

Humanism and Poetic Discourse: An Analysis of Shaikh Nur ud-Din's Contribution

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Abstract:

Kashmir is well known to the world from the very earliest times, because of its geographical features, culture, civilization and its people. It is for this reason that right from the ancient times the Valley of Kashmir has attracted the attention of large number of people including the Sufis, Rishis, Sayyids, Ulama, poets, learned men and travelers. The coming of these people in Kashmir gave rise to new ideas and philosophies. One among these philosophies was Reshi Movement. The credit of this indigenous movement in Kashmir goes to Shaikh Nur-ud din^(r.a). He is regarded the patron of this movement. Shaikh Nur-ud-din Noorani (R.A), celebrated saint of Kashmir, is known by many names; for few he is the Alamdar-i-Kashmir (Flag bearer of the people of Kashmir), for others he is “Nundreshi” the pious saint while others call him “Shaikh-ul-Alam” the spiritual preceptor of the world. Nur-ud-din Noorani (R.A) is undoubtedly the top personage of the spirituality in Kashmir. His sayings embody his teachings. His life was filled with love and compassion for people of all religions and contempt of this world, other-worldliness. His life was based on purity of thoughts and action. His spiritual eminence and his humanistic philosophy made him the idol of the people of Kashmir. They flocked to him and some of them modeled their very lives on his pattern. He is one of those outstanding personalities who had the greatest and most lasting influence on the culture of Kashmir. As a saint, a dedicated servant of the common man, a poet, a great caliber and above all as a messenger of love, purification and piety his achievement is unparalleled. His efforts reached far and wide and benefited a large number of people in Kashmir. The present study therefore is an attempt to highlight the concept of humanism in Nur-ud din’s poetry. It is in this context the present paper has been drafted.

Keywords: Nur ud din, Poetry, Humanism, Rishi

Introduction:

The teachings of Nur ud din are universal and are not only for the Kashmiri people but to the humanity as a whole. His sayings have great significance and performed this difficult task with sincerity. He expressed his philosophy through *Shruks*. He was one of those spiritualists who lit the lamp of ethical knowledge for the benefit of humanity. His aim was to illuminate the world with his philosophy of universal brotherhood based on conviction and brotherhood. He assumed the role of a missionary, but it was mainly through his poetry, composed in a local language, that a dynamic and creative interaction was established between the great tradition of Islam, as represented by the Sufis and *ulama* and the local peasant society. Unlike the saint missionaries from Central Asia and Persia, he was capable of entering into a meaningful dialogue with the local people regarding matters ranging from ontology to immediate social concerns. It is only amply borne out by the creative role of Shaikh as the matter of Kashmiri identity, but simultaneously it is reflected in the social response that his popular mystical poetry generated among the people. His message was not confined to one race or one class, but addressed to mankind as a whole. He expressed his thought in the simple language of his people, clothing his idea with an examples familiar from their experience. He taught the common people to practice religion not merely as a creed, but to make it life.

Nur ud din was not opposed to the world and its social system but rather moved within the social order so qualitatively informing his personal relations with men as to enter into the commitment of Allah. According to his philosophy, lust, anger and covetousness are three gates of hell. Jealousy, lack of interest, irritability, and living upon others' fortunes leads to misery and immoral character. Gambling, drinking, and harshness of speed and misuse of wealth lead to calamity and mediate on your own self and chant the sacred name of Allah with full control on your senses. To live on the fruits of your own labour, do your own work without disturbing others. Learn to sit in a natural manner, becoming steady, calm, detached, the more you sit still the steadier your mind will become.

He was indifferent to political institutions, the policy of religious tolerance for which Zain- ul -Aabidin is famous in history undoubtedly bears the stamp of Shaikh's influence on the Sultan's mind. It is remarkable that when Budshah first sought the guidance of the Shaikh to make efforts for administering justice in his kingdom. He is considered as the commentator of the Qur'an in the Kashmiri terminology. His poetry forms the explanation of the Qur'an and Hadith known as Shruks.

Humanism in Nur ud din's Poetry

Nur-ud-din's teachings are, undoubtedly, grounded in the Qur'anic ethics of humanism and reciprocal love. The ethics of non-violence that he advocates is of an activist and positive in nature; it aims at rendering positive good to human beings in the hour of their adversity. Nur-ud-din disliked tyranny and violence to fellow human beings for one's own gain. True, he regarded the gap between the rich and the poor as ordained in the existing social system. For him kindness is a form of non-violence at the personal level of which justice is the expression at the social level. Nur-ud-din gave a humanistic and life-affirming content to the concept of non-violence. The long poem in which he extols the virtues of a true Muslim reflects his sincere desire to mediate Islam to the common folk through the agency of their own medium.

One who does not neglect one's daily duties, Who longs to live by the sweat of one's brow, Who controls the bestial anger of one's mind, Who shows fortitude in provocation, May truly be called a Muslim,

He will be among the people of paradise Who shares meals with the hungry, (who) is obsessed with the idea of removing hunger, Who humbly bows (in prayers) in all sincerity, Who scorns anger, greed, illusion, arrogance and self-conceit, May truly be called a Muslim.

This humanistic concept of Shaikh Nur-ud-din preached and proclaimed widely and this way human relations flourished and it was his thought which he made us to understand in its simplest form. These teaching surveys are very found base for peace and justice. The highest order Sufi is explaining Holy verses of Qur'an to entire human beings in its purest form

because Qur'an is message for all human beings which *waliullah* have understood the way Prophet (S.A.W) has given instructions.

Shaikh Nur-ud-din made a clean sweep of all evils in society and threw open the door to spiritual opportunity for one and all by expounding the Qur'anic concept of the dignity of man in a number of verses. Nur-ud-din's contribution to the evolution of the concept of the dignity of man can be better appreciated in light of Qur'anic verses proclaiming that all men descended from one and the same pair created by one God. It is of no consequence of what parents a man is born since the origin of all mankind is the same. Here man is asked to be ambitious of true honor and of the real glory and perfection of his common origin.

The verses of Nur-ud-din give evidence of his belief that God is both immanent and transcendent. He is everywhere, not confined to one place or another. According to him, all the branches of knowledge are nothing but the commentary upon the proclamation of faith. "There is no God but Allah." If one truly seeks for God, he says, everything but Allah becomes worthless. One who recognizes himself recognizes God: 'when I was able to recognize my own self, I was able to recognize God; but loss and gain become identical to me and the distinction between life and death disappeared.

He once told his mother: "God was and is and shall be for ever; he is independent of all other creatures; he lacks nothing." Further he says: "There is no God but with a hundred names, there is not a single blade of grass, which does not worship him."

He further says: "First I became certain that there is no god but Allah, then I made myself (acquainted with) divine revelations. First I forgot myself and yearned after God, then I reached *la-makan*.

The Shaikh also impressed upon the people that the more they learnt about the deeper content of the *kalima*, the more they would become conscious of the sin of worshipping a multiplicity of deities. It was in the context that while criticizing the animistic beliefs of his compatriots, even though undergoing the process of Islamic acculturation, the Shaikh remarked:

O Pandit, the brother: O Pandits: How long will you remain wedded to the worship of stones and springs? Your thoughtless search did not bear any fruit; Submit yourselves to the Lord and his messenger; Aren't you solicitous of (spiritual and worldly) success?

Nur-ud-din strongly emphasizes the absolute dependence on God. One must trust in God, and recognize that no human endeavor can succeed without his help. The Shaikh is said to have told his mother, when she asked how he proposed to support his family, "Bread is provided by God, and trades and professions are only one of the means getting it. A slave of God should think only of worshipping him, caring nothing for food and drink. Again he says:

"No one can take anything from him to whom God has given, Time and chance are only means to an end. For one, whom God will abandon, no one can provide, Neither intelligence nor high caste shall help him."

He was, He is and He shall be, So remember Him constantly here; He will remove all (your) anxieties, So come to your senses at once."

Love and intense devotion to God form the basis of Nur-ud-din's utterances. His devotion is complete and exclusive absorption in God and indifference to all except Him. He advocates the suppression of all other preoccupations and the abandonment of worldly cares. The lover according to Nur-ud-din is one who cares neither for spiritual nor fleshy pleasures, but only for the contemplation of the 'beloved' (God). He says:

"Love is the death of a mother's only son, Love is the venomous sting of a swarm of wasps, Can the lover have any rest? Love is a rope dripping with blood. Can the wearer (lover) even utter a sigh?

"The lover is he who burns with love, whose self shines like gold. When man's heart lights up with the flame of love, Then shall he reach *la-makan*."

Nur-ud-din regarded a man's base nature (*nafs*) as his great enemy. The first duty of worship is to control one's desires. "The belly is the stronghold of the *nafs* and to fight the *nafs*," he says, "is a meritorious holy war (*jihad*). Again he says: "if one subdues his *nafs*, one is a great soul, and his efforts are pure worship." He strongly believed that man's *nafs* is the greatest obstacle in one's way to God. Repeatedly and with great vigor lays stress on the duty of crushing and overpowering it at all costs. His whole thought, and that of his followers, is based on the control of the *Nafs*. He says:

"The *Nafs* has distributed me greatly, The *Nafs* has ruined me entirely. It is the *Nafs* which makes us destroy others, The *Nafs* is the slave of the devil."

He says further:

To serve the *nafs* is to thrust ashes into one's own eyes, How then can one expect to see? The *nafs* is just like a rebellious calf, Which should be tied up. It should be threatened with the stick of fasting."

"Desire is like the knotted wood of the forest, it cannot be made into planks, beams or cradles. He who cut and filed it, will burn it into ashes."

The Shaikh condemned anger, pride and greed, the source of which, according to him, is selfish desires: "The proud should be sent to hell where they will become soft; like iron in the fire." Again he said to have remarked: "One cannot attain the truth, if one does not give up anger, pride and greed." He says:

"Those who kill *tamagunas*, They will bear (everything) with resignation. Those whose seek after ease, ease (God), They consider everything (in this world) as ashes (worthless).

Adam is the progenitor of the human race, The mother Eve has the same primordially, (So) from where have the 'low castes' descended? How can a 'high born' deride his own ancestry?

Nur-ud-din yearned for a society on moral values. He was conscious of the defects of the society in which he lived. There are many anecdotes associated with the life and doings of Nur-ud-din, which not reveal his disapproval of the established social customs, but also

provide ample evidence about the medieval society of Kashmir. Nur-ud-din believed in complete harmony among the different sections of the society and preached peace and understanding in them. He is conscious of the hatred and tension which were created during the reign of Sultan Sikander, and was keen to restore harmony between Muslims and Non-Muslims. According to Jonaraja, Suha Bhatta (Saif-ud-din), who after his policy and persecuted the Non-Muslims, put some restrictions on Shaikh Nur-ud-din. It is most likely that the Shaikh had disapproved of the actions of Suha Bhatta and raised voice against this. He strongly pleads for tolerance, fellow feeling, love and affection among all sections of the society. Shaikh Nur-ud-din was clear in his teachings and his thought flowed generously like a river.

We belong to the same parents, Then why this difference? Let Hindus and Muslims (together) Worship God alone. We came to this world like partners. We should have shared our joys and sorrows together.

Ethics is a subject that deals with the knowledge of virtues and the ways how to acquire them, a knowledge of the rules of human behavior, a knowledge of standard for assessing the human acts done out of free will and passing the judgment of good and bad on those acts and deciding the award or punishment provided the belief precedes the act and provided the individual does not violate the virtuous deeds which prevent him from earning the pleasure of Allah. Allah says: "Verily those who believe and do righteous deeds, they are the best of the creatures, their reward is with their Lord-Gardens of Eternity, through which streams flow; they will abide therein for ever, Allah is well pleased with them and they are well pleased with Him. That is for such who fear their Lord"

In a similar way, Nur ud din used to express his message in his Shruk:

“Dil Cha gaad ti houkh ma thawun Zikr hund poon dis lasiyo tavay Nimaz chay zameron phal zan wawun Adabach nend karus khasiyu tavay

Your heart is a fish, deny it not water, It needs the water of faith to live Prayer is a seed sown in the earth, Tend it with reverence to make it grow.

His thought proved a great source of inspirations for thousands of people. The method adopted by him is still the most viable and effective, filling the people with faith and enthusiasm. His aim was to reform the people in accordance with the tenets of Islam. His thought is relevant for all times including the present one and is a must read. Nur-ud-din's message was not confined to one race or one class, but addressed to mankind as a whole. He belonged to the universe. He expressed his thought in the simple language of his people, clothing this idea with similes and examples familiar from their experience. His verse therefore had an immediate appeal to the unlettered masses. Allusions to his sayings and verses both by the Muslims and Non-Muslims of Kashmir are quite common even today and have become almost proverbial. Above all the sayings of Nur-ud-din are the expression of the ideas of many thinkers of his time. In this way he and his sayings have great importance.

Conclusion

While concluding it is evident from the above discussion that Shaikh-ul-Alam's thought is plentiful with *tauhidic* humanism and universalism, his verses are content of the Quran embedded with metaphors drawn from society, his imagery of flowers and foliage, of mountains and landscapes, of birds and animals, of fish and fowl, of seasons and weather, of rivers and springs making us to understand the poetic approach of dealing with natural phenomenon as essential for understanding the purpose of creation. For Shaikh-ul-Alam the entire world was suffused with meaning as referred: "Symbolic pregnancy" by Cassirer. His teachings are grounded with the Qur'anic ethics of humanism and reciprocal love. According to Shaikh it was the cosmic love of nature which constituted the key point, vital for the understanding of Qur'anic universalism. Thus Shaikh-ul-Alam not only sustained rich Islamic tradition but also united the race to follow the right path without falling prey of ritualism. The religious thought which the verses of Shaikh-ul-Alam unfold has both the precision of a discourse and coherence of a system. After spending twelve years in the cave, the Shaikh-ul-Alam (R.A) realized that physical seclusion associated with asceticism does not make up its essence; rather it lies in emulating the example of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW): There are jackals and monkeys in the forest; The caves are infested with rats; Those who offer prayers five times a day to wash off the dirt of their heart; Those who lead a family life, they are privileged, A dutiful household will be crowned;

The Messenger of Allah (SAW) led a marital life and won the Divine grace.

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