

## Kashmiri Singers Late Ghulam Hassan: Their life histories and contribution on singing

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### Abstract

The present study was to access the contribution and their history of Kashmiri Singers namely Ghulam Qadir Langoo and Rashid Jahangir. Songs had specific functions, significance and meaning for folks who sang them. Yet, Folk songs remain essential to Kashmiri way of life. The way in which these songs are being sung has changed. Folk songs still exist but you can now hear them on VCD/DVD produced especially for mass consumption. Naturally, purist sneer and they wonder: what happened to the genuine Kashmiri folk songs? But, most people are happy knowing that these songs still exist and are sung, and hope that maybe the 'scene' is better in rural areas.

**Keywords:** Kashmiri singers, history, singing contribution

### Introduction

#### Late Ghulam Hassan Sofi

“The Undisputed Melody King of Kashmir”

“Afsoos duniya Kansina lob samsaar sitye”

Most singers sing for a living. Very few live to sing. Almost no singer lives his songs, Hassan Sofi did all three. What distinguished him for all other singers is that he lived his songs. Looking back and reminiscing, it would appear as if he sang only either to anticipate or to rationalize his own life and that of many others. Every facet of his life, from his being a prodigy to the neglect towards the end of his life, has been described by the songs that he sang. He had been given his voice, as if in lieu of the visual impairment that he was born with.

This should not come as a surprise considering that his father had sought him from the darbar Hazrat Mouh-ud-din Chisti. The greatest Sufi saint of the land seems to have blessed the unborn Hassan Sofi.

The singer in him was awakened by his surroundings. Thus was a period in Kashmir when Hafiz Nagma was at its peak. One of the most Hafizas of that time, was a woman called Gill. Hafiza Gill used to reside at Dalgate in the neighbourhood of Sofi. He was so taken in by her singing that he would often ears drop near her gate.

One day she caught him snooping and asked him why he was there, “I love your voice” replied young Sofi. Gill ded, as he would call her in later years, took him under her wings and inquired of him whether he knows how to play any musical instrument, perhaps thinking of including him in her troupe. Sofi told her that he can't play any instruments; she encouraged him to learn.

Late Ghulam Hassan Sofi insisted his father to buy a Sarangi for him, his father, Wahab Sofi, brought him a Sarangi from Tota of Nawakadal a famous Sarangi maker. Later Ghulam Hassan Sofi learned to play it but his pure dedication towards music was so much that he learned to play all instruments used in Kashmiri music known as Panch Hathiyar: Sarangi,

Harmonium, rabab, noet and tumbaknari.

He started his singing with Mohammad Subhan who used to conduct a mehfil. Ghulam Hassan Sofi sings with him till late hours, eventually, Sofi got hold of singing in rhythm.

Ghulam Mohammad Tanki introduced him to the legendry Amritlal Mini, Officer on special duty in the radio Kashmir. Mini gave him a break in Radio Kashmir, in early 1950's.

Hassan Sofi was born on 8<sup>th</sup> July 1932 at Dalgate. He came from the Hanji Clan who make a living of the Dal lake and are not particularly known for cultural pursuits. He married a widow and adopted her daughter from the first marriage and continued to lieu in the Dal to come from a very underprivileged background and achieve such heights demands respect.

Hassan Sofi started his career singing with Chakar. Overtime, he moved away from his form to evolve his own unique form of modern Kashmiri Ghazal singing, which was more modern and accessible to the newer audience.

As a singer and artist, it seems that Sofi found his spirituality through his songs and will live forever as part of our rich musical heritage and folk and romantic lore- a heritage dating back and underpinning a local, syncretic musical mystical tradition that cuts across the religious, gender class and rural urban divides.

At the peak of his career, his songs reflected a perfect weave of poetry, emotion and melody and a talent for capturing the essence and mood of lyrics in different genres ranging from the serious mystical rendering of Rajab Hamids Afsoos Duniya.....to ghazals like Che looguth Sorme Chasman, to lighter folk songs like Chonpaknooy parznomai Dooriye Walae Kastooriye.

From romance to spirituality, he would sing with ease and feeling his singing was full of aesthetics. He used to compose some songs himself which were full of emotions.

His message to younger generation of the Kashmiri singers was to work on the significance of purity of language, tradition and diction. Money or fame would not lure him

towards anything that he would consider hybrid or 'Filmy'. While it is accepted that Sofi contributed to the music of the valley, what has not been appreciated in his role in the cultural revival of Kashmir. According to him devotional and romantic songs are full of aesthetics.

### **Manzoor Ahmad Shah**

Manzoor Ahmad Shah, son of Abdul Salam Shah residence of Singpora, Pattan of District Baramullah was born on 4<sup>th</sup> June 1973. His qualification is middle pass.

Manzoor Ahmad Shah started his career as a dance (Bach koat), but side by side he received training and guidance in singing from Khazer Mohammad Shah, Gulam Nabi Bulbul, Mohammad Yousuf Paray and Kuka Parray, the reputed singers of the valley. As a dancer he joined the party of Kuka Parray.

In 1995, he was approved as B-class artist by Radio Kashmir Srinagar. Manzoor Ahmad Shah is one of the most outstanding folk musicians of Kashmir. Manzoor Ahmad Shah is basically the artist of Chakri and Rouf but besides a Chakri singer, his love and affection towards music make him a multitalented singer of the valley. He adds a lot of variations in different styles of singing. Nowadays Manzoor Ahmad Shah sings all kinds of songs without disturbing its originality. He is one of the leading singer of the valley. He is booked for the occasions like marriages, parties before a couple of months.

Radio Kashmir, Cultural academy and doordarshan provided him with the opportunities of displaying his talent outside Kashmir like Shimla, Delhi, Rampur, Bhopal etc.

He is having a great young fan following in the valley of Kashmir. God has bestowed him with a melodious voice. The popular songs sung by him are as under:-

1. Posh matu nender Payem Chaen gazal gavan gavan.
2. Laali Lalay Beha Lal Na Wa Tho Shazado Wadi Kya aos.

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