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Alamdar-I-Kashmir: The Great Sufi Saint and Poet

Asif Qadri

Ph. D. Research Scholar,

Department of Kashmiri

University of Kashmir, India

Abstract

Kashmiri literature witnessed a great change during the 14th century, when two spiritual poets LAL-DED and SHEIKH-UL-AALAM (R.A), emerged with great thoughts and ideas and introduced new forms in Kashmiri poetry. Shaikh-ul-Aalam also known as ALAMDAR-I-KASHMIR, a man of great vision and extra ordinary creative genius founded the Reshi movement in Kashmir. Shaikh-ul-Aalam has left an indelible impact on the culture and thinking of Kashmiri people. Islam has on the whole accommodated Sufism, and the movement spread throughout the world. Sufi's, saint's, mystic poets used literature as an effective tool.

Keywords- *Alamdar-i-Kashmir, Islam, Reshi, Saint*

Introduction

The term “Sufism” has migrated from central Asia to Kashmir by the links of trade and culture between central Asia and Kashmir. Sufi's are the persons who have abandoned the world for GOD and tried to control inner carvings. Literally Sufi means the persons with woollen clothes but in essence it refers to the group of persons who are nearer and close to GOD. These persons are pious, tolerant and religious minded. In 14th century the land of Kashmir was fertile for the spread of Islam. M.A. stain writes, “Islam made its way to Kashmir not by forcible conquest but by gradual conversion. For which the influx of foreign adventures both from the south and from CentalAsia had prepared the ground.”

The reshi cult of Kashmir was connected with the reshi cult of India, because it shares the same values and traditions which have prevailed in ancient India. The Reshi period started from the land of Arabia with Prophet Muhammad (saw), as Shaikh-ul-Aalam himself said:

Awal reshi Ahmad Reshi

Doyem Hazrati Owais ave

Treyam Reshi Rumah Reshi,

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Tsurim Hazrati Pilas ave
Pantsim Reshi Zulkar Reshi
Shayim Hazrati Miran ave
Satmis karnem hish na dishey
Be kus Reosh te me kya nav.

Shaikh-ul-Alam (R.A) was born on 779 hijri (1379A.D) in Qaimoh, a village of district Kulgam in a family of watchman. Shaik-ul-Alam, the great sage was one of the shining star of 14th century who has left an indelible mark on the thinking and culture of Kashmiri people. He lived in one of the most crucial periods of Kashmir history. Shaikh-ul-Alam was Sufi, saint, scholar, poet and social worker. The hall of his teachings has been the spiritual approach to problems of life. Besides poet, Shaik-ul-Aalam commands great respect among all the communities of Kashmiri people for being a saint and teacher. His poetry leaves an indelible mark on our pattern of thought. Lal-Ded served as foster mother to Shaik-ul-Aalam and transmit spiritual power deep into his soul. When he was a boy of seven years Shah-i-Hamdan (R.A) come to meet with Shaik-ul-Aalam to sow in him the seed of spirituality. During the period the seed germinated and grew in its surroundings. It was Shaik-ul-Aalam who inaugurated the Sufi order of Reshain-i-kashmir. No doubt Sufism was practiced before shaik-ul-Alam in Kashmir but he made it the movement and became the founder of Reshi movement of Kashmir. It is recorded that Shaik-ul-Aalam received spiritual guidance directly from Prophet Muhammad (saw) accompanied by his four illustrious friends.

Muhammad(saw) tetsoryaar bar haq ganzrokh
Timennishandeidunyahuk nay
Jan paan panun timen peth bunzrakh
Soie chey toar kich baed rahkay

The parents of Shaik-u-Alam (R.A) were named Salar Sanz and Sadre Moaj. It was Yasman Reshi of Bijbehara at whose hands Shaik-ul-Alam's parents were converted to Islam. Shaikh-ul-Alam considered Lal-Ded as his spiritual guide. He pays homage to her in his one of the shurk:

Tas Padmanpor che lally
Tim gali gali amrit cheyov
Sway soane avatar lalay
Tath meh war ditum dyvoo

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Shaikh-ul-Alam laid great stress to control "Nafs" believed to be the root cause of all social evils and a barrier to separate man from GOD. The issue and the core of many ills in society is Nafs. The simplicity and the purity of Shaikh-ul-Alam has greatly impressed the people of Kashmir. The shruks of Sahikh-ul-Alam not only attracted the mind but it touched the heart of the masses especially those who have suffered from spiritual thrust. His teachings were based on material of human value. He wants to flourish love and affection among all communities of Kashmiri people.

Akis malis maji hendan
Timen diey thavith te kayth
Musalman kyo Hyndan
Kar bandan toshi Kauday

Shaikh-ul-Alam is one who also engaged in poetry and prayers, he has no desires for property and stay aloof in caves. Shaikh-ul-Alam abandoned the normal life and was sympathetic towards all creatures. He was of simple manners and wear simple dress. Shaikh-ul-Alam is only saint in the history of the world in whose name Ata Muhammad Khan, an Afghan governor minted the currency in 1809A.D. So he acquired fame and popularity.

Alamdar-i-kashmir (R.A) was the mystical genius of 14th century, for whom Muslims and Hindus had a great reverence. The Muslims call him as "Alamdar" while the Hindus give him the title of "Nunda Sanz". Shaikh-ul-Alam sacrifice their body, life and existence for the sake of GOD.

Kunar ray bozakh kune na rozakh
Aemi kunran kotah deyut jalav
Akyl te fiqr toer koat sozakh
Kemi mali cheath heyuk su daryav.

Shaikh-ul-Alam (R.A) was against the Mullas who make it their profession to recite Quran and get money in return. In his shurk's, Shaikh-ul-Alam provide much information about the social life and religious attitudes of the Mullas of his time.

Malan hange phete kya shubaile
Pakan aelith valith keyth
Khoran konsh te kosum naliey
Kache tale trake tathle heth

The poetry of Alamdar-i-kashmir (R.A) holds a very important position and got the title of "Kashur Quran". Shaikh-ul-Alam was strongly influenced by the poetry of Lal-Ded. His poetry is full

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of mystic thought and philosophy. His poetry is against social evils of the society and full of moral values. The poetry of Shaikh-ul-Alam is full of symbols and metaphors. The style of Shaikh-ul-Alam is unique in whole Kashmiri poetry. According to the philosophy of Alamdar-i-kashmir anger, lust and covetousness are the gate of hell. Alamdar-i-kashmir did everything to make people understand basic principles of Islam in local language. Shaikh-ul-Alam is known by preaching the universal brotherhood and equality of human being. He and his disciples conducted themselves with such nobility and dignity, that they inspired almost all Kashmiri population. Poetry flew from the mouth of Shaikh-ul-Alam like a fountain of water. Shaikh-ul-Alam went into the darkness of caves to get his soul enlightened. He threw over the accepted norms of relationship and made a world of his own where the bonds of love and brotherhood extend beyond the bounds of religion, birth and geography. Shaikh-ul-Alam mastered the rebellious senses and entered in supra-sensory perception. The language of Shaikh-ul-Alam's poetry represents the language of the local people of the 14th century. After spending 12 years in cave at Qaimoh, he criticizes the spending of life in caves and forests. He prefers to remain in a society. After leaving cave he roamed about place to place to interact with people, discuss with them religious matters and invite people towards Islam.

Tosh bande neamzi beye ramzans

Tei malie lagyo panas seith

Alamdar-i-kashmir (R.A) was not only a great saint but also a great Kashmiri poet. He established the personality and identity of the Kashmiri people at a most crucial stage of the Kashmiri history. Mir Muhammad Hamdani (R.A) applauded Shaikh-ul-Alam as Zahid, Arif, Abid and called him Shaikh-Noor-Ud-Din Noorani for the first time. The Muslim masses and religious missionaries called him 'waiz' and interpreter of Holy Quran into Kashmiri. It was Shaikh-ul-Alam who guided and introduced people of Kashmir towards Islam in his local language.

It is the power of Shaikh-ul-Alam (R.A) poetry that even after six hundred years, its content and language has not undergone any major change. These shurk's are as meaningful today as these were in 14th century. The shurk's of Shaikh-ul-Alam have become part of day-to-day conversation in Kashmiri people. These are of high standard and representing the status of common man. We can see in the whole poetry of Shaikh-ul-Alam the message of brotherhood, harmony, goodness and service to mankind. This is the reason that there is hardly any Kashmiri who does not have some shurk's of Shaikh-ul-Alam on the tip of tongue. Every religious person use these shurk's in the religious speeches. His disciples and missionaries are all around Kashmir, who spread in all directions,

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preaching and practising the message of love, equality and brotherhood. Among all disciples, four are close to Shaikh-ul-Alam:

- 1) Baba Bam-ud-Din(Hindu name Bhuma Sadhu)
- 2) Baba Zain-ud-Din (Hindu name Ziya Singh)
- 3) Baba Abdul Lateef
- 4) Baba Nasar-ud-Din

Alamdar-I-Kashmir (R.A) didn't attain any formal education. He spent most of the time in a state of social isolation. He had hardly any interest towards worldly things and was mostly absorbed in deep thought and meditation. He touched peak of meditation during his cave and forest life. People from all sects love him by his preaching's. The teachings of Shaikh-ul-Alam show the path of right living for generations to come. There are few scholars and poets in our history who have acquired popularity. The spiritual power and humanistic philosophy made him favourite among the people of Kashmir. The shurk's of Shaikh-ul-Alam are preserved in Noor Nama, Reshi Nama and kulyat's. Shaikh-ul-Alam is one of them about whom Dr. Sofi writes, "The simplicity and purity of Shaikh-ul-Alam's life have deeply impressed the Kashmiri's who entertain the highest veneration for the Saint".

Alamdar-i-kashmir (R.A) died at Rupa Wan in 1438A.D. The body of the great saint was taken to Chrari Sharief for final rest with all royal honours. It is said that Zain-ul-Abidin, the king of Kashmir joined the funeral prayers.

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