

## Sufiyana Mousique and Hafiz Magma: An aesthetics of different styles of singing of Kashmir

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### Abstract

There are three distinct forms of music in Kashmir, namely Sufiana Mousiqi (traditional classical music) handed down to the present generation by old masters, folk music (Chakri, Rouf, Wanwun etc.) and modern light music (ghazals, geets and choral songs). Music is basically a spontaneous creation, which gives expressions to human instincts, sentiments and emotions with its universal appeal and potentially to enlighten the soul. Classical sufi scholars have defined sufism as “a science whose objective is the reparation of heart and tuning it away from all else but God”.

**Keywords:** Sufiyana Mousique, Hafiz Magma, aesthetics, singing, Kashmir

### Introduction

According to some modern proponents, such as Idris Shah, the sufi philosophy is universal in nature, its roots predating the arising of Islam, while all muslims believe that they are on the pathway to God and will become close to God in Paradise-after death and after the “Final Judgement” Sufis also believe that it is possible to draw closer to God and to more fully embrace the Divine Presence in this life. The chief aim of all sufis is to seek the pleasing of God by working to restore within themselves the primordial state of fitra, described in the quran and similar to the concept of Buddha. In this state no one defies God, and all is undertaken by the single motivation of love of God. A secondary consequence of this is that the seeker may be led to abandon all notions of dualism or multiplicity including a conception of an individual self, and to realize the divine unity.

History is witness to the powerful influences exerted by music on human civilization. Music, in fact, has always helped make us human-transcending the barriers of culture, race and creed, music not only plays an important role to tie us in a single vast human family but even contribute in the processes of nation building in kashmir, the music that has resonated with these pictureque valleys has always connected us in our joy and in grief. For centuries, music in our land was not merely a tool for entertainment but an epitome of a moral and ethical power entrenched in our spiritual and mystical practices. And as Kashmir has been a melting pot of ideas where civilizations met and flourished its music too evolved and thus processed axiological connotations. In our history, we can trace the phases of joy and grief in the tone of texture of our compositions.

Hazrat Sherief-ud-din Abdul Rehman Bulbul Shah laid foundation of sufi and secular culture of Kashmir in the year 1320 A.D. historians, scholars and intellectuals are of the opinion that like other great civilizations of the world. The origin of sufi civilization of Kashmir, world wise known as kashmiryat, in the philosophy of brotherhood and mutual love respectability as propagated by Bulbul Shah commonly known

as Amir-i-Kashmir and Baadashah-ie-Kashmir. However, it is clear that like other great sufi saints of Kashmir his grave and shrine is present in the valley. Bulbul Shah’s shrine is the first muslim sufi shrine of Kashmir which has its intellectual influence upto kashgar.

There are not many places like Kashmir in the world where a number of great sufi’s have lived and have their shrines also. Kashmir is the land of saints, sufis. It is bestowed with religious wealth in the form of numerous shrines and places of worship enjoying reverence and allegiance of people professing different faiths <sup>[1]</sup>. There are numerous sepulchers of saints which have enchanting environs, while visiting these shrines one feel in close proximity of almighty. Some of the shrines has historical importance in addition to religious significance attached to them. These shrines belong to both hindus and muslims and are visited by thousands of devotees.

### Sufiyana Mousique

The word Sufiana has been derived from word Sufism and intimate mystical and philosophical poetry. The poetry used in Sufiana Kalam is usually in Kashmiri, sometimes in Persian as it is blended with Persian music also <sup>[2]</sup>.

Sufiana Mousique or Kalam come to Kashmir from Iran in 15<sup>th</sup> Century, it is a sort form of music from Iran and it has established itself as classical music form of Kashmir, having 54 muqams <sup>[3]</sup> or ragas and has incorporated a number of Indian ragas having Indian names like Bhairavi, Lalit and Kalyan, while other muqams bear Persian names as Dugah Panjgah, Rast-i-Farsi and Rast-i-Iraq, Isfashani and Sengah. The ragas or muqams are played with respect of time significance as that of Indian ragas have, some of them are morning muqams and some evening <sup>[4]</sup>.

The beautiful sufi music came to be known as the Kashmiri Sufiyana Music. An integral part of the rich cultural ancestry

<sup>1</sup> Sufiyana Kalaam by Prof. Raj Kumari Magzine P.245

<sup>2</sup> Culture and Political history of Kashmir by P.N.K. Bamzai P-301-302.

<sup>3</sup> Sufiyana Kalaam by Prof. Raj Kumari Magzine P.402

<sup>4</sup> Jammu and Kashmir by Som Nath Dhar P-135.

and religious legacy of the state of Jammu and Kashmir, Kashmiri sufiyana music portrays the unlimited love of a devotee for the supreme Being. Kashmiri sufiyana music boasts of an inherent divine element. Sung in praise of the supreme Being, the enchanting melody of Kashmiri sufiyana music fills the devotees with an intense sense of devotion and dedication.

Sufiana Kalam is usually sung in chorus. "Solo" performances are rarely performed. Blended with different forms of Sufiana Kalam as emerged a Unique style of Kashmiri music [5].

Accompanied with traditional folk musical instruments of Saze-Kashmir, Tabla, Kashmiri Sitar (Sehtar) and Kashmiri Santoor, the singers of Kashmiri sufiyana music sing with full devotion and enthusiasm which is reflected in their flawless performance composed of poetic expressions that show the divine love between the ardent devotee and the supreme Being, Kashmir sufiyana music entralls and enchants the audience with its melodious music.

Kashmiris love singing, songs and ghazals, etc. and have always been a part of their literary culture. Music got flourished during the reign of Sultan-Zainulabidin (1420-70) [6].

Sultan Shamasuddin Shahmiri is famous for promoting music and encouraged quite a few musicians of that time [7]. To do this he had many Sanskrit books translated into Kashmiri and encouraged a good number of musicians to carry on the tradition. It is said that Sultan Zainulabidin was himself attracted to music and encouraged local musicians and even invited musicians from different countries [8].

Budshah's brother Sultan Hassan Shah (1412-84) introduced an independent government department to promote music – Sultan Zainulabidin had a special interest in music and he would organise special meetings of musicians to perform. His son heir apparent Sultan Haider Shah was good at playing musical instruments. His grandson Sultan Hassan Shah was also good in the art of music. He invited musicians from South India to promote music in Kashmir. An exclusive department of music was created for the first time in his life time. Kashmiri music, it is said, was at its Zenith during the time of Sultan Yousuf Shah Chak as he himself practiced music and performed with perfection and his queen Habba Khatun was also a great musician and who invented a muquam Raast Kashmiri, well [9].

The tradition of sufi music also traces its roots back to Amir Khusrau, which became linked to the various traditions of Sufi movements in Punjab, Braj and Awada. Although some sufi orders objected to sama (music), for others, it was a means to achieve mystic ecstasy. To understand the words that are spoken, the underlying reference has to be understood. Love for God and his teacher who taught him to walk on this part of selfless love for the almighty.

Kashmiri sufiyana music spread happiness and filled the air with joy and mirth through its poetic wordings coupled with enchanting melodies. upholding the traditional legacy of the

state, Kashmiri sufiyana music displays the rich folk culture of Jammu and Kashmir [10].

An intrinsic part of Sufism, Sufi Poetry arouses evocative images of pure emotions, inexplicable in words. On a higher level of self-awareness, the subtleness penetrate through the veil of earthiness and one takes afoot on the path of God and self-realization, a mendicant searching for the divine, wandering on the path of love and devotion, the path of the sufi.

Sufiyana music is so much a part of the Kashmiri culture that even today singers at wedding get special requests for songs written by mystics centuries ago. The local language, Kashmiri is also generously sprinkled with their quotes.

A scholar notes that Kashmiri Sufism is thoroughly Indian in Spirit [11]. Take the message of Nund Rishi Sheikh Nooruddin Wali for instance. Which is not confined to Hindus and Muslims alone. It speaks to all mankind. That is why his sayings and verses have acquired the character of proverbs and are routinely referred to by Kashmiris of all hues in their daily life. The verses of Sarfi, a Sufi of the Kubravi order says it all, "O, Sarfi" what benefit are you going to gain from the pilgrimage, if Kabba, temple and tavlm are not identical with you/ O, Sarfi! Impossible it is for you to say that Somnath has not the Kaabas light".

"Divine unity of all that is – blessed are those who imbibe this universal message of the sufis in their daily lives".

The earliest recorded mention of Kashmiri music is in its first written document of history. In the very first "Tarangs" (Contos) of "Rajtarangri", Kalhana refers. To the reign of King Jaluka, the son of Ashoka and indicates that a kind of wind instrument was played in viharas [12]. Kalhana talks about King Jayapida as a ruler who was well versed in "Natya Shastra" and 11<sup>th</sup> century Prince Harsha who was an accomplished singer [13]. The first references about Kashmiri folk music "Chakri" & "Nut" (Clay pot that is used as a musical instrument) too were in this document of history.

With the advent of Islam, our collective cultural personality was tremendously enriched, especially as the mystics from Arabic, Persia, and central Asia brought cultural influences along with religious scholarships to our valley [14]. The influence was clear in our music as well and the synthesis was a mesmerizing vocal ensemble called "Sufiyana Mousique". Five to ten musicians would sing the Kalaam of sufi's on the comforting melody of Saz-e-Kashmir, Kashmir's own version of Santoor, Kashmiri sitar and Dhukra (Tabla). Although a few voices still keep the traditions of sufiyana alive, this classical music is facing a real threat of extinction of its 180 melodies referred in ancient texts, we have already lost 130, and Saz-e-Kashmir the instrument is going silent too. It was only because of the life long toil of Kashmiri's noted musicologist and only contemporary music theorist, Ustad Sheikh Abdul Aziz have preserved 42 lost melodies of Sufiyana Kalaam [15]. Without any official support or funding, Aziz intervened musicians for clues of the melodies, passed

<sup>5</sup> Festivals of Kashmir by M.Amin Pandit P-135.

<sup>6</sup> Kasheer by G.M.D. Sofi p.93-119.

<sup>7</sup> Sheerazah, a journal, J&K Academy of Art, Culture and Languages p-53

<sup>8</sup> Kasheer by G.M.D. Sofi p.93-119.

<sup>9</sup> The nightingale of Kashmir by S.N. Wakhlu p. 43

<sup>10</sup> Sufiyana Kalaam by Dr. Raj Kumari Magzine P.245

<sup>11</sup> Sheerazah, urdu journal, J&K Academy of Art, Culture and Languages p-59

<sup>12</sup> Raj Tarangni, Tarang-1 translated by M.A. Stein shaloka-140.

<sup>13</sup> Raj Tarangni, by Kalhan p-144.

<sup>14</sup> The music of India by Herbert A. Popley p-1.

<sup>15</sup> Koshur Sargam by Sheikh Abdul Aziz.

traditionally from one generation to another. Then painstakingly, he noted the melodies and built a database even as he taught Kashmiri classical music in a university in the United States. He authored four volumes of "Koshur Sargam" the fifth volume published posthumously by his family. Ustad Aziz died on 2<sup>nd</sup> of Dec 2005. During his lifetime, he didn't receive any encouragement for his work, in his death there was little remembrance.

In the not distant past Kashmiri liked the style of Sufiyana music and is considered as the classical music of Kashmir. As most of poetry used in Persian which has its origin in Iran and Central Asia but at the same time the local Kashmiri language blended with Persian gave it a different flavor. The dance based on the Sufiyana Kalaam is the Hafiz Nagma Sufi poetry is the result of a spirit of defiance and self sacrifice.

The music of J and K reflects the rich musical heritage and culture legacy of the J&K region of India and Pakistan. Kashmiri music uses a wide variety of musical scale, everything from musical scales which are similar to the byzantine scale, and harmonic minor scale, to the more melodic sounding major scale, and minor scale also the use of vocals in traditional Kashmiri music varies.

In some forms of Kashmiri music vocals are given the central role, forming the lead of the songs, but in many other varieties, it is the instruments that act as the central focus of the music. In a lot of traditional Kashmiri music the vocals are harmonized, with a wide ranging of harmonies from the use of consecutive fifths to one person singing the same melody either an octave or lower.

Sufiyana music is sung in praise of the lord and Sufi singers speak of God in their composition. Renowned artists including Santoor player, Pandit Shiv Kumar Sharma, enthralled the audience with his music. Artists from the valley who also performed said that such festivals would help in reviving the Sufi tradition.

With the onslaught of western music trend, the Kashmiri folk music and Sufiyana music are on the wane. Kashmiri was the cradle of "Sufiyana" or mystic music, which has its origin from Iran.

The Sufiyana has been characterized as the science of the states of the lower self (the ego), and the ways of purifying this lower self of its reprehensible traits, while adoring it instead with what is praise worthy, whether or not this process of cleansing and purifying the heart is intimately rewarded by erotic knowledge of God<sup>[16]</sup>.

Today, there is a very small group of music lovers in our society, who know about the contribution of our legendary masters like Ustad Wazir Joo, Ustad Ramzan Joo, Ustad Sidiq Joo, and their gardenias Ustad Mohammad Abdullah Tibet Bakal and Ustad Ghulam Mohammad Qaleen Baff<sup>[17]</sup>.

In Sufiyana music resounded in the serenity of valley, is folk music too occupied an important space in people's lives. The traditional use of mystic poetry, the songs of yearning and remembrance of history have fashioned Kashmiri folk music into an essential repository of memory and faith. The folk music became an important medium that carried the mystic poetry of Shamas Faqir, Niam Sahab, Rahim Sahab, Ahad

Zargar and scores of other legendary Kashmiri poets to the people and kept the loss, pain and yearning of a coronated and betrayed Habbqa Khatun, the last Kashmir Queen alive even after 450 years of the forced exile of her husband and Kashmiri king Yousuf Shah Chak.

Without an institutional support, the music too is living entirely on past glorious periods, Kashmir has been through an unprecedented upheaval during last two decades and like other people of Kashmir. The Kashmiri musicians too have gone through pain, anguish and yearning, but our music remained largely untouched by these tragic experiences and it has almost failed to become an expression of people's despair and resilience in these overwhelming times.

As Sufiyana music is related to God, Bhakti Rasa emerges through this style of singing. The emotions of Bhakti Rasa are clearly seen in the singing, poetry and composition of such type of songs. The listeners got leaned towards God while listening this style of singing. Sufiyana music is a spiritual practice. Bhakti emotions are conveyed by the performer and thus felt by the audience. In this style of singing love for the Supreme is experienced.

Some of Sufiyana Kalaams are as under:-

1. Vuchan vuchan koot kaal prarai  
Yekh nai marai paan

#### Meaning

For how long I will wait for you,  
If you don't come I will sacrifice my life,

2. Dadi ashqini travith cholom  
Kas nish bavai

#### Meaning

My beloved has left me in love  
To whom I will express my feeling.

As already mentioned the compositions in such style of singing is based on muqams. Mostly the songs of such type of singing is sung in between Madhya and taar saptak. The main aesthetics of this style is that the singing begins in vilambit laya as begins in Indian classical music. The very heart of Kashmiri Sufiyana music is muqam, the melodic form upon which the artist improvises his performance. This style of singing is an aesthetic melodic form with its own ascending and descending movements.

After vilambit laya another song is sung in same muqam but in drut laya, which adds an aesthetic sense to this type of singing.

The taal are rhythmic cycle of a muqam also plays an equally important role expressing the mood. There is a unique relationship between melody and rhythm. In this style tihayi is also used which enhances the singing.

Kashmiri Sufiyana music has maintained its characteristics in its highly developed melodic and rhythmic structure.

#### Hafiz Nagma

Hafiz Nagma is a unique combination of dance, song and a group of musicians of Sufiyana Music (the classical music of Kashmir). Actually, the word Hafiz Nagma is a combination of two words, the danseuse in this tradition is

<sup>16</sup> Sufiyana Kalaam by Raj Kumari Magazine p.245

<sup>17</sup> Sufiyana Kalaam by Raj Kumari Magazine p.246

known as “Hafiza” and “Nagma” is an Arabic word and is used for song. The songs which are used in Hafiz Nagma is based on Sufiyana Kalams based on Ragas know as Muqams. The prominent instrument used in Hafiz Nagma is called Santoor, a hundred stringed instrument played with sticks (Qalam). Other traditional instruments which are used in this form are Sehtar, Saz-e-Kashmir and Wasool.

The Hafiza (dancer) is always a female wearing a particular attire. The dress worn by the Hafiza’s were having resemblance with Kathak dance dress Ghagra and a Turkish top, the blended form of Indian and Persian music dance presents remarkable molded form of new and unique style<sup>[18]</sup>.

It is a unique classical dance form of Kashmir with characteristic like tapping of the feet. In Hafiz Nagma, Hafiza’s use different gestures closer to real life expressions or Abhinaya.

Hafiz Nagma is a simple but beautiful medium of expression. It is a natural expression, as nothing is forced. The movements, grace, rhythm, foot work, gestures and music all goes in tandem.

In Hafiz Nagma, Hafiza’s eyes viewed an important features of expressions. Aspects such as blinking rate, she uses to indicate whether she is nervous or she is lying. The Hafiza in Hafiz Nagma expresses her emotion through her face, whether she is sad, happy, Jealous, surprised, angry or worried.

In mughal era, in which this dance was introduced, Hafiz Nagma was very popular. Many of these dancers stayed and performed in Shalimar Garden (Mughal Garden), lit by candles and lanterns, during performances and entertaining royal visitors.

In 1920’s, Hafiz Nagma was banned in Kashmir by the ruling Dogra Maharaja. The ruler felt this dance was losing its Sufi touch and was becoming to sensual, de-based and hence a immoral for the society. Now, songs being the same, in an odd parody female muslim dancers were replaced by young muslim boys who dressed like women. It came to be known as “Baccha Nagma” and remains popular for celebration of weddings.

Hafiz Nagma also survived, but in an increasingly Islamic going society, kept losing grounds. The performances occurred during social celebrations like birth, marriage, etc. and on days of religious importance. The dance form of Hafiz Nagma performed along with Sufiyana Mousique is a treat to watch.

Hafiz Nagma is more suited to the Mehfil or the Darbar environment, because the proximity of the performer to the audience, who can more easily see the nuances of the dancers facial expression. It is a classical dance style characterized by the rhythmic footwork, facial expressions and representation of theme from Persian, Urdu and Kashmiri Poetry. As already mentioned this form is a combination of dance and singing, both in dance and songs, mostly Bhakti Rasa is seen. In this style, sometimes the songs of Habba Khatoon are sung, which are pathetic, composed depicting the sadness of the famous Kashmiri Princes as she had been separated from her beloved husband King Yousuf Shah Chak. So, Karuna Rasa is also seen in this type of music in Kashmir. Sometimes the dancer dances for her beloved, so Shringar Rasa is also seen in this

type of singing.

Some of famous Hafiz Nagma’s are as under:-

1. Meha Ker Chie kith poshi daswanie  
Chaw maen danie posh...

#### Meaning

I have gathered the colorful flowers for you.  
Come and enjoy my blossom of youth...

2. Ami Yaer Karnas Bambaray  
Hooray Mai Nuenam Chooray Dil

#### Meaning

My beloved has left me in learch.  
And has snatched my heart...

As the aesthetics in the dance of Hafiz Nagma is already mentioned, but the style of singing of Hafiz Nagma is totally different from other styles of singing in Kashmir. The talas used in such type of singings are slow at intervals and fast at times. The swars used in Sathayi are in low pitch or in mandir and Madhya Saptak but in Antra the pitch goes very high which is the main aesthetic of such type of singing. In the antra murkies are used to enhance the beauty of singing and the Hafiza shows different gestures (Mudras) on different Murkies. At last, the beats get faster and the Hafiza moves her feet on musical notes when the Tihayi is taken to complete the music or singing part of it. In between Sathayi and Antra the instrumentalists play pieces of music in Jugalbandi which is really mesmerizing. The listeners get leaned towards it and it beautifies the whole song. Mostly the murkies are seen in antra as is demonstrated in a below mentioned composition which actually is the aesthetic of such style of singing.

**Antra:** Kongas Karimai Chaman

**Swar:** Sa Sa Sa Re Ga Re sssss  
Maenz ho lagith naman

**Swar:** Sa Sa Ni Sa Sa Re Ga Ga Re Ni Dha Pa  
Mushtaq goham kaman madano

**Swar:** Dha Ni Dha Pa Ma Ga Re Re Pa Ma Ga  
Ye dapham ti laagyo

**Swar:** Sa Sa Ni Sa Sa Re Ga Ga Re Sa Ni Dha Pa

This composition is based on muqam (Raag) Raast Kashmiri. The taal used in this composition is Dadra Taal of 6 beats, the masters of the Dukra (Tabla) player gives lots of variation during playing the beats of musical percussion instrument. Dukra plays an important role in Hafiz Nagma as a Tabla plays the role in Indian Classical Music/ dance.

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<sup>18</sup> Cultural and Political history of Kashmir by P.N.K. Bamzai P-296.