

Kashmiri Singers Ghulam Qadir Langoo and Rashid Jahangir: 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. Kashmiri music reflects the rich musical heritage and cultural legacy of Kashmir. Traditionally the music composed by ethnic Kashmiris has a wide range of musical influences in composition. Due to Kashmir's close proximity to Central Asia, Eastern Asia and Southern Asia, a unique blend of music has evolved encompassing the music of the three regions. But, overall, Kashmiri Valley music is closer to Central Asian music, using traditional Central Asian instruments and musical scales^[1], while music from Jammu is similar to that of North India and Ladakhi music is similar to the music of Tibet.

Keywords: Kashmiri Singers, history, singing contribution

Introduction

Rashid Jahangir

Rashid Jahangir son of Abdul Rashid, residence of Doda. His qualification is B. music from fine arts Srinagar. Rashid Jahangir has no background of music as his father is running an Electronic Shop. Right from his childhood he was interested in music. He used to participate in school functions like on, 26th January, 15th August, Annual days etc.

In the beginning he got no guidance for music but it was his personal interest which helps him in to touch the heights in the field of music. Economically he was not sound, so, he joined a private school from 1994 to 2000. There he used to organize musical shows and by himself composes some of songs.

His brother who is a K.A.S. Officer helps and encourages him to join the music field. His uncle Fareed Ahmad Fareedi who was posted in Cultural Academy as Editor insisted and helped him to join fine arts Srinagar. When he went for entrance test in Fine arts, at that time 200 students were to be examined. It was his personal interest and only observation which helped him to get selected. In Fine Arts Mr. Kamlesh Handoo, music lecturer in Fine arts at that time, who helped him to get the right path. Kamlesh Handoo Ji encouraged him a lot. They used to go to Nehru Park and used to discuss music there. He is his first guru or we can say Rashid Jahangir obtained his classical training from Kamlesh Handoo.

At present he is working as Staff Artist in Cultural Academy J&K. Rashid Jahangir has sung in different language which include Kashmiri, Urdu, Dogri, Punjabi etc etc. According to Rashid Jahangir the base of all styles of singing in Kashmir in Sufiyana and according to him Sufiyana style of singing in Kashmir is full of aesthetics. He wants change in singing but without disturbing its originality. He wants to boost Kashmiri language because Kashmiri language is lacking. He added that diction is the main problem in Kashmiri songs as the lyrics are difficult and normal people are unable to understand it. As simpler the lyrics is, the more famous the song will be, is his

idea. According to him poetry is the overflow of powerful emotions recollected in tranquility. His main aim is to reconstruct the old songs, he composes the old songs in his own way and those songs are liked by everyone.

His friend has opened a musical studio in Doda where he recorded his first album which was loved by everyone of every age and gender. His friends, family and relatives encourages his a lot.

He organizes many musical concerts where he encourages mostly mother language, Kashmiri. According to him, everyone is in its comfort zone when one is listening to mother tongue, because one can feel the emotions when one is comfortable with the lyrics or when he understands it fully.

He adds, that an artist should be sincere towards his job. He should not give importance to money, self respect is must for an artist. He is totally against senseless songs. He says that the songs should be full of aesthetics or emotions.

Doordarshan, Cultural Academy has given him opportunity to display his talent outside Jammu & Kashmir. He is working hard to preserve the original culture of Kashmir. He sings songs according to the demand of people and time.

Some of his famous songs are as under:

1. Kas wanie yim sitam, yaar chonue chum gam.
2. Yaar kota prarie.
3. Mo rosh ma mo rosh.

His officially hit albums are as under:

1. Tanha
2. Baewaye
3. Intizar
4. Hasrat
5. Gacha na madinas

He has been awarded by Sadiq Memorial Award, Adabi Markaz Kamraz.

Ghulam Qadir Langoo

For 60 years Ghulam Qadir Langoo sang for the rulers and the people of Kashmir, and his passion for music gave Kashmir, singers like Raj Begum. Ghulam Qadir Langoo, 95, spends his days reminiscent of his contribution to Kashmiri Sufiyana music. Very few people know langoo was a Court singer for Maharaj Hari Singh.

Langoo's family had a long association with the royal courts. His grandfather Shabaan Langoo was a Nakaal (entertainer) in Maharaja Pratap Singh's court. As a child Qadir would accompany his father Mohi-ud-din Langoo to the court of Maharaja Hari Singh where he would watch playing him Santoor. "Maharaja would get happy and flung a gold coin, that meant much those days," Langoo says.

Langoo learned music from his father to carry the legacy forward. Langoo's father also taught Hafiz Nagma to female dancers at his home.

Like his ancestors, Langoo's stints in the court hardly brought him any riches. He lived a poor life and spend 60 years singing for the rulers, though his was a little better than his relative, who mostly were cobblers. "I sang for the kings, the kings kept changing. I was like an instrument that played for anyone who stroked its cords", says Langoo.

Apart from Hari Singh, Langoo sang for Sheikh Abdullah, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad and has also entertained Jawahar Lal Nehru and other Guests.

He has shared stage with Indian musical greats like Lata Mangeshkar, Asha Bhonsle and Mohinder Kapoor, mostly playing Tanpura. His mastery over Tanpura put him into a different class. The Maharaja court, he tells, was different from the Royal courts seen on television, with some resemblance though.

A lady dance, called Tawafan would do Hafiz Nagma by dancing and singing to the tunes of Sufi music that langoo, with his choir, would play. "Guests would relish royal feasts, and sweets would be distributed among musicians. We would take some sweets home. I still remember there was a cardmon plant in the royal lawn" Langoo recalls.

Many decades later, when Radio Kashmir was inaugurated, Langoo sang for whole night in Polo ground.

"Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad once told that we can have our own radio station if I get many singers for it. I worked day and night to gather the artists," he says.

He was appointed in the station, as a singer and artist but says he would even compose music at times. Once, he says, the station required female singers for some contract. The station had none then. But Langoo was eager to secure the contract and the contract from required photograph of a female singer. He did something, he now calls his madness. "I used my wives photograph (who was not a singer) despite her objections. I left her crying. It was my madness, all I could see was Radio Kashmir meanwhile, in which langoo had a major role.

"Those days singing and performing arts was an affair of lower class people like my family. So I searched there," he says. Thus he found and trained Raj Begum, Zoon Begum and Naseem Akhter.

Slowly music industry grew in Kashmir, and with it, grew his passion for it. When langoo's only daughter was born, he named after Raj Begum, who by then was a household name.

"I would sing in her ears.....later I took her to famous

musician Shamboo Nath Sopori for professional training, but did not let her join Radio Kashmir. It was't good place for girls," he added.

In 1964 when sheikh Abdullah was released from Jail after 11 years, Langoo was taken to Pune by Sheikh's fellow leader where he sang his favourite song, walo haa baagwano and kaem sana badlow soan takdeer, quaid-e-azam Sher-i-Kashmir.

Langoo and his group were also invited by Jawahar Lal Nehru to his mansion.

At Prime Minister's house where they sang for his Russian Guests, Langoo remembers how their group was terrified by the sight of two pet beer cubs, and how a tea that the guests were praising tasted like poison".

Among his hosts, Langoo enjoyed singing most for Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad.

"Just a song of mine and he would forget who he was. He would join the choir and play some instrument mostly noet. I still remember how happy he would get", Langoo recalls.

He sang on the foundation stone laying ceremony of new Secretariat building where he says. "My photograph hung in corridors later, I don't know if it still there".

While Langoo survived on royal patronage, the performing artist of the time were in bad state. "It was pathetic. They would be always given leftover food. Most famous among the local populace was Bacha Nagma where a small boy dressed in women outfit would dance before men, he had to entertain each person individually, if he forgot to address someone, the poor boy would be beaten to pulp".

Since his retirement from Radio Kashmir some 30 yrs. back, Langoo has been living a private life. For his contribution he has been honoured with Fazil Memorial Award, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad Award but the "metallic toys" as he described them, hardly sum up his contribution to the Kashmir Sufi music".

According to him sufiyana mousiqui of Kashmir is full of aesthetics. The muqams played and sung in sufiyana mousique are full of emotions.

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