

An Introduction to Art and Culture of Jammu and Kashmir

Abstract

Jammu and Kashmir is the northernmost state of India. Jammu is the state famous for its temples, particularly 'The Vaishno Devi temple in Katra. A resident of Jammu is called a Dogra and resident of Kashmir is called Kashmiri's. Kashmir is specifically famous for its panoramic view of Dal Lake. And in the seventeenth century, Amir Khusrow said that if paradise is anywhere on the earth, it is here (the Kashmir valley) while having in a houseboat on Dal Lake.

Keywords: People of Jammu, Arts Province in Jammu painting, music, Dogri folk songs, Kishtwari folk songs, Kashmiri peoples, Food, Dress, Ornaments, Folk-songs, Variety, Themes.

Introduction

The Dogras inhabiting the hilly tract sounding the mountains of the Kashmir valley on the south and extending to the plains of the Punjab, are descended from Aryan Stock. They speak the Dogri language – a mixture of Sanskrit, Punjabi and Persian whose origin goes back to the Indo-Aryan branch of Sanskrit. The staple food consists of rice, wheat, and pulses. Their dress is simple a short coat or a flowing shirt with pyjamas at the knees and tight – fitting at the ankles. The men's turban on the head is generally complemented by a kamarband at the waist. With a shawl or dupatta thrown over the head, women put on tight-fitting bodice or jumpers over pyjamas which resemble those of the men folk.

The Dogra Rajputs, who have traditionally made the Army their profession are not big build, their average heights being 5'-4' (160 cm). The men's complexion is light brown, the women's lighter still. The Brahmins of the Jammu province are mainly engaged in agriculture. A minority among them comprise the priest class. The Chibbalis and the Sudans-the chief seats among the Muslim Rajputs are also a marital race.

The dishes are delicious, with abundant nutritional value. One of the dainties of Dogra dishes is auria, made from yoghurt and potatoes. Other Dogra specialities are ghiwar, a sort of bread fried in ghee, thothru, well-kneaded fermented balls cooked in dried wheat flour pieces also fried in ghee.

Distinct and remarkable, Dogra cuisine complements the people's achievements as soldiers, painters and builders of temples and forts. Through the Basholi school and other paintings. Dogras have made a notable contribution to the development of painting in India. Basohli emerged as a great centre of painting early in the 18th Century. Outstanding paintings of this school depict Krishna's frolics, scenes from the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, etc. Basohli paintings have been characterized as 'poem in colour' for their extraordinary lyrical quality.

Jammu province is inhabited by diverse castes and sects. Khatri and Mahajans are of Punjab stock. They generally follow sedentary occupation like trade and commerce. Harijans constitute another large segment of population. They are agriculturists and pursue semi-skilled professions, including those of cobblers and scavengers.

Strong – muscled, virile, simple and truthful, the Paharis inhabit the hilly tracts of the 'middle mountains'. There is a hard life, rearing sheep and cultivating the sparse available tracts of land on hilly, sloppy terraces for barley, wheat and maize. Many people of this area recruits to the army.

Their hospitality is exemplary. Frugal inhabitants, their diet is simple and sparse – wheat bread with whey and lentils. Their language is a mixture of Dogri, Punjabi and Hindi. Generally dressed in grey woollens and loose pyjamas, they also flaunt a kamarband. Women wear long, loose tunics,



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close-fitting chudidars and dupatas or cap to complete their charming ensemble. The Kashmiris who have immigrated into this region adopted the same dress and speak a mixture of Pahari and Kashmiri dialects.

The Dogras are deeply attached to their land much of their folklore myths and legends- relates to their shrines Religion also contribute to the mats entertainment of the people in the form of Ras dances.

The physical features of a Kishtwari are unmistakably those of an Indian dark Complexion, thick protruding lips and broad noses, akin to Dravidians. They are short statured, simple and unsophisticated but are very hardy [they are sure-footed mountaineers. Guileless and credulous, they are superstitious Witchcraft prevails among Some of them The people speak the Kishtwari dialect, which is a mixture of Dogri and Kashmiri.

Review of Literature

Jammu and Kashmir is one of the most beautiful destinations of India. However, this paradise on earth has always been in controversy due to terrorism and political turn ails. (Jammu and Kashmir Handicrafts – www.camelcraft.com)

The culture of Kashmir is a diverse blend and highly influenced by northern south Asian as well as central Asian culture. (Culture of Kashmir – <http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/culture>.)

Aim of the Study

This article is about the Indian state Jammu and Kashmir. It is located mostly in the Himalaya mountains and Shares borders with states of Himachal Pradesh and Punjab to the south. Jammu and Kashmir has an International border with China in the north and east. The main object of this article is that to give introductory.

Arts in Jammu Province

Painting

The art products, specially the Celebrated miniatures of Basohli (132 Km from Jammu now a dilapidated township) have a pride of place in the great art museums of the world The Amar Mahal Palace and the Dogra Art Gallery " Jammu, house collections of these exquisite paintings in the state An extraordinary terseness of the compositions, depicted with intense feeling and the utmost economy of line are the distinguishing features or the Basohli Qalam paintings Another unique characteristic feature is their strong local flavour, typified by the brave romantic hero courting the frail but beautiful

At the folk level, the typical art of the Jammu area can be seen on the walls of baulis or the constructions around a spring, usually in the vicinity of a temple as in different parts of India, the walls are usually ornamented with sculptures or engravings of gods and goddesses. The naga provides a common motif for their ornamentations Enduring specimens of Bauli art, noted for their excellence are to be found at Billavar, Sukrala, Sudh Mahadev and Udampur Wall paintings in the huts of villagers surprise the onlooker with (the degree of artistry attained by the folk. Dance

Dance, music and songs of the Jammu division also reflect the life of the folk, like the march of seasons, sowing and harvesting of crops, births,

marriages and deaths Kudd is the popular dance of the upland dwellers. Usually performed at night after the sowing or other agricultural operations are over, Kudd starts with a slow rhythm, the dancers (wearing churidar and pyjamas or long robes falling to the knees) dance round and round a fire in an open space. To the lively accompaniment of musicians playing on the flute drum and narasinha, the tempo of the dance rises to a crescendo until the dancers uttering loud cries are quite tired.

Another typical folk dance of the rural people of Jammu region, inhabiting the areas between the uplands and the plains is Phuminan (the word meaning -blooming' in Dogri) The gaily attired dancers open and close their fingers to symbolize the flowers in bloom

Bhangra, the vigorous folk dance associated more with the Punjab, is quite popular among the people of the plains in the Jammu district. High-spirited revelry, the dancers leaping in the air, performing acrobatic feats, distinguish this virile dance, which has become a feature of marriage procession.

Particularly popular during the Lohri festival in Jammu is the folk dance called Dandaras. An effigy made of bamboos and coloured paper, resembling a peacock, is carried by each group of dancers, who dance around it with gusto. Each one carries a short stick and dancer hits the sticks carried by the other group. The skilled dancer is the one who can hit the sticks of other, himself gyrating in different postures.

Music

As for Dogri-Pahari music, it has a long and rich tradition. Songs welcoming different seasons are accompanied with the virile Bhangra and other dances. The musicality of Dogras appears at its best in the singing of different forms of folk songs. The wind instruments used are nagaja (or galjoja), turturi, kail, narsinha and nefeeri. The stringed musical instruments are king, chakara and ikara. Among the drums, besides the dholki, nagar and duff are popular.

Dogri Folk Songs

The Dogra is strongly attached to his 'lovely Dogra land'. Many of the Dogri songs are replete with romantic descriptions of nature and man, like the following popular folk-songs :

*Behold our lovely Dogra land,
O friend, behold our glorious land,
Groups of lion-hearted men,
And women, the very incarnation of Durga
and Chandi,
Behold our glorious land,
Beautiful girls, growing to maturity like the
waking moon.
Fed on the nectar of springs and streamlets.
Behold our glorious land,
Twisting streams,
Rippling like serpents in the embrace of
towering mountains,
And the milky Tawi,
Flowing down with serpentine bends,
Behold our glorious land,
Exquisite lakes, of Mansar and Sansar,
Behold in every home,*

*Maidens of beauty like the full moon;
For centuries bards and minstrels have sung
Praises of our glorious Dogra land.*

A Lover who is indifferent to love as well as the people's marital tradition is aroused to action in a song, whose poignancy (of rejected love) and rhythmic grace can match with the best English love lyric. Here is the translation of lyric whose touching refrain is *O maria patliao maman*(O my tender, tender love)-

*O my tender, tender Love
What has been said or done
To make you angry with on
Who can reconcile and is won,
O my tender, tender Love?
Sweet unrest and sleepless vigils,
Desires that did not take up cudgels,
To me your charming words are puzzles,
O my tender, tender Love?
Sweet suchian served with a delicious dish
But at lunch time you to Mandi rush;
Can you imagine how my tears gush,
O my tender, tender Love?
Lazily lie your sword and shield
And armour hangs on the peg unappealed,
Even war-bombs fail to fly you to the field,
O my tender, tender Love?*

(Suchian, served in the kitchen, is balanced with the heroic story of the Mandi and its heroic denizens to excite the inert lover)

Kishtwari Folk Songs

A Mystic Song

*A person comes alone and goes alone,
What kind of scene turns you on?
The blowing of the wind bends flower tress,
But stronger wind destroys the whole thing,
Stones, earth and wooden beams collected,
The mason is engaged to construct the house.
One could spend so much that one loses count,
Even after that the builder is burnt on a few planks of wood.
Death, shedding tears, nobody asks, nobody singing,
Whatever God ordains shall happen,
Not even a scratch takes place without His will.*

A Folk Ghazal

*Who consumes whose country,
Depends on each one's luck.
Whatever you do makes your Destiny,
The Good do good and the evil do wrongs,
Some live whimpering and grumbling,
Others have a smooth sailing in life.
One may have observed things of the earth,
But who has seen anything that is beyond?
The broad minded give away things freely,
The non givers frighten away the supplicants,
The young or old succumb to death,
Just as autumn glitter fudes and water extinguishers fire.
All alone you have come, all alone you go,*

Guest of two days, you reap what you have sown.

Kashmiris

According to historians, the ancestors of Kashmiris are early immigrants from India proper. With the spread of Buddhism, many scholars came to Kashmir from far-off lands for research and study. This resulted in the emergence of Buddhism. The contact of Kashmiris with the Roman, Greek, and Persian civilizations, and the interaction made for a happy blending of cultures. Most of the people claim their descent from the Indo-Aryan stock. Kashmir is inhabited by diverse and different races, distinct in their looks, dress, food habits, customs, speech and traditions.

The Kashmiris made remarkable contributions to story – telling, mystical poetry, the Shaiva Philosophy, grammar and the sciences. Folk songs and dances as well as the various arts and crafts for which Kashmiri is world famous, bear eloquent testimony to the artists and cultural genius of the people of Kashmir.

Most of the people in the valley are fair-complexioned, with light brown hair, blue or grey eyes, chiselled features, and fine physique. There are also people with a whitish complexion, black, almond eyes and black hair. Kashmiris tend to be superstitious.

The Kashmiris, on the whole, are non-aggressive and temperate in nature and very God-fearing. They have been regarded as non-aggressive and temperate in nature and very timid during the early period, but this myth has been exploited by them after Independence. Kashmiris are a bundle of contradictions : vociferous, loath to hurt yet very abusive, master artists yet lacking art sense, shrewd yet business-like and persistent, lowly yet intellectual and mystical, polite on the face yet abusive and rumor-mongers behind-your-back. With all such positive and negative elements in Kashmiri character, the Kashmiris can be singled out as extremely warm, friendly, and hospitable.

Whereas the Kashmiri Pandits life and habits are simple and frugal, he tends to be individualistic, largely intellectual. Traditionally, he avoids doing manual labour and has go away from his homeland but now he has changed completely. Kashmiri Muslims, on the other hand, is generally more active, energetic and dynamic. He is an unrivalled craftsman, deftly producing time-honoured designs – intricate and beautiful-on paper-mache, wood, silver and gold, and embroiders and weaves the most exquisite shawls, carpets and rugs. He is an excellent cultivator, rears sheep and cattle, and is self employed in cottage industries. He is also a shrewd businessman.

Gujjars

The hill people of Kashmir, called Gujjars, mostly herdsmen by occupation, are found in most parts of Jammu and Kashmir. They are said to be Rajputs who had migrated from Rajasthan and adopted the Muslim faith. They are tall and well-built, with a prominently Jewish cast of features. Their dialect, Gujari is now identified as a form of

Rajasthani. They raise sheep and cattle. Their nutritious diet consists of maize bread, whey, jungle roots and fruits.

Religion

Ninety percent of the population in the valley profess Islam, of both Sunni and Shia Sects. The rest are Kashmiri Pandits. There are some Sikhs. The Kashmiris Pandits do not have castes like Hindus in the rest of India.

Food

Rice is the staple food of the Kashmiris, and meat cooked in delicious varieties goes with it. Kashmiris pride over Karam Sag (a kind of leafy green vegetable), nadru (lotus stalk) and turnips. Whereas a Kashmiri goes, he carries these precious vegetables as token presents. Kashmiris are known for their culinary art, or more accurately, the cooking of lamb dishes of various ways, each distinct in taste from the other. The tea that the Kashmiris drink is called Kahva – a concoction of green tea leaves brewed in the samovar and enriched with pounded almonds, cardamom seeds, and cinnamon stalks, overdosed with sugar and served without milk. The other kind of tea is Shirchai-salted and milked, pink in colour, with lots of cream on top of it.

Dress

Kashmiri Muslims used to wear pheran, a long loose gown, hanging down below the knees, a whole turban tied on a skull cap, a close – fitting shalwar and lace less shoes called gurgabi. A white piece of material hung on their shoulders like a stole. Hindu men wear churidar pyjama instead of shalwar. The less affluent Muslims wore skull caps, which looked cute and didn't carry any shawls.

Kashmiri women are among the most beautiful in India. They have 'an English rosininess of complexion behind the Eastern tan'. The colour of their hair ranges from golden red to brunette and that of eyes from green, blue, grey to black. Besides being boats – women and farmers, the women of Kashmiri lend a hand to their men folk at shawl making embroidery and other handicrafts.

The women wear the pheran, the voluminous Kashmiri gown, hemmed with a border and hanging in awkward folds. The long, loose pheran covers their physique no doubt, but does not blunt their physical appeal. Whereas a Muslim women's pheran is knee-length, loose and embroidered in front and on the edges, a Hindu woman's pheran touches her feet. For the sake of smartness and ease it is tied at the waist with folded material called lhungi. The long, loose sleeves are fashionably decorated with brocade hanging bonnet and tapers down to the heels from behind. The folds of the Taranga are made of brightly-pressed lines fastened to a pointed red-coloured and brocaded skull cap with a few gold pins at the sides. Over the head and ears are pieces of muslim embroidered in gold thread. The younger Hindu women, however, have taken to the sari, after the 'reform movement' of the thirties. Even then, on the wedding day they have to wear the Taranga ceremonially. It is covered with the pallav of the bride's wedding sari. Taranga thus stays as part of the bridal trousseau.

Unlike a Hindu woman's pheran, which gives her a Roman look, the Muslim woman's pheran is beautifully embroidered in front. Their head gear, the Kasaba, looks very different from the Taranga. It is red in colour, tied turban-like and held tight by an abundance of silver pins and trinkets. It has an overcharging pin-scarf which falls gracefully over the shoulders. A work-a-day shalwar goes with it. Unmarried Muslim girls wear skull caps, embroidered with gold thread and embellished with silver pendants, trinkets and amulets.

The dress of a Gujjar woman of the hills in the valley is very much similar to that worn by the Turkish village women. It consists of an ample shalwar and full skirted tunic. Women knit their hair in multiple plaits which hang in front, covering half of their moon-shaped faces.

Ornaments

Kashmiri women generally have such love of jewellery that their headgear, ears, necks and arms glisten with ornaments. The typical that Hindu women wear is the dejharoo, a pair of gold pendants, hanging on a silk thread or gold chain which passes through hole in the ears pieced at the top end of the lobes. The dejharoo is the Kashmiri Panditani's mangal-sutra. Muslim women wear bunches of ear rings, the weight of which is supported by a thick silver chain. And there are ample bracelets and necklaces. The whole ensemble lends a most artistic effect to the appearance of Kashmiri women.

With the passage of years, an appreciable change has come about in the dress of the Kashmiri women. Saris, shalwar-kameez, churidars and jeans are becoming popular, yet one of these belong to them as much as the good old pheran.

Folk Songs

In the Elysian habitat of Kashmir, with its abundant beauties of nature and man, it was but natural for some unknown folk-bard to have started the vogue of folk-songs, that was destined to become immortal.

Folk-songs in Kashmiri, as elsewhere, show, and to some extent, preserve the myths, customs, traditions and ways of life of bygone days. The songs and tunes are as compelling in their appeal as other forms of verbal folk arts, tales and proverbs. The belief and manners of Kashmiris are worthily embalmed in their folk songs, which also mirror the chequered national history of the valley. Folk verse also perpetuates the memory of calamities like floods and famines, foreign invasions, tyranny of rulers, etc. The songs correspond to the description of folk song of Paul Lafargue, the Russian poet: 'The folk-songs is the true, original and natural expression of the people's soul. It companion in joy and sorrow, the encyclopaedia of its religion, the philosophy, the treasure-house to which it commits its faith, its family and national history.' The folk-songs is of course, part of folk culture, which is distinct from that of cities.

Variety

Kashmiri folk-songs are current in almost every Kashmiri home, particularly in the rural areas. The songs present considerable variety in theme, content and form. The broad classification of the song

is : (1) Love songs (Lol-gevon) (2) Ruf dance songs (3) Pastoral Songs (4) Boatmen's sons (5) Spring songs (sont gevon) (6) Harvest songs (Lon-nuk gevon) (7) Children's sporting songs (Gindan Gevon) (8) Wedding songs (vanvun) (9) Sacred Thread ceremony songs (Yagnopavit gevon) (10) Semi-mystic songs (current among the village holy men) (11) Opera songs (Band Jashan) (12) Dancer's Songs (Bach Nagma Jashan) (13) Ballads (Called Bath or Kath, literally meaning stories) (14) Cradle songs, lullaby, nursery rhymes (called Lalvun, meaning to lull) and (15) Dirges (Van).

Besides the boatmen's songs, mentioned already there are songs galore sung to the accompaniment of certain occupations. Seed sowers harvesters, embroiders, paper-mache makers, saffron reapers, shepherds, village belles fetching water, grinding spinning yarn, or stacking paddy, or labourers doing the chores, sing their different occupational folk-songs in chorus.

Yet others are sung as lullabies or cradle-songs, or at the birth and the naming of a child or at its circumcision (in the case of Muslim) or the 'sacred thread' (Hindu) ceremonies. Then there are wedding songs sung in chorus by woman at and before a marriage ceremony. Durges, known as Van are recited in chorus by women of the family after the death of old persons. Variegated beauties of natural that surround the countryside from the theme of many a folk song. Practically nothing is beyond the scope of the versicle rendering of the rustic Muse, from subtle, philosophical thoughts to the romance and tragedy of love.

An important ingredient of folk culture, the folk-song may have diction, content and tone that differentiate in from the city product. Yet each form of song is suited to its theme, be it light, serious or any other. In most love songs, the woman offers her heart the plaints and the outpourings of an unfathomable, jilted heart. Unlike the Dogra or Rajput heroines, the Kashmiri heroine is mostly the spirit of love and beauty, rarely the mother of heroes. There are no songs about the lives of the brave queens. Didda or Kota Rani, who saved the country in their respective times. The folk songs thus mostly speak of the moods of love, marriage and other family occasions, the beauty of the season or the Elysian environment of the valley. And, generally, they are racy, rhythmic and vivacious-latterly. Justly popularized by the TV all over India. The exquisite singing quality of the songs is often appreciated by the visitor-even though his ear may not be attuned to the Kashmiri language – he hears the village belles, harvesters, craftsmen, boatmen or children recite them in happy chorus.

Many Themes

The predominate theme of folk-songs is a woman's touching plain about her strayed lover who has secreted her. A typical love song is :

*O, you must tell me,
Where my boy has gone.
Is he a fountain in life's garden,
On a well of nectar, sweet and delicious?*

Spring is the colourful season when fruit trees look resplendent in their variegated blossoms

and the shepherd girl addresses the Marg (a mountain meadow)

*Far off forests have all blossomed forth,
Hast thou not heard of me, my love?*

*Mountain lakes like Tar Sar are full of
flowers,*

Hast thou not heard of me, my love?

They are but excerpts from romantic love-song, replete with beautiful imagery, invoked by the folk bard from the lovely environs of the 'Paradise of the indies'. The imagination of the folk bard rises to poetic heights in cradle songs. The peasant mother, comparing the apple of her eye to her ear-ring, recites:

*I rock thee, my ear-ring I rock thee,
Thou are the God of Love at evening,
And the sun at early morning,
I rock thee, my ear-ring I rock thee*

Rural Women, plying the spinning wheel, sweetly hum songs such as :

*On my mat in my home is perched m
spinning wheel.*

I wheel it and weave thread out of it.

The serpentine and calm flowing river of the Happy Valley, the Jhelum, forms the just theme of the songs, like

*O thou slow-motioned Jhelum:
For thee, let me devote m all, O Jhelum !
How great is thy stateliness!
For thee, let me devote my all, O Jhelum !*

The peasant women sing praises of the majestic tree of Kashmir, the Chinar, whose beautiful leaf recurs in the lovely motifs of the Valley's manifold art products :

*To me, O Chinar, Leaf, my love has sent
thee,*

*My all, O Cupid, shall I sacrifice for thee,
Thou, art, Chinar leaf a prince of beauty,
My all, O Cupid, shall I sacrifice for thee.*

Saffron of Kashmir is well-known in song and legend. The saffron fields of Pampore in the vicinity of Srinagar, are famous. While picking the saffron flowers, peasants-men and women-sing.

Towards Pampore went away larding.

*Saffron flowers caught him in fragrant
embrace.*

*O, he is there and ah me ! I am here,
When, where O God, Would I see his face?*

The labouring folk enjoy the loved product of their toil, but soon the usufruct goes to the contract's store, and they feel the poignant separation of the enchanting flower :

*How pink is saffron's colour,
Collecting it into heavs we arebathed in
sweet.*

*Soon, too soon, it will be hurried to the City.
Enjoy, its glorious view, O Samad,
How pink is saffron's colour.*

The touching refrain of the song is reminiscent of the wonderful view of the saffron blossom which is enthralling in full moon or at sunrise or sunset.

Saffron-pilferers, actual or aspirant, lustily shout the humorous doggerel:

At Pampore are the saffron fields, Bare-footed I shall steal saffron;

My Pir Lives at Vijibrar

Why should I run there?

The incomparable beauty of the saffron flower excites the folk-bard to sing the village belle's conceit :

Proud of thyself are thou,

O, saffron flower !

Far lavelier than thee am !

O, saffron flower!

Conclusion

As we know that Jammu & Kashmir culture one of the world's largest collections of songs, music, dance, theatre, folk traditions, performing arts, rites and rituals, paintings and writing. This article section offers comprehensive information related to cultural heritage, ancient literacy arts, music fairs and festivals and handicraft of Jammu and Kashmir. Detailed information on various organization involved in promotion and propagation of Jammu art and culture is also available in this article.

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