

Mystical Dimensions of Classical Music of Kashmir: A Study of Musical Genesis

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Abstract

The “*Sufiana Mausiqui*” known as Classical music of Kashmir is the music of pious hearted people which commonly exists in the faculty of “SANA” because this music plays the spiritual poetry which is a heavenly pleasure and God related, full of solace and satisfaction. Although Classical music of Kashmir emerged in the courts of kings and was guided and nourished by rulers, yet its runners and lovers were the pious, spiritual and religious people.

Key words:- Sufism, Sufi Poetry, *Sufiana Mousiqui*,

Sufi: The word ‘Sufi’ is apparently derived from Arabic word “*SUF*” meaning coarse wool and was originally applied to those Muslim mystics who wore coarse woolen garments as a sign of self renunciation and penitence. The Sufis are named so because of the purity of their hearts and cleanliness of their acts. They are the one whose actions and acts are for the Allah and who also surrender and submit completely before his will. The Sufis are called Sufis because they are in the first rank (*SAF*) before Allah due to the sincerity of their actions, aspirations and beliefs. Their qualities resemble those of the people of the group (*Suffah*) who lived in the time of Prophet Mohammad.^(saw)

Sufism: Mystical Islamic belief and practice in which Muslim seek to find the truth of divine love and knowledge through direct personal experience of God. There is no single, systematic approach to Sufi teachings and not all of its teaching can be communicated in words. The wisdom of Sufism can be found in stories, poems, art, calligraphy, rituals, readings and prayer.¹ Sufism is often described as a path, suggesting both an origin and a destination. The aim of Sufism is the elimination of all veils between the individual and

¹ James Fadiman & Robert Fager, *Essential Sufism Selection From The Saints & Sages*, P.1.

God. Travelling this path, one can acquire knowledge of reality. God is the ultimate reality of this phenomenal world of multiplicity.²

To understand Sufism, we must understand mysticism. The Greek root *myelin*, “to close the eye” is also the root of “mystery”. The belief that direct knowledge of God, spiritual truth or ultimate reality can be attained through subject experience. According to ‘Siraj’s’ classic definition of Sufism, ‘The Sufis are people who prefer God to everything and God prefer them to everything else’ The Sufi ‘Al Gazali says’ ‘Real self knowledge consists in knowing the following things. What are you in yourself and where did you came from? Where are you going and for what purpose are you tarrying here a while? In what does your real happiness and misery consist? Many pitfalls both real and imaginary render us unable or even unwilling to seek this inner knowledge’.³

In short, Sufism (also known as *Tasawuf*) is a group or branch in Islam with a mystic path or system. Someone who practices Sufism is called Sufi or *Darvesh*.

Origin of Sufism in Kashmir: The region of Sufis (*Peer waer*), the land of enchanting lakes, pleasure gardens, lush green fields, forests, wildlife, fresh water springs, rivers, blooming fruits, tall deodars, Pine and “*Chinar*” trees, flower-beds, peerless handicrafts and religious places, Kashmir is indeed a heaven. It has produced a galaxy of Sufi poets, philosophers, Sufi Singers and Sufi Saints.

Sufism in Kashmir has roots dating back to Hazrat Bulbul shah.^(R.A) His original name is said to be Syed Abdul Rahman though some call him Syed Sharf-ud-Din or Syed Rahman Turkistani. This is certain that he was a Syed of Turkistan and was disciple of *Shah Nimat-ul-lah wali*^(R.A) a khalifa of Suharwardi tariks (a Sufi sect). He paid his first visit to Kashmir in the reign of Raja Samha-Dev (1286-1301) left, but returned soon.⁴ Raja Samha-Dev and his minister Ramchand fled. Rinchan Shah, the prince of Tibet, who had quarreled with Ramchand, cleverly attacked and butchered him in cold blood with the help of Shah-Mir and some Ladakhis. He then proclaimed himself as the King of Kashmir. Bulbul Shah again visited Kashmir in the reign of Rinchan Shah (1320-1323) and this time he effected the conversion of Rinchan Shah, rechristened him as Sadar-ud-Din under the circumstances that have already been referred to. With the

² S.M.D.Kashmir Being a History of Kashmir, Vol, 1, P. 272.

³ James Fadiman & Robert Fager, Essential Sufism Selection From The Saints & Sages, P. 2.

⁴ Kaumudi, Kashmir Its Culture And Heritage, p. 23.

establishment of the Muslim rule other notable Syeds began to pour in to the country. Bulbul Shah was followed by Syed Jalal-ud-Din of Bukhara and Syed Taj-ud-Din, (the cousin of Mir Syed Ali Hamdani)^(R.A)⁵ There also came Syed Hussain Samnani, the younger brother of Syed Taj-ud-Din. It is said that Taj-ud-Din and Syed Hussain Samnani came to Kashmir under instructions from ‘Mir Syed Ali Hamdani’(Shah-i-Hamdan). Mir Syed Ali Hamdani’ himself came to Kashmir as will be presently seen. It is said that the conversion of people of Kashmir to Islam was further encouraged by the arrival of a host of Syeds. With ‘The great Mir Syed Ali Hamdani’, 700 Syeds are said to have accompanied him. Mir Syed Ali Hamdani (1314-1348) was a Persian Sufi poet and a prominent scholar of the Kubrawi order. His Ghazals or Odes are naturally Sufistic. The “*Chehal-i-Asrar*” is a small collection of his religious and mystical poems. He wrote several short works on spirituality and Sufism. He was immortalized by poet like ‘Allama Iqbal’. His name was Ali and titles were Amir-i-Kabir.⁶

Poetry: Poetry may be defined to be the expression of imagination. It is linked with the origin of man. ‘Emotion produces a treasure of expression and language becomes the instrument or medium’.

Here are some definitions of poetry by some world famous poets:

- If truth is devoid of favour, it is philosophy. If receives warmth from the heart, it becomes poetry. (Dr.Allama Iqbal)
- Poetry is an activity of poets mind and a poem is merely one of the forms of its expression. (P.B. Shelley)
- Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings. It takes its origin from emotions recollected in tranquility.⁷(William Wordsworth)

Meaning and importance of Sufi poetry: The Sufi poetry or devotional poetry is equally related to “*Aqeedat*” (faith). *Aqeedat* has been derived from Arabic language. Its literal meaning implies “a fact accepted as truth and preserved in heart with love and respect”. Sufi poetry or devotional poetry or poetry of faith is actually a part of religious and spiritual poetry, the expression of love for God, that’s why we also call them *Sufi kalam* (Sufi poetry), in which Sufi has offered a path on which one can progress towards the “great

⁵ Masood Ali Khan & S. Ram, Basic Principles Of Sufism In Islam. P. 3.

⁶ Ahmad al Alawi Shaikh, Sufi Saints Of The Twentieth Century, P. 34.

⁷ Net Source. (<http://www.goodreads.com>)

end” of self-realization, or God-realization. Sufi poetry is a way or medium for teaching us that there is one God and that God is transcendent of all creation. God is all powerful and needs nothing from anyone or anything. God is the owner of everything that you can see and that you cannot see. Sufis poetic aim was to convey the deep insights and visions which came from their awakening experience, whose poetry is pervaded with an awareness that nothing happens without God’s will. Human will exists within the context of the great divine will; they believe that all things that came to us, good and bad, pleasant and unpleasant come from God. Life does not end with death. Life in this world is like a dream and our true life starts in the next world. There are hundreds and millions of people who would agree with these beliefs. They believe what the Sufis taught us through ‘Sufi poetry’.

Sufi poetry or spiritual poetry can be an enlightening way to understand spiritual teaching more fully and start thinking about the truths and facts.

*“Nafsan Kodus Ati Aty, Nafsan Korus Pashemaan,
Nafs Chhui Madhos Hankal Tchatl, Nafs Yemrot Suvot Lamakaan”*.⁸

(Shaikh-ul-Alam)

Meaning: My worldly desires have not kept me of any worth (have ruined me), it is an uncontrolled wild elephant. Whosoever has controlled his ‘senses’ has attained or reached the pinnacle of success.

*“Sabr Ha Mali Chhui Soni Sund Toory, Mol Chhui Drog Tay Heyas Kus,
Sabr Ha Mali Chhu Noon, Mrtch Ty Ziyury, Kheni Chhui Tiyoth Ty Kheyas Kus”*⁹

(Lalla Dyed)

Meaning: Patience, my son! Is like a golden bowl, being costly, none doth dare purchase it. Patience, my son, is a mixture of salt, pepper and *Zira* (spice), it is bitter to taste, so who will taste it?

Role of Sufi poetry for the development of classical music of Kashmir: The classical music of Kashmir is known as “*Sufiana Mausiqui*”. The singing of Sufi poetry has been in practice from the times of the “*Sultan-Zain-Ul-Abideen*” (1420-1470). It was initially patronized in courts of kings, after the subjugation of Kashmir by Pathans and Afghans. *Sufiana Mausiqui* or *Sufiana* singing was deprived of state patronage. However, it

⁸ Ghulam Nabi Gowhar, Kalami Shaikh Ul Alam, P. 28.

⁹ Kamudi, Kashmir Its Culture and Heritage. P. 49.

was protected by Sufis and spiritual poets and also by elite classes. During the subjugation of Maharaja the *Sufiana* singing was again brought to the court of the maharaja. It was also kept alive by Sufi saints and 'peers' who were the music lovers. It is the most strong and important medium of expression. A large variety of spiritual or devotional poetry has been written in Kashmir. The Sufi poetry or the poetry of faith has been classified into two parts. First part contains the *Hamdia*, *Munajaat*, *Manqabat*, *Naat* and mournful or elegiac poetry, the other part contains religious concepts and myths of Hindus and different religious and spiritual personalities. Thus as per 'Nishat Ansari', 'Any verse from the rhyme and poetic account expressing praise, admiration and pray is the devotion or *Hamud*. The *Sufiana* singing is an art of faith, trust and obedience which is directly connected with the faith of Islam. A praiseworthy poetry in the name of *Shiva*, *Ishwar*, *Bhagwan* or other faith and the singing in praise of these powers denoting their qualities comes in the category of *Leela* or *Bhajans*'.¹⁰

The role played by Sufi or devotional poetry in the development of the Sufi classical singing is very strong and appealing, it is the poetry that conveys the meaning of love, devotion towards God and glory and gratitude shown in Sufi poetry takes the singer to the upper reaches of the "*Tasawuf*". The music and the rhythmic texture given to the Sufi poetry portrays the glorious and magnanimous authority of the creator and gives vent to the sentiments of the singer, the singer himself gets lost in the mesmerizing words of the poet and at the same time steals the heart of the audience or the listener lot. The impact of Sufi poetry on the listeners is so strong that singer and the listener sometimes or we may say most of the times lose control on the self and become highly emotional. The waves of the devotional poetry take both the singer and the listener to the ocean of happiness, contentment and gratitude, singing and praising the "*Sana*" and pay tribute to the creator for the wonders he placed in the lives of the humans. When Sufis arrived in to Kashmir from central Asia they were practicing the tradition of Sufi poetry and Sufi singing in the praise of God called '*Sana*'. Gradually the Sufis introduced musical instruments in the singing of there hymns. This amalgam of Sufi poetry and Sufi singing and *Sufiana* instruments attracted the locals of Kashmir and in due course of time it got viral popularized and come to be called *Sufiana* music (*Sufiana Mosiqui*) and gradually which got converted in Classical music of Kashmir. If the poetry is enthralling and captivating the showers of spiritual

¹⁰ Nishat Ansari, (Kashmii Shairat Aur Sufiana Mosiqui) *Sufiana Mosiqui Aur Kashmir*, P. 435.

and transcendental ecstasy overwhelms the both. The heart and eyes are taken to the delight unmatched, which paves the way for grasping the ultimate goal of life. The goodwill of the supreme power fills the self with the glisten and grace. If the elegancies are candidly taken and in a broader standpoint it will make the social set up worth to be lived in by the gallant people. But, as far as the poetic tendrils of Sufism is concerned, the class or the audience and hearers are limited. It requires the sharp and deep mind to understand the intricacies and niceties of the poetic fragrance coupled with the singing of the Sufi enchanters. The verses of Sufi poetry touch the soul (*Rooh*) and get connected to the ultimate master. The Classical music of Kashmir gives the thoughts of the poet a mirth and jubilant goal. Classical music of Kashmir is inarguably strong part of Kashmiri culture. It is not only confined to Muslims, it is indiscriminately enjoyed upon by people of all walks of life. Kashmir's beauty not only enralls the poets but the singers as well.

Conclusion

The poetry and music are the two sides of the same coin or more accurately and appositely it is like a human frame with a lively soul or the delightful spirit. The devotional or Sufi poetry is incomplete if it is not provided with the theologically musical plethora. The endorsement of the philosophical doctrines of Sufi poetry are decorated and ornamented with the nightingale voices and incarnate instruments thus making it soulful and hallucinogenic.

The singer and the listener of Sufi poetry with *Sufiana* music makes him always absorbed in the multifarious imagination and gratitude of the creator weaving beautiful associations with him and feeling close to him. Mystic wisdom is reflected in the verses of Sufi poets and this wisdom is given an adorable frame by the musicians and singers. The prevalence and fragrance of Sufi thought is not required to be followed by a particular faith, it is open to all and all are the sons or the disciples of the creator who takes care of each and every thing. Sufis say that God has created us as one but it is 'us' that have made difference between the 'humans'. So the mystic ideology is not meant for one sect of society of one particular thought, it is like *Jaam-e-shireen* or the poise water for all Cultural values may differ from one culture to another but the very essential aim of oneness is found in all schools of mystic ideology. Had it been of our subcontinent or of the western theology the nucleus is same.

“Moyi Chhu Morifatuk, Chavan Rindi Panai,

Bagraan Natiav Ti Narev, Vuchnai Zi Hiyond Chha Ki Musalman”¹¹

Meaning: Author ‘Shams Faqeer’ says, the man in devotion absorbs the divine enlightenment and distributes it in infinite quantity without any bias of religion.

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¹¹ Motilal Saqi, Kashmii Sufi Shairi, P. 311.