classical music tradition along with a rich repertoire of folk and modern light music. The classical music of Kashmir is known as Sufiyana Mousiqui. This music is taught orally and passed on from one generation to another.

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<sup>7</sup> During the interview of Shabir Saznawaz 25 March 2022