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## The Contribution of Shaikh Noor Ud din <sup>(R.A)</sup> As a pioneer Environmentalist.

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### Abstract

Shaikh Noor ud din has consciously fought against disturbance of ecology and environment on his individual level both as a poet and a preacher, who has also organized a disciplined nucleus of dedicated cadres who fought at various levels to safe guard his environment. Noor ud din as its moto and inspiring guideline spreads awareness about the importance of our forest wealth. The adage of which the authorship is attributed to the saint is “*Ann Poshe Teleh Yeleh Wan Poshe*” meaning that the food is subservient to Forests. The poet has given aesthetic sensibility to an unliving being, a tree which is in itself the part of the nature but in these existing environment in which it is located, this lifeless being is not only given life in his poetry but emotional sense and expression to that sense

**Keywords:** *Environment; Nature; Food; Tree; Forest*

### Introduction:

Topographically Kashmir valley is divided in various regions viz plains calley Payeen areas, mountain areas usually snow decked and surround guard around this happy land and thirdly the Kandi where staple food .i.e paddy is not grown. It is very close to forests. For their inaccessibility people living in these Kandi areas are very poor and live within limited resources. Hence they depend too much on forests and forest production, cattle and herd of sheep. The famous saint has strongly protested against the practice of those particular villagers living in that area whose only source of recreation is to have a picnic in forests and on return they damage the green trees. In the below stanza he conveys the protest, warning and his constructive message against such practice:

*The youth of Kandi areas demonstrate their valour,  
By their urge to enjoy picnic in forests.  
But alas on the return they come with head load of wood,  
(By sheer damage to this green gold)  
Alas spiritless are these Kandi areas.*

The people living in far-flung inaccessible remote areas are by the compulsion of the situation cut off both from culture and education. They had no conception of the green wealth because it was in abundance around them. But, the committed environmentalist within the frame of our patriot poet does not forgive even these ignorant people and through the piercing sarcasm mends their habits. The Sufi saint condemns those people who for their recklessness and urge to construct wooden projected edifices of grandeur have caused damage to forest. He says:

*While plucking the fruit (particularly almond and walnut)  
They recklessly beat the branches of the trees,  
Unevenly cause damages and reduce their productivity,  
What they have severed?  
What fruit they have plucked from those severed branches?  
Alas why you have been lured by wooden verandas?  
Why have you decorated your house by the wastage of timber?  
Why did not u preffer to live in modesty?  
Alas the Satan has mislead you.*

The Sufi saint has made protection of environment part of the human faith and moral code of conduct. The poet has consciously made the commitment with nature and protection of natural surroundings as an inalienable part of Muslim moral code.

### Shaikh Noor Ud din As a Pioneer Environmentalist

No doubt that the Sheikh Noor-u-din's Kashmir was paradise which had all the bounties of nature undisturbed. In spite of that Sheikh Noor-u-din had a saintic vision about the future that he was aware that this natural beauty will get disturbed and tarnished by the irresponsible acts of uncultured, uneducated and ignorant inhabitants of Kashmir. Sheikh Noor-u-din who was having ecological vision has explained the importance of ecological balance some six hundred years before. The following verse in Kashmiri language is as famous as a universal truth and is respected by people with letter and spirit:

*Ann Poshe Teleh Yeleh Wan Poshe*

**(Meaning - The universe will sustain only if the forests (trees) sustain)**

The sayings of the great Saint are at present used as a motto by the Jammu and Kashmir Forest Department for spreading awareness for afforestation. Sheikh made conscious efforts for maintaining ecological balance

both by his literary work and teachings, Sheikh Noor-ud-din has practically avoided any Carnivorous diet only to safeguard other creatures of the God.

Sheikh Noor-ud-din has explained the dependence of humans on the nature in a very nice way, and made us clear that at every stage of development we are dependent on the bounties of nature in one way or the other. After the breast feeding we take milk from the domestic animals, which they (animals) generate from wild and domestic grasses, we start taking food, the food also mainly comes from field and plants so we are dependent on nature, we need clothing and shelter in the form of houses. These necessities are also obtained from the forests, and other natural resources and when we become helpless at old age nobody helps us even the nears and dears leave us at that time and it is nature which helps us at that time as well. Plants provide us a Stick which becomes our support. Sheikh Noor-ud-din has treated these obligations of nature as the nature's debt and not as free gifts. According to the Sufi Sect of Muslim jurisprudence, the debt is the first liability to be discharged from the assets of the deceased believer. No any believer should die without clearing his / her debt whether of his companion or nature borrowed by him / her even of a single penny, lest he dies under the obligation. On the other hand, according to the principles of the Muslim ethics, the debt from a fellow being or even from nature is a mutual transaction between the two and such debt if not discharged cannot be forgiven by any manner of Penance unless the creditor forgives the debt. This indicates that no any human being is free to pollute the environment and if he utilizes a tree he should implant another so that the debt of nature gets credited and a balance will be maintained in the nature.

Sheikh Noor-ud-din was a great environmentalist as he respects not only the Creator but all the creatures, He has produced, when Sheikh was warned about Cave dwelling by her mother and she said to her son there are certain wild animals that can harm you. On this Sheikh replied by following verse:

*I have painted the Cave, for my meditation,  
I am staying here to create a relation with nature,  
The Lions; Jackals are my friends and family members.  
I consider life is brief as if a fortnight,  
Thereby the jinnies and spirits are at my beck and call.*

Recognizing the importance of the flowering plants and the natural topographical features of land Sheikh has said:

*Those light houses who have bedecked themselves with roses,  
who have ingrained capacity to comprehend their Sweet words,  
Have adorned the hilltops and mountain cliffs as their thrones,  
Can one evaluate the worth of those Jewels?*

It is the nature through which man develops communication with his creator and receives eternal inspiration from Him. Sheikh Noor-ud-din was critically examining the life of people and their way of dealing with the nature. In his poetry he had time and again warned the people not to misuse the natural resources for their selfish needs the following verse of Sheikh clearly demonstrates his concerns about the life style problems and the way people are performing their work while harming the nature.

Sheikh Noor-ud-din developed and propagated a sect of Islam called Sufi Sect with the fundamental principles of Non-violence and common good. He was the poet of this religious group of Islam and uses his religious code of conduct to preach the morality in the same manner in which Milton uses Christian religious moral code or Tagore conveys his ideas through Hindu mythology or Iqbal uses Muslim political thought to carry his message, He has consciously made the commitment with the nature and protection of natural surroundings as an inalienable part of Muslim moral Code. Sheikh himself experienced the nature and shares his experience in the following verse:

*I visited the forests of the Kashmir through Kael trees,  
the hot climate of June damages the delicacy of Jasmine,  
The dew drops are like pearls on the leaves of flowers  
and by mere mishandling these pearls get damaged,*

so we should be aware that if we are to enjoy the nature then we have to our self safeguard it because it is very tender and delicate. Sheikh was a pure naturalist, he was so dedicated and involved with the delicacy of Jasmine flowers and its soft petals that he wishes to become shield to defend this delicacy against the natural process itself, he is equally angry with the Sunshine for the role it plays in destroying the dew drops resembling the pearls.

It is not only Sheikh Noor-ud-din Wali who was considered to be a great ecologist but his disciple and followers were also examples in themselves. The four great friends of Sheikh and the pillars of Reshi Movement were also living in the jungles among the wild animals. One of the Reshi, Baba Neek Shah was feeding the wild animals and it is said if sometime any animal showed some wild behaviour the Reshi were talking to them like the family members.

Now the need of hour is that our present day educationist should understand the need of highlighting the teachings of the Sufism regarding the ecology so that our people will understand the importance of the nature and its resources. It is also the need of hour that our politicians and policy makers may learn a lesson from the teaching of the great ecologist Noor-ud-din and the Reshi Movement. Nature plays a great role in progress and prosperity of humans that is why today the world is so highly concerned about the environment and its conservation, though the world powers are all in a rat race to overpower others and to develop very sophisticated weapons which are a great threat to the environment. Today we are trying to

minimize the degeneration of natural resources but at the same, the developmental works are going on a high speed and the population of the world is also increasing arithmetically. It is unwise to think that we can increase our comforts of life, develop weapons of mass destruction, provide modern facilities to every individual and at the same time safeguard the environment. The progress and development are inevitable but to conserve the nature and its resources are equally important. Man should be educated and informed about the teachings of great saints like Sheikh Noor-ud-din and other environmentalists about the importance and necessity of the nature and natural resources especially the exhaustible ones.

### **Conclusion:**

The last stage of Sheikh's life was very important and vital, as during this phase he spread the message of Sufism and Rishyat to the pros and cones of Kashmir valley. This phase of his life has seen a large number of challenges and difficulties as he started a new sect of thought and tried to spread it among the masses, as this school of thought was based on truth and reality and as opposed to the misguidance of superficial monks of that time. It was opposed by Mullahs and Gurus of that time but despite all opposition and difficulties, Sheikh has been successful in spreading the message of peace and harmony in the Kashmir. He himself visited every part of Kashmir and benefited people by guiding them to the right path. Sheikh propagated such teachings which not only help to conserve environment but the balance of nature as well. It is not only Sheikh Noor-ud-din Wali who was considered to be a great ecologist but his disciple and followers were also examples in themselves, they all were ready to sacrifice their personal tastes for the well being of Environment. As educationists and as scholars of environmental education it is our duty to safeguard our environment and everybody should understand the need of high lighting the teachings of the Sufism regarding the ecology so that our people will understand the importance of the nature and its resources.

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