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**A STUDY OF PERFORMING ART IN
JAMMU DARBAR (1825-1947)**



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Jammu-Kashmir has constantly enjoyed and patronized a rich and distinct cultural heritage. The social cultural, musical, economic and artistic life of the people in this, Heaven of the earth, especially, Jammu and Kashmir always has been attractive place for the Greeks, the Tuglaks, the Iranians, the Afghanis, the Sikhs, the tourist, for the traveler, the kings of territories, etc.

However some style of music and singing, like temple Sangeet, *Shiv Gayan* and folk music had survived the upheavals and political disturbance. The Kashmiris have been the great music lovers. The great scholar and the musician of Indian classical music,” Sarangdev was a Kashmiri Brahmin who belonged to the middle of the 13th century A.D. His grandfather Bhaskara migrated from Kashmir to south India.”¹ Of the Sultanats (1339-1586), the Mughals (1586-1753), the Afghan Satrapy (1753-1819) and the Sikhs, the Sultanats and the Sikhs well patronized to music. Among the Sulatanats, Zain-ul-Din was the great lover of music. “He always made generous allowance to musician. Hearingdirectios. One such artist was Mullha Udi Khorasan. He

played on Ud- to great delight of the Sultan and his courtiers. Another Master was Mullha Jamal who was the great expert in vocal music. Srivara performance. The Raja Gwalior hearing of the Sultan’s taste for music sent him all the standard the books on the Indian Music, including the Sageet Chudamani.”² Before the formation of Jammu and Kashmir as Sikh State, it was the disputed part of Lahore Darbar and Afghaani invaders and a time came when Jammu and Kashmir became part of great Punjab of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. At that time, Gulab Singh joined Sikh army as common trooper, dearly fought against enemies. It was result of his bravery that he had been entered in the cabinet of Mahareaja Ranjit Singh. After two years the governorship of Harri Singh Nalwa in Kashmir, Maharaja Ranjit Singh appointed Gulab Singh as Raja of Jammu and Kashmir in 1823 A.D. After that, Raja Gulab Singh conquered a vast region of Mountains till Ladakh with the under taking of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He was a personality of many colors, like as fighter, educator politician and music lover. He had been appointed many artists in his court. Among them, Ustaad Malikezada Kalander Baksh was a well known

Dhrupad artist of Talwandi Gharana as well as Rasavina player. “He was the court musician of Raja Gulab Singh. Miyan Gulab Khan and Maula Baksh were also appointed as court musician of Raja Gulab Singh.”³ They were kept swift and smoothly command on both, vocal and instrumental music. Ustaad Chhaja Ram was a well-vocalist and son of Kaura mall who was Minster of Gulab Singh’s court “Raja Gulab Singh was a well wisher of Chhaja Ram and granted to him a village in Property, as gift. Besides, he gave retirement pension to his family which continued till the regime of Raja Hari Singh.”⁴ After the demise of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Jammu had been become an independent state. During Sikh-Anglo war, his loyal ministers and Army commander had been died. “This encounter was Gulab Singh’s last political and military venture, for in February 1856, he installed his son, Ranbir Singh, as the ruler of Jammu and Kashmir State and went into semi-retirement.”⁵

Ranbir Singh was also good administrator, educationalist and music-lover. “One Lakh rupees was given to newly founded Punjab University and he became the University’s first fellow.”⁶ He appointed many artists in his court as court musician. Ali Bakesh and Fateh Ali Khan were exponents of Khayal and taken musical education from Ustad Mubark Ali of Jaipur and Tanrass Khan of Delhi. They enriched to classical music of India with the reference of Patiala Gharana. The emergence Period of them was around 1857 A.D. “They were invited to become the singer of Jammu and Kashmir Darbar and conferred the titles of Sangeet Ratna and Taan Samrat, respectively.”⁷ Maharaja Ranbir Singh used to give the free time to listen the music. “At the death of Maharaja Ranbir Singh in Jammu on September, 1885, his son, Pratap Singh

ascended the *Gaddi* of Jammu and Kashmir in peaceful manner.”⁸ Now British Government had been increased its participation in the Jammu and Kashmir state’s affairs. Like his father, he also ran many welfare schemes for the peoples of Jammu Kashmir. During his regime, many noted musicians came in his court to giving performance. Ali Bakesh, “who was the court musician of Jammu Darbar, was born around 1832 in Mukeria, Distt Hosiarpur.”⁹ The great Ustaad Hussain Bakesh was born in Patiala “He was a famous Tabla player of Lahore in later half century of the 19th century and was employed in the court of Maharaja Partap Singh of Jammu and Kashmir.”¹⁰ Pt. Vishnu Digambar Pulaskar was a noted personality of the Indian music, especially Southern music. He expended to Indian music all over India. Punjab had been become more preferred region to preaching of classical music for him. “On the invitation of Maharaja Pratap Singh of Jammu and Kashmir, he recited in Jammu court. Regarding his wish Maharaja Pratap Singh donated a purchased two Acre-land in Lahore to him. Where Gandarva Sangeet Maha Vidiyala was established by Pt. Vishnu Digambar Pulaskar.”¹¹ Ustaad Nissar Khan was the colleague of Karnail Fateh Ali Khan in court of Jammu. “Nissar Hussain Khan was the court Sitar player of Maharaja Partap Singh of Jammu Kashmir.”¹² Shree Gujjar Ram Basudev Ragi was born in Haryana Village of Hoshiarpur, Punjab, in 1891 AD. He was a well classical singer as well as Kirtankar. According to L.N. Garg’s work ‘*Hamare Sangit Ratna*, he used to give performance in the court of Maharaja Pratap Singh Jammu and Kashmir.

Maharaja Pratap Singh had no male issue and *Gaddi* of Jammu-Kashmir passed to his Nephew, Hari Singh, in 1922. Due to British-schooling of Hari Singh, he had become well

supporter of British. He was also a good administrator and a music lover. Music and Singing had become the great passion of Maharaja Harri Singh. He was the last King of Jammu Kashmir. "A popular name in the field of music, Mehmood Seth was the renowned name. Mehmood Seth used to come to sing Thumaris, which were his forte. Harri Singh organized music parties along with Mehmood Seth where some of the best artists in India would perform; among them were Kesarbai Kerkar, Sidheswari Bai, Begam Akhtar and Menaka Shirodkar."¹³ The great musician, Malik Nathan Khan was the father of Mehar Ali Khan. He belonged to Talwandi Gharana and done job in the court of Maharaj Hari Singh of Jammu and Kashmir. Ustaaad Malikzada Mehar Ali was the talented artiste of Talwandi Gharana. He was a good singer of Khayal style. "He used to give the performance with his father and uncle in age of seventeen in the court of Patiala, Jammu, Faridkot, Punchh and Suket."¹⁴ He appointed in the court of Raja Hari Singh and spent few years of his life here. He passed away on October 1976.

In the field of music, a famous artist of this region was Treveni Geer, a flutist artiste. "Once he was appreciated by Maharaja Hari Singh of Jammu. He belonged to Jammu."¹⁵ Maharaja Hari Singh used to appreciate and give valuable prizes. Another famous musician of Jammu Darbar was Pt. Moti Ram, the father of Pt. Jass Raj, who is a noted vocalist of Indian music. "He was the court musician of Kashmir."¹⁶ A renowned vocalist, Laxami Badodkar was the daughter of Parsa Ram, born in 1902 at Kohlapur. "Her concert was held in Mysore, Indore, Kashmir, Nagpur and Rajputana."¹⁷ The passion, we can observe that "he induced his son Karan Singh to learn classical music. With the former's goading, he learnt music from

Ustaaad Vilayat Husain Khan of the famous Agra Gharana who came to coach him for two summers."¹⁸ Ustaaad Gopal Mishra ji was son of Pt. Sur Saheye and born in 1920 in Kashi. "He learnt Sarangi playing from his father. He used to invite in the Sangeet Semmelan on National level and side-by-side, among the peoples and chiefs of main states of India; Kashmir, Barauda and Patiala, he gave his presentation of Sarangi and also popularized to Sarangi Vadan."¹⁹ The prominent artiste of folk music, Karim Baksh was the son of Mishra Khan. He was a classical and folk artist. "Karim Baksh joined Jammu court as paid artiste for 700 per month but he had to quit the job due to any misunderstanding."²⁰

One name of a famous Tabla artiste was Bhai Harnam Singh Jammuwale. He was an excellent Tabla player of north India. He became the disciple of the noted Mridang Master, Kadao Singh 'Maharaj'. "Bhai Harnam Singh had been done job in Victoria Film Company for eight years and after that he appointed in Jammu court."²¹ where many artists already had been appointed, namely, Ali Baksh and Feteah Ali Khan. Pt. Amin Chand Sultanpuria was famous exponent of Kapurthla Gharana in Dhrupad singing. "Pt. Amin Chand became the court musician of Maharaja Jammu and Kashmir."²² Ali Baksh Kasauri was the father of Ustaaad Bade Gulam Ali Khan. He was a personality of multi level. He used to sing Khayal, Thumri, Tappa and Folk Songs. "Ali Baksh Khan, Gulam Ali's father was a court musician in the state of Jammu and Kashmir."²³ He was also Taus player. Inayat Khan was a popular Veena player. He was court musician Jammu. On the same time, Malika Pukhraj was another popular folk singer and lived in *Shivali Di Galli* in Rajender Bazaar of Jammu. "Harri Singh invited her to the palace to sing highly

melodious songs and Gazals and folk renderings. Harri Singh was fascinated and appointed her, as she has said, permanently on Rs 600 per month”²⁴ Jammu and Kashmir has been become attractive place for tourist from ancient period. Before the formation of Sikh Territory, Gopal Lal, who was a closed disciple of Bejju Bawara was court musician of Kashmir and then Bejju Bawara also came to meet his follower in Kashmir court. He was Dhrupad Singer. He also stayed some time and gave performance in the Kashmir Court.

As we know that the declination of the Mughal Court and the Mutiny of 1857. Musician had been started to flee from Delhi Darbar and stayed in other courts. Therefore, many artistes came in Jammu court and got well-morally and

economically support from the rulers of Jammu state. Even, in Anglo-Sikh war, Gulab Singh did support of Sikh Army and because of this, he had to bear great losses.

But latter rulers had to join British camp. Jammu state was an economically strong state. Its chiefs gave economically aid to Punjab University Lahore and Gandharav Sanget Mahavidyala and laid the foundation primary and secondary schools in Jammu and Kashmir region for free education. Although, it could not establish new Gharana of music, but they gave more financially aid and morally support to instrumentalist and vocalist of Indian music. From the foundation period to till end, all Maharajas were music lover, appreciated to musician and honored with valuable prizes to them

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