

Spiritual Poetry of Kashmir

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Abstract:

The Valley of Kashmir has been an abode of different cultures and civilizations. Many famous religious currents like Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam have played a prominent role in shaping the socio-cultural fabric of Kashmir Valley. It has been a home of famous saints, Pirs and Rishis and is commonly known as 'Resh vir' such as abode of Rishis. Given this background, it is no wonder that Kashmir Valley has produced famous and rich spiritual or devotional poetry produced by famous mystic poets. The present paper is based on the spiritual poetry of Kashmir. Its origin and its influence in the life of Kashmiris have also been taken into consideration.

Keywords: Devotion,Aqeedat,Avert,Supplication,Eulogy,Elegy.

Introduction:

Spiritual poetry of Kashmir is also known as 'devotional poetry'. In the Indian tradition, the term to denote devotion is 'bhakti' derived from a Sanskrit verbal root bhaj-which bears two primary connotations that may take us closer to a definition of devotion.

Dictionary definitions will be of little use in explaining the essence of the term, though all attempts to describe devotion throw in expressions relating to emotionality, spirituality and religiousness. Devotion is at times identified with intense love then again with prayer and religious worship and else with passionate attachment. Devotion is not itself prayer or worship, but it is the invigorative quality of devotion that makes religious pursuits meaningful.

It is devotion, an immense sense of living devotion concealed in the innermost layer of the musical reality. It is a devotion coupled with readiness for complete self-sacrifice, a devotion that reaches out beyond even the conception of self only to lead the devoted soul to full mergence with the cosmic stream of love. It is likewise true that devotion constitutes the quintessence of spirituality which is again the fundament of religiousness, but the intensity of devotion exceeds by far the depth of spiritual perception and resulting concerns of religiosity.

The devotional poetry or poetry of faith are equally related a “Aqeedat” meaning “Faith” has been derived from Arabic language .Its literal meaning implies “a fact accepted as truth and preserved in heart with love and respect”.

Discussion:

The devotional poetry of Kashmir was originated with the spread of Islam in Kashmir. The Persian language entered Kashmir along with its culture. This laid its impact on Kashmiri language and culture to the extent, giving rise to a cultural revolution and made Kashmir little Iran. All the prevailing art, skills of Persian language entered the Kashmiri art and literature which included all forms of spiritual poetries.

In devotional poetry faith is seen as an important topic, hand in hand joined with sacred secret in Kashmiri poetry from the beginning. The basic subject of the poetry of faith is the expression of love for God, Prophet (s.a.w), the beloved personality in religion and spirituality, with a wish to take it as a source and improve the life after death, to avert the evils, sorrows and sadness, to serve as a prayer getting their wishes fulfilled. The devotional poetry or poetry of faith are actually part of religious and spiritual poetry. Its range is similar to that of love poetry. Among the forms of poetry, only religious poetry which by virtue of the experience through the creation of tongue has paved a way for building similarities of worshipping objects. ¹

The spiritual poetry of Kashmir was nourished by the saint poets of Kashmir. Today this poetry has rich value in the life of Kashmiris. This poetry is recited on different occasions and festivals according to their religion and faith. There are different forms of spiritual or devotional poetries of Kashmir as Hamud (admiration and a praise for God), Munajat, Naat , Manqabat, Marsi, are the different forms of the poetry of faith. The major part of Kashmiri poetry consists of the poetry of faith and religion.

Hamud(admiration or praise of Lord:

Hamud is an Arabic word means -worthy notes, praise and admire the lord of the universe and offer thanks to almighty Allah.

The Hamud according to the convention of literature, determine it as a poem or verse which expresses the various and innumerable characteristics of God as a creator without any peer, equal or partner.

Sham-ul-Rehman Farooqi writes in “Darsi Balagat”, Hamud is the poem or verse in which the praise and admiration of Almighty is narrated, with the poetic to pray through manifold admirable qualities.²

Nishat Ansari admires the definition of Hamud in “partaw Journal”, any verse from with rhythmic and poetic account expressing a praise, admiration and pray, is known as Hamud. Hamud in literal sense means praise in honor of the creator alone i.e., God’s grandeur, Greatness, loneliness, might supremacy and exaltedness. It also includes to pray Him, offer gratitude and thanks to God who bestows life and sources to live.³

After a keen search of facts in the history of global literature it is obvious that the beginning of writing Hamud comes from Arabic language and the first Hamud writing poets are Kus Bin Saed-ul-Ayari and Umro Bin Maed Yakrub although they lived in the age of ignorance, yet they believed in God whose love made them write Hamdia poetry.

The art of writing Hamdia poetry become popular when the heavenly book, the “Holy Quran” descended in which God mentioned the first chapter with Hamud, known as “Sura Hamud”. This caused the Muslim poets divert their attention towards Hamud.

This poetry was first introduced in Kashmir by Sheikh-ul-Alam a saint poet of Kashmir in his Sheikh Shruik- Faith formulated facts of religious saints. Sheikh-ul-Alam has versified the laudable qualities and characteristics of God with a melodious attractive and unique way of praise e.g;

Khudai chuh akoei naw chis lachah

Zikri rous akh kachah mo

Womberi vanden akaie bachah

Rizke rous akh mechah mo. ⁴

i.e.,

God is one with names billion

Bowing, praising and praying whom everyone

He is eternal without a Peer

Sends food to all before the set of Sun.

Munajat Poetry(Suppoication Poetry):

Munajat poetry is also known as supplication poetry. When a person gets disappointment from all sources. At length , every heart tolerate the burden when it goes heavy, when the artist fails fighting against such mental and external oppression, when a person does not meet to respond by seeking assistance from the persons of rule and authority. He turns to nature, God, and a supreme power or in other words he cries before a supreme power in order to get satisfaction. This cry is an expression. In other words, this cry is known as Munajat-(prayer) when uttered and expressed by a poet. Munajat is found, in all the works of global

art and literature in one way or the other. There are the best works, documents, written in Persian, Arabic, and Urdu languages and the Kashmiri literature is not behind in this aspect.

The history of Munajat in Kashmiri art and literature is old enough. The foundation of Munajat in Kashmiri literature was laid by Lal Ded (a saint poetess of Kashmir) and Sheikh-ul-Alam with their notable and renowned Munajat.

Around 1250 (Alhijra) the renowned saint poets such as; Wali-ul-Lah Mutto, Kutub-ud-Din Waiz, Mehmood Gami, Mir Sana-ullah Krierie, Maqbool Shah Kralawari, Mehjoor, wrote Prayer and supplication in their songs, war, events etc. The art of writing supplication poetry was blessed the worthy notes by the other Kashmiri Muslim and non-Muslim poets.⁵

During the Chack period in Kashmir. The anonymous writer of a heroic poem, known as "AHKAMI ISLAM." This poem contains many supplications and prayers. It is said that Sultan Gazi Chack got it written. The teacher of Yousuf Shah Chak known by the name of Mullah Ahmad Mehri- the king of poets written many supplications.

Supplication writer Mehmood Gami was born on 1855 A.D his famous prayer as: Ya Elahi ker ijabat der dua

Rbigfir Zanoobi Kuluha. ⁶

i.e., Oh God grant acceptance to my prayer

and pardon all my sins.

The another famous supplication poetry written by the modern poet Ghulam Ahmad Mehjoor which is the tip of the tongue of every Kashmiri as; Sahibo sath chehm may chaenie wath may

Aslech hawtum

Kouth kaleh rozeh bayzan zanhund mess

chawtum.⁷

i.e., Oh God Thou are my support, show me the

right way

How long shall I be unknown, help me to

Drink wine of knowledge.

Natia Poetry:

The word Naat is derived from the Arabic language which is commonly used for an applaud. It is also known as “Eulogy”. It implies a quality or a characteristic, especially when you exaggerate a thing in its applause, only then Eulogy is used. An applauder who narrated applause is known as Eulogist. It gives us various meaningful spheres which are vast and vital.⁸

To determine the first and foremost use of Eulogy in narrating the Qualities of our beloved Prophet (s.a.w) is very difficult Sayed Rafi-ud-Din Ashfaq opines that Hazrat Ali (a.s) expressed the foremost Eulogy in honour of prophet of Islam(s.a.w).

Apparently, the goal and determination of Eulogy seems simple. It is felt that Eulogy is the name of applause and praise in honor of our beloved Prophet(s.a.w) only. But a keen study of Eulogy Present in Urdu, Arabic and Persian appraise as of the vital, vast and greatness of its topic. It is a fact that applause is an essential topic Eulogy. So Naatia poetry (Eulogy poetry) is written in honour of the pious features of Prophet Mohammad (s.a.w) with regard to his noble ancestors, autobiography, character, honesty, with elevated and peerless principles, morality and what not. This is recorded as first Eulogy document in Arabic language.⁹

In addition to the applauses, significant qualities of our beloved Prophet (s.a.w) Eulogy contains the topic with an expression of esteem, respect and

reverence on Thy(s.a.w) pious life, responsibility, Wars, miracles, qualities, lessons, guidance, directives, assistance, humanity, kindness, manners , habits, activities, interaction attitudes behaviour, personal incidents and events with consequent details.

The other part gives an account of Your (s.a.w) pious life which include Thy birth, look after nourishment, the events from Thy childhood to the declaration of Thy Prophethood etc.

Sheikhul Alam is our first poet who wrote and founded poetry of applauds. He offered his tribute “AWRADI FATEH” in honour of the beloved prophet of Islam(s.a.w).

After Sheikhul Alam the skill of writing the sacred Eulogy in Kashmiri literature flourished equally and the Kashmiri poet and singer offered their tribute of love to it and thus pleasing the noble and pious heart of the Holy Prophet of Islam(s.a.w). Be it Mirza Akmal-ud-Din khan Badakshi(r.a), Khawaja Habibullah Nowshehri, Mehmood Gami, Peer Aziz –Ullah Hakani, Nazim, Nadim, Mir Sana-Ullah Krieri, Wali-ul-Lalh Mutto, all these have applauded the miracles, achievements and qualities of the beloved Prophet(s.a.w) . Verses of the famous Natia poetry of Abdul Ahad Nazim:

Royeh pak hao ya Rasoolulah

Mintha thaao ya Rasoolulah

Sayidul Mursaleen yikna sonoie

Lol aam chonai hao deedar.

i.e., Show Thy sacred face o’the Prophet of Allah

be obliged to our request, o’the Prophet of Allah

Thou are the leader and Head of all the Prophet

of God come to ours. ¹⁰

Manqabat Poetry:

Manqabat “an applause” is a praise in verse expressing the greatness of some one. Manqabat is confined to imply the greatness and exalted status of particular person like supplicative form and Eulogy. Manqabat is confined to applaud and admire the greatness of proper person. Manqabat is not divided into subparts. Every Manqabat related to a particular personality is given the subject essential as a topic at the top e.g., Manqabat Shahi Jeelan(a.s), Manqabat Shahi Hamdan(r.a), Manqabat Hazrat Ali(a.s), Manqabat Sheikhul Alam(r.a) etc.

Dr.Margoob Banihali says, “the fundamental identity of a Manqabat is hidden in two things: The first one demands a writer to know all about the spiritual, physical and practical aspects of life of the person, applauded and admired in his Manqabat, with his complete knowledge and command. The second one demands his responsibility in professing the firm faith upon “one-ness of God” and Prophethood with supremacy in Prophet of Islam(s.a.w).”

According to Margoob Banihali, “the most scoring mighty natured Manqabat in Kashmiri language has been said in honour of Hazrat Sayid Mohi-ud-Din Abdul Qadir Jeelani (r.a).” The poetic applauses in honour of Hazrat Amir Kabir Sayed Ali Hamdani(r.a) comes the next and the third one stands in honour of Hazrat Sheikh Hamza Mukhdoom (r.a). The Manqabat in honour of Hazrat Sheikh Bahaw-ud-Din Nakash Band (r.a), is numbered the fourth and fifth one is related to Sheikh Hamza Noor-ud-Din Noorani(r.a).

The most numbered Manqabat are written in honour of Hazrat Ali (a.s). The realm of Kashmiri Manqabat is a treasure which can create great offices of literature for the betterment of the world. This is the most important, attractive and charming artful skill of Kashmiri literature.¹¹

Manqabat poetry in Kashmiri literature initiated during 14th century A.D. Sheikhul Alam wrote this way a Manqabat in honour of the Hazrat Fatima the

beloved daughter of Prophet of Islam and in honour of Hazrat owaes Qarni(a.s) the famous companion of prophet of Islam.

There are also another famous poets who wrote Manqabats; like Mehmood Gami, Abdul Ahad Nazim, Wahab Parray, Mehjoor, Fazil Kashmiri.

Although our Kashmiri poetry records the traces of its origin before Lal Ded and Sheikhul Alam(r.a) with signs, samples and events, yet, it is not available because of the ups and downs of the time. Although, her poetry does not present any applausive verse. Yet the Shruik written by Sheikhul Alam (r.a) frequently present Manqabat. He has diverted his keen attention towards Hamud, Eulogy and applauses. He has admired the dignified and glorified status of Charyar (four friends of Prophet Mohammad (s.a.w), Ali Bayat Athar(the family members of Prophet (s.a.w), different saints and religious persons with firm faith love and hope.

Marsi (Elegy):

In Greek, Latin, and English languages, a Marsia is known as (a) Elegy (b) Elegeia (c) Elgy, All the three words imply: A Mournful, sorrowful or plaintive poem especially a lament for the dead poetry or a poem written in Elegic metre. A sad or mournful musical composition. Marsia is that part of a literature in which the qualities and noble deeds of a hero are lamented upon after his pious death. The main objective of a Marsia is to convey the message of hero's character and his noble deeds with all the worth applaudable expression to others as a lesson in a positive way. Conventionally, a Marsia is that part of a literature in which the exalted status, greatness, noble, deeds, kind nature and other qualities of a dead personality or a martyr are lamented and mourned upon with a melancholic expression.¹²

In other words , Marsia is a word related to Arabic language. It has been derived from the word "RISSA" is that poetry which implies to glorify the qualities and sacred deeds of a dead personality.

Zain-ul-Abidin writes: "RISSA" is that poetry in which the death of a dead one is mourned upon, condolence of his relatives and friends is mentioned.

It can not be said how and when an Elegy was started as a verse form. However, it is an admitable fact that the impact of sorrows, sadness and miseries are obvious in human history from its very existence. The legends of Ramayina and Mahabhartta also present the mournful and sad events. The oldest history of Kashmir "Raj Tarangini" also cite such several and mournful events in a versified expression, which can be included in the realm of an Elegy. There are different ways to express pain, suffering, sadness and distress. One method to express sadness is manual and physical mourning i.e. beating chest and head, puling hair etc. This pattern of mourning passed on with the development and achieved the name of an Elegy.

The Marsia poetry begin in Kaskhmiri literartue when Hazrat Amir kabir Mir Sayed Ali Hamdani came for the first time to Kashmir in 766 Hijra, from Iran. This was the period of Kashmir's ruler Sultan Qutub-ud-Din, who was the father of Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin (Budshah). He was fond of knowledge and a great lover of Art and literature and his popularity thus brought scholars, teachers, Ulmas, poets, artists, painters and men of spirit from Iran in a good number. Sadats were most among them, who were God loving, pious, religious and kind. They visited Kashmir in crowds together with their main aim to preach Islamic teaching and knowledge. This was one aspect of their life. Other aspect was that they were true lovers of the beloved Prophet of Islam (s.a.w) true at heart, lovers and devotee of Prophet(s.a.w) Ahli Bait (family members and companions) and intimate friends of the martyrs of Karbala.

This fact is known that the subject and title of Kashmiri Marsi (Elegy) is basically the most tragic event of Karbala and Martyrdom of Hazrat Imam Hussain (a.s) and about thousands of Elegies have been composed on this subject in the last seven hundred years. In addition, the Elegies written another topics, other than the event of Karbala are a few and can not be countable.¹ An Elegy is written

by Sham Bibi on the death of Hazrat Sheikhul Alam(r.a) and Maqbool Shah Kralwari has written on some rulers, kind virtuous people. The fact is that such Elegies are a few. The Elegies written on the most tragic and inhuman event of Karbala, which remarks the most groanful Elegy till the end of the world.

The Elegies written in memory of the most tragic event of Karbala present the painful moments whose impact move hearts and bring tears. These Elegies mention the greatest sacrifice of Hazrat Imam Hussain(a.s), matchless martyrdom, the sorrows and miseries of Karbala desert , the hunger and thirst of Ahli Bait (a.s) battle field, bloodshed of innocent and the heart burnt scenes of fixed tents. On the day of martyrdom (ashoora).

Conclusion:

It has been concluded that the spiritual poetry of Kashmir has a great influence in the life of Kashmiris. It is a way to express their emotionality, spirituality, religiousness, prayer and religious worship. The Kashmiri saint poets nourished it by their blood. All the spiritual forms of poetry have a greater importance in the life of Kashmiris. This poetry is mostly recited on different occasions, religious gatherings and festivals also. This also play a rich cultural heritage in Kashmir. In this way, all the forms of spiritual poetry implies a fact accepted as truth and preserved in heart with love and respect.

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