



(LAS 7260)

## FOLKSONGS OF KASHMIR

Recorded in June 1972 by Verna Gillis

Kashmir, wedged between China, Pakistan and Indian, was the ancient route for Buddhists coming from India and Afghanistan going to China. It is the home of the famous Shalimar gardens. The Kashmiri language is 50% based on Sanskrit, 40% Persian and 10% dialects of Central Asia, particularly Tashkent. The Kashmir valley itself is 93% Moslem; however, the state of Kashmir, which consists of the valley and Jammu, breaks down into 62% Moslem and 38% Hindu. The main industries are their magnificent handicrafts, paper mache, woodcarving, rug weaving, woolen carpets, embroidery and leather goods. Some of the finest wool products in the world - Pashmina - come from Kashmir. It is exceptionally soft wool made from the fur of the necks of Tibetan goats. One can find remains, sometimes in the same structure, of the three important religions of that area - Buddhism, Islam, and Hinduism. There are two main branches of Islam - those who are Sunni and those who are Shiite. Superficially, the difference between the two concerns the problem of 'successor' to the Prophet as the leader of the community after his death. The population of Kashmir seems about equally divided between the two sects. Sufism, the mystical arm of Islam, which attempts to have personal experience and knowledge of God through divine or mystical union, is alive in Kashmir. Several of the songs on this record are Sufi songs, and the words, as literally translated, are almost impossible to comprehend fully because of the several sub-strata of meaning, which underlie the words. Kashmir has a rich musical tradition. There is no solo singing in

Kashmir except for religious songs. A group with instrumental accompaniment sings all melodies. Included in selections is the popular kashmiri musical form known as chakkri. The lead singer sings a verse, which is then picked up by the other members in the group. The music on this record was recorded on a houseboat on Lake Dal.

#### TRACKS:

Track 01 10:50  
Track 02 1:24  
Track 03 1:08  
Track 04 2:12  
Track 05 5:08  
Track 06 8:14  
Track 07 6:58  
Track 08 7:43

#### MUSICIANS:

Eli Mohammad Shera - solo singer

#### Ensemble:

Mohammad Sultan Bhat - lead singer and not player  
Bulam Mohammad Dar - sarangi  
Eli Mohammad Shah - harmonium  
Gulam Qadar Mir - rebab

#### INSTRUMENTS:

Not - clay drum - played by the leader of the ensemble. It has a narrow mouth and a big belly and is one of the most ancient percussion instruments in existence. It is used extensively for accompanying folk music and especially street music. The drum is held between the two legs of the seated musician and played with hands, wrists and fingers. Considerable tonal variety can be achieved, depending where the not is hit.

Rebab - a popular stringed instrument found all over the Middle East. The Indian rebab is used principally in Kashmir, Punjab and Afghanistan. It is made of wood and has four strings; however, sometimes the two upper strings may be doubled, in which case it will have six strings. Sympathetic strings made of metal run underneath the four main gut strings. The shape of the violin and viola resembles that of the rebab, which is plucked.

Harmonium - a keyboard instrument that works on the same principle as the accordion: a bellows of air set in motion by vibrators known as free reeds. The harmonium is used here as it is occasionally used in Indian music, as a drone or as an accompaniment to the melody.

Sarangi - said to be the instrument closest to the human voice. It is a string instrument about two feet long, with three main gut strings of varying thickness. It is made by hollowing out a single block of wood and covering it with parchment. In spite of the fact that there are only three strings, there are four tuning pegs: one-fourth string of brass is sometimes used for a drone effect. The sarangi is held in the lap of the performer, and the head of the instrument rests against the musician's left shoulder. The bow is made of horsehair and held in the right hand. The sarangi has been a folk instrument for centuries, and only recently was it considered suitable to accompany the classical style of music. There are 35 to 40 sympathetic strings.

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