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SHAMEEMA AZAD: THE MELODY QUEEN OF KASHMIR



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Shameem Azad, the melody queen, was born on May 25, 1955, in Srinagar, Kashmir, to a cultured and orthodox family. Her father, Muhammad Abdullah Dev (Nadeem), was a well-known intellectual, educated personality and poet of Kashmir. Shameem Azad married, Mr. Ghulam Nabi Azad, a well-known Indian politician and former Chief Minister of Kashmir. She is best known for her versatile vocal quality, having recorded albums of Kashmiri ghazals, folk songs, filmi songs, and other genres.

After schooling, she graduated from Women's College, Maulana Azad Road, Srinagar and subsequently got a master's degree in Indian classical music from Allahabad University. She began working as a lecturer of music in 1978.

Shameem Azad embraced Kashmiri music when she was just nine years old. She had been a gifted artist since she was a child. With the passage of time, she attained a position where her admirers/listeners have been watching and listening to her performances on television or radio with great respect and honour. She contributed a valuable voice to the cause of preserving and upliftment of the cultural heritage of Kashmir. Despite coming from an orthodox family, she rose to the pinnacle of glory in the field of music, bringing respectability to the artist community, particularly women artists. She has a strong sense of "guru-shishya parampara," and she has always attributed her success to her gurus, well-wishers, listeners, viewers, music composers, and, most importantly, her parents, children, and husband, who have always been there for her.

Shameem Azad has given Kashmiri folk and light music a new dimension. Her sweet voice brought old classic pieces of Kashmiri poetry back to life in their original form. Shameem Azad not only worked tirelessly to improve the quality of Kashmiri poetry, but she also worked hard to improve the quality of the music. She is notable for singing to certain pieces of poetry that the Kashmiri masses have forgotten.

Shameem Azad's hard work, dedication, capability, and competence propelled her to new heights and ranks of perfection, and she became a household name in Kashmiri light and folk music. She had a firm grip on the flow of Swara, Laya, and Tala, which would enhance her abilities to perform with confidence and perfection. She was selected as a top-grade artist by All India Radio Kashmir, Srinagar, and Doordarshan Kendra Srinagar. By performing at the All India Radio, Kashmir and Doordarshan Kendra, Srinagar, Kashmir, she was able to fully develop and enhance her soothing voice and talent, resulting in her becoming a leading and proficient light and folk music singer who established her own standards. She was patronised by Radio and Doordarshan, and she recorded a number of folk and light music songs, most of which became hits. One of her light music songs, "Kashmir Mere Jannat-e-Kashmir" when broadcast from All India Radio Kashmir, Srinagar, turned out to be huge hit and is still considered to be the crowning glory of the light music genre.

Shameem Azad's glorious, soothing, and powerful voice breathed new life and light into the old and rich Kashmiri folk music and poetry by presenting them in their original shape and form, establishing her as a great and distinguished folk and light music artist in Kashmir. She was always very busy demonstrating her skillful abilities, new melodies and tunes, and she left no stone unturned in enriching and refining Kashmiri folk and light music. She was amazingly well-versed in playing on "Harmonium". Her devotion to purity and oral tradition inspired her to compose and sing some of her own songs. She has written a book of her own poetry

collection “Noor Subuhuk Yath Zameenas”. She could sing about anything, from romance to spirituality, with ease and feeling. In doing so, she would drown in her knowledge and expertise of the song and leave indelible imprints on the hearts and souls of her audience. Her sweet, melodious voice would make famous poetess “Habba Khatoon’s” poetry a joy to listen to and even comforting to human souls. Her musical turns and thrills (Murki, Meend, Khatka, Alap and Behlava, etc.) were fabulous and fantastic. When her patriotic songs “Yeli Yaad Pewan Sonahaer Watan” and “Kashmir Mere Jannat-e-Kashmir” were broadcast on Radio Kashmir, Srinagar, they became a huge hit and continue to be popular to this day. She appears to have found her spirituality through her songs as a high-caliber singer and artist, and she will live forever as part of Kashmiri folk or light musical heritage. She was a straightforward and focused person. Flaunting a serious appearance, did regular Riyaz, creating new melodies and technics.

Shameem Azad’s success in the valley stems from the fact that she didn’t simply sing songs; she also vocalised Kashmiri culture, contributing not only to the culture of Jammu and Kashmir but also to cultural nationalism. She has given ordinary Kashmiris like me the opportunity to understand and convey the wonderful philosophy of our legendary Kashmiri poets Neyama Soab, Rasul Mir, Ahmad Dar, Shamous Fageer, and poetess Habba Khatoon, and many others. Her songs display a flawless weave of poetry flair, emotion, and melody, as well as a gifted knack for capturing the spirit and mood of lyrics in various music genres, while she was at the pinnacle of her career. Her success in the domain of Kashmiri music has inspired many young females from well-respected families to pursue careers in music as well. After entering the field of music, her success has given them new motivation as well as a sense of confidence and respectability. She has consistently and actively supported young and aspiring Kashmiri musicians who have formed a strong feeling of belonging and commitment to their mother tongue and culture.

Shameem Azad enchanted listeners and viewers across the country with her distinctive manner of presentation and poetic compositions, and she was acknowledged and recognised whenever and wherever she performed. The acclaim she garnered for Kashmiri music as a result of her songs crowned her the melody queen of Kashmir. She is also known as the “Lata Mangeshkar” of Kashmiri music.

Shameem Azad is a well-known performer. She has sung in several Indian languages, including Bengali, Telugu, Kannada, Marathi, Rajasthani, Dogri, Gujri, Ladakhi Urdu, Hindi, and Kashmiri. She has performed Hamud, Naat, Manqabat, Nowha, Leela, Ghazal, Nazam, Filmi songs, and folk songs in solo and chorus renditions, in addition to singing in several languages. Her melodies have become more melodic with time.

List of feature films/tele-films, television serials and music directors whom she has worked.

Shameem Azad has sung/rendered her voice in a variety of well-known television serials and feature films. Among them are: -

She holds the distinction of being the Kashmir valley’s first female playback singer, having performed for the telefilm “Habba-Khatoon,” which was shown at the national and international level. The songs are still played with zeal.

She is the only lady artist from the valley of Kashmir, who has had the honour of lending her melodic voice to the Hindi feature film “Hum Bachhe Hindustan Key.” She signed for another feature film “Sapna” after hearing her in “Hum Bachhe Hindustan Key,” which garnered her immense acclaim across the country and notably in the music circles.

1. Tipu Sultan - Naushad (Music Director)
2. Great Maratha - Khayyam (Music Director)
3. Jai Hanuman - Ravindra Jain (Music Director)
4. Film Sapna - Ravindra Jain (Music Director)
5. Film Bub - Pandit Bhajan Sopori (Music Director)
6. Hum Bachhey - Ravindra Jain (Music Director)

Hindustan Key

Concerts / Public performances

- Shameem Azad is a leading Kashmiri singer who has performed all over the country.
- Shameem Azad has pushed the legacy of Kashmiri music beyond the boundaries of the country to London and Europe.

Special achievements

After a 38-year hiatus, The National Film Development Corporation (NFDC) of India released “Bub,” a Kashmiri feature film in which Shameem Azad rendered her voice, and won the Nargis Dutt National Award for National Integration.

Awards / Honours

Right from her childhood, she has been a promising artist and has been awarded a number of times from her school days.

- Shameem Azad has won the title of “Andhra Ki Beti” after she sang in Telugu. She was also awarded gold medal by the Government of Andhra Pradesh in 1978.
- Shameem Azad cut a music disc in Bengali. This was done to honour her for singing Bengali songs.
- The union minister for Information & Broadcasting honoured her for life time achievements on the occasion of Golden Jubilee Celebrations of All India Radio Kashmir, Srinagar in 1988.
- In the year 2005 she was awarded **Padamshri** by the President of India for her outstanding and tremendous contributions in the field of music and art.
- Shameem Azad has not only been devoting her time for the excellence in music but her passion for women development won her the **Kalpna Chawla Excellence Award for Women** in the year 2007.
- The SARHAD Foundation honoured Shameem Azad with Lalded National Award 2010, for her outstanding contributions in the field of Kashmiri Music.
- Recognizing her outstanding contributions in the field of Performing Arts, Shameem Azad has been conferred with **State Award** by Govt of Jammu & Kashmir in 2010.

- Shameem Azad has been awarded by a number of cultural and social organizations all over the country and abroad.

Some reputed and most famous Hamud and Naats recited by Shameem Azad are:

1. Allah Te Ho Ho
2. Allah Badshah Chu Moullah Badshah Chu
3. Ba-Khoda Sarie Khodaye
4. Ya Nabi (saw) Salam Alaika
5. Dila Wath Sakhar Kar, etc.

Some reputed and most famous songs sung by Shameem Azad are:

6. Bedard Dadi Chani Soor Ho Sapdan
7. Hakeema Wara Wuchtam
8. Raah Bakhshitam Sarey
9. Chi Yiwan Roshie Chukh Nata
10. Aakho Shehre Sheerazo
11. Madano Parda Royas Tul
12. Rosha Wala Miyani Dilbaro
13. Kiya Kar Yath Lola Naras
14. Madano Rayi Chaney
15. Razahanza Byooth Kana Daray
16. Vasiye Naraye Daza Miyani Tan
17. Rang Bael Dolum
18. Tula Naar Chuma Lalvun Mooray
19. Hala Aki Sala Yita Lalo
20. Soz Ashkun Wani Boze Warai
21. Me Ha Kari Che Ket Poshdaswanay
22. Dil Band Dil Aazar, Dil Aaram, etc.

