

PANDIT BHAJAN SOPORI  
Renowned Santoor Legend

A Renowned santoor player and Living Legend of India, Pandit Bhajan Sopori is more than an individual – a performer and music composer par excellence. Pandit Bhajan Sopori is hailed as the “Saint of the Santoor” and the “King of Strings”. He was born in 1948 in Srinagar (Kashmir) into a family of musicians and was initiated into Santoor playing by his grandfather Pandit S. C. Sopori and later by his father Pandit Shamboo Nath Sopori, hailed as the 'Father of Music' in the State of Jammu and Kashmir.

A highly learned person, Pandit Bhajan Sopori has done his Masters degree in both the Sitar and the Santoor besides having a Masters degree in English Literature. He has also studied Western Classical Music at Washington University, USA.

Pandit Bhajan Sopori has taught music at Washington University, US. His performances have been broadcast in India and seen by both cultural associations there and by audiences in countries such as Belgium, Egypt, England, Germany, Norway, Syria and the USA. Pandit Sopori, considered as the cultural link between Jammu and Kashmir and rest of India, also runs a music academy called SaMaPa (Sopori Academy for Music and Performing Arts), which is actively involved in promoting Indian classical music. SaMaPa is involved in promoting music with jail inmates, with the objective of using music for healing the prisoners and creating an emotional bond between the society & the prisoners. The academy has trained several musicians and revived old instruments.

Pandit Sopori is the only classical musician to have composed music for more than 5000 songs in various languages of the country including Persian, Arabic, etc. He combines a profound knowledge of music and musicology and has carried out immense research on Naad (sound) and 'sound therapy'. One of his highly commended albums on 'sound therapy', “Naad Yoga on the Santoor”, was released by a pharmaceutical company.

Panditji has led the revival of Sufism to spread the message of humanism and the patriotism amongst the masses, especially the youth. He has composed Guru-Baani, Shabads, Vedic Chants and Sanskrit mantras like 'Mahamrityunjaya', 'Durga Kavach' and 'Surya Upasana'. Panditji has also composed and introduced three new Raags: Raag Laleshwari, Raag Patwanti, and Raag Nirmalranjani.

He has composed various patriotic songs, which are loved by the people of all age groups, like “Bharat Bharat Hum Iski Santaan”, “Hum Honge Kaamyab”, “Bharat Ki Beti”, “Vijayee Vishwa Tiranga Pyaara”, “Vande Maataram”, “Sarfarooshi Ki Tamanna”, “Naman Tujhko Mere Bharat”, etc. for the national integration. His compositions bear the distinctive stamp of his virtuosity and erudition and have been sung by eminent vocalists of the country. His classical version of “Saare Jahan Se Achhaa ...” and instrumental version of “Vande Maataram” are recognized pioneering efforts.

Panditji has used his Santoor and his compositions to highlight the concept of oneness and foster unity enshrining the idea of national integration, humanism and peace amongst the common man and the youth in particular. Moreover, he has extended the various possibilities in Santoor playing and prepared a formal system, the Sopori BaaJ, on the basis of which further research and experimentation may be carried out on the Santoor. For his enormous contributions, he has received numerous awards including the prestigious:

- Padma Shri (one of the highest civilian awards of India),
- Sangeet Natak Academy Award (highest performing award of the country),

# Artist Column



- J&K State Award (highest civilian award of J&K State),
- National Flag Honour of the Arab Republic of Egypt,
- Baba Allaiddin Khan Award,
- Maa Shardey Samman (lifetime achievement award),
- Gama Maharaj Award (lifetime achievement award),,
- Akashwani Annual Awards,
- Golden Jubilee Celebrations Award by All India Radio Srinagar - for contribution to Kashmiri music,
- Kashmir Overseas Association Award (USA) - for contribution towards preserving art & music of Kashmir. And many more...

