

Heena songs and Nend Baeth: Kashmiri Songs

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Abstract

Heena songs are sung on Mehendi Raats. The Mehendi Ceremony on the eve of the wedding is the most festive of all ceremonies with singing going on till late in the night. "Naindai Gavun" is related to famous folk songs. "Naind" is the changed form of the word "Ninad of Sanskrit". The word "Gavun" also has originated from Gayan of Sanskrit. The harvesting time is a hectic time for all farmers throughout the world, same in Kashmir. The farmers are busy day and night working in their fields. When spring comes, they are busy in sowing seeds. After crops are ripe and are ready to be harvested, farmers had to be work harder then before.

Keywords: heena songs, nend baeth, Kashmiri singing

Introduction: Heena Songs

In Kashmir, both Hindus and Muslims celebrate a special day known as Mehandiraat, before a wedding of boy or girl is solemnized as a custom, wet heena is applied to the palms of would be bride or groom, and then, special heena songs, meant for such occasion are sung for the whole night. That is why it has the name of Mehendi Raat (The Night of Heena).

Mehandi has a major role to play in Indian Celebrations and wedding is one of the biggest occasion in one's life. There are Muslims as well as Hindus in Kashmir but rituals are different in their marriages, though Mehendi Raat is the same.

In Pandit's the Maenz Raat (Mehandi Raat) ceremony takes place a week prior to the wedding. It begins with Krol Khaarun, a ceremony which involves decorating the doors of the houses of the prospective bride or the groom, by their respective aunts (fathers-sisters) and in the evening, the bride to be, follows and elaborate bathing ritual, during which her feet are washed by her maternal aunt. After the bath her eldest aunt decorate her hands and feet with heena. Heena is distributed among the relatives and neighbours. The women invited for this occasion are served a delicious Kashmiri meal. After Dinner, all participate in a lively Wanvun or Music Session. In grooms house, a little mehendi is applied on his hands as it is a symbol of auspiciousness.

In muslim mehendi raats, the bride or groom are brought inside the big hall or tent and all friends and relative flank him or her. Women start singing in two groups known as Wanvun. They start Mehendi Songs in the form of Rouf.

Then Mehendi is applied on the palms of the brides hands. It is believed that Mehendi Signifies the strength of love in a marriage and that the longer a bride retains the mehendi, the more auspicious would be her future.

Mehandi is applied on the little finger of groom. There also singing goes on till late night. Special singers are invited on Mehendi Raats who starts with Mehendi songs like-Aze Cha Hooray Maenz Raat, Maenz lagaan Kaman Kaman maenz naman Mubarak.

Heena songs are full of aesthetics. As mehendi is colourful, same way the songs are colourful. The ladies over there express their emotions through songs and bless the bride as

well as the groom. They express their love and affection through songs. In Heena Songs they sing about the colour of heena, from where it has come, its piousness and how auspicious mehendi is. Throughout the ceremony whole family indulges into great festivity and merrymaking.

In Kashmir mostly heena songs are on fast beat and with high pitch everybody present in the ceremony wants to dance on those songs.

Some Heena songs are as under

1. Maenz wachi arbistanie
Lala lagyo morith gahanie

Meaning

The myrtle is from Arab Land.
Come my darling I will adore your hands.

2. Rengmayo maenzi seath nam
Kamue lalan dutue bram

Meaning

I have colored your nails with myrtle
But who else has enchanted you.
The composition of one Heena song is given below

Antra:	Maenz Wachie Arbistanie
Swar:	Re <u>G</u> a Re Sa <u>N</u> i Sa Re <u>G</u> a Sa Re Sa Lala Laagyo Morith Gahanie
Swar:	Re <u>G</u> a Re Sa <u>N</u> i Sa Re <u>G</u> a Sa Re Sa
Sathayi:	Maenzraat Cham Lalas amis Shahzadas
Swar:	Ma Ma <u>G</u> a Sa Re Sa Ma <u>G</u> a Sa Re Sa Aawie Shazad Dar Hindustanie
Swar:	Re <u>G</u> a Re Sa <u>N</u> i Sa Re <u>G</u> a Sa Re Sa

This composition is based on Kafi thaat. The Komal swars used in this composition gives a soothing aesthetic sense in this song. Folk Goda Taal is used in this composition when the taal, swars and lyrics goes in hand in, it creates a melodious atmosphere over there.

There are many pauses in between the Swars which is the

main aesthetics of this song. The attractive Jugalbandi, of women folk instrument, tumbaknari, with the swars creates a melodious atmosphere. In this song the singer shows that today is the night of myrtle of his princess as his princess has come from Hindustan and the myrtle is from Arab Land. The Jugalbandi of traditional percussion instruments like noet, tumbaknari and the swars is demonstrated below

Swar: Ma Ma --- Ga --- Sa--- Re --- Sa
 Taal: Dhin Dhin---Na Na ---Dhin Dhin---Na Na

In Heena Baeths Kashmiri copper noet is also used. It is also played by women folk, Professionals play it with rings which they wore in their fingers and strikes on the noet which produces sound but mostly women folk plays it with metallic thing available at homes like keys, spoons etc. The jingling sound produced by the noet also beautifies the aesthetic sense.

Nain Dai Gavun

The Nilamata Purana speaks of dances performed on religious occasions, dances performed in social gathering held in honour of seasons, and dances performed on agricultural festivals. Dances are prescribed at the time of ripening of grapes, so horticulture, to, seems to have had some dances to its credit ^[1]

All hands are required. All young, old men and women, are part of the job. There is a race against time. The harvest must be brought home in the shortest possible time for who knows the rains may come and spoil the whole show. The farmers blend all their energies to the task to avoid all risks. It is indeed a sight to see farmers singing and dancing out of spontaneous joy. The farmers joy knows no bounds. They sing and dance with joy at the sight of a bumper crop. Singing makes difficult tasks of the farmers easy and enhances their Zeal.



Fig 1

To prepare the paddy field is not an easy task. It requires hard labour with proper planning after cultivation, the land becomes uneven and soil lumps are formed. The lumps are broken and the soil is made even. The task of breaking of soil lumps is called “Yattapur”. After “Yattapur” farmers sow paddy plants. Sowing of paddy plants is called “Thal”. Making the fields suitable for agriculture is called “Naindai”, and the songs they sung is called “Gavun”.

They include songs about reaping the grains, dancing in the fields and singing at a celebration feast or thanks giving

dinner. The grain harvest occurs whenever the grain is ripe, generally in the month of October and November. The farmers show their emotions through songs. They are joyful, exciting and merrymaking. When the sun sets and when their hands are free from the fields they usually sits beneath a tree and entertain themselves with singing. They sing in chorus, they are called “Naindan Chaker”.

At last I come to the conclusion how singing put an impact on farmers too. It is singing which makes their task easy. Though they have less knowledge about music but how aesthetically it helps them.

Some of Nandai Gavun are given below

1. Karaan chas bi intizaar
 Katue yaar praryo...

Meaning

I am waiting for you, where i can see you
 I did not found it proper to tell you...

2. Aos yousuf farzandi yaqoob
 Noori tehndi samsaaras shoob

Meaning

Yousuf – son of yaqoob.
 His beauty was light of the world.

Its simplicity in the melody of such type of songs is the main aesthetics. Musical instruments are not used in Neandi Baeth. It is sung by the common folk of Kashmir, they have less knowledge of musical compositions but still they make the sowing of Thal (Paddy Plants) as their beats. On every beat of their composition they sow paddy plants. The sowing of paddy saplings on every beat of their singing creates a wonderful atmosphere over there.

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¹ The Nilamata Purana by Dr. Ved Kumari p.105