



Historical development of music in Kashmir

Dr. Waheeda Akhtar

Research Scholar, Faculty of Music, Indira Kala Sangit vishwavidyalaya Khairagarh, Chhattisgarh, India

Abstract

Kashmir is referred to as a paradise on earth with its lakes and mountains, its luxurious chinars and tall poplars, delicious fruits, ancient monuments, its placid rivers and lakes, the Kashmir valley is considered to be the most beautiful valley in the world. The beautiful mountains of Kashmir look all the more beautiful at sunset. The clear cool waters, the gentle breezes, the warm sun shine, the murmuring springs, the fresh water of the lakes and snow-capped mountains of Kashmir are very charming indeed.

Keywords: historical development, music, Kashmir

Introduction

The famous Mughal Emperor Jahangir on his first visit of Kashmir, was so much fascinated and attracted by the charming beauty and pleasant climate of Kashmir that he described the Valley as a "Paradise on earth".

Stating about Kashmir Emperor Jehangir said

In Persian Language:-

"Agar Firdous Baryoe Zameen Ast"

Hameen Asto-Hameen Asto-Hamee-Ast!!^[1]

Meaning

If there is a heaven any where on the Earth

It is here, it is here, it is here.

Kashmir means several things to several people. It is a pleasure garden for lovers, an ideal health for the sick, a heaven of rest for the weary souls and the source of inspiration to an artist, singer and a poet. The tall trees echo, the fragrant breeze, to create continual and unending music. The sweet chirping and melodious songs of colourful birds, the rivers, streams and waterfall beats sheer heads against the shallowly stones create soft and serene music. Its charming beauty bestowed sublimity of thought to the poets who have composed most of delightful songs, which in turn have boosted and bloomed music, is the practical representation to the poetic expression.

The words of Thomas Moore (An Irish Poet) about the beauty of Kashmir in the keynote of his Oriental-Romance "Lalla Rookh" whose verses have the real feel of Kashmir's beauty "who had not heard the value of Cashmere, with its roses, the brightest, that earth ever gave, its temples, grottos and fountains as clear as love lighted eyes that hang over their wave!....." ^[2].

Kashmir or Cashmere is immortalized for its beauty by Sir William Jones, and he praises its beauty in his own way, in his book "Works of Sir William Jones"..... "No nation at this day can vie with the Arabians in the delightfulness of their

climate and the simplicity of their manners. This is a Valley indeed, to the north of Indostan, called Cashmir, which according to an account written by a native of it, it is a perfect garden, exceedingly fruitful and watered by a thousand rivulets"..... ^[3].

Jones's inclination was towards locating paradise in central Asia but his enthusiasm of Kashmir (which he had not visited himself but of which he had learnt from others) was unbounded.

Background /History

Kashmir is having a glorious and interesting musical background. Many historical manuscripts related to the Kashmir history are witness to the fact that the ancient Kashmir was an abode of music. During ancient times, people in Kashmir were the great patrons of music and dance. Musical tradition of Kashmir is as ancient as Vedic era, when we look into the past we find that the development of music in Kashmir had been gradual and continuous. Neelmathpurana, the earliest historical book of Kashmir, give the details about the festivals and occasions like religions and agricultural, in which the musical programme featured ^[1]. Musicians during those times played different types of musical instruments like flute, Dhol, Stringed instruments ^[2] etc.

During various era's many kings of Kashmir who were the patrons of music invited many musicians, singers and dancers from different parts of India and also from central Asia. During Ashoka's reign ^[3] [269-227 B.C] music in Kashmir progressed by leaps and bounds. This was the time when Indian music reached and spread in Kashmir also. Musicians from south and north India used to assemble in Kashmir to participate in musical festivals. During the reign of Maharaja Jaloka [3rd century B.C] music was played in Buddhist viharas [monastery]. Music was necessary at religious ceremonies. Maharaja Jaloka employed hundreds of musicians in his court. Lalitaditya's period is considered as the golden period in the music of Kashmir. When Raja Lalitaditya was crowned as the

¹ Kashmir Rediscovered by Dr. Abdul Ahad p.6.

² The poetical worksof Thomas Moore pp.437-438.

³ Works of Sir William Jones, 6 vols, volIV p.527 London 1779

king of the Kashmir 724-761 A.D.^[4] music flourished throughout Kashmir. During his reign drama received royal patronage and drama artists were given every opportunity to promote their talent.

During the reign of king Kalsha^[5] 1063-1089 A.D. wanjun [the folk song of Kashmir] and a better technique of dancing was introduced in Kashmir like ballet dancing. King Kalsha patronized music, dance and drama. Dancers who generally belonged to the lower classes were raised to the status of courtiers. Music in Kashmir at that time was somewhat similar to the rest of country.

During medieval period music in Kashmir experienced various ups and downs. This period saw the two different phases of music in the history of Kashmir. One is its decline and the other is its development. In this period, the most of the musicians from Kashmir fled to other part of the country and most famous among those was "Sarang Dev" who fled to Devgiri and continued his work during exile and most famous of his works was "Sangeet Ratnakara" which became a treatise on music during 12th century. During the same era many rulers had shown their special interest towards music. Among them are a large number of Muslim rulers, as well. The credit goes to the sultan Zainul Aabidin (1420-1470A.D)^[7], in the development of music in Kashmir, during this time. Sultan Zain ul Aabidin held musical festivals or concerts, and he himself was a great classical singer, he maintained musicians from Karnataka, who popularized a number of Karnataka ragas^[8]. The sultan's patronage to music attracted a number of foreign musicians to Kashmir. The famous among them were Mulla Udi, Mulla Jameel, Mulla Zada from khorasan. Sultan Zainul-Aabidin invited many dancers, singers and actors from the outside countries, among them Tara and utsava were the great female dancers. This period is quoted as the happiest period in the history of Kashmir. Every year Sultan Zain ul-Aabidin during his reign held musical festivals, in which he invited and also introduced new musicians and singers from different places like Yarkand, Samarkand, Iran, Tashkand, Kabul, Punjab, Delhi to Kashmir for performance.

Sultan Hassan Shah and Haidar Shah were the two Muslim rulers who had shown their special interest towards music. Sultan Haidar Shah's role is appreciable, during his period, music department was created by him for the first time in Kashmir and he appointed Srivara as the head of this department^[9]. Sultan Hassan Shah was a vocalist himself, he had a sweet voice and was fond of vernacular songs. He included Karnataka ragas in Kashmiri music,^[10] and that was the great contribution and his experiment in the field of Kashmiri music.

Sultan Yousuf Shah's role is admirable in the music of Kashmir. Sultan Yousuf Shah himself practiced music and performed with perfection and his queen "Habba Khatoon" (the famous poetess of Kashmir), and a great musician, invented "Raast Kashmiri Raga"^[11] in sufiana musique and many more ragas in Kashmiri sufiana musiqi. Sufiana musiqi was the main attraction of sultan Yousuf Shah and Sufi music attained/gained high position during the reign of Sultan Yousuf.

Many musicians and singers of Kashmir believe that the glorious and golden chapter in the music of Kashmir started with the reign of mughal emperors. According to them the emperors would witness dance performances in their beautiful gardens^[12]. Akbar's reign marks the dawn of a new stage in the history classical music both Indian and Kashmiri. Under him, Kashmir came close within the orbit of Delhi and Agra, the two centers of art and learning of that time.

Hence, the development of music in Kashmir is the result of heterogeneous collection of studies from diverse origins through musical styles, with the help of varied actors, singers, dancers and musicians.

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