



Musician Mohammad Abdullah Shakhsaaz: Their contribution towards of Kashmiri folk music

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Abstract

Ustad Mohammad Abdullah Shakhsaaz occupies a prominent and a special status in Kashmiri music (both folk as well as traditional music) for his great, enormous and invaluable contribution in this field. He is one of the most fascinating and leading performing artist of Kashmiri folk music of the contemporary times & is best known for his remarkable and outstanding performances which he delivered during his tenure at Radio Kashmir Srinagar. He gained a wide spread name & fame for his playing folk instrument "Sarang" in a unique and special way and deviates from that of the many musicians around with his extraordinary skill and mastery for the instrument. Ustad Shakhsaaz is a musician cum singer with phenomenal energy artistic qualities, devotion, dedication, transparency and perfection. His folk rendition speak of a sensibility which is Kashmiri in nature and modern in treatment. His wisdom, sensibility and the imaginative power & expertise of this legend are relevant to us and it has been an admiration and inspiration to many music lovers. His work and demand for great & popular singers & musicians increased his repertoire and knowledge of styles and this adds further feathers to his popularity and he became an eminent figure in all cultural circles of the valley. Ustad Shakhsaaz's Sarangi renditions includes a universe of songs for almost all occasions of life from traditional wedding songs to welcome songs, Ghazals, Naat, Bhajan, Choral songs, Sufi & romantic Songs etc all these musical forms are accompanied by his strong and colorful Sarangi renditions. This great maestro had a perfect blend of melody emotions and energy which comes out spontaneously while his playing. He did not just perform for the Indian audience, but on many occasions performed for the global audience as well. He represented the state of J&K during different festivals organized in the USSR, France, Singapore, Dubai, Switzerland etc. So far he has remained one of the most busiest & widely travelled folk musicians Kashmir has produced.

Keywords: musian, sarang, notes, rabab, ustad

Introduction

Art and Career

"Mohammad Abdullah Shakhsaaz" is one among the rare well reputed, established and promising folk Musician cum singer of Kashmir. He occupies a prominent and a special status in Kashmiri music (both folk as well as traditional music) for his great, enormous and invaluable contribution in this field. "Ustad shakhsaaz" is a celebrated 'Sarang' virtuoso, who gained a wide spread name and fame for being a maestro and a distinguished musician and represented Kashmiri folk music. He is one of the most fascinating performing artistes of Kashmiri folk music & is best known for his remarkable and outstanding performances which he delivered during his tenure at Radio Kashmir Srinagar. He has a unique technique & mastery to create and play an extended melodic range with rhythmic accentuations. The legendary "Shakhsaaz" is today one of the most popular Kashmiri alive. This bright shining star of Kashmiri folk music and traditional light music has held the top spot hostage for nearly three decades. He gained a wide spread name for his playing "sarang" in a unique and special way and deviates from that of the many musicians around with his extraordinary skill and mastery for the instrument. He is acclaimed around the Kashmir for his originality and improvisations for the instrument and also gave a new and yet timeless interpretation to it. Keeping to the tradition and yet being innovative he created many enchanting

melodies of his own. He is a musician cum singer with phenomenal energy artistic qualities, devotion, dedication, transparency and perfection. Ustad Shakhsaaz is the most loved and respected musician of the state of J&K. He has done a remarkable work in the field of Kashmiri folk and light music. His folk rendition speaks of a sensibility which is Kashmiri in nature and modern in treatment. His wisdom, sensibility and the imaginative power & expertise of this legend are relevant to us and it has been an admiration and inspiration to many music lovers. He has to his credit several original contributions to Kashmiri folk music. Ustad Shakhsaaz's singing as well as playing is essentially melody oriented and characterized by sweetness of intonation. It featured a graceful meditative approach to elaboration in extempore and tended to be serene even placid in its overall effect. Shakhsaaz is among the rare musicians of Kashmir who spoke with his instrument, weaving a graceful tapestry of sound and he has also realized his search for excellence & that really contributed to the strengthening of his iconic stature. His art of tar playing is characterized by extreme transparency and perfection which adds lot of emotions & feeling to his playing instrument Sarang. Shakhsaaz's style owes much to the old traditional and his specialization lies in his ability to produce intricate sound patterns of the "sarang" rooted in its original form, revealing the traces of ancient treasures of Kashmiri folk music. He said that if one wants to become a

good instrumentalist, one must know & study the different colour, melody & beauty of all the old treasures of folk & traditional music.

Ustad Mohammad Abdullah Shakhsaaz from a very early age displayed keen love and deep interest for music so fierce as to be obsessive. Born into the family of musicians, he was trained under the excellent guidance & supervision of his uncle “Ghulam Mohammad Bhat” who himself had been a great and famous artist of his time. Shakhsaaz was further initiated into “sarang” playing by ‘Abdul Khaliq Dar’ who was one among the talented folk party members of Ghulam Mohammad Bhat. Shakhsaaz has a profound sense & aptitude of music that he has inherited from his traditional folk Gharana, under the “Guru Shishya Parampara”. From school days to Higher Secondary, Shakhsaaz always take an active part with full zeal & zest in all the cultural events & programmes organized by school & various cultural groups and won several awards & certificates for his art & talent. He learned the art & technique of playing “sarangi” by keenly studying and following the practice of his Guru Abdul Khaliq Bhat. After devoting his time to improvisation by regular practicing & devotion he learnt the art of playing ‘Sarangi’ and within a short period of time mastered over it. Besides playing Sarangi he also learnt the art of singing and managed to get hold on it.

In the beginning of his career Shakhsaaz was initiated and groomed by his uncle in order to boost and enhance his capabilities to perform with confidence. He started performing for “Chakri & Ruf” based folk programmes in near by villages. All overnight singing and playing on Sarangi brought a unique sweetness to his vocal and instrumental playing and it paved a way to him as a stepping stone of his desirous success. He continued to participate in domestic and other official functions since long but his luck changed when he joined A.I.R Srinagar as a casual “Sarangi player in 1982”. Being a competent and well versed in playing his instrument ‘Sarangi’ he received immense acclaim & appreciation from the great and renowned artists of Kashmir besides radio authorities and finally he was appointed as a permanent Sarangi player for Radio orchestral music, where he served from 1992 to 2016 as an A- top class musician. For his unique and mesmerizing sarangi renditions he received full appreciation from the public and very soon his name became a house hold. Employment in Radio Kashmir not only provided a favorable atmosphere to him but also boosted and flourished his talent and capabilities as he was deeply involved with musical activities for both folk music as well as light music activities. His work and demand for great & popular singers & musicians increased his repertoire and knowledge of styles and this adds further feathers to his popularity and he became an eminent figure in all cultural circles of the valley. His ability and inspiration to show his extempore while playing is outstanding and extremely graceful. Ustad Shakhsaaz’s Sarangi renditions includes a universe of songs for almost all occasions of life from traditional wedding songs to welcome songs, Ghazals, Naat, Bhajan, Choral songs, Sufi & romantic Songs etc all these musical forms are accompanied by his strong and colorful Sarangi renditions. His music has always been a part and parcel of Kashmiri culture and tradition and it has got a unique status. The sweet, charming and melodious

tunes he played in his songs touch the heart and mind and even consoles human souls. His hard work and dedication continues growing Kashmiri folk and traditional Sarangi music in new directions revealing this ancient treasure to today’s world. This great maestro had a perfect blend of melody emotions and energy which comes out spontaneously while his playing.

Besides being a maestro in playing his native folk instrument ‘Sarangi’ Ustad Shakhsaaz has also got an amazing & enchanting vocal capabilities too, which has not only added more colour & beauty to his Sarangi renditions but has made the folk work much easier. His energy and vocal skill owe much to the influence of his tutor Gulam Mohammad Bhat. Being an artist of high repute & caliber he embodies the rich melodic and sophisticated rhythmic traditions of Kashmiri folk music in his recitals. Shakhsaaz has also been constantly singing in the Sufi mehfiles, & Sufi shrines with full zeal & zest. He stated that to perform in these highly disciplined ‘Sufi mehfiles’ has developed suffistic attitude towards life & also opened the doors to give vent to his inner feelings & emotions in verses.

Ustad Shakhsaaz with his simplicity love for music and straight forwardness did not became favorite in Kashmir only but also gained a lot of popularity and love from the other parts of states also. He did not just perform for the Indian audience, but on many occasions performed for the global audience as well. Through his enchanting and mesmerizing performances over a period of more than three decades he has created thousands of new listeners and ardent fans of Kashmiri folk and light music. In 1990’s Shakhsaaz teamed up with the legendry Ghazal singers of Kashmir like; Vijay Kumar Malla, Waheed Jeelani, Ghulam Hassan Sofi, Shameema Dev, Gh Nabi Sheikh etc to produce various albums and all these albums turned out to be the greatest hits in Kashmiri music. Throughout his illustrious musical career he released his own innovative experimental albums on “Chakri” music like “Sabzaar, Bandagi and Dewanaye” etc, and these albums became huge hit in the state of J & K & Shakhsaaz’s work & conduct was highly acclaimed & appreciated. Shakhsaaz’s own compositions often dwelt on spiritual and mystical themes that has capture the true spirit of Kashmiri folk music. His music on his recording offers a glimpse into Kashmiri past endowing the present with reminders of the regions rich and glorious folk musical heritage and inspiring the future with a virtuosity never to be forgotten. Ustad Shakhsaaz’s self-motivation is his deep love and attachment for old traditional folk and its spirituality and any financial interest has been of no consequence. Despite all his success, & glorifying works he has done so far but as a person he is very simple & focussed down to earth & bearing a lovely, shining & smiling face and would embrace every one he came across. While interviewing he stated that he aims to please the audience and create a feeling of harmony and expects the audience of reciprocate by reacting to his singing & playing. He strongly believes that it is of utmost importance for a person playing a musical instrument to get vocal training as well. One should try & match the two to create an ultimate & splendid expression of musical harmony. One’s instrument should sound as it is singing.

Ustad Shakhsaaz always sings in an open and forceful voice

and presents his composition in a beautiful and impressive manner which is his specialty besides he always shows special emphasis on a clear and correct interpretation of words of the song. Shakhshaaz always keep musicians and vocalists in tune and inspire them in a cordial contest while playing his native folk instrument Sarangi. So far ustad Shakhshaaz has performed extensively on the prestigious stages in India and abroad & every where he has won great acclaim and numerous awards & honours. He represented the state of J&K during different festivals organized in the USSR, France, Singapore, Dubai, Switzerland etc. So far he has remained one of the most busiest & widely travelled folk musicians Kashmir has produced.

Shakhshaaz also functions as an expert on several panels for selection of Artists/composers in Radio and Doordarshan Srinagar. Now a days Shakhshaaz sings a wide repertoire of traditional and Sufi songs and always remains busy in recordings and concerts. To date he has more than 20 albums to his credit and recorded more than 500 songs mostly in Kashmiri language. Despite his popularity and fame he never had any scandal in his outstanding career.

Ustad Shakhshaaz has been awarded with numerous musical awards & honors for his excellent & worth mentioning contributions in the field of Kashmiri music like “Shesh Rang Award, J&K Tourism Award, Sher-e- Kashmir Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Award, Sa- Ma- Pa award etc. Even today he calls himself a Shagird(disciple) for his quest still continues in the vast unlimited & unending field of music. Being an outstanding folk singer as well as a musician, he with his musical genius made the Kashmiri folk instrument “Sarangi” as one of the most popular & prominent musical instrument on national & international level.

Ustad Shakhshaaz did not generally take students under him and the only people he associated with in that talent and capacity are as:

1. GhulamMohadGanie*Rabab Player*
2. Shameem Ahmed *SarangiPlayer*
3. Mohammad Ashraf Baba *Sarangi Player*
4. Ajaz Ahmed Bhat*Rabab & Sarangi*
5. Mohad Afzal Sheikh *Sarangi player*

All of them are doing really well in the realm of Kashmiri folk music.

Ustad Sakhsaaz had a special skill to play Harmonium and being best at Rabab. Despite the arrival of many electronic musical instruments, Shakhshaaz’s soulful & heart touching Sarangi rendition has left a sensational & electrifying effect on the listeners due to which ‘Sarangi’ will continue to rule over the hearts of Kashmiri people.

Ustad Sakhsaaz has contributed much to singing Kashmiri mystic songs. His famous Sufi song “ Ha Sher Sawaroo Kour Gachak Aakhir Chhe Marun Chuy” written by the great Sufi poet & Saint “Wahab Soab”has been one of the most popular “Chekri “song of those times & is still retaining its beauty & charm in Kashmiri Music. Shakhshaaz has his own multi talented folk party headed by him.Members of this group include.

1. Ghulam Mohammad Shakhshaaz (Hormonium Player)
2. Mohammad Maqbool Bhat (Rabab Player)
3. Mohammad Ismail Gadda (Noet Player)

4. Shammem Ahmed Sheikh (Rabab Player)
5. Mohammd Ashraf Baba (Sarangi Player)

Ustad Shakhshaaz feels highly indebted and grateful to the people for their encouragement and support and held him with such an honour and dignity in making him a symbol of Kashmir folk and traditional music. In the field of Kashmiri folk and traditional music his contributions is highly worth mentioning & praise worthy. In short ustad Mohammad Abdullah Shakhshaaz’s contribution to Kashmiri music and melody is infinite and boundless. Being an energetic and high caliber artist we expect further marvelous and wonderful achievements from him.

References

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