

**Communal Harmony
in
Kashmiri Literature**

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Roop Krishen Bhat



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Preface

In my childhood I was part of a small Hindu family surrounded by a large Muslim neighborhood. I woke up to *Azan* from mosque in the early morning hours, lived through the daily chores of socio-cultural patterns of life in a mix of Hindu–Muslim society. While my mother would recite her *bhajans* both in mornings and evenings mostly written by her father, a popular Bhakti poet of Kashmir, Zeba Maasi (a Muslim lady) very close friend of my mother would at leisurely meetings narrate to me tales from *gulistan-bostan*, the famous folklore of Persian origin, *shah namas*, *gulrez*, the longer poems again of Persian origin and the popular verses from Kashmiri Sufi poetry, etc. During school days we would hear and sing poetry of Lal Ded, Nunda Rishi, Habba Khatoon, Azad, and Mahjoor; watch performances of folk singers cum dancers like Gani Trali and Mohammad Mukeen, the *Jashni Kashmir* (Festival of Kashmir) organised regularly during Bhakshi Ghulam Mohammad’s rule (former C.M. of J&K). Later, when I studied Linguistics and taught Kashmiri language and literature to non-native speakers with an objective to promote national integration and the concept of unity in diversity, my orientation in Kashmiri language, literature and culture was complete.

In Patiala, Punjab, where I stayed for about two decades during my professional career, I very frequently listened to the most popular *Bhagat Kabirbaani*, in *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* often played in Gurudwaras: *aval allah nuur upaya, kudrat ke sab bande, Ek nuur te sab jag upjiya kaun bhale ko mande*. “First God created

the divine light, then he made all mortal beings. From one light the entire universe welled up, so who is good and who is bad.” I understood for the first time the significance of communal harmony and peaceful co-existence of all human beings irrespective of caste, colour, creed, religion and nationality. I resolved to write on the subject whenever, I could.

I was fortunate to get an opportunity to write on this subject when I was granted a Senior Fellowship by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India (2013-15). Kashmir which is considered a heaven on earth for its natural beauty has lived proudly through this tradition for thousands of years, despite many political, natural and man-made upheavals. It has had a praiseworthy and glorious tradition of co-existence not only amongst different kinds of people but even between humans and beasts like *Nagas*, *yakshas* and *Pisachas* in the earliest times of existence of Kashmir. While I was writing on the topic I was aware of the adverse situation Kashmir has been passing through since 1990 onwards, widely being covered by media. It resulted in *topsy turvey* of the situation in Kashmir and shattered the age-old ties of co-existence Kashmir was famous for. While subject of communal harmony has lost much of its meaning in present-day Kashmir and writing on the subject appears going against the tide, but I go with Prof G.R. Malik (*Readings-2009*) on this situation who believes that this is an aberration which is not going to last long and the good old times shall return again. I think it is the appropriate time to present before the world other brighter side of Kashmir. I consider myself fortunate to be the first author of such type of a book.

I have written in detail about various developments in Kashmiri literature starting from the Lal Ded's time to present day in the forthcoming pages of this book, therefore would not say much about that here except that I have separated post-1990 literature from the Modern literature of Kashmiri and discussed it in a separate chapter 7, because I believe the post-1990

literature has many newer concepts, contents and forms which were not heard of earlier. A new concept and term like *bala apaerim* and *bala yepaerim koshur adab* 'the Kashmiri literature from across the hills and of this side' came into existence. While the writers from this side of Pirpanjal i.e., the displaced ones mostly expressed their nostalgia and pathos, gave vent to their miseries, hardships and sufferings, the writers across the Pirpanjal i.e., inside the valley, wrote about their side of sufferings, the encounters, excesses by both militants and armed forces, caged life, hardships etc. Besides the established writers, the situation became conducive for many new writers who appeared on the scene and contributed a lot. As a result a voluminous treasure of Kashmiri literature has been written during last twenty-seven years.

I express my gratitude to the concerned authorities of the Ministry of Culture, Government of India and the expert committee members in the field for giving me an opportunity to work on this important and relevant subject. I express my gratitude to Prof. Omkar N Koul, an eminent Linguist and scholar of Kashmiri language, for his inputs and guidance, to my wife Raji for her encouragement and support and to all the scholars and writers whose works I have quoted or written about in this book. I thank Authorspress for publishing this book.

I am conscience of missing a few relevant works of different writers, although I tried my best to reach them and contact people on that. I hope the readers would find this work worth reading and send me their valuable comments and observations to help me update information in forthcoming editions of this book.

December 11th, 2017
NewDelhi

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Note on Transcription

Kashmiri has sixteen Vowels and twenty-seven Consonants. While as phonetic transcription makes full justice to the sound system of the language but few phonetic symbols for high and mid central and low back vowels are not easily available on key boards, moreover a common reader is not aware about them hence they have been represented here by sequences like *ae, oa* etc. which may not be scientific but are user friendly. The Roman alphabet used to write Kashmiri text in this book is as follows.

Vowels

Kashmiri Vowels have short and long counterparts doubling of Vowel is used here to write long form.

i ii e ee I II ae aee a aa u uu o oo ɔ oa

Nasalisation of Vowels is indicated by using capital N

Consonants

p ph b t th d T Th D k kb g ts tsh c ch j m n s sh h ʒ l r v y

Capital letters T Th D are used to write retroflex sounds.

While as all Consonant letters are part of English Alphabet but there are no matches in English for the dental affricate sounds of Kashmiri *ts* and *tsh*

Palatalisation, an important feature of Kashmiri, is indicated by an apostrophe sign (') above the consonant letters i.e., *p' b' kb'* etc.

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Introduction

India has traditionally been a pluralistic society, a multicultural, multi-religious and multilingual country. A unique country in the world known for diversity in terms of its people, religions, ethnicities, cultures, languages, etc. Despite diversity of such a magnitude, India has a common national cultural heritage of thousands of years and an age-old tradition of its people living in harmony. *Unity in Diversity* has been an unparalleled slogan in India.

Language plays an important role in the social, economic and educational development of a nation. In a multilingual country like India, the role becomes more important and significant. According to Emeneau, "Language and culture had fused for centuries on the Indian soil to produce an integrated mosaic of structural convergence." National Integration is a matter of integration of ethnicities, religions and cultures. In India, such integration has taken place by exploring unity in diversity. To explore unity, diversity is to be recognised. In multilingual countries, there are layers of integrating languages. Every big or small language has a specific role to play. Some serve as means of local communication, some as link languages and some serve the purpose of wider communication at the national or international level. Languages have to transcend the local barriers and boundaries and aim for national integration.

When we portray the nation and national integration, the perception about nation differs from one language group to another.

The word “Nation” is derived from a Latin word/root which means ‘to be born’ or people of common descent. According to Stalin, “A nation is a historically formed stable community of people which arose on the basis of common language, territory, economic life and psychological make-up which has manifested in Common Culture.” Kautilya in his *Arthaśāstra* identifies “The king, the minister, the country, the fort, the treasury, the army, the friend and the enemy...” as the elements of sovereignty. Tirukkural identifies the constituents of a state as “the king, troops, population, substance, council, alliances and fortifications.” Integration has many semantic connotations like “actor or an instance of combining into an integral whole, behavior in harmony with the environment, the organisation of the constituent elements of the personality into a co-ordinated, harmonious whole... .”

National integration and harmony therefore can be perceived on two planes, one on the geographical or territorial level and another one on the psychological level. In the first case, it would mean “keeping the territory united” and on the psychological level it can mean “keeping the plural society in harmony” irrespective of its composition of people with different linguistic, religious, ethnic and economic backgrounds. In the Indian context, the latter, i. e. the psychological one, is the main challenge, given the multilingual, multi-religious and multiethnic character of our country. National Integration and harmony can be achieved in the real sense if this component is addressed with utmost care and concern.

LANGUAGE, LITERATURE AND CULTURE

India is a vast country with the largest number of languages, religions and ethnic groups. Literature is written in about two dozen languages. Despite its vastness in terms of languages and subjects, there are several basic characteristics or features which make it look like a single identity. What gives unity or integration to the literature is not the language (since we have the maximum number, or say 24 languages in which literature is written) but the culture. Culture is lived and indispensable and cultural boundaries are more stable than the linguistic ones. People who are born and live in the same environment with similar socio-cultural, geographical conditions and share the same value system or develop similar ideals and experiences result in the common consciousness of one single community or nation. This common consciousness reflected in literature is responsible for a single or similar national literature.

Literature is an essence of life, an analysis of human conditions, and a reflection of human society. It has blessed us with ample opportunity to imbibe the true human values.

As reflection of human life, whatever is happening in a society, be it social, economic or political, gets noticed by the writer who pens it down and places it back before the people. So literature is also a representation of the society. It could also be a figment of imagination of the writer. Some writers become popular because of the beauty of the language they use, some because of the content they select. For a good piece of literature, both content and expression are equally important. A writer does not live in isolation; he or she is part and parcel of the society. Therefore, whatever he or she writes is a representation of the society and the time.

The pan-Indian features for unity or national integration are more visible in art forms like music, dance, painting and sculpture. Though there are certain prominent features of national integration and communal harmony based on common cultural heritage and common source of origin that are visible in literature, but given the vast number of Indian languages and literatures such features may be hard to notice or grasp.

There are several factors which have influenced Indian literature over a period of time and contributed towards unification of the content. The influence of the Sanskrit language, great epics like Mahabharata and Ramayana, movements like the Bhakti movement and Progressive movement are a few such factors responsible for integrating and binding different Indian literatures together.

KASHMIRI LITERATURE

Although Kashmiri literature is considered to be thousands of years old, the samples of literature which have been documented are barely a thousand years old. The oldest ones are the 9th century *Chuma Padas* written by Sanskrit scholars of Kashmir. The main purpose was to propagate the Shaivite doctrines among the masses of Kashmir. This was followed by Siti Kantha's *Mahanay Prakash* a text written in *vaakh* form. Unfortunately, Kashmiri literature does not find a proper place in most of the recorded histories of Kashmir. According to the authors of the *Kaeshri Adbuk Tavaariikh (A History of Kashmiri Literature)* (1992), "Due to slavery, Kashmiri historians, intellectuals and other educated people lived under inferiority complex. They recorded the poetry of Persian poets of Kashmiri origin but ignored the genius of any Kashmiri poets." A proper history of Kashmiri literature has been recorded recently by the modern scholars. Abdul Ahad Azad, a great poet

of Kashmiri language was the first scholar who wrote *Kashmiri Zabaan Aur Shayri (Kashmiri Language and Poetry)* in Urdu, published by the J&K Academy of Art, Culture and Languages.

In the history of Kashmiri literature spread over more than seven hundred years, the concern and passion of love for humanity without any bias for language, region and religion is very prominent in many scholarly writings of Kashmiri. Right from the poetry of Lal Ded, an eminent spiritual poetess of Kashmiri considered to be the real first of Kashmiri literatures to Shayri Kashmir Mahjoor and Abdul Ahad Azad, eminent and popular poets of the modern era and upto the present day poets like Sunita Raina Pandit and Ashok Saraf Ghayal, all have sung songs of communal harmony, love and concern for man and humanity. We have Muslim poets singing Bhakti songs and Hindu poets swearing by Sufism. Kashmiri litterateurs across the religions have shown the path of humanity to people in general.

Historically, Kashmiri literature can be divided into the following major periods.

1. The early period.
2. The age of synthesis (Period of Lal Ded and Nunda Rishi) 13th-5th centuries.
3. The age of turbulence and neglect (Vatsun and Marsiyah) 16th-18th centuries.
4. Golden age of Kashmiri literature (Sufi Poets, devotional poetry, Mahmood Gami, Ghazal, *vatsun*, *marziya*, 19th century)
5. Progressive Movement (Mahjoor, Azad and other poets), Sufi poets, development of prose, 20th century
6. Modernism and post-modernism.

Through her *vaakhs* Lal Ded connected with people of all hues and shades across all religions and championed the cause of the human being in general and not of a particular class and religion. That is what makes her great and existential in Kashmiri literature, and even after seven hundred years of her existence, her *vaakhs* continue to guide and inspire people across religions and classes. She was against discrimination of human beings based on religion, class or creed. Through her *vaakhs* she promoted brotherhood across people and was against any sort of untouchability or discrimination amongst people. She said *anas kbenas kya chum duush* “there is no fault in grain and food.” Lal Ded was considered a Shaiva Yogini of the Kashmir school of Shaivism, who recognised the external world as an illusion and the human body as a vehicle for spiritual growth. Lal’s *vaakhs* were equally acceptable to emancipated Hindus as they were to liberal Muslims. In her *vaakhs* people read the message of communal harmony and peace. Lal Ded has been a pioneer, rather instrumental in establishing common spirituality and composite culture based on tolerance and mutual trust amongst Kashmiris.

Nunda Rishi alias Sheikhul Alam who considered Lal Ded as his spiritual Guru was an outstanding exponent of the Rishi cult. He founded an order of Rishis in Kashmir. He travelled across the length and breadth of Kashmir to deliver his message and strengthen the Rishi order. This order believed in public service along with meditation in isolated places or solitude away from mundane worldly affairs. His life was of detachment and he was immensely loved and followed in his life time. Even now he is loved with equal veneration. In fact, both Lal Ded and Nunda Rishi evoke the same degree of respect, love and affection amongst all Kashmiris, irrespective of religion and creed. Through his verse popularly called *shrukeh* a modified

version of Sanskrit *shloka*, he addresses mankind in general rather than any particular community. He believed in moral preaching for the upliftment of human beings and harmonious social living. There is a deep influence of Lal Ded's life and poetry on Nunda Rishi. This is evident in one of his *shrukhs* where he prays God to bless him with the wisdom and stature of Lal Ded.

When he talks of one God with numerous names, he gives a clear indication of a multi religious society or world where ways and methods may differ, outward rituals or customs may vary, but all routes or faiths lead to one God or one supreme power who is the maker or owner of the entire world, whatever may be its composition.

Based on the religious traditions of Vedanta and Shaivism the basic temperament of Kashmiri poetry is spiritual. This is evident in the poetries of both Lal Ded and Nunda Rishi. After Islam reached Kashmir, a large number of its preachers who travelled through Central Asia especially from Iran brought with them the Islamic version of mysticism which was very close if not similar to the local prevalent philosophy of that time. Therefore people readily accepted it. Iran at that time was a meeting point of the Western and Eastern schools of thought and home to a large number of intellectuals like Jalaluddin Rumi, Hafiz Shirazi, Sheikh Saidi, Umar Khayam etc. Persian became the court language in Kashmir during Muslim rule therefore its impact in terms of the established literary trends and scholarship on local minds was but natural. Two important components of Islamic mysticism are the oneness of God, his manifestation in everything and the love for God. These concepts were found to be very close to the local belief and thought process hence easily got blended with the local philosophy, thus producing a unique type of Sufism and Sufi

poetry very different from the rest of the world. Hence seeing God in everything and loving everything for the sake of God is the central theme of Sufi poetry.

Starting from the fourteenth century and till first half of the twentieth century we have a galaxy of Sufi poets like Momin Saeb, Shah Qalandar, Sochi Kral, Nyama Saeb, Shamas Faqir, Wahab Khar, Ahmad Batwari, Waza Mahmood, Ahad Zargar and a host of others who have patronised this form of Kashmiri poetry and dominated the literary scene of Kashmir for hundreds of years. Through their poetries they have championed the cause of humanity, brotherhood, equality and spirituality. They have shown the way to realise God, to lakhs of their followers and readers.

Immediately after the Independence of India in August 1947, Pakistan invaded Kashmir, well known as the *Qabaili Hamla* (Tribal Attack) which ultimately led to both the then Maharaja of Kashmir Hari Singh and Sheikh Mohamad Abdullah jointly seeking the Indian Government's intervention and help and entering into an agreement with India, well known as the "J&K Accession accord."

The intelligentsia in Kashmir comprising writers, poets, academics, artistes etc. came together to form a cultural front to uphold the values of socialism, democracy and secularism. After sometime it was renamed as the cultural congress. One of its branches under the name of "Organisation of Progressive Writers of Kashmir" was set up at Srinagar. It brought out a literary magazine named "*Kongposh*", the first issue of which was published in 1959. The editorial board comprised Ghulam Ahmad Mahjoor, Mirza Arif, Dina Nath Nadim and Soom Nath Zutshi. This organisation continued to work for the promotion of literary and cultural activities in the state. To extend its activities to other areas of the state, this organisation was

renamed as “All State Cultural Conference.” In 1957, some of the writers and cultural activists broke away from this organisation to form a separate organisation named a “Cultural conference.” A similar group was also formed in Delhi called “Kashmiri bazme adab Delhi.” This organisation too continued to work on the agenda of progressive writers and published a literary magazine called “Pamposh.” The State Govt. of J&K patronised these organisations. A resolution passed by this organisation read, “We the Kashmiri scholars, poets, artistes, sculpturists, and cultural activists declare that we will work towards building of the great Indian culture and thereby uphold the cultural tradition of our hundreds of years and shall fight with full force all such elements who may try to derail our objectives and efforts.”

A large number of scholars, poets, prose writers etc. while working on this agenda and upholding human values contributed immensely to various forms of Kashmiri literature during the post-independence period. As a result, under this new political backdrop a new kind of literature came into existence which on one hand was nationalist, promoted communal harmony and on the other hand fought against the feudal system of landlords and warlords and supported democratic values, thereby safeguarding the common people’s interests.

Till then the earlier poets had more or less restricted themselves to two major domains i.e., love lore and mysticism; besides these, other types of poetry like devotional and folklore was also written or narrated in abundance. There was a rich oral tradition and Kashmiri poetry was sung in various forms. Other forms of poetry i.e., masnavi, naat, marsiya and ghazal were the result of Persian influence and were straightaway borrowed from the Persian language, both in content and form.

Most outstanding poets of the modern period whose contribution to Kashmiri literature in general and to patriotic and the literature of communal harmony in particular, is unparalleled. Mahjoor and Azad became the beacons of light in Kashmiri poetry. The progressive movement in literature had gripped the entire nation and all the Indian litterateurs were beaming with progressive writings under the Marxist-Leninist and socialist influences. The Russian and Chinese revolutions had a lasting impact on Indian literature. Poets took pride in identifying themselves with the new movement and Kashmiri writers saw themselves shoulder to shoulder with other writers or poets of different languages. Mahjoor and Azad wrote several patriotic poems which became very popular and are sung in school assemblies even now.

One of Mahjoor's patriotic songs, *bulbul vanaan chu poshan gulshan watan chu soonny* ("Nightengale tells to flowers that this country i.e. a garden full of flowers belongs to us"), which depicted his love for his native land was an instant hit with people and became a popular song amongst people. It was sung like a signature tune on festive occasions, prayer meetings and official functions.

It was hundreds of years after Lal Ded and Nunda Rishi that someone from the writer fraternity had directly addressed the two communities and appealed to them to live in harmony with each other. The period from 14th century onwards has been a period of great turbulence and unrest in the political history of Kashmir with some rulers resorting to open discrimination and suppression along communal lines. Several rulers and their men at the helm in various capacities openly attempted to divide the Kashmiri community on the basis of religion. Such discriminatory attitudes of rulers continued intermittently till Independence. Even after Independence of India, Kashmiris

were not allowed to remain in peace. With the Pakistan invasion notorious as *qabaili hamla* resulting in killings, sabotage, destruction and looting of properties, followed by the Kashmir Accord with the Indian Govt. and pushing back of the Pakistani attackers by Indian forces, the situation in Kashmir continued to remain uncertain and in turmoil. Forces with vested interests who were not happy with the changing scenario post-independence and the establishment of democratic process were bent upon creating chaos and spreading hatred. They were bent on dividing people on communal lines. Mahjoor, during this period took the challenge on himself and wrote many poems on communal harmony. These poems were well received and appreciated by one and all. People saw in them the necessary appeal to preserve the age old traditions of communal harmony and brotherhood that Kashmir was famous for since ancient times. For example, he appealed people to shed hatred, discard disputes, love each other and share true love.

nyaay traeviv maay thaviv paanIvaen'
poz mobobat baegraeviv paanIvaen'

Mahjoor worked hard to keep alive the age old tradition of communal harmony between people of Kashmir. He expressed his prayer to God to keep such unity and equality intact, in these verses.

chi baagas jaanvar bolaan magar aavaaz chakh byon byon
tsI yihindis aalvas yaarab asar yeksaan paida kar
mashüidan, mandran, girjan, daramshalan tI astaanan
yiman yüiten garan atsnuk kunny darvaazj thaavun chum

(The birds in the garden are singing but in different voices. Oh God please bless their voices with a touch of unity to create a single impact. For mosques, temples, churches, dharamshalas and asthapans. Have to establish a single door for entry to all these religious places.)

In this manner Mahjoor in a true sense championed the cause of communal harmony of people. Such was the impact

on the psyche of people of Kashmir that even Mahatma Gandhi had to acknowledge and laud the attitude of Kashmiris towards communal harmony by saying “there is a ray of hope in Kashmir” when in the rest of the country bloodshed and hatred was on its worst display.

According to Raina “His earnest prayer has been of communal and social harmony in the valley, not only because it is an inevitable maxim but primarily because it is firmly embedded in the genes of the people of Kashmir. Mahjoor is not only aware but deeply steeped in the age old tradition, the perennial soul of Kashmir...”

Azad was one of the most patriotic poets who wrote maximum poems full of patriotism and Kashmir pride. There are number of such poems Azad has written, full of his patriotic feelings, love for Kashmir and strongest urge for its freedom. “din-o-duniya haavsan path raavirovuth tiy pazya” is one such poem full of the spirit of patriotism. He cautions people against the designs of outside rulers.

Azad was a champion of the interests of the masses. In the preface of his monumental work “kashmiri zabaan aur shairi”, ‘Kashmiri language and poetry, Azad writes, “Our dear country and its area – Kashmir is the most attractive place on earth in the entire world. Its scenic beauty and natural resources are self-revealing. God has hardly created any other area as beautiful as this, that is why it is called the heaven on earth.” With a sense of pride, Azad names some very eminent personalities from Kashmir i.e., the first ever woman ruler of the world, Rani Yashomati, first historian of the subcontinent Kalhan, first expert of Ayurveda medicines Charakh, the conqueror king Lalitaditya, justice loving ruler Badshah, scholars of Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian like Som Pandit, Yodh Bhat, Mullah Mohsin, Sarfi, Gani, Bhavani Das Kachroo etc. Although the list is not

exhaustive and many more eminent names have not been mentioned by him here, but his description shows the spirit of patriotism and love he had for Kashmir and its people.

There is no doubt that Azad remains the most outstanding poet of Kashmir who through his poetry stood for common and underprivileged people, preached communal harmony, was concerned about the prosperity of Kashmir and its people, wrote openly about Hindu-Muslim unity was a lover of nature and above all a good hard working human being whose contribution to Kashmiri literature is pioneering.

OTHER POETS

Under the influence of the progressive movement in literature which had spread at the Pan Indian level, a new generation of poets came to the fore in Kashmir, following the footsteps of Mahjoor and Azad. These are Nadim, Rahi, Kamil, Firaq, Arif, Nazki, Khayal, Majboor, Premi, Saqi, Santosh, etc. The socialistic thinking became dominant among writers and vast literature with such themes came into existence. However, the undercurrent of such literature was communal harmony and social justice.

According to Trilokinath Raina (2002), “Nadim sang the dawn of the freedom movement in 1946 in his poem entitled *vothi bagic kukli* ‘rise oh nightingale of the garden’. His exploitation of the resources of the Kashmiri language is remarkable and with him the distinction between Hindu and Muslim Kashmiri may be said to have come to an end. “For him (as a progressive writer) the miseries and issues of a common man whether a Hindu or Muslim were the same. Using poetry as a vehicle of propaganda, he made use of rhyme, rhetoric and effective repetition to awaken the sensibilities of men to the dangers of war, imperialism and capitalism.”

Rehman Rahi in his early period as poet adopted the style and theme content of Nadim and appeared largely influenced by him. His two earlier poems *gaTa tI gaash* 'Darkness and Light' and *zindagi* 'Life' bear such impressions but eventually he developed his own style and diction and in due course of time occupied the topmost slot in Kashmiri poetry.

There are a host of other poets who contributed towards communal harmony through their poetry. Notable are Arjan Dev Majbuur, Moti Lal Saqi, Makhan Lal Kanwal, Fazil Kashmiri, Shafi Shaida, etc.

PROSE

Usually prose has followed poetry in all world literatures, however, in the case of Kashmiri, it has developed at a much later date. While Kashmiri poetry dates back to the twelfth century when *chuma padas* and *mabanay prakash* were written, prose in Kashmiri had to wait till the last quarter of the nineteenth century when the Bible was translated into Kashmiri and later in 1940 the first Kashmiri journal named *gaash* 'Light' was published, comprising both poetry and prose sections. Many other journals followed it at various intervals. Establishment of Radio Kashmir in 1948 necessitated writing of prose in the form of the spoken word, reviews, skits and dramas etc.

THE SHORT STORY

The most prominent form of prose in Kashmiri has been short story writing. Dina Nath Nadim, Soom Nath Zutshi, Aziz Haroon and Noor Mohammad Roshan were the earliest short story writers. *Jawaabi Card (Reply post-card)* by Nadim and *Yeli Phol Gaash (When Dawn Broke)* by Zutshi were the first short stories to have been published in the March 1950 issue of *Kongposh* a

literary magazine. Thereafter, the short story, popularly called *afšana* emerged as an important literary genre in Kashmiri. Within fifty years of its journey the Kashmiri short story is rated as one of the best in Indian literature. Short story writing in Kashmiri started in the progressive movement in literature, that is why the theme content was the common man and related issues like poverty, illiteracy, exploitation etc. and an issue like communal harmony was inherent in such descriptions and is not prominently depicted. In T. N. Raina's words "short story in this period was firmly rooted in the soil."

Dozens of new writers appeared on the scene and prominent ones were Akhtar Mohidin, Amin Kamil, Ali Mohamad Lone, Hari Krishen Kaul, Bansi Nirdosh, Amar Malmohi, Avtar Krishen Rahbar, Ratan Lal Shant, Hriday Kaul Bharti. Akhtar Mohidin and Hari Krishen Kaul were leaders in this genre, published several collections of short stories and wrote through the first few years of the present millennium.

In *pagah* 'Tomorrow', one of the best short stories of Hari Krishen Kaul, he uses Makhan and Sula characters from the two communities as classmates who remain oblivious to their religious identities and innocently strive to remain together in the same class for childish and silly reasons. The narration assumes significance as it helps dissolve the religious boundaries. The protagonist in his other short story *pata laraan parbat* 'The Parbat (hill) Chases', being frustrated, sits on back of a tonga to move away realises that Parbat hill which is an important symbol or representative of Kashmir's religion, culture and history is chasing him and he finds it difficult to remain untouched or away from it i.e., Kashmir. According to R. L. Shant "harmony can be read in my stories in the form of absence of tensions between the two principal religious groups of Hindus (Pandits)

and Muslims of Kashmir.” This may be true in the case of other short story writers as well.

Novel writing has been the weakest feature of Kashmiri literature. However, authors like Amin Kamil, Ali Mohamad Lone, Chaman Lal Hakhoo etc. in their novels have through their characters, nicely portrayed communal harmony in their works.

LITERATURE AFTER 1990

The last decade of the twentieth century AD turned out to be the most pathetic period for both Kashmir and Kashmiri literature. It was in January 1990 that about three lakh Kashmiri Pandits (Hindus) under a well-planned and orchestrated conspiracy were forced to leave their centuries old homes in Kashmir and flee to safer destinations in other parts of country. The foreign sponsored militancy in the valley of Kashmir proved out to be so harsh and draconian that under a fearful, threatening and bloody atmosphere created by the militants and their supporters, lakhs of people abandoned their centuries old homes and establishments in the shortest possible time and fled to the safer areas in other parts of country. Given the three choices, namely, to convert to Islam, flee from Kashmir or get killed, they choose the second option. The displacement of such magnitude reminded the people of the world’s largest and most dreadful displacement which had occurred during the partition of India in 1947.

Like other people the writers and cultural activists had lot of miseries and happenings to share. This resulted in the creation of a treasure of literature in Kashmiri. It is a fact that the number of books written in various genres in Kashmiri exceeded several times the number of books written during the same time span before the displacement. Even though the

writers inside the valley remained dumbstruck for obvious reasons for some years after the tragic exodus of their fellow writers from Kashmir, but subsequently broke their silence and a large number of books were written there too. However, the subject matter differed.

A new concept and terms like *bala apaerim* and *bala yepaerim kaeshur adab* ‘the Kashmiri literature from across the hills and of this side’ came into existence. While as the writers this side of Pirpanjal mostly expressed their nostalgia and pathos, gave vent to their miseries, hardships and sufferings, the writers across the Pirpanjal i.e., inside the valley, wrote about their side of sufferings, the encounters, excesses by both militants and armed forces, caged life, hardships etc. The situation became conducive for many new writers who appeared on the scene and contributed a lot on both sides. As a result a voluminous treasure of Kashmiri literature has been written during the last twenty five years.

Although the main focus, subject and theme of the literature of displacement (during the last twenty seven years) has been the sufferings, nostalgia, gloomy and unsure future but surprisingly the undercurrent of such writings remains the love for humanity in general and Kashmir the lost motherland in particular, pangs of separation from dear ones, the lost glory of brotherhood and communal harmony of Kashmiris. This is evident in both poetry and prose. The bitter, pathetic, nostalgic, emotional and sharp reactionary literature of the nineties has given way to more pragmatic, thematic and rational viewpoint in the early twenty first century writings. Kashmiri literature has truly emerged as richer, responsive, and critically viable.

Amongst poets who wrote on communal harmony, the prominent ones are Arjan Dev Majboor, Prem Nath Shad, Makhan Lal Kanwal, Rafiq Raaz, Sunita Raina Pandit, Jagan

Nath Sagar, Ashok Saraf Ghayal etc. The prominent short story writers are Ratan Lal Shant, Makhan Lal Pandita, Roop Krishen Bhat, According to R. L. Shant “As we know in post-90’s Kashmir, the sense of togetherness and tolerance among common people suffered the most even though they were only prey to actions of others. In my short story *tshen* ‘Dis-connect, for example, loss of mutual confidence in general becomes a major reference point.”

A remarkable feature of the displacement literature is that the writers who suffered the worst due to the displacement contributed tremendously to communal harmony despite the personal grief and miseries they suffered.

CONCLUSION

It would not be an exaggeration to say that the scholars, writers, intellectuals and socio-political activists from the Land of Kashmir through the medium of various languages and particularly through Kashmiri, have contributed tremendously to the communal harmony and national integration of India, before and after the partition of the country in 1947. Communal harmony in Kashmir has withstood several upheavals in the past. According to Prof. Majrooh Rashid, a Kashmiri scholar, “The Kashmiri cultural ethos is a synthesis and a combination of two apparently unlike thought patterns that spring from the oneness of man and the diversity of his unity.” (Readings-2009). During the recent turmoil in Kashmir due to foreign sponsored terrorism, unfortunately a gulf has been created between the two communities. In this context another noted Kashmiri scholar G. R. Malik says, “I believe whatever has befallen us is an aberration and before long we shall be back on the track. A civilisation that has nurtured humanitarian values in its lap for countless centuries cannot be

extinguished out of existence by forces of darkness.” (Readings-2009). Hope the will of Nunda Rishi shall prevail as expressed in his verse as follows.

When shall my Lord be gladdened?
With the oneness of Muslims and Hindus.

Language Landscaping, Linguistics and Literary Scenario

1. 1. LANGUAGE

Social scientists and linguists believe that language is the single most important factor that distinguishes humans from animals. It is defined as a set of arbitrary conventional vocal symbols used for communication by the members of a particular speech community. According to Charles F. Hockett, “Everyone, in every walk of life, is concerned with language in a practical way, for we make use of it in virtually everything we do. For the most part, our use of language is so automatic and natural that we pay no more attention to it than we do to our breathing or beating of our hearts. But sometimes our attention is drawn; we are struck by the fact that others do not speak quite as we do, or we observe a child learning to talk, or we wonder whether one or another way of saying or writing something is correct. “However, many have professional need to know something about language. While as some use language as a medium to study certain subjects or areas of knowledge, for some it is an end in itself or a complete discipline of knowledge. They name this discipline, Linguistics, i.e., a science of languages, which is based on experiments, observations and inferences. Linguistics, therefore, is a scientific study of language. A scholar who

studies linguistics or works in the field of linguistics is called a linguist.

There are various people or professionals who are concerned with the language; however, their purposes may vary. A language teacher, an anthropologist, historian, philosopher, a communication engineer or a computer engineer or software expert would look at a language from different perspectives. Language is basic to several areas of knowledge and linguistics has many applications. Some of the important areas of linguistics are structural or descriptive linguistics, sociolinguistics, anthropological linguistics, psycho-linguistics, applied linguistics, historical linguistics, computational linguistics, etc.

1. 2. LINGUISTICS

Linguistics developed as a discipline in the U. S. in the early decades of the twentieth century mainly due to the anthropologists who felt that the unrecorded American Indian Languages of North America must be recorded and described as early as possible or else the same would become extinct as the number of speakers of these languages was dwindling at a fast pace. That is why almost all the early 20th century linguists investigated or worked on one or more of these American Indian languages. The field methods they developed and generalisations they made came to be called structural linguistics. Among these early Linguists were Boas, Bloomfield, Spair, Hockett, etc. The traditional grammars were mostly based on written languages. Writing and not speech was the basis of grammar. Structural linguistics views spoken language to be the basis of grammar. They considered spoken language to be the subject matter of Linguistics. During World War II, the language problems of the armed forces were dealt with by Linguistic Society of America. They described languages and prepared

teaching materials. Some basic principles about language (teaching) were accepted as follows:

- i. Language is speech, not writing
- ii. Language is what its native speakers say, not what someone thinks they ought to say
- iii. Languages are different
- iv. Language is a set of habits
- v. Teach the language, not about language

By 1960 Structural Linguistics became very popular in America and travelled across the world through scholars who were trained and educated in this discipline in America. Language is studied at various levels such as phonetic, phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, etc. Traditional grammars include morphological and syntactic levels. Morphology deals with the study of word structures. Syntax studies combination of words or phrases in sentences. Linguists believe that all languages are different at various levels. Traditionally, all grammars including English in Europe, were written on the pattern of Greek and Latin grammars. In India, grammars were written on the pattern of English grammars hence were far from reality. Such grammars were named as prescriptive as they prescribed how a language was to be spoken.

In 1965 Noam Chomsky came up with Transformational Generative grammar. He said that every speaker of a language has mastered and internalised a generative grammar that expresses his knowledge of the language. He called this “competence” while the actual use of language he named as “performance.” His theory is widely known as T. G. theory. After this theory, a few more models were introduced by various scholars, namely, Schuman, Dulay and Burt, Krashen, Fillmore, etc.

1. 3. SPEECH COMMUNITY

A speech community is defined as a set or group of people who communicate with each other, directly or indirectly, through a common language. There are no sharp boundaries between speech communities. There are people who are bilingual, multilingual or polyglots, and have command over two or more languages, who could be the conduits of interaction between different speech communities.

Usually, the boundaries of speech communities coincide with political boundaries. Speech communities or languages became the basis of reorganisation of states in India after Independence. Certain speech communities are very large with millions of native speakers, like English, Russian, French, Spanish, German, Chinese and Hindi etc. On the other hand, there are speech communities with less than a dozen speakers e.g., some tribal languages of Andaman and Nicobar in India. The UNESCO has prepared a list of endangered languages of the world. As per reports, a good number of languages are getting extinct or wiped out from the globe each day.

The written records of languages tell us about the shape of languages in earlier times, like Old English and Vedic Sanskrit. We too have written records authenticating the existence of languages which have become extinct now. Like humans, languages too have a cycle of birth and death. The span of time would vary depending upon the size, development and patronage of the language.

1. 4. LANGUAGE FAMILIES

The estimated number of languages across the world is from five to six thousand. All Indo-Aryan languages have evolved from a common source which has been named as Proto-Indo

European. Based on their interrelationships, this family of languages has been divided into two major language groups. The western languages have been labeled Centum and the Eastern as Satem. Indo-Iranian, also called Indo-Aryan, one of the sub groups of the Satem group of languages, was carried to the area of Iran and India through migrations more than three millennia ago. The Indic or Aryan group passed through Old Indic, Middle Indic and Apabhramsas “off-branchings.” From Apabhramsas developed the modern Indian languages. Most widely spoken of these is Hindi.

The historical linguists study differences in languages between two points of time. The languages are constantly undergoing changes in pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary etc. this is why languages change over a period of time. There are closely related languages and languages which have less in common or entirely different structures.

1. 5. MOST SPOKEN LANGUAGES OF THE WORLD

Worldwide, two languages reached approximately one billion speakers by the end of the 20th century. These are Mandarin Chinese, official language of China the most populous nation on earth and English, now the most widely used and studied language of the world scenario.

The next category of languages, in terms of demographic importance, includes the group of languages with combined totals of more than half a billion (500, 000, 000) speakers. The first of these comprises Hindi+Urdu, which are inter-intelligible when spoken inspite of their different scripts. If allowance is made for the comprehension of spoken Hindi and Urdu by speakers of the closely related Punjabi language, and of other languages in the Indic set as well as for the widespread passive understanding of Hindi among speakers of Dravidian

languages, then Hindi+Urdu has its place in the same category as Chinese and English, as a language with around one billion “hearers.”

The second pair of languages with over half a billion speakers is composed of Spanish and Portuguese.

Three more languages rise above the total of two hundred million speakers each; these are Russian, Bangla and Arabic.

In the category of mega languages, with one hundred million or more speakers each, are five further languages or pairs of languages: Japanese and Malay+Indonesian in Asia and the Pacific, German in Europe and French throughout the world and Punjabi in Pakistan, India and some other countries such as Canada and the U. K.

1. 6. SOUTH ASIAN REGION

With one third of the world’s population, South Asia remains one of the important sub-continent of the world. The population size in itself reflects both, the suitability for permanent settlement and the long history of human occupation. The multilinguistic, multi-cultural and multi-religious character of this subcontinent provides a rich variety to South Asia along with a common heritage of ethnic backgrounds of culture and tradition giving this region a distinctive place in the world.

According to M. B. Emeneau, “The fact is that we can say of the whole area, from Japan to South Asia, that it has been marked by elaborately hierarchical social structures. It was an area of divine kingships, accompanied in some instances by elaborate class or caste structures. That the linguistic status patterns are superstructures developing from the sociological systems is, it seems, obvious. To them may even be added

another, and typologically somewhat different, structure, that of Japanese high and low vocabulary; this too with its Sanskrit origin for much of the high vocabulary, is related to the superimposed Indic Kingship. “Similarly, in South East Asia the immigrant Hindu Kingdoms and the Hinduised kingdoms with their complex historical interrelationships were the settings in which diffusion could take place and in which linguistic areal relationships developed. The divergent linguistic patterns have developed independently as superstructures on the social systems.

Most of the countries of South Asia are marked by the plurality of languages and cultures. A large number of polyglots live in villages and cities. This situation provides a typical mosaic of verbal experience. Particularly so in India the four language families Indo Aryan, Dravidian, Austic and Tibeto-Burman represented by various ethnic groups reveal a fundamental cultural unity of the vast region. Although the Indian languages belonging to these language families have shown parallel trends of development, they characterise as a single linguistic and cultural region. These languages share many grammatical characteristics from the phonological to the syntactical to the semantic level. Multilingual societies have a wider access to intergroup and intercultural communication and that is how certain languages like Hindustani in South Asia have assumed the role of lingua-franca, a communication amalgam of this vast area.

The amalgamation of messages and thoughts of the maximum number of the world’s religions being practiced in this part of the world has given birth to the greatest luminaries of human brotherhood and ambassadors of world peace.

The blend of south Asian cultures and traditions has resulted in an eastern way of civilisation which has laid a path

leading us towards tolerance, brotherhood, human development, peace and prosperity. Our saints and sages have redefined the world and emerged as beacons of light providing solace and comfort to the entire human fraternity across the globe.

One can write volumes and speak for hours about our rich religious and cultural thought and quote innumerable instances from world history where the entire world has looked towards India in the East for light, inspiration and peace. Besides being deeply rooted in religion, tradition and culture, the region has also marched ahead in scientific development. The composite culture of this region is a beautiful blend of tradition and human development. Major cities of the region are representative of both traditional and modern South Asia.

Apart from a rich religious and cultural history, South Asia also has an interesting linguistic history and remains a very important region of the world from the linguistic point of view.

The linguistic landscaping of South Asia is predominant with modern languages like Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, Bangla, Sinhalese, Nepali, etc.

Sanskrit emerged as the dominant classical language of India by the 6th century BC. It remained the language of the educated until about 1000 AD. The Muslims brought Persian into South Asia as the language of the rulers. Like Sanskrit in the earlier period and English from the 18th century onwards, Persian became the language of a numerically small but politically powerful elite across South Asia. Hindi and Urdu and all other languages of North India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal owe their origins to the blending of earlier Indo-Aryan languages. Most of other North Indian languages were not written till the 16th century.

1.7. INDIA AS LINGUISTIC AREA

There is sufficient evidence to believe that a large number of philosophical ideologies have emerged from Indian intellect, whether monist, dualist, pluralist, theist and atheist. India has made a significant contribution to world knowledge. Along with other various areas of knowledge, language/grammatical studies too received enough attention in the ancient period. The greatest of all was the *Ashtadyay*, grammar of Sanskrit by the eminent scholar Panini. In today's idioms, this was the mother of all grammars. Such was the impact of this grammar that the language described by Panini became India's literary language. For the first time, it was accepted that speech, gesture or language are learnt and are not automatic or natural like respiration and digestion.

Hindu culture was so deeply interested in various studies that techniques of investigation and analysis leading to inferences were developed. The linguistic description of Panini was so scientific that it has not been bettered even now, except in the area of syntax. Greek and Latin studies could not match the Hindu (Indian) account of phonetic, phonemic or morphophonemic analysis. The Greek and others who followed the West were unable to construct a system of relations comparable to Panini's. This led to the famous statement by the great European scholar Sir William Jones who studied Sanskrit for about a decade, "The Sanskrit language, whatever be its antiquity, is of wonderful structure; more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either, yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity, both in the roots of verbs and in the forms of grammar, than could possibly have been produced by accident; so strong indeed, that no philosopher could examine all three, without believing them having sprung from some common

source, which perhaps no longer exists; there is a similar reason, though not so forcible, for supposing that both Gothic and the Celtic, though blended with a very different idiom, had a similar origin as Sanskrit; and the old Persian might be added to the same family, if this were the place for discussing any question concerning the antiquities of Persia.” Feb 1786.

It is necessary to mention that the growth of Western Descriptive Linguistics in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century owed much to the Hindu grammarians. Western linguists like Franz Boas, Edward Sapir, Leonard Bloomfield were well acquainted with Panini and other Indian grammarians. It would be appropriate to say that with Panini the Indian (Hindu) grammar reached its glory.

The other area of linguistics in which Indian contribution was acknowledged worldwide is the study of meaning or Semantics. Indian grammarians, literary theoreticians and philosophers were all concerned with the study of meaning and much was written on this. The Hindu treatises are in a unique style that hardly a few in the West would be able to deal with it. Unfortunately, the Hindu genius for grammar remained dormant in the pre-Christian era. However, the European scholars were equally responsible to bring the Indian contribution to knowledge to world focus, e.g., the Middle Indic passages in Sanskrit dramas were known only in Jones’ time. The Middle Indic inscriptions of the Buddhist emperor Ashoka were recovered by the decipherment by Prinsep in 1830’s. The Jain scriptures and Buddhist scriptures in various Middle-Indic languages became known to Western scholars. Inscriptions on stones and coins were collected and printed by several scholars.

Work on Modern Indo-Aryan languages started in the second half of the twentieth century by both Western and Indian scholars. The works of Jules Bloch’s outline of historical

account of Indo-Aryan from the Vedic period to modern Indian languages and Suniti Kumar Chatterji's work on Bengali are worth mentioning. The monumental work, *Linguistic Survey of India*, of Sir George Grierson besides dialect mapping, touched on all aspects of linguistic description of Indian languages and set the trend for further detailed research on Indian languages. The authoritative and gradual growth of research in descriptive linguistics in the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century owed much to Indian (Hindu) grammarians. They became grammarians for grammar's sake.

1.8. THE ARYAN LANGUAGES

The oldest specimens of the Aryan languages in India are known as Vedic Sanskrit, preserved in the four Vedas believed to have been compiled during 1200–800 BC or even earlier. The period from 800 to 600 BC is identified with classical Sanskrit. The entire period from 1500 to 600 BC is called the old Indo-Aryan stage.

In the early stages, the Middle Indo-Aryan assumed the form of Prakrits including Pali, the Ashokan Prakrit and other dialects. With the passage of time, the Prakrits took the form of Apabhraṅshas. Linguists have enumerated seven main Apabharanshas.

India, a geographically vast and multilingual country, is inhabited by one billion and two hundred fifty million people (approximately) who speak languages belonging to four major families, Indo-Aryan, Dravidian, Austic and Tibeto-Burman.

1.9. GEORGE GRIERSON AND THE CENSUS OF INDIA

Sir George Grierson's Linguistic Survey of India which took him about thirty years to complete, roughly maps out major language and dialect areas. Grierson was also responsible for

bringing out the Language Report of the 1901 census which became a guideline for the next three consecutive censuses. The survey was an experiment in dialect mapping and was considered to be a partial success so far as accuracy and analysis of data is concerned but amazing details about languages were made available, which are even now referred by researchers and linguists. Thereafter, linguists have been referring to the Census reports for language data. The figures available now are of the 2001 census, while as the 2011 census is now under process and the language report will be available in due course of time.

According to the 2001 census report, there are 122 languages and 234 mother tongues with speaker strength of 10, 000 or more. There are 22 scheduled languages (i.e. recognised in the 8th schedule of the constitution) and one hundred non-scheduled languages.

Three varieties of scripts derived from Brahmi, Arabic and Roman are used in the writing system of Indian languages. There are 50 written languages with a range of publications from 50 to more than 10,000. Sahitya Academi recognises 24 languages for literary purposes.

1.10. POST-GRIERSON SURVEYS

After Grierson's survey, several attempts were made by Indian scholars/organisations to carry yet another survey, more scientific and detailed to fill up many blank spots in the Indian Linguistic map. However, they did not succeed. A relook into the Linguistic survey of India was carried out by Prof. S. M. Katre in 1954 which resulted in a Language survey-Census in 1961. The Registrar General of India and the Census Commissioner under the Home Ministry of the Govt. of India during the VI year plan undertook two programmes, a State Survey and a mother tongue study. The first was constrained by

the fact that states have well-defined boundaries whereas languages do not have similarly sharp boundaries. The Mother tongue study sought to identify and document the unidentified mother tongues with reference to the previous censuses. In about 30 years' time they have been able to publish only two State studies and four more are ready for publication. The mother tongue studies are yet to see the light of the day.

The third such attempt was by the Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL), Mysore. The CIIL prepared an ambitious and audacious plan for the Survey. It planned not only a survey of languages but of cultures too, covering all related dimensions. A massive training programme of about 800 persons, mostly students and young scholars, was organised at Mysore in 2006 for this project. But the project got scuttled due to Govt. intricacies. During this period, CIIL also started yet another project of similar nature called Language Information Service (LIS India Project). Under this project basic information about major Indian languages has been compiled and is available on the Net. The preparation of entries with respect to other small languages is in progress.

In March 2010, The Bhasha Research and Publication Centre, Vadodara, a non-Governmental organisation held a Confluence of Languages and decided to initiate the work of preparing a People's Linguistic Survey of India (PLSI). The PLSI is the first such attempt by a collective of scholars and activists, carried out by a large number of volunteers and associates mobilised and trained through a series of workshops. The leading mantra of this programme is that language has to be empowered, promoted and disseminated by its own people. It is the people's perception of language, not the linguists' definition of language or dialect. It is meant to capture how

people identify, name and perceive their speech. The main objectives of PLSI are:

- To provide an overview of Indian languages as they are at present.
- To arrest the extinction of linguistic, cultural and biological diversity, nurtured transgenerationally by speech communities.
- To build bridges among diverse language communities, and thereby strengthen the foundations of the multilingual, multicultural Indian society.

The Language Division of the Census of India has taken up the project of documentation of smaller and minor languages. Under this project the language data from the native speakers is recorded in video and transcribed. Linguists are engaged in analysing the data and preparation of grammatical sketches of these languages.

1.11. LANGUAGE BOUNDARIES

The inter-language boundaries in many regions in India have remained fuzzy and fluid. Usually, there is overlapping of speech in such areas. This leads to claims and counter claims of belongingness on behalf of certain language activists or political organisations. After reorganisation of states on the basis of language there are disputes still prevailing between Punjab and Haryana, Karnataka and Maharashtra, and in several North Eastern states.

In Kashmir of J&K State, Kashmiri is surrounded by Shina in the north, Tibeto-Burman languages Balti, Ladhakhi in the east, Pahari and Punjabi dialects in the west and Dogri and other Pahari dialects in the south.

A strange linguistic phenomena has been witnessed in the history Kashmir. A non-native language has always assumed a prestigious role here. It was Sanskrit and Persian in ancient times and Urdu and English in the modern or post-independence period.

1.12. THE ANCIENT KASHMIR

The frontiers of Jammu and Kashmir situated on the northernmost part of Indian Territory, also called the crown of India, touch or are very close to Pakistan, Tibet, China, and Afghanistan. The earlier Soviet Union and present Central Asian Republics assume strategic geographical and political significance. It also attracts the attention of big powers like America who, though far away from its territory are ready for interventions at the drop of a hat/on small incidents taking place over here.

The Kashmir valley within the State of J&K blessed by nature with shimmering lakes, snowcapped majestic mountains, lush green meadows, springs and rivers is internationally known as a jewel in the Himalayas. The Mughal King Jahangir named it as “paradise on earth.” Commenting on the beauty of Kashmir, Kalhana in his *Rajatarangini* says “Such is Kashmir which may be conquered by the force of spiritual merit but not by armed force; where the inhabitants in consequence fear more the next world; where there are hot baths in winter, comfortable landing places on the river-banks, where the rivers being free from aquatic animals are without peril; where, realising that the land created by his father is unable to bear heat, the hot rayed sun honours it by bearing himself with softness even in summer. Learning, high dwelling houses, saffron, iced water, grapes and the like – what is common place there, is difficult to secure in

paradise.” (R. S. Pandit’s translation of *Rajatarangini*, Sahitya Akademi 2010).

The valley of Kashmir was once a vast lake. According to Kalhana’s *Rajatarangini*, Kashyapa was instrumental in the killing of demon Jalodbhava, draining off the lake water and the place was named Kashmir after Kashyapa’s name. The *Nilamatpurana* and *Rajatarangini* refer to the Nagas and Pisachas as two tribes, the progeny of Kashyapa as the original settlers. The Nagas have been serpent worshipping non Aryan tribes of ancient India. There are evidences that Nagas were in all parts of the country. In Kashmir they were the aboriginals who lived there before Pisachas and the Aryans. During the winter months Nagas were usually driven out of valley by Pisachas who used to reach here to save themselves from the extreme cold of Karakoram and Pamir areas of central Asia. In this way both tribes lived here for six months, Nagas during summer and Pisachas during winter. The Pisachas were originally from Central Asia. As per literary records the immigration of people took place from the Indo-Gangetic belt. The Nagas and other new arrivals entered into some agreement with the Pisachas by pleasing them with some meat etc., to stay back in winter. The present day rituals such as *khichri amavsiya* and *gaDa bata* amongst Kashmiri Hindus are the reflections of those pleasantries.

The Aryans

The native Aryans who lived along the river Sarswati were called Sarswat Brahmins. Because of geological phenomenon, the major sources of glacier waters were lost for the river Sarswati spread over 1600 kilometers from Pir Panjal range upto the Arabian Sea through the deserts of Rajasthan and Gujarat and it became extinct. Life without water was impossible hence a large number of people migrated to the Kashmir valley. The present

day Kashmiris, irrespective of their religion, are the descendants of these people.

The geographic location of Kashmir made it a meeting ground for trade and ideas for four main parts of the ancient world. Its closeness to trade routes brought it considerable wealth and exposure to different thought processes. Kashmiris embraced the Sanskrit language and became interpreters and missionaries of the Indian civilisation and authored numerous texts and academic works. Their contribution towards arts, sciences, literature and philosophy is well acclaimed and appreciated.

Pannini, whose grammar *Ashtyadhyay* remains the greatest achievement of human intellect, lived in northwest Punjab close to Kashmir and the University of Taxilla too was not far from Kashmir. Patanjali, the great scholar who wrote a commentary on Panini's grammar, was a Kashmiri. He also made contributions to Yoga and Ayurveda.

Lalitaditya, the king of Kashmir of the 8th century conquered most of north India, Central Asia and Tibet. Kashmiris became important players in political, cultural and academic fields. Another important Kashmiri is Bharata Muni of *Natyashastra* fame. Bharata's *Natya Shastra* comprising 36 chapters not only presents the language of creative expression, but it is the world's first book on stage craft.

The contribution of Kashmir to ancient literature has been very significant and widely acknowledged. The ninth century scholar Anandavardhana wrote the *dhvanyaloka* 'Light of Suggestion', a world class masterpiece on aesthetic theory. Anandavardhana was a member in the court of King Avantivarman. Abhinavagupta who lived about one hundred years after Anandavardhana, wrote a famous commentary on

dhvanyaloka called Lochana. Abhinavagupta, a veteran scholar and philosopher wrote on philosophy, poetry, tantra and aesthetics. He wrote more than sixty books. Kshemendra, a pupil of Abhinavagupta too was a philosopher and poet. His *Bribatkathamanjari* is a summary of Gunadhya's *Bribatkatha* in 7500 stanzas. Somadeva's *Kathasaritasagara* is another version of Gunadhya's *Bribatakatha*. Somadeva's large collection of stories written for queen Suryamati, wife of King Ananta of the eleventh century, set a trend for fiction writing in and around Kashmir. Because of such contributions, Kashmir became famous as *Sharda Peeth* i.e., the seat of learning. Kashmiri Brahmins were supposed to have sound knowledge of various disciplines like philosophy, astrology, logic, grammar, medicine and religion.

There has been considerable interaction between Kashmiri scholars and scholars in other parts of India. The Saivism school of philosophy developed as an offshoot of the Saivist thought and philosophy in Kashmir. Some of the important proponents include Vasugupta, Somananda, Bhatta Kallata, Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta.

Kashmir also achieved great fame as a centre of Mahayana Buddhism and Buddhist thought. Buddhism was introduced in Kashmir by Emperor Ashoka (273-232 B C), who brought along with him 5000 monks for permanent settlement here (Bamzai 1994:71). Buddhism reached its pinnacle about three centuries later during the rule of Kushaans, especially during Kanishka (1st century AD), who held the third Buddhist council in Kashmir. The philosophy of Mahayana Buddhism bears a deep influence of Kashmir Saivism. Buddhism under the Kushaans became the State religion and it was Kashmiri missionaries who were instrumental in spreading it to China, Tibet, and other countries of South Central Asia.

Kashmiri

Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* bears evidence in the form of vocabulary, idioms and sayings that Kashmiri has been a living language of those times. Kshemendra, an eminent poet and scholar of the 11th century who wrote several books in Sanskrit, gave accounts of a *deshi bhasha* in vogue in those times. Keeping that in mind he even pleaded that "poets should write in their own language." It is said that in 150 BC a renowned Kashmiri Buddhist scholar Nag Sen wrote *Milind Panha* in Kashmiri. According to Hasan Khoihami the book must have been used to preach Buddhism. Similarly Gunadhya, a well-known poet and scholar wrote *Brihatkatha* in the 6th century. It is considered as the first book written in Kashmiri (Pisachi) during the Prakrit age. It consists of stories and essays on nature, human beings, birds, animals, fairies etc. The book became very popular. However, Gunadhya was abused and condemned to such an extent by the Sanskrit scholars for writing in Pisacha, considered by them a low language, that he had to burn the book and run away to the forests. Later, many story books based on this book became available in Sanskrit which included Somadeva's *Kathasarit Sagar* and Kshemendra's *Brihatkathamanjri*.

However, towards the close of the fourteenth century, after the advent of Islam in the valley there was an abrupt end for arts and sciences. Painting, sculpture, dance and music could no longer be practised. Sanskrit period too was on the decline as the Muslim rulers patronised the Persian language. It was during this very period that Kashmiri language became popular through the spiritual and devotional poetries of great mystics Lal Ded and Nunda Rishi.

1.13. THE KASHMIRI LANGUAGE

Kashmiri is mainly spoken in the valley of Kashmir of the J&K State in India. However, large numbers of its speakers are spread through the length and breadth of India and globally as well. According to the census of 2001, there are 53, 62, 349 speakers. Kashmiri is an Indo-Aryan language, classified under the Dardic group of languages by linguists. There seems to be a consensus amongst Linguists on this. Kashmiri has two types of dialects (i) Regional and (ii) Social. Regional dialects further are of two types – (i) the regional dialects spoken in the regions inside the valley of Kashmir and (ii) the regional dialects spoken outside the valley of Kashmir. The Kashmiri speaking areas or dialects within the valley are: (i) *Maraz* (southern and southeastern region) (ii) *Kamraz* (northern and north western region) (iii) *Srinagar* and its neighboring areas (central Kashmir), also referred to as *Yamraz* in some texts. There are minor linguistic variations at the phonological and lexical levels. The language spoken in all three areas is mutually intelligible. The language of Srinagar has assumed a social prestige and is considered a standard form of speech and is used in electronic and print media. Style switching from *Marazi* or *Kamrazi* to Srinagar style of speech is very common, especially amongst educated Kashmiris. The two main regional dialects outside the valley are *Poguli* and *Kashtawari* spoken in *Pogul* and *Paristan* valleys bordered in the east by *Rambani* and *Siraji* and on the west by *Lahanda* and *Pahari*. *Kashtwari* is spoken in *Kashtwar* valley towards the south east of Kashmir. *Kashtwari* is bordered by *Bhadarwahi* in the south, *Chiballi* and *Punchi* in the west and Tibetan speaking areas of *Zanskar* in the east. Both these dialects share about 70% to 80% of the vocabulary with Kashmiri. (Koul and Schmidt 1984)

Kashmiri is closely related to Shina and some other languages of North-West frontier. It also shares some morphological features like pronominal suffixes, with Lahanda and Sindhi. But Kashmiri is quite distinct from all Indo-Aryan languages. Kashmiri is a verb second i.e., V2 language, that is, in the word order of sentences the finite verb occurs in second position. That way it resembles German, Dutch etc.

Kashmiri has undergone many morpho-phonemic and lexical changes under the influence of other languages like Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, Hindi, Urdu and English.

While Kashmiri is one of the oldest languages, it has never received government patronage. It was never the official language of the state nor is it today. It is neither a medium of instruction in schools nor a language of administration. Very recently, it has been introduced as a subject in schools at primary and middle level. However, it has been taught at the P.G. and undergraduate levels in the University of Kashmir and some selective colleges since the late seventies of 1900 AD

There are some non-Governmental organisations working hard for the promotion of Kashmiri language and literature in and outside the state. Within the Governmental ambit, J&K Academy of Art, Culture and Languages in the State, and the Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore and its Northern Regional Language Centre, Patiala (under the Govt. of India), outside the state are worth mentioning.

Script

Kashmiri has been written in various scripts. Sharada derived from Brahmi was the original and first script used for this language. Several old manuscripts are available in this script. Siti Kantha's *Mahanaya Prakash* is written in this script. Horoscopes were usually written in this script. This script has become

obsolete now and has restricted use. Efforts are being made by certain organisations to revive and preserve this script. The Roman script was used by some European scholars like Walter Lawrence in the “*Valley of Kashmir*”, Aurel Stein in “*Hatim’s Tales*”, Grierson in “Kashmiri dictionary”, who transliterated certain Kashmiri texts. J. L. Kaul in “Kashmiri Lyrics” and T. N. Raina in “*Anthology of Modern Kashmiri Verse*” too used this script. It has been used intermittently ever since, in transliteration and in recording the language data by linguists. Some scholars have written Kashmiri primers in Roman. Most recently is one by R. L. Bhat. However, there is no standardisation in its use. Different scholars have used different diacritical marks for representing typical sounds of Kashmiri. There is even no consensus amongst linguists while using International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). There is need for standardisation in this.

Devanagari has been used by some scholars for writing Kashmiri for quite some time now. It is mostly used in research work related to Kashmiri carried out in Hindi. Zinda Kaul used it in “Sumran”; some portion of Ghulam Ahmad Mahjoor’s poetry was also published in this script. It is also used in Hindu religious texts and in books and journals outside the valley. Devanagari script has been recently standardised by a high level committee of linguists, Kashmiri language scholars, software experts, and a software named Aakruti-Arnimal has been developed. This software is widely used now. Based on the standardised script, several language teaching/learning materials have been produced. Notable amongst these are books published by the Central Institute of Indian languages, Mysore namely *Let us Learn Kashmiri Primer and Reader*. The Standardised Devanagari is now used in all Kashmiri journals published outside Kashmir like *Kosbur Samachar*, *Vaakh* etc. Some scholars

like Bimla Raina, have published their literary works in this script along with Perso-Arabic script or Nastaliq.

The official script of Kashmiri as recognised by the Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages is based on the Perso-Arabic script or Nastaliq, using additional diacritical marks for representing certain peculiar characteristics of the Kashmiri language. This script is widely used in the publication of books by the Academy and other organisations and individuals. There are still inconsistencies found in the use of this script.

The proposed standardisation is not strictly followed, in fact after 1990 there has been a deliberate effort to bring this script closer to Urdu or to impose the Urdu alphabet on Kashmiri irrespective of its linguistic relevance, which I would name urduisation of the script. However, this trend has picked up and most Kashmiri literature is available in this script only.

1.14. KASHMIRI LITERATURE

Although Kashmiri literature is considered to be thousands of years old, the samples of literature which have been documented are barely a thousand years old. The oldest ones are the 9th century *Chuma Padas* written by Sanskrit scholars. This was written in old Kashmiri or Apabhramsa to propagate the Shaivite doctrines amongst masses of Kashmir. This was followed by Siti Kantha's *Mahanay Prakash*, a major text written in the form of *vaakhs*. Its language is similar to that of the *chumma padas*.

Due to political and geographical upheavals there have been gaps in the records of Kashmiri literature. Another important reason must have been the lack of patronage for the language on behalf of rulers who promoted Sanskrit and

Persian as court languages. As a result there is no consistent record of history of Kashmiri literature up to the 14th century.

It is unfortunate that historians who wrote about Kashmir did not dwell on Kashmiri literature. According to Naji Munawar and Shafi Shauq, “*gulami kin ruudy kaeshir morikh, daenishwar, tI aam khaNdI luukh ehsaas kamtari hIndy shikar, timav thaev kaeshryan pharsi shaeyran hInz shaeyri kalamband kaerith magar kaeshri shaeyri hInz kadIr na zaanInI kin tsbunikh yi gaal khatas. yi cha heartas layakh kath zi lal dedi tI sbeikhul aalmas hiven abad saaz sbareyan mutlak ti chunI tami dorkyav murikhav kenb lyuukhmut tath barakIs chikh vopar haekman hIndeyan caryan maskharan taam taeriph kaerimit tI tim chikh aelim phaezil tI shaeir zaenmit.*” (“Due to slavery, Kashmiri historians, intellectuals and other educated people lived under an inferiority complex. They recorded the poetry of Persian poets of Kashmiri origin but ignored the genius of any Kashmiri poets. It is surprising that the historians of that period have not even recorded anything about the great poets like Lal Ded and Sheikh-ul-Alam, while as they have showered praises even on the dumb jokers of outside rulers, projecting them as scholars, educationists and poets.”) History of the Kashmiri Literature, 1992.)

Natural calamities and political upheavals in the history of Kashmir must have influenced, rather, suppressed Kashmiri language and literature and hampered the recording of its history but even then Kashmiri literature has been representative of major trends and movements like Shaivism and Sufism, Bhakti movement, Progressive movement, Modernism etc.

A proper history of Kashmiri literature has been recorded recently by the modern scholars. Abdul Ahad Azad was the first scholar poet who wrote, “*Kashmiri Zabaan aur Shayr?*”, “*Kashmiri Language and Poetry*”, in Urdu, published by the J&K Academy

of Art, Culture and Languages. Thereafter, a few more scholars ventured into this field. Notable amongst them are: Naji Munawar and Shafi shauq-History of the Kashmiri Literature – 1992, revised in 2012. Shri Avtar Krishen Rahbar –*Kashri Adbech Tareekh (History of Kashmiri Literature)* 1965, Prof Trilokinath Raina – *A History of Kashmiri Literature* –Sahitya Akademy – 2002. Since language development is a continuous process, recording of histories of literatures too has to be an ongoing process. We need more and more literary histories of languages based on research. There are still many aspects of the history and development of Kashmiri language and literature which remain unexplored or ambiguous and need to be studied in the light of current research. No study or book of history on Kashmiri language and literature could be termed as final or complete; we therefore need to encourage more and more scholars and researchers to write histories, taking advantage of modern technology.

As there is no consistent record of history of Kashmiri literature up to the 14th century, Lal Ded, an eminent saint poet of the 14th century is considered to be the first and foremost milestone of Kashmiri literature. Almost all literary historians are unanimous on this.

Historically, Kashmiri literature can be divided into the following major periods:

1. The early period.

The age of synthesis (Period of Lal Ded and Nunda Rishi). 13th –15th centuries.

The age of turbulence and neglect (Vatsun and Marsiyah). 16th –18th centuries.

Golden age of Kashmiri literature (Sufi poets, devotional poetry, Mahmood Gami, Ghazals, *vatsun*, *marjiya*. 19th century.

Progressive movement (Mahjoor, Azad and other poets), Sufi poets, Development of Prose. 20th century.

2. Modernism and post-modernism.

The concern and passion of love for humanity without any bias for region and religion is very prominent in the scholarly writings of Kashmiri literature. Right from the poetry of Lal Ded, an eminent spiritual poetess, to Abdul Ahad Azad, a poet of the modern era, all have sung songs of communal harmony, love and concern for man and humanity. Lal Ded and Nunda Rishi, through their verses, have underlined that a human being, however ignorant and barren of ideas he/she may be, is capable of attaining spiritual knowledge through his/her persistent efforts and dedications, thereby achieving greater heights of humanhood. To acquaint himself/herself with saintly qualities should be the main objective of a human being. All through the history of Kashmiri literature we have seen Muslim poets/singers singing Bhakti songs and Hindu poets swearing by Sufism. Such people have shown the path of humanity to people in general, cutting across religious and regional barriers.

With such rich traditions and under eminent and popular rulers like Avantiverman, Lalitaditya and Budshah, people have been living together with amity, harmony and peace for centuries.

National Cultural Heritage and Kashmir

India's civilisation dating back over 5000 years is full of chapters of glorious culture ranging from Mohanjodaro and Harappa to the golden ages of the Guptas, Mauryas and Mughals. Each dynastic rule accompanied by foreign influence either through trade or invasion has led to a unique vibrant lifestyle, and sufficient amount of imagination and craftsmanship with varied cultural patterns. The very atmosphere of our country offers infinite amounts of inspiration in various arts. The artisans have flourished under the patronage of rulers. Through their hard work and ability to knit together diverse geographical regions, they have been able to weave the rich canvas of art which is an integral part of India's history. However, a civilisation articulates its cultural achievements in the form of art and craft.

India is known for its ancient and rich cultural heritage. Culture in India is like colourful tapestry, woven out of threads of several colours to merge together to form an integral design. From time immemorial several cultural streams have joined together to form an ocean of human activities. Despite moving and joining together, each culture has retained its individuality and uniqueness. To be one and diverse simultaneously is, perhaps, the unique characteristic of Indian cultural heritage. It is this uniqueness of our culture which is to be preserved and disseminated. No other civilisation or country can, perhaps, boast of comparable diversity in its art and culture. Throughout

history, Indian craftsmen have been producing distinct works of art.

Culture permeates every sphere of human activity, determines and governs life and patterns of Indian society in diverse regions and equally diverse fields. It is a very crucial part of development which deserves careful attention and substantial investment. Culture determines the quality of life, hence it needs to be commensurate with the overall development of the country. Culture is lived. It is lived in so many different ways by so many different people. From time immemorial, various cultural streams have been flowing to meet. Rabindra Nath Tagore called the ocean of great humanity of India ever flowing and ever changing, where each culture remains unique. With their uniqueness, they contribute to build Indian heritage, an outcome of interactions of give and take. This is the secret of India's continuity as one of the greatest and living human civilisations.

In this age of high technology and globalisation the process continues. There is a hue and cry about the electronic media eating up Indian culture. We have to preserve our traditional values and lifestyle on one hand and simultaneously adjust to the advancement of technology. We have to find the means and ways of working out a proper role for the electronic media to foster and nurture the culture in the present scenario.

Although the responsibility of preservation and dissemination of culture rests with the Government but it is ultimately people who have to write the norms and values of life in its various manifestations. The quality of life oozes and overflows in its natural way and is not in any way bound by the rules and regulations which the rulers may like to impose. Cultural values take generations to stabilise, withstanding numerous upheavals of history and natural calamities. The

geographical, political and economic factors play a remarkable role in the development, reformation and establishment of cultural values. This becomes the soul of the society.

In redefining the good society what we perhaps need to do is to re-discover in each of our respective cultures and civilisations, the elements of past ethos that might apply with new force to the problems of our present. The challenge is to reaffirm essential values without regressing into fanaticism and fundamentalism of any description. The objective must be to enlarge the concept of family to include not only humanity but all creations. The State has produced eminent philosophers and spiritual leaders, men of great intellect who have been respected world over as benefactors of mankind. They stand as beacons of light whose luminosity is as radiant today as it was in times immemorial. They have been able to demonstrate validity and significance of different modes of worship of one and the same God, thereby looking upon the entire world as one and the entire race as of one flesh and blood.

The last few years have brought in a lot of radical change affecting mankind. The widening gulf between the rich and poor and the privileged and the deprived is becoming more and more permanent, giving rise to global imbalances of power and prosperity and environment. Internationally sponsored terrorism has already created enough bad-blood amongst the people. While we have the highest commitment and respect for liberty and democracy, our constitution provides for the full range of freedom and rights that a democratic state gives to its citizens. The democracy in essence involves persuasions, negotiations and inclusiveness of different viewpoints. Religion has traditionally been a very strong binding force in our society; it has been a source of consolation and morale booster regulating our behaviours. The breakdown of religious orders

accompanied by fundamentalism has unfortunately made our society chaotic, fragmented and rigid. All such factors run counter to our tradition and civilisation. The unfortunate trend of shifting towards caste politics where a particular group wants to share the benefits of power, leads to tension and discrimination between different social groups, which needs to be checked and stopped.

Unity is achieved when plurality is appreciated and encouraged to interact. Culture must find its expression in people because culture is lived.

2. 1. CULTURAL HERITAGE OF KASHMIR

According to Sir Aurel Stein who translated *Rajatarangini*, the celebrated book of history of Kashmir from Sanskrit into English, “Kashmir has the distinction of being the only region of India which possesses an uninterrupted series of written record of its history.” The archaeological excavations of Bourzahama 15 kms from Srinagar establish its antiquity to beyond 3000 BC. It has been established, as mentioned earlier, that Nagas were the original inhabitants of Kashmir and Kashmiris built their cultural traditions on the habits and customs of Nagas. The traditions and customs of Nagas are prevalent in modified forms in various regions of the state even now. Abhinavagupta, the eminent Kashmiri philosopher, claims the primacy of *agamas* – religious texts of ancient Kashmir dating between 1st and 5th century AD – over the Vedas, both in point of time and performance of rituals.

The interaction between Vedic and Kashmiri traditions did develop in course of time but in Kashmir’s religious literature the supremacy of Shiva over Vedic supreme God Indra has often been asserted. According to V. N. Drabu, the pre-Vedic

people of Kashmir were admitted to Vedic society with distinctive characteristics of their own life at different periods.

Buddhists and Jews have left tremendous influence on Kashmir history and culture. The transition from Nagas to Buddhism has been smooth. Influenced by Shaivite-Tantric thought of Kashmir, Buddhism got transformed into its Kashmiri version. The local religious beliefs, Vedic concepts and Buddhism were synthesised by great Kashmiri philosophers, Vasugupta and Abhinavgupta, into the Kashmiri version of Shaivism called Trikha philosophy. After that Kashmir has experienced situations of strife and Kashmiris had to struggle hard under alien rulers like Mughals, Pathans, Sikhs and Dogras. Muslim rule followed the conversion of a local ruler into Islam, which resulted in many conversions thereafter. The last native rulers of Kashmir were the Chaks. Islamic beliefs and practices enjoyed as much autonomy within wider Islamic tradition as pre-Islamic Kashmir did during Vedic and post-Vedic tradition of India.

The amalgamation of Shaivism and Islamic Thoughts resulted in yet another school of thought called as Sufism, which flourished for hundreds of years. Both Shaivism and Sufism are the prominent schools of thought which developed in Kashmir and left an indelible mark on the psyche of Kashmiris.

Proclaiming himself to be spiritual son of Lal Ded, Nunda Rishi carried further her spiritual message in the form of the Rishi order (as Sufism in Kashmir valley was called). Lal Ded and Nunda Rishi translated religion into Kashmir's spiritual and cultural idiom and converted it into a massive emotional upsurge. The faith and tradition of preaching and worshipping of each other's religions and pilgrimage centres has been a very unique and glorious tradition of the people of the state. The

famous Hindu shrines and the equally famous Muslim pilgrimage centres are held in highest esteem by the people of every faith. The offerings made and the obeisance paid at such places by people of all faiths has baffled and even bothered the conservative elements across the globe.

The entire valley is full of such shrines and pilgrimage centres which are respected and adored by both the communities. Some places house the shrines of both the faiths in close proximity to each/one another. The pilgrimage centre like one at Hari Parbat where monuments of all three religions co-exist, with a temple, mosque and gurdwara, are the living symbols of communal harmony for people of the state.

The valley has seen many eminent saints and sages apparently from both the religious faiths ameliorating the social, economic and spiritual conditions of Kashmir since ancient times. People bow in front of them irrespective of caste, creed and religion and seek redressal of their worries and anxieties. Bhagwan Laxman Joo of Ishbar, Bhagwan Gopinath, Nandabab, Sultan Sahab are some of the illuminaries of this cult.

According to Dr. Arthur Neve, “Kashmiri Muslim has transferred reverence from Hindu stones to Muslim relics. Similarly, Muslim saints are worshipped like Hindu Gods and Godlings. A unique feature of the Kashmiri Muslim is that he has remained a Kashmiri as well as a Muslim.”

Kashmir has been a melting pot of ideas and races. G. M. D. Sufi observes “the cult of Buddha, the teachings of Vedanta, the mysticism of Islam have one after another found a congenial home in Kashmir. It has imbibed the best of Hinduism, the best of Buddhism and best of Islam.”

Kashmir has remained a clearing house of several civilisations, it has made monumental contribution to Indian

culture. There is hardly any branch of human knowledge to which ancient Kashmir did not make a pioneering and substantial contribution. According to Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, “Kashmir dominated the intellectual scene of India for almost 2000 years.” Kashmir has a distinction of being a place where people from all walks of life and from all across the world have been coming to seek peace, knowledge and spiritual enlightenment. It has received travelers of great significance to human history, like Heun Tsang. Traditionally called a place of saints, it has remained a seat of learning known as Sharda Peetha, for years together. The contribution of the scholars of Kashmir to Sanskrit language and literature has been remarkable. Names like Kalhanna, Bilhann, Mammata, Abhinavagupta, Anadwardhan, Shamindra and many others have gone down as legends in the history of scholarship.

Maharajah Lalitaditya, Avantiverman, Rani Deda and Zain-ulabdin – the Budshah, are some of the most remarkable and glorious rulers of Kashmir whose contribution to human civilisation has been outstanding. They not only conquered a major territory of the region but had carved a deep niche in the hearts of people of all religions. In Budshah, the state had a great savior of mankind in general, who besides accelerating the developmental activities, initiated and patronised many forms of arts and crafts in Kashmir. History is witness that rulers who singled out a particular community or wanted to patronise one single faith have not been able to last longer. They not only invited the wrath of people but of destiny too. Kashmiri culture has been under influence of Central Asia and Persia, as in the ancient times, the silk route passing through the upper reaches of Kashmir was largely used for travel and trade.

Kashmiris, irrespective of their religion, by and large share living habits i.e., food, attire, customs rituals, besides the language. They are God fearing, religious, peace loving, jolly by

nature and highly emotional people. They are inheritors of the same cultural heritage and many of their festivals are common. Kashmiri cuisine both vegetarian and non-vegetarian (wazwan) is very famous and Kashmiris are very good hosts.

Music, dance and theatre are very deep rooted traditions in Kashmir. Present day Kashmiri theatre has developed from *baanD paetblr* a traditional folk form of theatre. At present there are such folk artists living in about 80 villages in Kashmir who are still performing. Whatever is prevalent today in the name of dance is folk dance, probably called *Rouf*. However, there are other dance forms, like *damaely*, performed on special social occasions, or dance on marriages etc. At present there is no classical dance form in Kashmir. Kashmiri folk music is very rich. The ancient form is called *vanIvun*, sung on special social and religious occasions. *Chakri* is very popular folk music being sung as a chorus song. Besides these two music forms, Kashmir has a rich light vocal music comprising of songs. *Vatsun* and *Ghazal* are very popular forms of light music. There is rich devotional music comprising *Bhajans*, *Leelas*, *Naat* etc. *Soofiana* or mystic music is a typical form of Kashmiri music. Amongst the Kashmiri musical instruments, *Santoor* has become very popular across the globe. Some of the Kashmiri musical instruments are very close to the Central Asian instruments i.e., *Tumbaknaer*, *rabaab* and *sarangi*, These are very typical musical instruments of Kashmir.

The tradition of other forms of art i.e., visual arts like *Pahari* paintings, though nurtured in the *Jammu* region, have their roots in Kashmir.

The customs, rituals, cuisine and tastes of Kashmiris are typical and unique; very different from those of the Muslims and Hindus outside the valley. Some of the important cultural symbols of Kashmiris are:

- *Pheran*: This huge garment of knee length, shaped like a kurta with long and loose sleeves, enough for arms to be retracted into it, is very popular and commonly worn dress for all Kashmiris irrespective of age, gender and religion. This is usually made of woollen cloth like tweed etc. in different colours and mostly worn in the winter months as a protection against cold. Even in summers when the temperature cools down, it is used as a convenient and daily use dress. There is a difference in the men's and ladies designs and mostly ladies pherans are embroidered. It has now become a dress of fashion and is used even by non-Kashmiri ladies outside the valley.
- *Kanger*: Kanger or Kangri is an earthen pot covered by a basket made of willow. It is filled with glowing embers of charcoal and used to warm up the body. It is generally used inside the pheran and carried along where ever one may go. That is why it is sometimes referred as portable heater. It is also called poor man's protection against the biting cold during winters. Normally every member of a household has a Kangri. It is also used under the blanket or quilt to keep the bedding warm. It has become part and parcel of Kashmiri folklore and literature. There are plenty of idioms and proverbs related to the Kangri.
- *Samavaar*: It is a traditional kettle used to brew, boil and serve tea. It is usually made of copper and brass with engraved or embossed calligraphic designs or motifs. There is a fire pot inside which is filled with burning charcoal. This fire pot is surrounded by the chamber or space for tea. Every Kashmiri household must own a samavaar. Some have more than one of different sizes. It is also found in Russia and Iran.

- *Cuisine*: Kashmiris relish good food, use different spices for different dishes, and are famous for their hospitality. There is variety in both Kashmiri vegetarian and non vegetarian cuisine. Large varieties of both these types of dishes are given a distinct look and taste, with the help of typical spices and methods of cooking.

Wazwan is a multi-course mainly non vegetarian meal in Kashmiri Muslim tradition. Some of the important dishes are *goshtaab*, *rista*, *seekh kabab*, *korma*, *kokur* (chicken), *methi maaz* etc. The Hindu non vegetarian dishes include *rogan josh*, *keliya*, *yekhani*, *matsb*, *tabakh maaz/kabargah*, *tsok tsarvan*. Usually lamb or goat mutton is used for all non vegetarian dishes. Fish is very popular too and *muji gaaD* i.e., fish with radish is mostly relished.

Amongst vegetarian dishes, *ledIr* (yellow)/*vozIj* (red) *tsaman* (cheese), *dumolw*, (red potato), *haakh* (a collard green), *razmah gogji* (kidney beans and turnip), *muji chetin* (mashed radish), *olw/nadIr churma* (French fries of lotus stem or potato), *nadur* (lotus stem/*all* (pumpkin) *yakhni* (yoghurt based dish) are very popular. Besides, dishes based on all other vegetables like cauliflower, cabbage, tomato, peas etc. and dals/cereals too are used in plenty.

Kashmiris drink a variety of teas namely *kebwa/mogIl' chai* (green tea with sugar, cardamom, almond, saffron, darchini/cinnamon, etc. It has a medicinal use and is very popular drink on special occasions. *noonI chai* (salty tea) is typical in the way it is prepared from a variety of Assam tea with soda, milk, salt and cream. It is also called *sheer' chai* (tea with milk). A very good appetizer and digestive drink, it is commonly used in breakfast, as an evening drink and after heavy meals as a digestive drink. Some people in villages drink it without milk as well. Besides these two varieties of tea, Lipton tea too is very commonly used.

The Great Mystics

3. 1. THE EARLY PERIOD

The *Chumma Padas* are the first and earliest written forms of Kashmiri. This was the period when Shaivite philosophy was at its peak in Kashmir with a galaxy of Sanskrit scholars from Kashmir dominating the philosophical discourse of India. Vasugupta is believed to have laid the foundation of Kashmir shaivism. Shaivite doctrines especially the Pratibhajna has been described in it. *Mahanay Prakash* was the next book written in Kashmiri by Shiti Kantha. Both these works are in the Apbhramsha form of Kashmiri and have more influence of Sanskrit language in diction and style. This part of literature introduces the Trikha shaivism, a distinct form of shaivism practised in Kashmir. This tradition was carried forward in their poetries by Lal Ded and Zinda Kaul in later years. Immediately after Lal Ded we have Sheikh Noor-ud-din known popularly as Nunda Rishi, a renowned exponent of Kashmir Sufism and proponent of the Rishi cult in the valley. Lal Ded's *vaakh* or *vaakeya* of Sanskrit and Nunda Rishi's *sbrukh* or *shloka* of Sanskrit became the most effective mediums of communicating spiritual messages to the people and remain so even today. Both Lal Ded and Nunda Rishi are the pioneers of Kashmiri cultural ethos where people exhibit self-restrain, tolerance, mutual respect, brotherhood and respect for each other's religion. Kashmir has remained an abode of Rishis, Munis and Sufis who all have

helped to develop a rich composite culture based on human values. Sudha Koul in her book “The Tiger Ladies: A memoir of Kashmir” while relishing this rich cultural legacy, writes:

“Kashmiris pray to long gone Sufi mystics, madwomen and madmen who are our poets and prophets. Our Sufism is a combination of the esoteric elements of Hinduism and Islam and gives the highest priority to what-is-not-of this world. With us reason is not everything and insanity demands instant veneration. We stand timorously at attention should a mad person enter our home. We make way for them for they are the last symbols of our Sufi past. Our literature is the legacy of these prolific men and women of ‘flashing eyes and floating hair.’”

3. 2. LAL DED AND HER POETRY

Lal Ded was born in a Kashmiri Brahmin family in the early 14th century at Sempora village near Pandrethan in the suburbs of Srinagar and was married at Padampora, today's Pampore. She was educated in the early years of her life at her father's house and learnt certain spiritual sadhanas (disciplines). She was initiated into yoga at an early age by her Guru, Siddha Shree Kantha popularly called Sedhamol. He is the Guru whom Lal refers to, very frequently in her *vaakhs*, asking him questions on spirituality and even questioning his knowledge. After her marriage at a very tender age of twelve years she was named Padmavati. As per the custom, all Hindu (Kashmiri Brahmin) brides were given new names by their in-laws. However, she was mostly known as Lal a short form of Lalita (Goddess of fortune). Her marriage was in trouble from the beginning due to very harsh treatment she received both from her mother-in-law and her husband. Her husband had none of the sensitivity or subtlety to appreciate her personality or poetry and her mother-in-law would tease her at every step and stage of life. She would scold Lal on the smallest pretext. Although Lal was performing all duties of a daughter-in-law, her mother-in-law would find

fault in all her acts. She was an oppressive and hostile lady who often complained to her son against Lal. Her married life became miserable. True to her saintly virtues she bore all taunts and insults and never complained about the ill treatment meted out to her. There are many such stories common among all Kashmiris about the excesses she had suffered in her in-laws' house and the miracles related to her spiritual powers. Some of these are given here.

Her mother in law would serve food to her, spreading a thin layer of cooked rice over a grinding stone kept by her in Lal's plate to give it the shape of lump. Lal would eat the little rice and wash the stone and keep it quietly in the kitchen for reuse by her mother-in-law. Once her neighbours teased her playfully about a forthcoming feast being organised in her in-laws' house, Lal replied *honD maertan ya kaTh lali nilavaThtsali nI zanb* (They may kill big sheep or a tender lamb, Lalla would never get rid of the stone. At that point her father-in-law heard her statement, when food was served at home he unravelled the mystery and rebuked his wife. This became a famous proverb in Kashmiri. Similarly there is another story that Lal use to go for early morning prayers to a nearby quiet spot. Once while returning from her tryst with God, she was carrying water in an earthen pitcher over her shoulder as per her daily chore, and her husband in his rage at her being late, struck the pitcher with a stick. The earthen pitcher broke into pieces but to his amazement the water stood frozen on her shoulders till she filled up all pots in her kitchen and threw the remaining water through the window. To everybody's surprise the water collected into a pond which was later on named as "Lala Trag", the pond of Lalla. The pond continued to be there till the early twentieth century till it got dried up. After this event her spiritual and miraculous powers became public and people in large numbers

would visit her house to have a glimpse of her, interact with her and seek her blessings. This caused heartburn and inconvenience to her in-laws and she had to abandon her home for her spiritual needs. She started roaming from place to place. This state of her mind can be summed up in this *vaakh* of hers.

*gorun vonInam kuniy vatsun
nebrI dopnam andar atsun
suy me lali gav vakh tI vatsun
tavay hyotu nangay natsun*

(My Guru gave me but one precept. “From outer withdraw your gaze within. And fix it on the inmost self.” That was the one precept I, Lalla, took to my heart. That is why I started roaming around naked (unconscious of the physical self).

Nunda Rishi who is supposed to be younger to Lalla by about fifty years, when born, did not suck his mother’s breast. It is said that Lal Ded happened to visit his home and was told about it, she went near the toddler and whispered into his ears *yina mandchokh nI canI kyaṛi chukh mandchaan*, “you were not ashamed to be here (born), why are you ashamed to suck the milk (from your mother’s breast).” The baby immediately started sucking milk. This baby later on became a follower of Lala and was named as Sheikh Nuru-u-din Wali, became famous as Nunda Rishi, Alamdari Kashmir “banner holder of Kashmir” and Sheikhul Alam “universal teacher.” Paying rich tribute to Lal Ded he says:

*tas padmanporici Lale
yemi kale amret cov
soa saen avtar loale
titb’ var me dim di:vo*

(“To that Lal of Padmanpora, who drank the nectar (Amrit), She the Lal who is our prophet, Oh God bless me with similar virtues.”)

By elevating Lal to the status of Devta (God), Nunda Rishi refers to the real truth of her being a Yogini who had realised

God in her early age and guided people towards that ultimate truth.

There are numerous similar stories regarding the cruel behaviour of her inimical mother-in-law and her worthless husband and Kashmiri language is full of proverbs and idioms connected to Lalla's legendary wisdom, spiritual powers and patience.

According to Prof Shafi Shauq and Naji Munawar “*laladed yetsa namvar tI kadavaar shakhsiyat saenis adbi tavarikhas manz cha ti:tsiy cha tasInz zindgi masbrafken pardan tshayi. Kaeshryan cha pativathtamis sI:t' aki:dat ru:zmIts tI aki:datmandi kin cha soaakh ni:m daastanvi kirdar banemIts.*” “The name and fame Lal Ded has achieved in our literary history is extraordinary and exemplary; however, it is strange that despite that her personal life has remained a mystery. Kashmiris from earliest times have revered her and it is because of this reverence that she became a legendary character’.

Lal Ded's Poetry

According to Prof Jaya Lal Kaul “Lal Ded did not compose her *Vaakh* as a deliberate contribution to literature or philosophy, she did not sing them nor write them for kirtan, “devotional recitation and singing” as the later day Bhakta saint singers did. Nor was she a preacher, an evangelist, or a reformer. Her verses, mainly the outpourings of her soul, are an expression of her inner experience and sometimes though rarely, of her comment on what she observed around her.”

The *vaakh* is usually a four line stanza, complete in meaning and expression and independent in itself. It hardly may run into another *vaakh*; however, there are many *vaakh*'s which may have common or similar connotation. Few *vaakh*s are said in the form of question and answer. All such *vaakh*'s are

semantically connected. The *vaakhs* are loaded with meanings and are not primarily worded for singing. They may not have a musical quality but they compel you to think, introspect, ponder and draw a lesson. They are existential in time and are as meaningful today as they were more than six hundred years back.

Lal lived life like an ordinary human being and suffered the pangs of life as an ordinary human being. But despite her normal, common and simplistic looks, she had an entirely different and extraordinary soul. Her feelings were that of a common human being. The pain, agony, misery, poverty helplessness, found expression in her *vaakhs* but her observations and dispensations were very rational, objective and were those of an elevated soul. Through her *vaakhs* she connected with people of all hues and shades across all religions and she championed the cause of the human being in general and not of a particular class or religion. That is what makes her great and existential in Kashmiri literature; even after six hundred years of her existence her *vaakhs* continue to guide and inspire people across religions and classes. The *vaakhs* continue to be as meaningful and relevant as they were then (six hundred years back). Her predictions about the current times or 'kalyug' came true to their meaning; that is what made people believe that Lal was not an ordinary poet but an illuminated and blessed soul who was perhaps God's messenger to salvage and guide people towards a righteous path. Her yearning to know and realize God within oneself was an eye opener to the common people who were carried away and misled by the so called guardians of religion, the priests or mullas. She had both guts and sound arguments to challenge their ways of thinking and acting on it.

Lal raised her voice against the religious fanaticism based on fraud, jugglery and condemned the so called siddhis' miraculous powers and equally well demolished the hollow knowledge of priests and other religious heads who were cheating and exploiting people by preaching superstitions. She pleaded with people to remain unruffled by desire, anger, power etc. She was against discrimination of human beings based on religion, class or creed. She herself became immune to respect-disrespect, good-bad, joy-sorrow and said:

*Well or unwell
Let it come
My ears will not hear
My eyes will not see*

According to R. K. Parimu (*A History of Muslim Rule in Kashmir 1320-1818*) “She is the earliest known social and educational reformer of Kashmir. She preached against the existing social Hindu drawbacks. She preached harmony between Vedantism and Sufism, good Hindu and good Muslim.” It is widely believed by a large number of scholars that “Lal Ded brought about a synthesis of the two philosophies (the Trikha and Islamic Sufi) and this synthesis was given to the world by the wandering minstrel through the rest of her life.” According to Jayalal Kaul, “The fourteenth century was a period of storm and stress in Kashmir, a period indeed of epoch-making revolutionary political and socio-religious changes.” Lal Ded's *vaakh* does not directly portray such conditions. However, her *vaakhs* do convey certain fall outs of those times through various expressions like a learned man dying of hunger, and so on.

Through her *vaakh* she promoted brotherhood across people and was against any sort of untouchability or discrimination amongst people. She said “*anas kbenas kya chum*

duush” She preached to the people to raise their voice against such social taboos and discriminations.

The European scholars like George Grierson, D. R. Barnett, Richard Temple etc. agree with many other people who said that Lal was a devout follower of the Kashmiri branch of Shaiva philosophy i.e., the Trikha shaivism. She had acquired a divine grace which led her to tread the path and she never turned back from it. She confirms it in one of her memorable *vaakhs*:

*goran vonnam akuy vatsun
nebrl dopnam andar atsun
suy me lali gav vaakh tl vatsun
tavay b'otum nangay natsun*

(My Guru gave me one sermon/precept. “From outward turn inward.” It came to me (Lal) as God’s word. I started roaming naked (unconscious/oblivious to the worldly attires).

Richard Temple says “She has recognised that the external world is an illusion.” Lal Ded was considered as a Shaiva Yogini of the Kashmir school of Shaivism. However, Lal Ded never preached to renounce the world. According to Jaya Lal Kaul “There is, however, no such epithet or word that even by implication, could convey to me that Lal Ded regarded the world as such an illusion and human life a total unredeemed wretchedness and sin, Nor does Lal Ded speak with disgust, as something intrinsically sinful and evil, of the human body. While as the learned authors say that “Lalla was a devout follower of Kashmir school of Shaivism”, they do not seem to have inquired into whether this school of philosophy regards the world as an illusion and whether the mental disciplines laid down by it are on all fours, identical with Yoga Sutras as systematised by Patanjali, not to speak of Hathayoga.”

Lal Ded speaks of the human body as a vehicle for spiritual growth. For her it is a *karmabhumi*, a *dharmakshetra* i.e. a field of dharma. For her body is the abode of God.

*kye kara pantsan daban ta kaban
vokhsbun yim yeth leji kaerith gayi
saeri samlhan aeksly razji lamban
adl kyazji raavi he kaban gaav*

(Lal refers to five *rasas* (bhuttas), namely anger, jealousy, greed, attachment and pride, and ten *indriyas* and the eleventh their lord the mind scrapped this pot (the body/soul) and went away (fell apart). Had all together pulled the rope of life's boat? Why should have the eleven lost the cow i. e., the spirit of body.)

*lal bo drays lolre
tsbandaan lusum dyan kyo raath
vuchum pandit panine gare
suy me rotmas nechhtar tl saath*

(Driven by love I, Lal, rushed out and wandered for days and nights, but I found the Pandit (the lord) seated inside me, mingled with my spirit and that for me was the perfect moment i.e. the realisation of truth.)

Lal Ded was neither a social activist nor a religious leader or saint, She lived like a common person, went through all social obligations and followed all rituals of a *grahini*, a domestic mortal, but as she was raised in a Shaivite Kashmiri Brahmin family, was deeply groomed in religious matrix by her Guru and achieved spiritual enlightenment due to her *Sadhana*. Her *vaakhs* depict her state of awareness which transcended the cult or common man's religious beliefs like division of mankind on religious faith. As a result her *vaakhs* were acceptable equally well by emancipated Hindus as they were by liberal Muslims. In her *vaakhs* people read a message of communal harmony and peace. These were found meaningful and relevant by all, irrespective of the religion they belonged to.

Out of her one hundred and fifty odd *vaakhs*, Lal Ded has said only one *vaakh* in which she directly names the two communities living in Kashmir during those times, i.e.,

Shiv chuy thali thali rozan
mo zaan baTI ta musalmaan
truk hai chukh tI paan parzaan
soy chay sahibas saeti zaaani zaan

(Shiva abides in all that is, everywhere. Then do not discriminate between a Hindu and a Musalmaan (Muslim). If thou art wise, know thyself. That is true knowledge of the Lord.)

Lal Ded's *vaakhs* exhibit a definite influence of Shaivite philosophy and terminology. As she was one with God due to her direct encounter with the ultimate truth as a true yogini or mystic, her *vaakhs* appeal equally to people of all faiths. Being a saint poet her *vaakhs* are embodiments of wisdom and exhibit a high class of poetic sensibility. Lal Ded has been a pioneer rather instrumental in establishing common spirituality and composite culture based on tolerance and mutual trust amongst Kashmiris. This fusion of saint and poet in her can be better described in the words of Dileep Chitre because of 'a poet's vision of spirituality and a saint's vision of poetry' that she presents in her verses. Her spiritual vision, her mystical insights and her deep sense of compassion is exemplary. According to S. S. Toshkhani, "This very image of Lal Ded as a spiritual giant and poetic genius fused into one, reinforced by many hagiographical accounts, myths and legends surrounding her has led to attempts at appropriating her for ideologies and causes totally alien to her thinking and temperament. We thus come across not one but several image constructs of the saint-poetess."

Lal Ded's spiritual stature and her humanistic reverence can be judged from some of her very popular *vaakhs* as given below.

*gvaras prItshom saasi laTe
yas nI keeb vanaan tas keya naav
prItshaan prItshan thaechis tI luusIs
kebnabas nisbi kyab tany draav*

(A thousand times did I ask my Guru. What is the name of the one who cannot be named. Asking again and again I tired myself out. Something has come out of nothing.)

*aayas vate gayas nI vate
semanz sootbe lusum doh
candas vuchum baar nI ate
naavi taaras dimI keya bo*

(I came by a proper path but did not return by the same path. I found myself stranded halfway on the embankment. With the light of day having faded away. After searching my pockets not a penny is found. What shall I pay for being ferried across.)

*asi aes tI Iasi aasav
asi door kor patlvath
shivas sori nI zyon tI marun
ravas sori nI atI gath*

(We have been in the past. In future also we shall be. For ever Shiva creates and dissolves. Forever the sun rises and sets.)

*gaTulah akh vuchum boachi saet' maraan
pan zan haraan pobni vaavI laab
nyashibod akh vuchum vaazas maaraan
tanI lal bo praaraan tshen'am na praab*

(I saw a learned man dying of hunger. Trembling like dried leaves falling in harsh winter wind. An utter fool I saw beating his cook. Since then I, Lal, am waiting to be free of worldly attachments.)

Lal Ded was able to dovetail her spiritual or mystic experiences along with experiences of an ordinary self. With her feet deeply rooted to the ground she elevated her soul to ultimate enlightenment and liberation. So did she teach to the people of her time.

For Lal human life is a stream that flows continuously. It is the quest for the ultimate reality for which life moves on and that is core of her mysticism. Her approach to poetry is

humanistic as she feels perturbed by social injustice and discrimination and is hurt by the pretence and sham that goes on in the name of religion. Her heart bleeds for the learned man dying of starvation while an utterly foolish person beats his cook for not cooking a delicious dish. It is clear that Lal was very much aware about harsh realities of life like hunger and poverty. Most of her poetry has basis in her personal life and that of her fellow citizens. She finds salvation in the grace of Shiva who transcends in a human being once one surrenders to him. An interesting aspect of her poetry is the usage of similes, imagery which is embedded in rural milieu of Kashmir to which she belonged and lived through. The colloquial and proverbial language of the *vaakhs* made these very appealing and attractive for the general masses who owned, appreciated and believed in every word of it like a religious sermon.

Sir Richard Temple in his book, “The Word of Lalla” – 1925 says: “The *vaakhs* of Laleshwari have become part of day to day conversation in Kashmiri households. Her religion is not bookish. Her religion is a mix of people, hopes and miseries. Her *vaakhs* are of high standard, spiritual, brief to the point, sweet, full of hope, lively and representative of the status of common man.” In their context, *vaakhs* represent human brotherhood, harmony, goodness, service to mankind. The proverbial and idiomatic significance of *vaakhs* make these popular even after more than six hundred years of their existence.

Sir George Grierson says in *Lal Vakhyani*, “There would hardly be a language in the world which would match the popularity of sayings of saint – poetesses to those of Lal Ded in Kashmir.” Such is the power of Lal Ded’s poetry that even after six hundred years of history, full of political, social and economic upheavals, its language has not undergone any major

changes. It is as intelligible today as it was originally when the *vaakhs* were composed. The language of *vaakhs* besides indicating the diction of the poetess or the terminology in vogue at that time is but a reflection and representation of the socio-cultural and political life of that period. The diction also reflects the shades of the personal life of the great saint poetess, e.g.

byath karith rajya pheri nl
dith karith tripti naa man

(In ruling kingdoms there is no relief. In giving them away there yet is grief.)

Lal had no belief in sacred places and sacred times, pilgrimages and fasts. In A. K Ramanujam's words she condemns the "orthodox ritual genuflections and recitations. She expresses her strong abhorrence for animal sacrifices and idol worship. On this she is on the same page with Kabir and Baba Nanak. This way hers was a strong voice of protest in medieval Kashmir."

Lal Ded has remained a role model for the present day feminist writers and social activists, the way she stood against the patriarchal oppression at a time when society was totally male dominated and women had hardly any role in decision making. She took her own decisions. In the words of S. S. Toshkhani, "She challenged the orthodoxy and threw the rigid codes of dress and decorum followed by the medieval society of her times to the winds and roamed about with barely any clothes on, like the great Kannada Shaivite poetess, Mahadeviakka. Perhaps it was her last act of defiance against a social set-up whose arbitrary and gender discriminatory rules she did not find acceptable." The verses given below express her time tested strength and confidence.

kessari vanI volum raTith shaal

(I dragged the lion from its den like a jackal.)

yim pad lali vaniy tim hridi aank

(Brand in your heart what Lalla spoke in verse.)

Almost every *vaakh* is semantically independent and hardly overflows into another one. Each line completes the sense and has the compactness and pointedness of a proverb. Many Kashmiri idioms and proverbs have their origin either in Lal Ded's *vaakhs* or in her life and have become an integral part of Kashmiri language and are used very frequently in day to day conversations. For example:

Proverbs:

kaban gaav ravIn'

Too many cooks spoil the dish, (disunity)

seki shaaTas byol ravum

To sow seeds in a desert

muDas gyanIc kath vanIn'

To impart knowledge to a fool

Idioms:

abakh chaan An untrained carpenter

pabli ros khyol A shepherless flock

vaakh tI vatsun To heed a precept

ravan tyo Pain of losing

An important tribute to Lal Ded has been paid by a famous Kashmiri mystic poet Shamas Faqir in a poem, a few excerpts from which are given below:

zanIvin zaan kar pranas gyanas

zaan millnaav bagvaanas sI:t'

puuzayi karni gayi manz karmIvaanas

darme shaastIrnis butkhaanas

kor lali yikIvaT aakash pranas

zaan millnaav bagvaanas sI:t'

(Oh you enlightened one, recognise the vital air and attain gnosis. To realise God, real worship is performed in life's workshop itself. What the holy scriptures truly mean. By the house of idols. Lala achieved the fusion of her vital air and ether. And thus realised God)

*sabakh tati ruudhy tas abakh chaanas
raazdaen' taem' laez vaeraanas
lali o:s millvaTh lalvun paanas
zaan millnaav bagvaanas si:t'*

(The unskilled carpenter. Having built the palace in the wilderness. Learnt the lesson from Lalla. Lal had to bear with the stone, her mother-in-law kept concealed. In the plate of rice served to her. She stood to gain from this austerity)

*voapdesb karni gayi nundareshanas
shamas faqir naemi par kanTas
tsbay vuchl ma chay ro siriyas
tsbay obur laegith kbaets aasmaanas
zaan millnaav bagvaans sL:t'*

(Lalla went to Nunda Rishi to teach him her doctrine. What the Rinda (mystics) call gnosis (irfaan). Oh you learned Shamas. The sun does not have a shadow. Lalla ascended to heaven like a cloud. Realise God as she did.)

This poem is an excellent tribute to the spiritual qualities and attainments of Lalla by the celebrated mystic poet Shamas Faqir, who is highly acclaimed amongst all Kashmiris. He acknowledges her individual genius as a spiritual master and her ascent to the highest abode.

In the words of A. N. Dhar (S.S. Toshkhani Ed.book) "Lalla's *vaakhs* convey a message of peace and harmony and one can see that she owes it as much to her educational background in a Shaivite Kashmiri Brahmin family as to her spiritual enlightenment based on her own Sadhana. There is an evidence in the *vaakhs* of a state of awareness and of an outlook for transcending cults. Her teaching is in tune with Sanatan Dharma that is exceptionally catholic and all embracing, acceptable as much to the emancipated Hindu as it should be to the liberal

Muslim.” In fact Lalla’s *vaakhs* appeal to all shades of people with the underlining principle that all religious paths lead to the same goal. Her *vaakhs* bear a testimony to Lalla’s genius as a saint and poet in one.

Elaborating on the mystic poet, an American literary critic Helen C. White says, “It is not a strange hybrid of poet and mystic who writes a mystical poem. It is not a man who writes first as a mystic and then as a poet. It is not even a mystic who turns over to the poet who happens to dwell within the same brain and body, the materials of his insight to be made into a work of art by the competent craftsman. It is rather that the same human being is at once poet and mystic, at one and the same time from the beginning of the process to the end.” (The Metaphysical Poets: A study in Religious Experience, 1936, New York). By this standard and explanation Lal Ded was one who fitted into this dictum.

In Neerja Mattoo’s words, “Lal Ded became, what is known in modern feminist critical idiom, a subject woman, or to use the current jargon, an empowered woman, one who through her mystic poetry, set in motion a cultural, linguistic, social and religious revolution. Her work reveals that she conversed and discussed with most learned scholars—all men of her time on an equal footing. Her poetry is a woman’s work and in the process she gives a voice to women. For example,

*aami panI sodras naavi chas lamaan
kati bozj day m'o:n me ti diyi taar
aamyam Takyan po:n' zan sbramaan
zuv chum bramaan garI gatsbIba*

(With untwisted thread I tow my boat through the Sea. Would the Lord heed and ferry me across? Water seeps through my bowls of unbaked clay, Oh how my heart longs to go back.)” From S.S. Toshkhani’s Ed. book on Lal Ded.

Lal Ded draws her metaphors from the likes of boatman and potters. An emotional climax of the *vaakh* is the cry of an unhappy woman caught in a bad marriage who longs to return home. She uses these to convey her mystic quest, but even talking about abstract concepts her woman's voice rings out true."

Lal Ded uses metaphors from everyday life, i.e., potters, weavers, carpenters, blacksmiths, and other underprivileged classes mostly from the country side. She celebrates their work and trade in her *vaakhs*. That is the reason common people, irrespective of caste, creed and religion relate with her poetry and this has been an important factor towards the promotion and preservation of communal harmony.

In Grierson' words "Lal Ded was a saint par excellence, who, in her own life time, attained the way of supreme, paramagath, and entered the abode of light, prakashasthan of God. She became a *jeevanmukta* for whom life lost its meaninglessness and death its terror. She had loved God with a passionate and one pointed longing and found him in her own self."

In Jayalal Kaul's words "Her poetry is modern because it comes alive for us even today. In deed she helped us Kashmiris to discover our mother tongue and our soul as a people. Hence forth Kashmiri might not have the patronage of Kings and feudal lords, it might be overshadowed by Persian which became the language of Government and of the elite, but it could not be suppressed, for it had the patronage of people who, now onwards used it to give expression to their deepest thoughts and feelings. That is why there is not a single Kashmiri Hindu or Musalman, who has not some of her *vaakh* on the tip of his tongue, and who does not reverence her memory."

There is a strong tradition amongst all our singers across religions to start singing with recitation of a *Vaakh* of Lal Ded. It has the same significance for all the Kashmiri artistes that Saraswati vandana has at the start of a formal function outside Kashmir. Whatever the times may be, Lal Ded will remain an integral and dominant factor in Kashmiri literature forever and shall retain her motherly stature for all forthcoming generations of Kashmiri Hindus and Muslims.

3. 3. NUNDA RISHI ALIAS SHEIKHUL ALAM

The child named Nunda was born in Kaimoh village of Anantnag district of J&K in the fourteenth century. The year of birth is believed to be 1378. This village is about seven kilometres away from Anantnag on Khanabal-Kulgam road.

It is said that in Kishtwar of J&K there was one Rajput dynasty of the Surajvanshi clan ruling in the fourteenth century. One of the rulers of this clan was Ogra Dev, also named as Ogra Sanz. His cousin Balder Dev revolted against him. Ogra Dev was forced to leave his kingdom as well as Kishtwar and migrate to the Kashmir valley. At that time Jai Simha was ruling Kashmir. Ogra Sanz was allotted land at Roapawan where he settled down. Ogra Sanz's son Zangason became a courtier of King Sahdev. During this period Zoluchan attacked Kashmir. Hunarsanz, the son of Zangason went underground, and had to do menial jobs to survive. After order was restored, Hunarsanz's son Grazasanz became chief commander of the forces of the king of Tilasar but was killed in a battle. In such turmoil in search of peace his son Salar Sanz came in contact with Yasmin Rishi of Bijbehara. Here he embraced Islam and was named as Sheikh Salardin.

Nunda Rishi has described his clan of ancestors in a verse which goes on like this:

sanzly chum mo:l tay sanzly cham mo:j
kan thav koal myo:n sanzly ho:
jad myo:n bagan von ogar sanz o:so
sant patI rovus dar patab sanz
dar pataab sanz as samay yeli vo:to:
pot path ru:dus zanga sanz
zanga sanz yeli ran andar mo:ro:
path tas ru:dus honar sanz
honar sanz as sant kam voapto:
akb sant ru:dus graza sanz
graza sanz as salar il solo:
sabrin bl chus nunda sanz

(Sanz is my father and Sanz is my mother. Listen Sanz is my dynasty. My grand ancestor was Ogar Sanz. After him was Dar Patah Sanz. When time ran out for Dar Patah Sanz. After him remained Zanga Sanz. When Zanga Sanz was killed in Battle. After him remained Honar Sanz. Honar Sanz had saintlike children. One saint was Graza Sanz. Graza Sanz had Salar and Soluu. I am the son of Salar Sanz.)

Another descendent of Ogra Dev resettled at Dadrikot village in Adwani area. As was destined, the king of Dadrikot too became a victim of the turmoil and got killed, leaving behind his only daughter. She was handed over to a chowkidar of Khi Jogipur village in the Kulgam district. She was named Sadar. The chowkidar's wife was from Kaimoh, she got Sadri married into the family of her relatives. Her husband was a weaver. However, he died after sometime and the widowed Sadri returned to Khi Jogipur. Sadri too was a devotee of Yasmin Rishi and used to visit him often at Bijbehara. On the advice of Yasmin Rishi, Sadri married Salardin. Salardin resettled along with his family at Kaimoh village in Anantnag District. Sadri who was called Sadri maej (mother), gave birth to a son called Nunda in the year 1378. The same child due to his deeds was later known as Nunda Rishi alias Sheikh Nuru-din-Wali alias Sheikhul Alam. When he grew up he took no interest in his father's occupation nor was he interested in domestic chores. He kept aloof and devoted time to meditation and took interest in

spiritual practices. To engage him with worldly affairs his parents got him married at Dadasar village of Tral with a girl named Zee. He was blessed with two children a boy and a girl. But despite of that he could not reconcile with worldly affairs and remained busy in meditation and spirituality.

As nature desired, both his children died at a young age; they remain buried aside their mother at their tomb in Kaimoh village, presently an important pilgrimage site. Nunda was shattered, he rebuffed the world, entered a cave at Gophabal and remained in deep meditation/Samadhi for about twelve years. He was a vegetarian and survived on fallen leaves of difsacus and chicory. In Kashmir there has been an age old tradition of rebutting the family life (grahasthi) and entering into meditation/spirituality. Nunda too followed this tradition. After twelve years when Nunda came out of the cave he was a totally changed person. He had achieved what he desired. He was now on the right path of spirituality and in search of God. He had achieved complete control over his senses. While living in the world he was completely detached from worldly affairs and would strive to help poor and needy people in one or the other way to salvage them from their miseries. He believed and preached that one should have control on ones senses and desires, detach oneself from worldly affairs, spend time on the path of God, i.e., in search of God and serve the common people in one or the other way irrespective of caste, creed or religion. Live a simple life and keep the conscience very clean. That is what he named Rishism or Rishi cult. Nunda became so popular amongst people that they popularly called him as Nunda Rishi. Rishi is a Sanskrit word which means a saint or sadhu who remains detached from the worldly affairs, meditates in caves and solitudes, worships God and utilises or spends his spiritual bliss for the service of common people, motivates

people to tread on the right path. One who is a blend of knowledge, purity, goodness and selfless service. Such tradition was so strong in Kashmir that it was named as the valley of Rishis.

Nunda Rishi was the outstanding exponent of the Rishi cult; he founded an order of Rishis in Kashmir. He visited the whole valley to deliver his message and strengthen the Rishi order. This order believed in public works, public service along with meditation in isolated places or solitude, away from mundane worldly affairs. He would preach this ideology amongst people through his poetry. Some of his prominent disciples were: Nasr-ud-din, Bamm-ud-din, Payamm-ud-din, Shyamma Bibi (also called Shanga Bibi) etc. He gives us the lineage of the Rishi order in the following verse:

*awal reshi ahmad reshi
doyim reshi Uves aav
treym reshi zulkaar reshi
tsurim hazrati-i Meeraan aav
paentsim reshi Ruma reshi
sheyim hazrati pilaas aav
satimis karham dashma hishi
bi nay kanh il me kya naav*

(First Rishi was Ahmad Rishi, Second came Uves Rishi Third Rishi was Zulkar Rishi, Fourth came Hazrati Meeraan, Fifth Rishi was Ruma Rishi, Sixth came Hazrati Pilaas, Seventh was treated strangely, In case I am none then what is my name.)

Nunda Rishi's life was one of detachment. He was immensely loved in his lifetime. Even now he is loved with equal veneration. In fact both Lal Ded and Nunda Rishi evoke the same degree of respect, love and affection across the length and breadth of the valley. Nunda Rishi passed away in 1438 at Rwo-pavan and was buried at Tsrari-sharif. The famous pilgrimage centre for Kashmiris of all faiths. Such was his

stature amongst people that the king of the time Zainul-Abdin also called Budshah also attended his funeral.

Nunda Rishi's Poetry

Nunda Rishi was so deeply influenced by the life and *vaakhs* of Lal Ded that he too started saying verses, which were named as *shruk* i.e., the modified version of the Sanskrit word *shloka*. *Shruks* became as popular among people as *vaakhs* were and people owned them instantly. There are several manuscripts entitled Rishi Naama and Noor Naama authored by different scholars in different points of time. Sometimes the genuineness of the verses becomes a challenge for the reader, given the different versions, however, the form may be different but the semantic sense is more or less the same. Sometimes the authorship of the verses of Lal Ded and Nunda Rishi too poses a challenge and the verses are attributed to either of them wrongly. The two forms i.e., *vaakh* and *shruk* look alike as both are four lined with normally four accents in each line, both are self-contained. Both have originated from Sanskrit words *vaakya* and *shloka*. They may have the same style but when examined closely, they are found to be different in form and content. In T. N. Raina's words, "The *shruk* is most often a moral exhortation, much more than a *vaakh*, which is a statement of eternal truth or the communication of an experience embodying it, and seldom didactic."

In his essay on Nunda Rishi, Rehman Rahi says, "There is very often in Lal Ded's *vaakh* the presentation of an inner conflict – in fact it is the identification mark of her *vaakh*." In Triloki Nath Raina's words, "The structural difference between the two forms is that the *vaakh* is loose knit and flexible with an accentual metre, and does not necessarily follow a rhyme scheme, though it abounds in internal rhyme. The *shruk* on the

other hand is close knit with a firm metre and a definite rhyme scheme. It seems to be modelled after the quantitative metre, bahaar in Persian.” Unlike *vaakh*, *sbrukh* is didactic in content and exhortative in nature. To express his ideas he uses words of daily use or routine words or things in his poetry rather than abstract forms. He believed in moral preaching’s for the upliftment of human beings and harmonious social living. Like Lal Ded, he too addresses his poetry *sbrukh* to mankind in general rather than to the communities like Hindus or Muslims. For him, man was just man, nothing else. Other things like religion, caste, creed, region were not important. Examples of some of his verses are:

aaravalan naagaraada rovukh
saada rovukh tsuuran manz
muDagaaran gvar panditha rovukh
raazya honza rovukh kaavan manz

(Amid the rocks the found was lost. Among the thieves was lost the saint. Among the ignorant the wise teacher was lost. The swan was lost among the crows.) (Tr. by Jayalal Kaul)

yi:rvuni vatsbaas chi:rvuni naave
aavlun valima kinI lagI kuni baThi

(Floated down in a drifting boat. Shall I be sucked in (by the whirlpool or touch the bank?)

As mentioned above, there is a deep influence of Lal Ded’s life and poetry on Nunda Rishi. This has been accepted by him in his lifetime. He has gone further to pray to God to bless him with the wisdom and stature of Lal Ded in the verse given below.

tas padmaan porci lale yemi gali gali amret cov
soa saen’ avtaar loale, titbi var me ditam di:vo:

(To that Lal of Padmanpora, who drank the nectar (Amrit), she the Lal who is our prophet, Oh God bless me with similar virtues.)

Similar to Lalla, he found God (Shiva) in everything around. In day and in night, in air and in water, in prayers, in space, i.e., as seen in the following lines by Lal Ded.

*gagan tsly botal tsly,
tsly den pavan tl raath
arg tsandun poosh poon' tsly,
tsly chukh soory tl lag'zi kyath*

(You are the sky, you are a bottle, you are day, air and night. You are sacred rice, sandal, flower, water, you are everything, you should decide.)

The same thing (sermons) Nunda Rishi has said like this:

*akoy khwada naav chus lachaa
zikeri rus kanh kacha mo
vumri vyandun akoy pacha
rizki sus kanh maecha mo*

(There is only one God and he is known by a myriad names. No variety of grass is without a name. Consider life as one fortnight. There is not even an insect (fly) without food.)

When he talks of one God with numerous names, he gives clear indication of a multi religious society or world where ways or methods may differ, outward rituals or customs may differ but all routes or faiths lead to one God or one supreme power who is the maker or owner of the entire world, whatever may be its composition. This he further reiterates in the following verse which he directly addresses to the people of two faiths i.e., Hindus and Muslims.

*akis maelis maji hInd'an
timan dly traevith tl kyay
musalma:nan kyo hend'an
kar bandan to:shi kboday*

(To the children of one single parentage (i.e. one father and mother. Leaving aside the hatred and jealousy. Muslims and Hindus. Oh God bless your followers alike)

Nunda Rishi conveyed a message of communal harmony amongst the people of two faiths. He was aware of the

suppression of people (Hindus) at that time. He was against division of people on the basis of religion.

It may be mentioned here that Kashmir was largely inhabited by Hindus till the early part of the thirteenth century and Islam reached here through the large number of Sayyids led by Shah Hamdan from Central Asia and Persia in the later years of the 13th century and early 14th century after Timur's invasion over there. Their influence increased with a local ruler embracing Islam, resulting in suppression of the aboriginals. When their oppression became unbearable, the people of Kashmir rose under the able and patriotic general, Malik Tazi Bhat. Most of the Sayyids were thrown out of the valley. But still a large number of Sayyids and their cronies stayed back and settled permanently in Kashmir. In the later years Kashmir has absorbed large tribes of foreign elements including Mughals, Pathans, Punjabis, Paharis, Gujjars etc. who settled permanently over there and mixed with locals through marriages etc.

The poetry of Lal Ded and Nunda Rishi has largely helped to promote brotherhood and communal harmony amongst the two communities, which took deep roots during their period.

Nunda Rishi adopted the path of ancient Rishis and under the influence of Islam he laid the foundation of Islamic Sufism in Kashmir. He believed in meditation or *Sadbhava* away from the hustle bustle of the world, like Bhod Bikshus and Hindu saints or Rishis. He spent several years of his life in caves in meditation and in the realisation of God. He believed in facing hardships and difficulties on the path to truth and God. This he expressed in the following *shrukab*.

tsaalun chuy vuzImall il traTo
tsaalun chuy mandin'an gaTTeaar
tsaalun chuy paan kaDun graTo
tsaalun chuy khyon veh il gaar
tsaalun chu parbatas karni aTo
tsaalun chuy manz atbas hyon naar

(One has to tolerate lightning and thunder. One has to tolerate devastation in day light (afternoon). Tolerance is getting oneself grilled in the mill. Tolerance is to taste poison. Tolerance is to lift a mountain at your back. Tolerance is to take fire in the middle of the palm.)

Nunda Rishi travelled through the length and breadth of the Kashmir valley preaching Rishism. Wherever he stayed longer, the places came to be known after his name. His followers built monuments and shrines in his name to impart Rishism. Some of these places are: Daderkuut, Kulgam, Khee Jogipur, Kaimoh, Daadasar (Tral), Bumzuv, Tsimer (Noorabad), Mokhtamul (Srinagar), Roapavan, and Tsrari Sherif, the last destination of his spiritual itinerary. He has influenced many poets of Kashmir who followed his tradition, and an important name is of Shama Bibi who is famous for writing an elegy on Sheikhul Alam. Some of the verses of Nunda Rishi are as follows:

nandI sanz gov soargas maato
asi sanz gov soargas maato
nandI sanzIk sanz reshe
beyi melav panIne deshe
doadI deshi ba gaarath kaato
nandI sanz gov soargas maato

(Nunda Sanz (Nunda Rishi) passed away to the heaven. Our sanz passed away to the heaven. In this world, where shall I look for you now. Nunda sanz passed away to the heaven.)

There were many more of his disciples who dedicated their lives to spread his message through their poetry.

Lal Ded and Nunda Rishi are important luminaries of Kashmiri literature and culture who would always be remembered with reverence, faith and respect. They are the shining stars of Kashmiri civilisation whose light shall enlighten and inspire people to work for communal harmony in all ages to come.

Communal harmony in Kashmir has withstood several upheavals during the past. According to Prof. Majrooh Rashid, a Kashmiri scholar, “The Kashmiri cultural ethos is a synthesis and a combination of two apparently unlike thought-patterns that spring from the oneness of man and the diversity of his unity.” During the recent turmoil in Kashmir due to foreign sponsored terrorism unfortunately a gulf has been created between the two communities. In this context another noted Kashmiri scholar Prof. G. R. Malik says, “I believe whatever has befallen us is an aberration and before long we shall be back on the track. A civilisation that has nurtured humanitarian values in its lap for countless centuries cannot be extinguished out of existence by forces of darkness.” Hope the will of Nunda Rishi shall prevail, as expressed in his verse as follows:

*When shall my Lord be gladdened
With the oneness of Muslims and Hindus*

The Sufi Poets

The period from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries is considered a dark period in the political history of Kashmir. During this period Kashmir lost its political Independence. The invasion of Moghuls opened a new chapter for the literary scenario in Kashmir. Persian became the court language and occupied the space of prestige within the Governmental and social echelons of power. The Moghul and Afghan rulers unleashed terror on the general masses to such an extent that an average Kashmiri became a victim of inferiority complex and many writers and scholars readily discarded their mother tongue and switched over to the Persian language. The circumstances gave rise to a new type of scholarship and Kashmir produced a large number of Persian scholars and poets who became famous and renowned through their contributions.

Kashmiri language suffered a lot and was reduced to merely a spoken language. However, there are a few very prominent names of Kashmiri poets of this period, who kept the torch of Kashmiri literature burning. Such names include Habba Khatoon, Habib-ullah Navshahri, Sheikh Dawood Khaki, Sahib Kaul, Arnimal, and Ropa Bhavani. The main theme of their poetry has been spirituality and love lore. While on one hand due to sufferings emanated from outside rulers the common Kashmiri remained heartbroken and dejected, it also influenced the Kashmiri poets too who choose to remain

stubborn, aloof and away from political and social life. They chased the path leading to the realisation of God, and devoted their time and energies in exploring the spiritual realms of life after death. Leaving aside the outside world they concentrated on their own inner self. This resulted in the making of spiritual and mystic poetry with 'one God one man ideology' where human beings were seen as one flesh and blood with no discrimination on religion, caste or creed. Many such eminent poets were born in Kashmir, who through their poetry became very renowned and famous torch bearers of human brotherhood and equality, and whose existential poetry remained a guiding force for several generations and remains so even now.

Based on the religious traditions of Vedanta and Shaivism, the basic temperament of Kashmiri poetry is spiritual. This is evident in the poetry of both Lal Ded and Nunda Rishi. After Islam reached Kashmir, a large number of its preachers who travelled through Central Asia, especially from Iran, brought with them the Islamic version of mysticism which was very close if not similar to the local prevalent philosophy of that time. Therefore people readily accepted it. Iran at that time was a meeting point of the Western and Eastern schools of thought and home to a large number of intellectuals like Jalaludin Romi, Hafiz Shiraz, Sheikh Saidi, Umar Khayam etc. Persian became the court language in Kashmir during Muslim rulers, therefore its impact in terms of the established literary trends and scholarship on local minds was but natural. Two important components of Islamic mysticism are the oneness of God, his manifestation in everything and the love for God. These concepts were found to be very close to the local belief and thought process hence got easily blended with the local philosophy thus producing a unique type of Sufism and Sufi poetry much different from the rest of the world. Hence seeing

God in everything and loving everything for the sake of God is the central theme of Sufi poetry.

According to Raina (2002), “The Sufi poets of Kashmir followed the Persian masnavi (longer poems) tradition, their romantic narratives adopting Persian mystical devices, and stories being essentially allegorical, which is an attempt to underplay the ritualistic part of religion, emphasize the oneness of God and his manifestation in everything.”

Starting from the fourteenth century and till the first half of the twentieth century, we have a galaxy of Sufi poets like Momin Saeb, Shah Qalandar, Sochi Kral, Nyama Saeb, Shamas Faqir, Wahab Khar, Ahmad Batwari, Waza Mahmood, Ahad Zargar and a host of others who have patronised this form of Kashmiri poetry and dominated the literary scene of Kashmir for hundreds of years. Through their poetry they have championed the cause of humanity, brotherhood, equality and spirituality. They have shown to lakhs of their followers and readers, the way to realise God.

According to Rahman Rahi and Shafi Shauq Sanglaab, 1983 “Love remains the central idea of the Kashmiri Sufi poetry, but this love is not bothered about human separation i.e. it does not aim at reducing the physical distance between the two humans, a lover and a beloved, but it yearns towards/the everlasting oneness i.e. merging together of entire mankind with that eternal force i.e. God.” Through the use of normal and common imagery and similes, the Sufi poets have tried to guide human beings towards realisation of that ultimate truth and the supreme goal of life. By this alone one can get rid of ills, pains and sins of life. Beauty is yet another feature of Sufi poetry. It is goodness and truthfulness which constitutes this beauty and not the external and worldly attributes.

Though man works hard for his existence in this world and is externally attached to various objects and necessities, he hardly gets fulfilment of joy. According to Sufi philosophy, attachment, or sense of ownership in relation to worldly objects or individuals is the root cause of all the bondages in the world. A man of knowledge does not love anybody personally, nor does he want others to love or be attached to him personally. Because he is and wants to be free from all such worldly bondages; because he sees God in his own self and in all manifestations around him. This love is universal i.e., the same for all beings. There is no trace of lust, no infatuation for physical beauty. The man of knowledge is the true lover of God and God is his only love. The mind by its very nature remains attached to external pursuits and attracted towards sensory objects.

The Sufi poets show the way to control the mind, draw it away from unsubstantial external objects and make it look within and discriminate and distinguish between the real and unreal. Look at the world as a long dream full of many ups downs, illusions, fantasies but one should simultaneously hold on to the conviction that God alone is the only true and external reality and that there is no real happiness until he is realised. Man is basically like a drop separated from the ocean, its origin, or like a particle separated from the sun. His entire life should be spent and all efforts made towards reaching and uniting with the origin that is God. Therefore the love of Sufi poetry is basically love of God, and its goal is not in the external world but the world within oneself.

Speaking about Kashmiri Sufi poetry, an eminent Kashmiri language critique and scholar Mohd. Yousuf Teing says, “*sufi shaeri manz chi aes tiit’ bakhavaar zi shayad aasi na shumaali bar sageeras manz sindhi zabaen’ varaey kaensi yitsh kbuhsurat ta thadi*

*mollc arzath, amyuk lafzi votur, amic jaed' hankal, amyuk kashyap
aameez pbaqa il ath manz istaaran ta paykaran haenz khaabnaak roapl
laankI cha kaeshri zabaen'hund tyuth sarmaayi yath p'aTh aes' kaer
voagIn' hekav thavith.*" Soon adab-1991. ("In Sufi poetry we are so
fortunate that there would hardly be such a beautiful poetry of
high order in any other language other than Sindhi. Its
vocabulary, its mesmerism, its spiritual ambience and the power
of imagery and similes is such a treasure of Kashmiri language
that we hold our head high being the native speakers of this
language.")

The greatness of the Sufi poets is that they never discriminate between people on the basis of religion, colour, creed or caste. For them all human beings are equal and creators and followers of the one and only God. They addressed all their poetry to human being and not to the followers of one particular faith or religion. Their contribution towards communal harmony and human brotherhood therefore is unparalleled in literature.

Some of the samples of Sufi poetry are given here which themselves speak of this very high order poetry.

*yas layi naad su chum neeshi
kamyo sheeshi covnas moay
sazas taarI ganjam keshi
shemay paas troprith goos
sadaay saaz paanas nishi
kamyo sheeshi covnas moay* (Nyama Saeb)

(The one whom I call (seek) is within me with which tumbler (glass) have I been intoxicated. I set the tunes (wires) of the instrument (body) and closed all the six senses. I found the tune of divine music close to me, with which tumbler (glass) have I been intoxicated.)

In his other poem he talks of mortal human beings and the temporariness of the world.

*vaiIgatay paanI myanyo kath no rozāan kaeliye
bali karyoom lukl lukay lukh na neraan saeriye
lukh chi tith' doakh chi divaan kanh na karaan yaeriye
rangI mandooryan rooba kbaanan mooth karaan vijaeriye*

(Oh a self a traveler that you are will not last for long
I had yearned for people but people are not permanent
People are such they trouble you, no one bestows friendship
The death destroys the colourful houses and decorated mansions)

Wahab Khar is famous for being a poet and singer himself who would love to sing his poetry and has openly vouched for Hindu Muslim brother hood. For him, humanity has only one form and that is human being. He disliked dividing people on the basis of religion and creed.

*hazrat aadmas zIy gabar
tim aes doayi silsilay
aekey raet aavrin beyi kabar
doamvay chi kuni zaath
shama zaajoom haTike ratay
su gab zulmatab pyom
ath zulmaatas laal keya chi tay
su kas patay goom (Wahab Khar)*

(The forefather of man had only two sons. They followed two different systems. One chose cremation (pyre) and other grave (yard). Both are the same creed. I kindled the candle with the blood of my jugular vein that lit up the darkness. In that darkness I could view the dazzling gems, who did he follow?)

While preaching to seek God, the Sufi poets categorically state that the path to realise God is not easy, one has to work hard, cross many hurdles and be consistent in approach, e.g.,

*panInuy khook gatsbi treshi kani chyonuye
suy gatsbi tsangi zaalunye lo
tami ke gaashi gatsbi praan prazalunuye
ratsi ratsi matsbi maaz khyonye lo (Momin)*

(One should quench thirst by drinking one's own blood instead of water. Same should be used to light an earthen lamp. One should look within and realise oneself with that very light. Path towards realising God is like eating the flesh of one's wrist little by little.)

These verses of Momin depict his remarkable poetic technique and sensitivity.

Swacha Kral, another prominent sufi poet was a believer of the philosophy of wahadutul-vajuud “There is only one God” a firm belief of all Sufis. He also vouched for *suu ham suu* (i.e., I am He). Though Sufism was established much earlier but Swacha Kral gave it a clear shape by presenting the eternal truth of Sufism in a simple and common language.

*akh tsI tI beyi bI ganzar ma ba
haba yi chuy babaanay
sodras manz bag chay zuunI Daba
tath manz basith chuy shah paanay
na tati neh tay na tati shaba
haba yi chuy gumaanay*

(Do not count yourself and me alone. All that is an illusion. Over there is located a balcony like hermitage inside you, in that lives the king (God) himself (i.e. God lives within oneself). Over there, there is neither day nor night. This whole world is an illusion. (The God lives inside you. The place transcends time and space. This whole world is an illusion.)

His other verse reads:

*kenb nay oos kenbtam oos
kenb nas maane chu kentsha*

(When there was nothing, there still was something nothing means something.)

*kenb nas maane zaanaan goos
paanay oos ba babaanay*

(The meaning of nothingness started unfolding before me, myself became an excuse.)

Shah Gafoor was equally knowledgeable both in shastras and Islamic mysticism and was influenced by saguna philosophy. For him God is one and he is called by different names by different people. Supreme attainment was the goal of life but for this one has to break the man-made artificial hurdles of

caste, creed and religion, as his famous poem *su-ham-su* depicts very beautifully.

*yot yith zanmas kenb chuna laarun
daarnaayi darun su ham su
brahma vishnu mahaesbar gaarun
shaphat ho chuy tibunduy zuw
paan hay kbaTnay jaan bekb maarundaarnaayi daarun su ham su
basber traevith iishar tsI gaarun
iishras sIII' rooz sapdakb su
iishar sapdun shariir gov maarun daarnaayi daarun su-ham-su
aakasbi samandar man caavlnaavun
vaarl dapnaavun bly chus su
kan dith soakbnan maani gatsbi tsaarun
daarnaayi daarun su-ham-su*

(Being born in this world shall not do you any good unless one believes and remembers “He (God) is in me”, yearn for Brahma Vishnu and Maheshwar, Only they have gifted you with life. In case they keep away from you, you will lay down (take) your life, your belief in “He is in me” shall reaffirm. Leave the self and look for God If you yearn for God you will merge with Him. Merging with him would mean discarding the body and reaffirming the belief that “He is in me.” One has to make the sky and earth one and assert that I am He. One has to attentively listen to the sayings and understand that “He is in me”)

The poets of that class, i.e., Sufis have no consideration for religious difference amongst people or difference based on caste and creed of people. They stand for oneness of God and love of human fraternity. They believe in the eternal love of God. The Sufi poets used so many similes and terminologies, which on one hand were drawn from Islamic philosophy and mysticism imported from central Asian countries like Iran and on other hand were based on the local rituals and customs drawn from Hindu philosophy. Therefore in Sufi poetry, Kashmiris saw a reflection of their common cultural heritage and looked for spiritual solace in it. In Prof Rashid Nazki’s words “*pharsi aur urdu tarakiib, maslan, naasuut, malkuut, jabruut, asbaat, anaulhaq, fanafi alsbeikh, phanafi alrosuul vagera islaami tasavvuf ke istalaabaat ke saath saath brmaand, Shiv, Paarvati, Vishnu,*

kaamdev, indar, mabesh, sbastIr, su-ham-su vagera Sanskrit aur mukaami taraakiibka istimaal bhi kashmiri sufi shora ke kalaam mai milta hai. shivmat aur khaaskar prtibhajna phalsaphe ka asar hamaari sufi shairi par islaami akeede ke saath jism aur ruh ki tarah dikhaayi dete hai. in sab avamil ne hamari sufi shairi ko manzabat toor par hindu muslamaan ki mushtaraka tabziib aur sakaafat ki kosi kaza bana diya hai.”

Shamas Faqir describes the concept of oneness in the following manner:

*amiy kuniran kya dyut jalaav
tas kun'ly kya chu naav
prazi blnzi razi paan khajoom
mot maashoq yaad pyom*

(The same oneness ignited passion in me, what is the name of that 'one self' I wondered. I tried my best to recognise and understand that truth. I remembered my beloved (God))

Nyama Saeb describes the concept of oneness in this way,

*kunuy draav kunis niishi
kunuy oos sooryov na zanh
von div nyamo paanas niishi
kamyo shiishi cyovnas moay*

(Only one came out of one, was only one but lasted for ever. Oh Nyama look for Him near yourself. With which tumbler (glass) did he intoxicate me.)

Asad Paray expresses himself on this through religious symbols and traditional similies like this:

*avlay khabar an' rabim raaman
mujuuda manza sarnaaman ta lo lo
kaba ta but khana raetmit savaaban
dama dama dil nyuum kaaban ta lo lo*

An eminent historian G. M. D. Sufi reproduces Asad Parey's thoughts like this.

“The oneness of God and his truth in all religions are frequently dwelt upon. Rahim and Ram are one. The God of

the Qibla or Kaba is also the God of the temple. Adam had two sons: one chose cremation and other burial after death.”

Rehman Dar was another eminent Sufi poet. A practitioner of Sufism, who had many disciples in the Sufi order. His poetry is a depiction of his personal pain as well as worldly pain. His shash rang poem is very famous. A woman’s yearning in love is a simile for the longing of a Sufi for realisation of God.

*aadan yikhna cham ladan tay sar ho vanday paadan
buniyadi aadam chay laanibayath, duniya chu
naapaayidaar
yem' yeti parzun, suy tati phareg tas cbuna kunyuk baar*

(Oh, please do come to meet me I long for that, I would bow my head under your feet. The foundation of the world is not permanent/strong enough, the world is not strong enough. One who recognises him here shall be blessed over there and shall not carry any burden on himself/herself.)

One thing common in all Sufi poets is the depiction of extreme yearning or mystic longing for realisation of only truth that is “God.” They portray God as a real beloved for whom one should happily lay one’s life. For a Sufi this world is an illusion and there is only one reality and only one existential form and that is God. The sooner one realises this, the better it is and that is what is the real purpose of one’s life. In short, Sufi poetry is a precious treasure of Kashmiri literature which upholds, hails and promotes communal harmony amongst people of various faiths.

The Modern Poetry

5.1. POLITICAL BACKGROUND

Till the early fourteenth century i.e., the beginning of 1300 AD, Kashmir was ruled by local rulers. Sahdev, the then ruler of Kashmir, gave shelter to two non-Kashmiri lord heads. The Chaks and Shahmeris. This was followed by two more outsiders i. e., Zelchu a Mongol and Ranchen a defeated Bhod ruler from Ladhakh arriving in Kashmir and seeking asylum in later years. Sahdev, after becoming victim of political conspiracies of these very people had to flee from Kashmir leaving the reins of government in the hands of his Army chief Ram Chander who could not hold his fort for long and was killed by Ranchen, a Bhod warrior who subsequently assumed power and also embraced Islam. His rule of tyranny was followed by the Shahmeris, Chaks, Mughuls, Pathans, Sikhs and Dogras ruling Kashmir for the next six hundred years.

An important feature of this era, especially the period starting from the Moguls, was the political patronage of Persian language which continued to remain as the court language or language of administration in Kashmir for about four hundred years. This had a tremendous impact on the Kashmiri language, literature and culture. Kashmiri, which was the language of the general masses, not only borrowed a lot of Persian vocabulary

but also some of its literary forms like ghazal, masnavi, marsiya, naat etc. with all its metres, similes, terminology and rhythm.

Kashmiri poets were mostly from amongst the common people who continued to pamper the oral tradition of Kashmiri poetry. Love lore or romantic poetry and mysticism formed the main content of their poetry. Folk songs and devotional poetry were also important genres of poetry. The satirical poetries like Ladi Shah which narrated people's concerns about natural calamities, political, social and economic sufferings, became very popular. Though Persian was the language of opportunity and privilege but Kashmiri literature came closer to people's aspirations and emotions. The Dogra rulers replaced Persian with Urdu as the court language and the very same people or class of people who till then were admirers of Persian switched their loyalties over to Urdu.

The valley of Kashmir which had remained aloof till then became accessible to outsiders i.e. travellers and tourists, only when it was linked to the outside world by two main highways, one up to Rawalpindi via Muree and other through the Pirpanjal range. This boosted trade and made it possible for locals to visit places like Lahore, Rawalpindi, Delhi and Aligarh etc. for studies and livelihoods and also to participate in the Independence struggle. The Pirpanjal route was subsequently i.e., after Independence of India, linked to Banihal, Udhampur, Jammu and other parts of northern India through a tunnel called the Jawahar tunnel, which till now remains the main road link to Kashmir.

The changing scenario touched the souls and minds of intellectuals and litterateurs who started participating in and contributing towards socio-cultural and political processes. The socio-political changes became evident in the literatures all along the width and breadth of the country. This movement led to a

new type of literature coming into existence, known as progressive literature. This further resulted in political activists and writers joining hands, leading to the uprising against the British. In Kashmir, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah formed the Muslim Conference, later renamed as the National Conference party and started fighting against the rule of the Dogra Maharajah. He started the quit Kashmir movement in 1944. Immediately after the Independence of India in August 1947, Pakistan invaded Kashmir, well known as the *qabaili hamla*, which ultimately led to both the then Maharaja of Kashmir Hari Singh and Sheikh Mohmad Abdullah jointly seeking the Indian Government's intervention and help and entering into an agreement with India, well known as the "J&K Accession accord."

5.2. LITERARY ORGANISATIONS

Immediately after Independence, the intellectuals in Kashmir comprising writers, poets, academics, artistes etc., came together to form a cultural front to uphold the values of socialism, democracy and secularism. After sometime it was renamed as the Cultural Congress. One of its branches under the name of "Organisation of Progressive Writers of Kashmir" was set up at Srinagar. It brought out a literary magazine named *Kongposh*, the first issue of which was published in 1959. The editorial board comprised Ghulam Ahmad Mahjoor, Mirza Arif, Dina Nath Nadim and Soom Nath Zutshi. This organisation continued to work for the promotion of literary and cultural activities in the State. To extend its activities to other areas of the State this organisation was renamed as the "All State cultural conference." In 1957, some of the writers and cultural activists broke away from this organisation to form a separate organisation named "Cultural Conference." A similar group was also formed in

Delhi called “Kashmiri bazme adab Delhi.” This organisation too continued to work on the agenda of progressive writers and published a literary magazine called “Pamposh.” The State Govt of Jammu & Kashmir patronised these organisations. This is evident through one of the statements of Ghulam Ahmed Sadiq, the then Education Minister of J&K, published in the “kong posh” in 1957.

ham Kashmir ke aadeb, shayir jankar, musavir aur tabzibi karkun is baat ka elaan karte hai ki ham apni sadiyu puraani revaayaat ko barkaraar rakhte hue ek azim Hindustani kalcar ki taamir mai apna hisa ada karte rahege aur har us kuwat ka muqabla karege jo hamaari in koshishu mai rkbna dalne ki koshish kare.

(We the Kashmiri scholars, poet’s artistes, sculpturists and cultural activists declare that we will work towards building of the great Indian culture thereby upholding the cultural tradition of our hundreds of years and shall fight with full force all such elements who may try to derail our objectives and efforts.)

A large number of scholars, poets, prose writers, and others, while working on this agenda and upholding human values contributed immensely to various forms of Kashmiri literature during the post-independence period. As a result, under this new political backdrop a new kind of literature came into existence which on one hand was nationalist, promoted communal harmony and on the other hand fought against the feudal system of landlords and warlords and supported democratic values, thereby safeguarding the common people’s interests.

Till then the earlier poets had more or less restricted themselves to two major domains, love lore and mysticism. Besides these, the other types of poetry like devotional and folklore was also written or narrated in abundance. There was a rich oral tradition and Kashmiri poetry was sung in various forms. Other forms of poetry namely masnavi, naat, marsiya and ghazal were the result of Persian influence and were

straightaway borrowed from Persian language, both in content and form.

One very hard fact which needs to be kept in mind while discussing the Kashmiri language and literature is that Kashmiri never enjoyed any political patronage from the rulers of Kashmir. In the earlier period i.e., up to the 14th century, it was Sanskrit and later on Persian and Urdu which were either the court languages or languages of administration, reducing Kashmiri to the position of a spoken language of the masses, devoid of any prestige or social status which unfortunately continues even now. The turning point for the popularity of Kashmiri came when many European scholars started exploring and writing about Kashmiri language towards the later years of the nineteenth century. Grammars, dictionaries, folklore and other pieces of literature were written and translated into English. Another factor which contributed towards bringing Kashmiri language into focus was the compulsion of Kashmiri leaders to reach the general masses propagating their agenda during the pre and post-independence struggle.

5.3. GHULAM AHMAD MAHJOOR

The first important poet of the modern period, Ghulam Ahmad Mahjoor was born in Mitrigam in Pulwama District in August, 1885. His father was a cleric and well versed in Persian and Arabic languages. Mahjoor received his first lessons from his father and was sent to Islamic schools. After passing Middle school he was sent to Amritsar where he came across many Urdu and Persian poets and served in a local Urdu newspaper. He returned to Kashmir, and was married at an early age. His father wanted him to join priesthood, his family profession; however, he was not attracted towards it and was later appointed as a Patwari i.e., a revenue clerk in the Government. He had

many ups and downs in his service career. He wrote first in Persian, then in Urdu and ultimately switched to Kashmiri in 1915 when he wrote a love poem *vanta hai vesy bewafaei sheva dildaar cha*. “Tell me oh my friend (female) is unfaithfulness (playing false in love) the basic trait of a beloved.”

Having started writing in Persian and Urdu and immediately switching over to his mother tongue, Mahjoor not only set a trend of writing in the mother tongue Kashmiri, but persuaded and influenced many other poets like Abdul Ahad Azad, Abdul Satar Asee, Zinda Kaul, Dina Nath Nadim, Amin Kamil and a host of others, all of whom started with other languages and later switched to their mother tongue and became highly revered and celebrated poets of Kashmiri. “There are thousands who write in Persian” he would say “only Kashmiri remains a helpless, neglected language.”

Mahjoor was greatly influenced by the stalwarts of Kashmiri literature like Habba Khatoon, Mahmood Gami, Rasul Mir and Maqbool Shah Kralwari. He adored their contribution to Kashmiri language and even followed their style of writing. According to Trilokinath Raina “from Habba Khatoon he learnt the beauty of vatsun, the oldest form of love lyric, his feigned feminine sensibility shows as clearly as in Mahmood Gami’s rendering of Arnimaal’s *arni rang gom sbravanI beeye*. Maqbool Shah Kraalawari’s Gulrez with exquisite songs interwoven into it and Rasu Mir’s ghazals were his great favourites.” Mahjoor has acknowledged Habba Khatoon’s and Rasul Mir’s influences by composing songs similar to theirs. Once while strolling down the river bank he heard peasant girls singing Habba Khatoon’s popular vatsun, *volo myaani pooshe madnoo* “come oh my flower decked lover.” He was inspired to write a similar poem, one verse of which is given here. *tslohama roshi roshe, poshe mati*

jaanaano “you stole away with furtive gait, my darling lover of flowers.”

*ath dardI suurats pardI tulith gav su rosul miir
mahjoor lagith aav beyi dubarI ati rooz
gul hardI baraan soontI beyi dubarI baraan josh
maer' maer' cha banana zindagi vasvaas marnuk traav*

(Rosul Mir after unveiling the love's gnawing pain left the world. Came back again (was reborn) as Mahjoor, just hold on. A flower withers away during autumn, comes to life again in spring. Life is born out of death, so leave the fear of death.)

His profession of a Patwari took him across Kashmir. He lived and spent most of his time in the countryside. He used a common and spoken language in his poetry which made his poetry popular and a hit amongst people. According to Raina “the three stalwart poets Habba Khatoon, Kralwari and Rosul Mir were the main influence in shaping him as romantic poet. He borrowed themes and expressions not only from Kashmiri poets but from poets of other languages, mainly Urdu poets too, but used his own diction and style.

When his famous *naẓm* (poem) *grees' keur* ‘The Peasant Lass’ was translated into English by Pandit Anad Kaul Bamzai and published in *Vishwabharati* (quarterly journal), Tagore, after reading this and some of Mahjoor's other poems, called him the “Wordsworth of Kashmiri poetry.”

*poshivani baagIc poshi goandrye
grees'keur'naazneen soNdarye
sorgic beemaal kaafIc pariye
grees'keur' naazneea soNdarye*

(Bouquet of meadow flowers/Oh country lass, Oh sweet, Oh dear/Hemaal of heaven, fairy from Kaaf, Oh country lass, oh sweet, Oh dear.)

In later years Mahjoor wrote poetry on many other important subjects like unity, communal harmony, social equality, patriotism and freedom. He became part of the literary

movement of Kashmir and became vice president of the National Cultural Front, an organisation of artistes, poets and theatre personalities. He was an editor of *Kongposh*, a literary journal of Kashmir. He was a celebrated poet and was a highly honoured one.

This Wordsworth of Kashmiri died suddenly of brain hemorrhage on 11th April 1952. His body was laid to rest with full State honours next to the grave of renowned poetess Habba Khatoon at Athwajan near Srinagar. A film entitled *Shayre Kashmir Mahjoor* was made on his life and works, as a tribute to this great poet.

Patriotism in Mahjoor's Poetry

Though the tone and tenor of Mahjoor's poetry is that of a traditionalist but it also demarcates the beginning of a new or modern era of Kashmiri poetry. Due to political developments like the formation of the National Conference Party by Sheikh Abdullah, followed by a call of Quit Kashmir, a new dawn of optimism spread in Kashmir. Mahjoor wrote his famous poem:

*voalo haa baagnaano nav bahaaruk shaan paida kar
pholan gul gath karan bulbul tithuy saamaan paida kar
caman vairaana rivaan shabnam tsaTitb jaamI paraishaan gul
gulan tay bulbulan andar dubaarI jaan paida kar
kari kus bulbulo azqaad panjras manz tsI naalaan chukh
tsI panIne dasI panInen mushkilan aasaan paida kar
chi baagas jaanavaar bolaan magar avaaaz chakh byon byon
tihIndis aalvas ya rab asar yaksaan paida kar*

(Arise oh gardener, let there be a glory in the garden once again. Let flowers bloom again, let nightingales sing of their love again. The garden in ruins, dew in tears, the flowers in tattered petals. May you kindle new life in flowers and nightingales? Who will set you free oh nightingale, why cry inside the cage. You have to work out your salvation from miseries yourself. Birds of the garden are singing loud but in different notes. Harmonise their different notes oh God into one loud song.)

Mahjoor uses the simile of “thousands of laughing hyacinths” for a large number of lower class of people who are desperate for change in their conditions and whose expectations from the gardener (leader of the time) are limitless. He says:

*Rank nettles hamper the growth of your flowers
Weed these out, for look thousands
of laughing hyacinths are crowding at the gate*

Mahjoor through this remarkable poem became the true representative poet of the suppressed and underprivileged people. He further gives a call for total revolution in the same poem:

*Bid good bye to your dulcet strains, to rouse
This habitat of flowers, create a storm
Let thunder rumble, let there be an earth quake*

The change which set in during the thirties of the twentieth century flowered in Independence in August 1947. However, the pain and uncertainty continued for the people of Kashmir with the invasion of the Qabailis from Pakistan in October, 1947 which saw a large territory of Baramulla (north Kashmir) falling to the raiders from across the border. This necessitated coming together of the local leadership (Sheikh Abdullah and the then Maharajah Hari Singh) who sought the intervention of Indian Government forces in Kashmir, resulting in pushing back the raiders to Pakistan. The first ever people’s Government of Kashmir took certain people friendly steps including the passing of the land reform bill which brought cheer to the people and created a new fervour and optimism amongst people. The poets of the time lead by Mahjoor considered themselves as harbingers of this change and being instrumental in ameliorating the condition of hapless people. Mahjoor’s poems became very popular among the masses and his poetry was sold and distributed as kalame-mahjoor, payame-

mahjoor. Never after that was poetry of poets sold at mass levels like that.

gāTI tsaej gasb aarbeyi yiya bahaar.....

(Darkness is over, dawn has set in spring will come again...) was another poem Mahjoor wrote in optimism after Independence.

Mahjoor, along with Abdul Ahad Azad, another prominent poet of the time became the beacons of light in Kashmiri poetry. The progressive movement in literature had gripped the entire nation and all the Indian litterateurs were beaming with progressive writings under the Marxist-Leninist and socialist influences. The Russian and Chinese revolutions had a lasting impact on Indian literature. Poets took pride in identifying themselves with the new movement and Kashmiri writers saw themselves shoulder to shoulder with other writers or poets of different languages. Mahjoor wrote another important patriotic poem which became very popular and is sung as a prayer in schools.

Mahjoor's other patriotic song, which depicted his love for his native land became an instant hit with people and a popular song amongst people. It was sung like a signature tune on festive occasions, prayer meetings and official functions.

*bulbul vanaan chu poshan gulshan vatan chu sonuy
yeth saani rangl vaare phl' poosh vaari vaare
keshobbu tibInz tsopaeri gulshan vatan chu soonuy
lajmIts phulay cha pooshan, baagan vanaan tI goshan
bulbul vuchith chi tooshan, gulshan vatan chu soonuy
naagan kolan ta aaran, joyan ta aabsbaaran
dyut soz nav babaaran, gulshan vatan chu sonuy
and' and' sapbed sangar, devaar sangi marmar
manz bag sabl' garbar, gulshan vatan chu sonuy
mahjuur des sonuy bagab chu nundabonuy
ath lol gatsbi baronuy, gulshan vatan chu sonuy*

(Nightingale tells the flowers, this garden of flowers belongs to us. In this our colourful garden many varieties of flowers are blooming around. Their fragrance is felt everywhere, this garden

of flowers belongs to us. Flowers are blooming everywhere, in orchards, hill tops and glades. On gazing it merrily, the nightingale says, this garden of flowers belongs to us. Springs, streams and brooks, rills and waterfalls, all are filled with symphony. By the new spring, this garden of flowers belongs to us. Surrounded by the snow clad range of mountains, looking like walls of marble. In the centre of it is the green emerald (valley), this garden of flowers belongs to us. Our motherland, Oh Mahjoor, is a lovely garden. We must love it dearly, this garden of flowers belongs to us.)

In another poem “*sangar maalan p'av prakaash*” he cautioned the people to be careful, patient and consistent while fighting for their rights. If they do so they will definitely achieve their goal:

*gaTi tsaaj gash aav gab troov laalan
sangarmaalan p'av praagaash
baagIke' reenzal vaaril'an gaalan
bulbull gam traav kaD pakhan vaash
yeti yoor coonuy mazhab paalan
sangarmaalan p'av praagaash
maane tsaar mahjuur sInzan misaalan
nanirith vanibe sir gatsbi phaash
daana bozan naadaan Taalan
sangarmaalan p'av praagaash
harduk tuuphaan poshi thari tsaalan
soonbt yiyi doaba aki tuli purkhaash
suy pholi tan yus diyi janjaalan
sangar maalan p'av prakaash*

(Darkness has gone away, new morning has dawned, the light is shed on the range of mountains. The watchers of the garden shall kill the hawks. Oh nightingale do not worry, spread your wings. From now onwards only your desires would be honoured. The light is shed on the range of mountains. Try to understand Mahjoor's dictums/examples, would have said openly but fear the secret may leak out. Wise will listen, unwise would not heed. The light is shed on the range of mountains. If flower laden branches tolerate autumn winds, spring will come one day and take care of them. Only one who braves the storm will blossom, the light is shed on the range of mountains.)

Mahjoor's poems like *nav kasheer*, *panun bag*, *gilasi kul*, *grees' sund taraanI* are worth mentioning here. Such poems catalysed the feelings of the masses against feudalism, landlords, autocratic rulers and their sympathisers.

The high hopes and expectations Mahjoor had visualised and created for himself and for people in general during the pre-independence period were gradually proving hollow after independence. Their hopes were getting shattered due to high-handedness of politicians and officers. Only a privileged few were reaping the fruits of independence. General masses were ignored. He became angry and frustrated and expressed his unhappiness, protest and dismay in his famous poem *aazæedi* 'Freedom' in a satirical manner. Some of the verses of the poem are given here:

sana saery pariv saanyan garan manz tsaayi aazæedi
syuTha yets'kael'asi kun jalva haavaan aayi aazæedi
yi aazæedi goaDan' nan' draayi yeli hindustaanas manz
lachar pæTh' aayi insaanan talaan tillkeraayi aazæedi
yi aazæedi cha traavaan magribas kun rahmat baaraan
karaan saenis zameenas pyuTh tsharey gagraayi aazæedi
yi aazæedi cha sorgle huur, pberya khanI patI khaanay
phakat kentsan garan andar cha maaraan grayi aazæedi

(All should thank God that freedom has entered our houses. After a long time Freedom showed us its face. When for the first time this freedom became visible in India, Lakhs of people were just fried in a frying pan. This freedom is showering the blessings on the West. However, for us (on our land) it brings roaring of thunder only. This freedom is like an angel from heaven, moving from house to house will not befit it. It, however, enters select few houses only.)

Mahjoor loved his motherland very much. Though he stayed away from Kashmir for many years but longed to return home. When once away from Kashmir he expressed his longing and gratitude to his motherland in these verses:

chus ba tsey nish duur pyomut chum tavay mahjuur naav

(I am far away from you (Kashmir) that is why I am named Mahjoor)

Some scholars believe that Mahjoor was influenced by Iqbal's *saare jabaan se achha bindoostan hamara*, the national song of India, when he penned *volo ba bagyanoo and gulshan vatan chu sooniy*. In fact, the other very important song *jana gana mana adhinayak jaya he* which became the National Anthem of India was also written by Tagore around the same time. According to Raina "Mahjoor's *voalo ho baagyanoo* which became the clarion call of freedom movement organised by Sheikh Abdullah was the offspring of this influence." According to Raina, Josh Malihabadi, a contemporary of Mahjoor deserves special mention. "Both were lovers of beauty not abstract but its material manifestation in nature, bird, beast and man." Mahjoor, though a common man's poet, was not a diehard progressive like Azad or Faiz, Sardar Jafri or Nadim.

Mahjoor was a poet of life and death both, a common man's poet, a liberal Muslim and a lover of nature. He was concerned about the welfare of the common man and a champion of communal harmony and brotherhood.

Communal Harmony in Mahjoor's Poetry

It was hundreds of years after Lal Ded and Nunda Rishi that someone from the writers' fraternity had directly addressed the two communities and appealed to them to live in harmony with each other. The period from the 14th century onwards has been a period of great turbulence and unrest in the political history of Kashmir with some rulers resorting to open discrimination and suppression on communal lines. Several rulers and their men at the helm in various capacities openly attempted to divide the Kashmiri community on the basis of religion. Such

discriminatory attitude of rulers continued intermittently till Independence. Even after Independence of India, Kashmiris were not allowed to remain in peace. With the notorious Pakistan invasion, as Qabaili hamla, resulting in killings, sabotage, destruction and looting of properties, followed by the Kashmir Accord with the Indian Government and pushing back of the Pakistani attackers by Indian forces, the situation in Kashmir continued to remain uncertain and in turmoil.

Forces with vested interests who were not happy with the changing scenario post-independence and establishment of democratic process were bent upon creating chaos and spreading hatred. They were bent on dividing people on communal lines. Mahjoor during this period took the challenge on himself and wrote many poems on communal harmony. These poems were well received and appreciated by one and all. People saw in them the necessary appeal to preserve the age old traditions of communal harmony and brotherhood that Kashmir was famous for since ancient times. Here are some samples of his poetry:

nyaay traeviv maay thaviv paanIvaen'
poz mobobat baegraeviv paanIvaen'
z̄aat butraath kaesbr'an hINz̄ chav kuni
khanmakha duuryar ma paeviv paanIvaen'
doad chu muslim h'oNd chu shaker saaph saaph
doad ta beyi shakar ralaeviv paanivaen'
nyaay traviv maay thaviv paanivaen'
hend' raTan nam, kbuur' vaayen able diin
naav yemi mulkIc calaeviv paanIvaen'

(Leave the disputes and live in harmony with each other. Distribute the true love amongst each other. Leave the disputes and live in harmony amongst each other. The caste, creed and land of Kashmiris is the same (only one). Do not create unnecessary distances with each other. Muslim is like milk and Hindu is like crystal clear sugar. Mix the milk with sugar jointly together. Hindus shall hold the direction of boat, Muslims shall row the boat. Row the boat of this country jointly together.)

Mahjoor has referred to certain historical characters who worked for communal harmony in the past, while attempting to prevail upon people to remain united.

*kor buTan p'aTh zuv phida kud gojvaer'
az timay kathI yaad paeviv paanIvaen'
yod thaeviv atbIvaas tobi poosbivI na kanh
tsben karith yinI pooshinaeviv paanIvaen'
baey sund baeyis paz'a thaavun malaal
ganD dilan bInd' mutsraeviv paanIvaen'*

(Kud Gojawari sacrificed his life for Kashmiri pandits. Recall those very events today among each other. In case you remain united, nobody can harm (overcome) you. Do not get harmed by disuniting with each other. A brother should not keep a grudge towards another brother. Open the knots of your hearts with each other.

He recalled, hailed and propagated the services of people towards communal harmony. In the same poem he mentioned another name, Suraj Kak, as an embodiment of human service.

*raech sirij kaakan musulmaan gabar graeNz
dil titbay paeTh' milanaeviv paanIvaen'*

(Siraj Kak lavished parental care on Muslim orphans, open your hearts to each other the same way.)

Mahjoor further cautioned people of both communities to remain united and alert about the conspiracy of enemies who are bent upon trying to create a wedge between Hindus and Muslims, in the following verses of the same poem.

*akb aekis p'aTh yuth nI zaNb kaeNchiv badi
yuth na sa zaNb raavaraeviv paanIvaen'
paanavaen' yina akb aekis dushman baniv
phitna yina zaNb vuznaeviv paanIvaen'
yim gareeb aasan timan atbIroT kariv
baey baey chiv raetsbraeviv paanIvaen'*

(Never wish bad to each other. Never spoil relations with each other. Never become enemies with each other. Never give rise to

disputes with each other. Help all those who are poor. You are brothers, keep your relations intact.)

Mahjoor worked hard to keep the age old tradition of communal harmony between people of Kashmir alive. He expressed and prayed to God to keep such unity and equality intact, in these verses.

*chi baagas jaanvar bolaan magar aavaaz chakh byon byon
tsI yihindis aalvas yaarab asar yeksaan paida kar
mashüdan, mandran, girjan, daramshalan tI astaanan
yiman yiiten garan atsnuk kunny darvaazi thaavun chum*

(The birds in the garden are singing but in different voices. Oh God please bless their voices with a touch of unity to create a single impact. For mosques, temples, churches, dharamshalas and asthapans. Have to establish a single door for entry to all these religious places.)

In this manner, Mahjoor in a true sense championed the cause of communal harmony of people. Such was the impact on the psyche of the people of Kashmir that even Mahatma Gandhi had to acknowledge and laud the attitude of Kashmiris towards communal harmony by saying “there is a ray of hope in Kashmir” when in the rest of the country bloodshed and hatred was on its worst display.

According to Raina, “His earnest prayer has been of communal and social harmony in the valley, not only because it is an inevitable maxim but primarily because it is firmly embedded in the genes of the people of Kashmir. Mahjoor is not only aware but deeply steeped in the age old tradition, the perennial soul of Kashmir...”

It would be appropriate to mention here and refer to Mahjoor’s work in Urdu. His span of writings in Urdu spread for about twelve years, from 1912 to 1924. Besides writing poetry he attempted several biographical works including those of Habba Khatoon and Nunda Rishi. But the work which is

more relevant here is his book entitled “aayene itihade Kashmir” (Portrait of Unity of Kashmir). This book presents a detailed account of communal harmony and unity of Kashmiris, their age old tradition which Mahjoor, like every other Kashmiri was proud of and wanted to promote and preserve. Mahjoor’s works influenced the society largely. Whatever he wrote became instantly popular with the masses. His poetry was sung by roadside singers and artistes with equal zeal and affection. His poetry about the plight of poor people of Kashmir, the beauty of Kashmir and its people, patriotism and on various other subjects was appreciated by one and all; that is what made him the people’s poet.

Mahjoor expressed his anguish, pain and disgustment about the partition of India followed by communal rites, mass migrations, killings etc. In one of his verses he says,

*akh chu pakistaan vanaan byaakh vanaan bendostaan
asi sapud philhaal Daekistaan yath mulkas zabar*

(One says Pakistan another says India. Our country is presently destroyed to the full.)

5.4. ABDUL AHAD AZAD

Azad was born in 1903 as the second son to Sultan Dar, a small agriculturist with mystic ideology in a small village called Rangar near Tsrari-Sharif, the famous shrine of Nunda Rishi in the Budgam District of Kashmir. He studied Persian and Arabic in his brother’s maktab, learnt basic lessons of mysticism from his father and was admitted to a nearby school at Zowhama, a few miles from his village, where after completing his schooling he was appointed a teacher at the age of 13 years, interestingly with Rs. 13 as his salary. Azad was gifted with an intelligent and inquisitive mind. He was a voracious reader and read books on literature, history, religion and Marxism. He acquired sufficient knowledge of Arabic, Persian and Urdu languages. Azad started

writing at a very young age and wrote mathnavis to begin with. At the very young age of 45 years in 1948 he died of appendicitis in a hospital at Srinagar. He was buried at his native village in Rangar.

Being born in a poor family of a remote village he had experienced the hardships and miseries of life and being educated, was well aware about the social, economic and political issues concerning the people of Kashmir. He suffered many personal setbacks including the death of his son at a very young age. Because of his revolutionary thinking he was victimised by the then Government and transferred to far off places many times and was not given his due. He died a quiet death was mourned only by some of his very close associates. Azad had a pro poor and antiestablishment image. He stood against the repression and subjugation of masses. He was forceful in criticising religious and political extremism. Those in power did not like him but people in general understood and admired his concern and vision.

Azad had intended to write a biography of his contemporary and the celebrated poet Mahjoor and Mahjoor too had expressed his satisfaction that after his death Azad would be his *bête noire* and would carry forward Mahjoor's legacy but God had decided otherwise and Azad died at a very young age of 45 years, seven years before Mahjoor. Mahjoor had to write Azad's elegy with a heavy heart. Even at that young age Azad left a very large and valuable collection of literature behind him which made him a legend of Kashmiri literature. He has many firsts of Kashmiri literature to his credit.

Azad as a Revolutionary and Patriotic Poet

Azad was proud of being born in the heaven on earth, as Kashmir was and is called. He wrote a lot about the scenic

beauty of the place and innocence and simplicity of its people. However, when he grew up he witnessed the exploitation of the common man at the hands of both the Governmental agencies and the money lenders and landlords. He saw the monopoly of resources and riches getting piled up in few hands only and subjugation and exploitation of have-nots, small farmers, labourers, etc., by the rich, privileged and the officers. Forced labour and collection of revenue at exorbitant rates was rampant. The masses were in agony and distress. Through his poetry he protested and raised a voice against such repression and exploitation. He wrote many poems on this subject; a rather major chunk of his poetry is on this subject only. He alerted both the people and the Governmental agencies. Let us look at some of his verses.

*chukh banyomut kyazi taqdiiрук shikaar
voh panun taqdiiр paany kar tayaar
Why have you become a victim of destiny
Stand up and design your own destiny
zuв myon myon vatan, dil myon myon vatan
myon yaar, myon gamkhar, sada baar mubarakh*

(My country is more dear to me than my life and heart. This is my companion, my saviour, I congratulate it a hundred times)

*vaeth'na myan'av aabhav saet' nendri kenb kenb navjanaan
az pagah aekhIr timan vuznaavi paanay inkalaab*

(Few youths of my country did not wake up even by my repeated calls. Today or tomorrow revolution will itself wake them up.)

In one of his poems entitled *Shikvay Kashmir*, 'Complaint of Kashmir' He recalls the ancient glory of Kashmir in terms of scholarship, tradition, cultural heritage, lovelore, bravery etc. and compares it with the present day Kashmir of despair, agony, exploitation and destruction.

*karlkh phekiiri tl rIts phekiire, karlkh amiiri tl rIts amiiri
karlkh dileri tl baeD dileri, paray nI kasba pathar nI kaara
yimav aechav vuch me naazi lalita dityas hiv' gul pholaan vaaray
timan aechan tal na tresh naagan, gatshaan baagan chu lurIpaaray*

(They (Kashmiris) as Faqirs were truly so; they (Kashmiris) as rich were truly so. They were brave and truly so; they were adept as craftsmen, excelled in every craft. With these eyes I saw a flower like Raja Lalitaditya in full bloom. And now the same eyes witness springs without drinking water, gardens are destroyed.)

*palyamit aasan charakh il kalhan, gani il sarphi yemis loale manz
thavun pazya tas ti naar lallvun il yuut basrat il khaaril khaaray
gobar il arlaad baDshabas bin'yimav athav rachnI aes' aamlI'
jakhith il juurith karith il kraevith timay athI bI vony lukan bI daara
mangay il mongmay na aesh ashrath, sharaab kabaab ya su naaz-o-nyamath
me gotsh gariiban il bekasan kyuth banun guzaara il ikhtiyaara*

(The place which has given birth to great men like Kalhan, Gani, Sarfi. Should such a place keep itself burning with hatred and long for peace. The hands which raised sons like Badshah, shall I now spread the same hands, which worked so hard, before outsiders. I never demanded drink and dine, lavish life, or luxury. What I need is a livelihood, a right to exercise for my poor and helpless.)

Referring to people of ancient Kashmir poet says there was grace and decorum both in their penury and richness.

The lap which saw sons like Charakh, Kalhan, Gani and Sarfi playing in it, should such a lap remain in turmoil, hatred and such desperation?

The hands which had nourished and fed sons like Badshah, the hands with which I worked so hard in life shall I now spread them before strangers for alms?

Neither earlier nor now shall I ask for luxuries like wine and feast or other delicacies of life, I only want to make two ends meet and the right to live for the poor and underprivileged.

Azad has portrayed the condition of the general Kashmiris of those times as hapless, wanting and desperate for basic amenities and the rights of life. Look at the following verse.

*saadI manosh kaeshir'koonI karaan aphsari
vuchta yinIz abtari, vuchta yibund kaarlbaar
yas na mozgur' mehnatas Danji behaan dil na tas
mangi su kya dovlatas yas na panun yekhtiyaar*

(Why can the simpleton Kashmiris not be officers. Look at their bad situation, look at their occupation. One who does not get reward for his labour cannot rest in peace. One who has no authority to spend, for him wealth has no purpose.)

In yet another poem entitled *gulami* 'Slavery' he says how slavery can blunt the mind, make people dependent, useless and disabled. Having said so, the poet instigates and infuses the spirit of freedom in the minds of the masses. The fools rule the roost and wise men are sidelined.

*diluk valvaII raavraavaan gulami,
demaagas panun bes na thaavaan gulami
kaman naabkaaran baend'an brandnly pyaTh,
kaman gaaThyan sajdI dyaavaan gulami
yiman shuubi he jaay travIn' khoran tal,
kalas pyaTh timan khaalnaavaan gulami*

(Slavery blunts ones enthusiasm, deprives one of the wisdom. At the doors (verandas) of worthless people, slavery makes wise people bow down. Those who deserve a place under one's feet, slavery makes them sit on one's head.)

Azad wanted people to rise above the sectarian and communal boundaries created by vested interests, feudal lords and autocrats. While addressing all people irrespective of caste, creed or nation he says he was against any display of duality and discrimination of human beings based on religion. For him all humans were equal and one; he hated all those who created such differences amongst people. He expressed his concern in these verses.

*sanyar, vognyaar, baeTh' tay berI,
Diishith jeerI chum yivaan,
kunyar yeksaan chus tshaaraan,
laaraan yunt maaraan chus
tavay chus aab aesith vaarI tullryan tonglan andar
yivaan chum zindagi hund sooꝛ saphran manzilan andar*

(Looking at the unevenness of land's deep and hilly terrains I become furious. I am looking for evenness and equality, am wandering around and tiring myself. That is why being (as cool as) water myself, I feel as if I am on the ambers of mulberry wood. I enjoy the life travelling between different destinations.)

To challenge the economic exploitation and political subjugation and bring social change, Azad gave a call for complete revolution. He composed several poems on this theme, like *inqalaab*, ‘Revolution’ *payami inkalaab*, ‘Message of Revolution’, *an inqalaab* ‘Bring Revolution’ etc. He urged the people to remain united to seek freedom and a dignified life. He outrightly condemned slavery and feudalism; wanted people to fight against it unitedly. See the verses given here.

gulaama chus na kaNbh thaavyam me panjran baeNkalan aNdar
yivaan chum zindagi bund sooz saphran manzilan aNdar
tabiyat myon aazaeedi chu aadath myon aazaeedi
kunyar yeksaan amal shaedi mohabat mehnat aabaedi
tavy chus ToTh aazadan rItyan sababdilan aNdar
yivaan chum zindgi bund soz saphran manzilan aNdar

(I am not a slave that someone would imprison me in cages and chains. I enjoy life while travelling between destinations. Revolution is my nature and revolution is my habit. Unity, equality, pleasure, love, hard work, well-being are my traits. That is why I am dear to freedom loving and big hearted people. I enjoy life while travelling between destinations.)

Azad was one of the most patriotic poets who wrote the maximum number of poems full of patriotism and Kashmir pride. There are a number of such poems Azad has written, full of his patriotic feelings, love for Kashmir and strongest urge for its freedom. “din-o-duniya haavsan path raavirovuth tiy pazya” is one such poem full of the spirit of patriotism. He cautions people against the designs of outside rulers. One verse from this poem reads like this.

vay panInis mael’ mulkas chukh kamav cheshmav vuchaan
na khalaph avlaad laegith khyavrovuth tiy pazya

(Oh with sorrowful eyes you are looking towards your own country. Having behaved like a disloyal child you allowed it to be grabbed by outsiders; should you have done that?)

In similar way he speaks his mind in following lines:

*In its deep and warm bosom, the earth
Offered thee the riches in treasures,
Thou hast to put it to collective use
Alas dragons have boarded them all.*

In his poem *soon vatan* 'Our Country' he says:

*chu kya nuNdIbonuy yi soony vatan
yi soonuy vatan nuNdIbonuy vatan
yi roshan phizā saaph kboshbu hava
zuwan zindagi, zindagibund dava
balaan daed' pharbat yivaan maNz dilan
yi soonuy vatan nuNdIbonuy vatan
samith vatan vatan karav tarany vatan parav*

(How beautiful our country is! This country of ours is very lovely. This beautiful climate, clean and fragrant air. It kindles life, the medicine of life. Diseases are cured, hearts get refreshed. This country of ours is a lovely country.)

In another patriotic poem *tarany vatan* 'Song of the Country' he mixes patriotism with communal harmony like this.

*nishat bag il shaalMaergigar pholiy tsaliy gubaar
naseem Dal il gupakaar isI vuchil kodratuk bahaar
samith vatan vatan karav taraany vatan parav
chu sarinly kunuy kboda samith karav kunuy sadah
mangos nI zaNbh panun mudah alag alag juda juda*

(The blossoms of Nishat and Shalimar gardens will lift our moods. Look for nature's spring at Naseem garden, Dal lake and Gupkar, together we shall hail our nation, sing the National anthem. We all share the same God. Together we shall call Him. We shall never seek individual favours from Him.)

Another of his patriotic poem *myoon vatan* 'My Country' is very popular amongst people and is sung widely.

*toshaan kya chu poshan myoonuy vatan mubarakh
kaer'toos roshi roshay poshay vatan mubarakh
nuNdIboon kya vatan myoon vuch vuch pholaan badan myon
korbaan yi zuv il man myoon amican vatan mubarakh*

(What a charming and happily blooming place my country is looking like. Do fondle it carefully, my country of flowers.

Looking at such a beauty of my country I am charged with pleasure. I am ready to sacrifice myself for its sake.)

Azad as a Lover of Kashmir, Poet of Masses and Champion of Communal Harmony

As said above Azad was a champion of the interests of the masses. In the preface of his monumental work *Kashmiri Zabaan aur Shairi* ‘Kashmiri Language and Poetry’, Azad writes, “Our dear country and its area – Kashmir, is the most attractive place in the entire world. Its scenic beauty and natural resources are self-revealing. God has hardly created any other area as beautiful as this, that is why it is called the heaven on earth. “With a sense of pride, Azad names some very eminent personalities from Kashmir, namely, the first ever woman ruler of the world, Rani Yashomati, the first historian of the subcontinent Kalhan, the first expert of Ayurveda medicines, Charakh, the conqueror King Lalitaditya, justice loving ruler Badshah, scholars of Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian Som Pandit, Yodh Bhat, Mullah Mohsin, Sarfi, Gani, Bhavani Das Kachroo, among others. Although the list is not exhaustive and many more eminent names have not been mentioned by him here but his description shows the spirit of patriotism and love he had for Kashmir and its people.

In several of his poems like *paan tsadar*, ‘Waterfall’, *vyath* ‘Vitasta or Jhelum river’, *aarIval*, ‘A Wild Flower’, *shiinI maen*, ‘Glacier’, *dariyaav*, ‘River’, *soonth aav* ‘Spring has Arrived’, the poet under these titles describes various aspects of the beauty of Kashmir. The imagery, symbols and similes used ascertain that they are related to Kashmir only, for example,

*cani dilIk’ yim vollvoll vuch me dūdav pyaThI abrabll
cham na mashaan so dilaavari roz dama paan tsaadariye
verI naglc maer’manz’ pariye soandarye boz meen’ zaar*

(I have witnessed the enthusiasm of your heart, from the top of the waterfall of Ahrabal. I cannot forget that daredevil ship, oh

waterfall stay a while. Oh lovely ferry of Verinag, Oh beautiful fairy! listen to my pleas.)

According to Raina, “Politically he (Azad) remained a radical Marxist throughout his life. He was strongly affected by political suffering, but was never convinced of the purposefulness of the political movement in Kashmir at that time. He may truly be called the first rebel, a lone forerunner of revolutionary ideas and a poet of deep intellectual conviction. He was the first poet to enlarge his canvas to include themes like religious fanaticism, social inequality and war, and to champion the cause of modern man and sing of universal brotherhood and peace.”

At times, when he would get upset with the selfishness of human beings, of the disconnect, hatred and enmity amongst them, he would get disturbed and in his anger raise his voice as in his class poem *aasmaanIk' taarakh vanaan insaanas* ‘The Stars of the Sky tell man’

*tSI oosukh gaaTI jaaruk nuur,
tse loguth naar insaano
kaarIth insaeniyath badnaam,
hato be aar insaano
kunuy aalam kunuy aadam,
namas saet' maaaz, maaazas nam
yi kaem' trovvy dilas andar,
duyi hund naar insaano
kbatab kya chuy tse be zaelim,
bI chus paanay panun kaetil
vutsaan yeli jaanvaaran doan
yivaaan vath tiir andaaazas*

(You (Oh human being) were the light of wisdom, but you behaved like fire. You disgraced the entire humanity, oh ruthless human being. There is only one world, only one human being like nail and flesh. Who has sown the seeds of hatred in your heart, oh human being? Oh cruel one you are not to be blamed, I am myself my killer (responsible for my miseries). When two birds quarrel (are at war) with each other, the hunter takes advantage.)

Few more verses of the same poem are:

*thaeryonay kodratan panInyan kbazaanan ThaanI mutsraevith
tsey oosny baegraevith khyon banyookh shabmaar insaano banyookh darmuk
tI deenuk tham na deenuk gam na darmuk gam
karaan insaenyath maatam ruchith caen' kaar insaano
pazya d'un seenI insaanas tithis deenas tI iimaanas
karaan kuniras ti yeksaanas chu yus doginyaar insaano*

(God had kept the lid of his natural treasures (resources) open for you. You were supposed to share it with others but you acted like a snake (* a species of poisonous snakes who guards natural treasures). You acted as if you are a pillar of religion or *dharma* (Hindu faith) or *deen* (Muslim faith), but the fact is that you are neither bothered about *dharma* nor about *deen*. Indeed humanity is ashamed, looking at your deeds. Should a human being crave for such a religion or faith which distinguishes human beings on the basis of religion.)

According to Ratan Lal Shant, “*Abdul ahad azadni shaeyri hInz infraedyath cha tasInzi insaeni hamdardi ta insaan dosti hInzi shakli manz voatlan. yeli kaeshris siyaesi nabarabari, gurbatIc ya dagal duuzi hInz athIr lagaan cha, hisaas tI tsuk'dar zabeen chi baarav divan zi mazhabi taphriikh masbraevith thaev'tav akaey kath yaad zi saeriy chi mulltali maaqas ta ratas banyemit insaan. yobay zaben tI yobay soonc chu obdul ahad azaad sInzi shaeyri hund hero murtab karaan tI tasund hero chu akh aam gariib insaan, chara insaan*” (The individuality of Abdul Ahad Azad’s poetry appears in the shape of his human sympathy and human friendship. When an average Kashmiri becomes the victim of political discrimination, poverty or deceit, sensitive and caring intellectuals cry hoarse that people should forget religious differences and keep only one thing in mind that basically all humans are made of flesh and blood; the hero in Abdul Ahad Azad’s poetry portrays the same thinking and same bent of mind and his hero is a common poor human being, only a human being. (– Soon adab, JKAACL, Azad special No.)

The verse below shows the status a human being enjoys in the poet's eyes.

*mansuur ti insaan zamruud ti insaan insaan'yalc pharakh tsI insaanI
hanaa kar*

(For you Mansoor was a human being and Zamrood too a human being. Do make a distinction in humanity, Oh human being.)

For Azad, the human being was supreme while religion divides a man into a Hindu and Muslim. Azad says,

*paez kath vepi insaanas pananis kyo begaanas
hendis ta musalmaanas vanaba ti vanun raave*

Azad likes to address only a human being and anyone from any religion, he says, "Only a human being, known or unknown, shall heed the truth. I could have addressed either a Hindu or a Muslim but that would go waste."

Azad in clearer terms challenges the hypocrisy of so-called religious sycophants in his verses given below. He expresses his priorities in the strongest words, shows his sympathy and adoration for a human being.

*diin daarI tsey chuy diin panun, me chum panun diin
iimaan khoda coon tI insaan muda myon
mandran mashiidan daralM saalan coon kboada kboash
loolas tI kun'ras dardi dilas raez' kboada myon*

(Oh religious man you have your religion, I have my own religion. Your aim is trust in God and my aim is human beings. Your God is happy with mosques, temples and Dharamsalas, While my God is happy with love, unity, and sympathetic heart towards human being.)

Few more verses from the same poem are:

*ph'uurus haakeeman paad rI Tim brahman saadan
zakbman tI daad'yan paansly nish vuch tI dava myoon
chus dosti hund doos yi dushman me karyam kya
yath dosti bInzi vaari manz dushman ti gula myoon*

(I visited several medical specialists (doctors), touched the feet of divine sages. Found the treatment of my troubles within me only.)

I am a friend of friends; what harm can the enemy cause to me. In this kitchen garden /valley of friendship, the enemy has no place.)

Azad's view point was that religion practised in temples and mosques can separate one human being from another and he was against dividing people on the basis of caste, creed and religion. He disapproved of any religious practice which resulted in division of human beings; instead, he believed that true religion based on Gita and Quran preached that Hindus and Muslims are brothers, have originated from the same human being, they are therefore one and the same. He went on to say,

*butkhanI tse banaevith kaabuk bina tse troovuth
gütaayi kya khata kor vantam koaraanI vale*

(You made the places of idol worship you laid the foundation of Kaba. What then is the fault of the Gita, tell me oh believer of Quran.)

In yet another poem he says,

*voth paana panun sanz kar ban paana panun rebbar
avatar ta paigambar yivaan aes' path kaaly
dognyaar chu yeli matlab puuzayyi nemaazan hund
soozas ba yi bakhsbaeyish beyi tuur' ladith Daaley
hendis ta musalmaanas sheeerith akisly baanas
zaanun tagi insaanas kya maani chu misaale*

(Come on get up, take your own care, become your own savior. Avatars or God's messengers used to come in ancient times. In case pooja and namaz (Hindu and Muslim prayers) lead to the division of human beings, I shall send these back to him (God) as gifts. Shall serve both Hindu and Muslim in one pot only. Only then a human being shall understand the meaning of such an example.)

Azad's poem *shikva-i-ibliis* 'Satan's Complaint' was considered blasphemous by the orthodox Muslims; several of his well-wishers including Mahjoor tried to persuade him not to follow such an approach and retract to the traditional path, but he was not convinced. Instead, he wrote,

*O men of faith, you have your own diin (religion) and I have mine.
Your sacred object is God and my ideal is man.*

*Your God is pleased by building temples, mosques, dharamshalas.
My beloved (God) feels delighted in unity, affection and sympathy.*

In the same tenor he says,

*diin myon miltsaar, daram yeksaan,
saarinIy kyuth chu nuuraanI myon
yuth me nish byond tay tyuthuy musalmaana,
goosh thav booz afaana myoon*

(My religion (Islam) is integration, my religion (Hindusm) is equality; for all it is my message of enlightenment. Hindu and Muslim is the same for me, give me your ear, listen to my story (message).

Such was his zeal and spirit for the oneness of humans that he took refuge in God when he said,

*koadratas byon byon tharun yeli aasIhan milat tI koom
prath akis byon byon zameena aasmana aasibe*

(Had God desired to separate human beings from each other based on caste, colour and religion, then in that case each one of them would have his/her own (separate) earth and sky.)

This verse is a master piece and the most referred to and spoken about verse of Azad and a great tribute to communal harmony by the most talented and patriotic poet of Kashmir. In the poem he says,

*kIsmatas ya kbaandaanas prath akba D'yuunthum savaar
broN pakaan panIn'yav koThyav kaNbh nayavaanah aasibe
neerIha san'yaes' laegith pbeerIha timany vatan
doostan yeti dosti bInz par'zana aasibe
yim vanaan aes' hend' musalmaan baeybaarin' paanIvaen'
kya timan nishi byaakb kanh vedah koranah aasibe*

(I saw everyone relying on luck and dynasty. I wish any young man marches ahead on his own capability. I wish he roams like a saint and moves on the same paths, Where friends could recognise true friendship alone. Those who used to call Hindus and Muslims as brethren, Do they need to possess a different Ved or Quran?)

According to G. N. Gauhar, "In high and chaste language, Azad wants to destroy the status quo and bring about complete

change not for the sake of change but for the betterment of humanity. He is for destruction of everything that has become obsolete, but has a definite conception about the future set-up based on a classless society where the natural sources are used for the benefit of workers and where exploitation is unheard of. These ideas are humanistic and universal. It is for these reasons that Azad is called “The poet of Humanity.” In the following verse by Azad, we see such feelings in abundance.

Unbreakable is the unity of man and the universe
Why feed in thy bosom, burning flames of duality

Azad raised his voice against every type of social, material and political exploitation and promoted communal harmony and equality. For him, the human being was most important and nothing else. He looked at a human being only as a human being, not as Muslim, Hindu or anything else. He sang the songs of importance and greatness of human beings only. His confidence on this is evident in the following verse:

*kenh paraan kuphruk tarana kenh chi diinuk dam divaaan
caen' loolan roch yimav daagav nishl daamaanl myon*

(Some sing atheistic songs, some songs of religion. Your love (of man) has prevented me from getting soiled.)

It is a fact that Azad never faulted on the path of humanity and communal harmony. He never bowed before anybody for his personal benefits. He could not tolerate short-sightedness, bias or flattery. He even condemned patriotism if that led to creating a wedge between people. As he says in this verse,

*syaTha matlah chu mazhab daaran manz
sitamgaeri yiman gam khaaran manz
vatan daeri ti yeli hechnaavi doginyaar,
cha akh bemaer' bemaaryan manz*

(There is enough selfishness in religious persons, there is highhandedness in such well-wishers. In case patriotism in any

way leads to disunity of people, I would in that case consider it as one amongst many such diseases.)

In the following verses he expresses his optimism in Hindu Muslim relationships:

*yi tay dognyarkuy ranga tI yaksaanuk bahana boz
nemun h'ot brahmanv kaabas musalmaan tsaayi butkebaanas
yinaan yaad ulphatIk' aphsaana buuzith shad sapnaan dil
chu sooz'a yaavnuk azaadI caanyan taa'za aphsaanan*

(Come and I shall explain to you the colour of division and excuse for unity. Brahmins started bowing before Kaba and Muslims starting entering temples. It reminds one of stories of pleasure, heart is filled with joy. Your fresh stories Oh Azad satiate us with the music of youth.)

Azad calls upon members of both communities to resolve their grievances amicably. He says,

*voth rinda yunt kaal zindI von' aasav
paanIvaen' kaasav panin' nyaay
baag soon raavroov khur'lad gaasav yena
pyaThI baez'gaar baagraan aay
tiy h'och aaman tiy kor khaasav
paanavaen' kaasav panIn' nyaay
peerav tI saadan beyi saen'yaasav
zaayi kor yaavun soon hay haay
khabas sl:t' millnoon vas vaasav
paanavaen' kaasav panIn' nyaay*

(Oh dear one, let us till we are alive, settle our disputes amicably. Our garden has been ruined by defective grasses, since fussy gardeners arrived. That is what commons and privileged ones learnt and followed, let us settle our disputes amicably. Religious heads (Peers and Sadhus) spoiled our youth, Oh alas! Our supersitions razed us to the ground, let us settle our disputes amicably.)

According to Prem Nath Bazaz, a well-wisher of Azad, “This singer of Renaissance, a great thinker of modern Kashmir and the poet of humanism died like an orphan, unwept, unhonoured and unsung.” Azad had said about himself,

*duniya kari yaad azaad aazaad
vuchil yaad paavay ba madnoo*

(You will see dear friend, a time will come when, the world will remember and recall Azad, Azad.)

Azad's prophecy about himself came true. Many years after his death, his unpublished work was acquired by the State Government and was published as *Kashmiri Zabaan aur Shairii* 'Kashmiri Language and Poetry'. This became a monumental critical work, an important reference material for researchers, critics and students of Kashmiri language and literature after that.

There is no doubt that Azad remains the most outstanding poet of Kashmir who through his poetry stood for common and underprivileged people, preached communal harmony, was concerned about the prosperity of Kashmir and its people, wrote openly about Hindu-Muslim unity, was a lover of nature and above all a good, hardworking human being whose contribution to Kashmiri literature is pioneering. Though a protagonist revolutionary he simultaneously kept cautioning people to remain in control of their senses and actions, not to fall prey to political maneuverings of certain vested elements and be derailed from the primary mission of freedom and wellbeing. Both Kashmir and Kashmiri literature was unfortunately deprived of this genius mind by his death at a very young age. But he is and will be remembered for all times to come.

5.5. OTHER POETS

Following the social and communal repercussions of Qabaili raid in north Kashmir, both Mahjoor and Azad took up the challenge and came out openly in support of communal harmony among Kashmiri people. They openly addressed the

people of both communities and pleaded for harmony, brotherhood and peace. That is prominently reflected in their poetry. However, under the influence of the progressive movement in literature which had spread at the pan Indian level, a new generation of poets came to the fore in Kashmir following the footsteps of Mahjoor and Azad. These are Nadim, Rahi, Kamil, Firaq, Arif, Nazki, Khayal, Majboor, Premi, Saqi, Santosh, etc. The socialist thinking became dominant among writers and vast literature with such themes came into existence. However, the undercurrent of such literature was communal harmony and social justice.

Dina Nath Nadim

Nadim with his towering personality is a doyen of Kashmiri poetry, one of the pioneers of progressive literature, an innovative and celebrated poet who besides writing ghazal and nazam also wrote opera, sonnet, haiku, blank/free verse etc., for the first time in Kashmiri. He started with Hindi and Urdu poetry and later switched over to his mother tongue Kashmiri. He has written about 150 poems. However, *shibil'kul* 'Shade Tree' (1985), is the only published poetry collection for which he got Sahitya academy's award. His love and concern for Kashmir and its people is the major theme of his writings.

According to Raina (2002), "Nadim sang the dawn of the freedom movement in 1946 in his *vothi baglc kukli* 'Rise O Nightingale of the Garden'. His exploitation of resources of the Kashmiri language is remarkable and with him the distinction between Hindu and Muslim Kashmiri may be said to have come to an end. For him (as a progressive writer) the miseries and issues of a common man, whether a Hindu or Muslim, were the same. Using poetry as a vehicle of propaganda, he made use of rhyme, rhetoric and effective repetition to awaken the

sensibilities of men to the dangers of war, imperialism and capitalism.”

A few verses from his patriotic and people friendly poems are shown here, as follows:

*yi chu maNdar isbbar vaet’
yi gaNTa aeti cha vaqaan
hu chu astaan ba barkaet’
chu kami huba naat grazaan*

(This is temple that we have reached in Ishbar. The bell is ringing over there. That is a religious place for Muslims, it bestows God’s grace. A *naat* (religious song in praise of the Prophet) is sung with devotion.)

*asi cha maNziI dosa devaer’
tsI pakb hallpaer’ lagay,
tse ti vaatiy kumi vizi vaer’
tsI pakb hallpaer’ lagay Dall baeTh’ baeTh’*

(We are divided by fencings and walls. You please walk freely, shall sacrifice my life for you. Your turn shall come some day. You please walk freely.)

*yi chu myon vatan, yi chu coon vatan
yi chu soon vatan, nuNda boon vatan
asi paqi ath vatmas lool barun
ruma ruma guma panunuy mokahtI jarun
navi aayi novuy takdeer garun
naII nakehtI gatsbi poThun soon vatan
yi chu myoon vatan,*

(It is my country, it is your country. It is our country, a lovely country. We should love this country we should decorate it with the pearls of our sweat. Should shape a new destiny with a new style. Each and every part of our country should get strong.)

*vatan baall yaar, vatan baall yaar
yi soon poshi maalyun yi asi sberi taaj
yi soon baeyraaj yi soon mohrl daaj
syãTha rut tI hyot toshivun pooshi zaar
vaeliv az yi sheeroon ta paeroon zaabar
gaeNdiith dor kamar, baenith raechdar
vaNdoos dil jigar, aallvoos lokcaar
karith sar nisaar
vatan soon saanyan dilan huNd karaar
vatan baall yaar, vatan baallyaar vatan*

(A childhood friend, our country a childhood friend
 Mother's flowery place, a crown on our head
 Our brother, a treasure of dowry
 Very good pleasing garden of flowers
 Come on let us develop and decorate it nicely
 Let us tighten our waist and be its guard
 Sacrifice our heart and soul for it, sacrifice our childhood
 Sacrifice our head for it, the country is our peace of mind
 A childhood friend, our country a childhood friend.)

*asi kor phaesal sezras pazras roozun naeli naal
 dl maesbraevith Ilyi vatslI traavan, ceshman kaasan tsbaay
 shisbras vaNdakis daNd pbuTraevith sooNtas sbeeran jaay
 az taam kaet'ab oorIk' yoorIk' asi tsben dini yot aay
 asi zaen' saeriy panIni baarlN' zan asi vachi tall zuay
 jaanaavaar chi byon byon baagas kun sor chukb kun' taal
 asi kor phaesal sezras pazras roozun naely naal asi kor phaesal*

(We decided to remain united for simplicity and truth, forgetting hatred we open our hearts, sensitise our eyes. Shall halt the winter freeze, ready ourselves for spring. So many came wandering from across the globe to distintegrate us. We treated all our brethren as if born to us. Many kinds of birds live in the garden but have one voice and one tune. We decided to remain united for simplicity and truth.)

In his poem *naaray inkalaab* 'Slogan of Freedom', Nadim calls upon the youth to rise for unity and integrity of their motherland Kashmir as follows:

*tsI chukb kaesheerihNda javaan
 vuchaan tse kun chu drus jahaan
 tsI gaND kamar tI tul kamaNd
 sitaarI soon kar bulaNd*

(You are a youth from Kashmir. The whole world looks at you. Tighten your belt pick up the arrow. Turn our fortunes.)

*kashiiiri buNd tsI shaan ban
 tsI meeri karvaan ban,
 kaeshiiiri paasbaan ban
 vadun rivun chu shabnamuk
 asun pholun chu gulshannuk
 vatan yi ziNda thaavnuk
 chu akh osuul kaargar
 tsI sar panun nisaar kar*

*shabeed nanjavaan ban
tsl meeri kaarvaan ban,
kaeshiiri paasbaan ban*

(Become the honour of Kashmir. (You) become a leader, become a saviour (guard) of Kashmir. It is for dew to weep and cry. It is for the garden to smile and bloom. To keep this country alive. There is one principle which works. Sacrifice your life, become a young martyr, Become a saviour (guard) of Kashmir.)

Two other poems by Nadim, *bl gevI nI az* ‘I Will Not Sing Today’ and “*me cham aash pagablc*” ‘I Am Hopefull of Tomorrow’, are classics which depict his disgust with the political system and hope for good times respectively.

Rehman Rahi

In his early period as a poet, Rahi adopted the style and theme content of Nadim and appeared influenced largely by him. Two of his earlier poems, *gaTa tI gaash* ‘Darkness and Light’ and *zindagi* ‘Life’ bear such impressions, but eventually he developed his own style and diction and in due course of time occupied the topmost slot in Kashmiri poetry. He is the only writer of Kashmiri to have won a Jnananpeeth award besides the Sahitya academy award.

I will quote a few verses from his classic poem being used as *taraana kashmiir university* ‘The Theme Song of Kashmir University’. The poem represents the glorious past of Kashmir as the birth place of very eminent intellectuals and spiritual personalities whose contribution to knowledge and humanity is acclaimed and acknowledged world ever.

Rahi’s poem on Kashmir, which is now used as Kashmir University’s anthem, is a classic one in which he praises Kashmir and recalls the contribution of the sons of the soil to various fields of knowledge.

hii moej kaeshiirii chiy aayit'
patavath aelimIk' saagar saerii
vethi vuz' tSI saanyan siinan manz
chakh urphaanauk dariyaav jaeriy
caani yetsbi soon yi daenishgab
yath sorgas manz taemiir sapud
caani ilhaama yi naag vuzyon
caani ramzuk taebiir sapud
caen' path kaallc aagaebi saen'
azkaallc beenadaeri
hii moej kashiiirii chii aayit'
patavath aelimIk' saagar saerii

(Oh mother Kashmir all founts of knowledge have been at your bidding and command. Oh you, who make the *Vitasta* (river Jhelum) gush forth. Whose wisdom profound flows perennially through our souls. You willed, and this seat of learning came into being in this paradise on earth. This fountain of knowledge made a leap at your will, and yours was the intent which bodied forth into what we behold around us here. You are the wisdom of our past which kindly leads us on today.)

yeti shookh shemindaran' trosh baavath
yeti bilhan sund mot yaadI votur
yeti kalhansInz v'eth kaad kaDaan
yeti abhinogupt sund gyaanI sodur
yeti lalvaakhan bInz zallvIn' reb
yeti shekhI shruk'an bInz zimIvaerii
hii moej kashiiirii chii aayit'
patavath aelimIk' saagar saerii

(This is the land that heard Khemindra's poignant tale, and quickened Bilhana's fond memories. It is here that Kalhana's *Vitasta* sprawls far and wide and Abhnavgupta's ocean of knowledge surges high. You are the refulgent flame of Lala's verse, you are the solemnity of Sheikh's sacred hymns.) (English translation by Faculty of P. G. Deptt. of English, Kashmir University)

Moti Lal Saqi

Moti Lal Saqi was a legendary character, a poet, scholar, researcher, critic, opera writer, translator, literary historian, folklorist, a true lover of Kashmir and its beauty, and above all,

a very jolly and warm human being. This multifaceted personality, Saqi, reached his zenith in his lifetime only. Hailing from a humble background, he was heavily felicitated in his lifetime. He received the J&K State Academy award, the Sahitya Academy award and a Padma Shri award besides many other honours. According to Shafi Shauq and Naji Munawar “Saqi has wielded his pen in all genres of literature but he is more successful in writing *nazms* and quartelets.” Saqi has written a lot about the natural beauty, landscape and ancient times of Kashmir and its people. His love for the place and its people is widely reflected in his poetry.

His poem *himalIk' gabar raebdar be shumaar*, “The Guardian Sons of the Himalayas” is an excellent example of his patriotic poetry in which he talks of national integration.

*cha aslvIn' tI gindavIn' yi saen' poosbi vaer
molul mokhtI Dal aeth' vogIn' roozI kaer'
samut soon kaari dushmanas laarI laar
himalIk' gabar raebdar be shumaar*

(Playful and smiling is our valley of flowers (Kashmir). Dal the precious jewel is a symbol of our pride. Our unity will tear apart our enemy. Large number of sons of the Himalayas are our guardians.)

The following verses from another poem of his portrays very well his concern for amity and brotherhood amongst people:

*hu ti akh aadam
tsI ti akh aadam
bI ti akh aadam
kani maa kaNbh phoT
nabI maa kaNbh voth
saery metsi maer' maajiy zaaay
teli asi byen keus
duuryar tshyan keus
tall sae tseth dith saeri sunNciv
me cha zan sooNcas phaeTmIts lay*

(He too is a human being. You are also a human being. I also am a human being. No one has emerged from stone. No one fell from the sky. All earthly bodies were born only to a mother. Then this distinction is meaningless. No distance no separation. Let all of us take time to ponder upon this. My thinking has turned barren.)

His love for Kashmir is well depicted in this opera *mooj kaesbiir* 'Mother Kashmir'. The poet shows mother Kashmir narrating her story. A few verses are given here.

*hut'an boni yet'an baag
panun baag maetsbul baag
natsaan vigni g'evaan raag
panun baag maetsb'ul baag
cham voandas sheblath vetasta kuur cham
raech chum paNtsaalb'uw tsuk'daar booy
zaayi me ded raen' thaevnam kaer thaez
kad ditum lalita ditas phir'phab ditum
baDshabas paany me thod dasgab ditum...*

*myaani kochi manz naphratas chanI jaay kaNb
bad kbahan chuna resh'garas manz paay kaNb...*

*chu manzil soon bas insaan insaan
chi nam tay maaz saeriy bend' musalmaan
kunuy tabziib kuniy cha zaath saeniy
kuniy paez zaath tay butraath saeniy*

(Over there are chinars, here are gardens. Our own garden is a lovely garden. The ferries are dancing and singing a song. Our own garden is a lovely garden. My heart is feeling the comfort as *Vitesta* (River Jehlum) is my daughter. My caring brother *Pir panjal* (mountain) is guarding me. Here Deda Rani was born who did me proud. Blessed Lalita Ditya with greater heights. Gave authority to Badshah the king.... There is no place for hatred in my lap. Bad characters cannot survive in the home of Rishis. Our aim and destination is just a human being. Hindus and Muslims are like nail and flesh. Our civilization and caste is the same. Our true origin and land is the same.)

In his poem *dag* 'Pain' in *neer' nagma* he again expresses his immense love for Kashmir and portrays the amity and concern amongst its people and highlights the cultural heritage of Kashmir.

bab buD'bab jadIbuD' bab saeriy
yetiy thanI pemI'
yeth' metsi shrepeemit'
khab khal timvIy thaevmit' sheerith
koala kaji timvIy nilavaTh ciirith
non koD timvIy sharda peeTh
yeth' metsi manz beni gaesh' amaanath
yet' chu ali juv yem' lall novus
subhaan shah oos yeth' metsi phoTmut
gevnuk gimdnuk dyutnam hoosh
yet' cha khatij ded
meen' khatij ded
kbira kbaNDI rochnas
tas vudI zaalaan gaamuk gaam

(Father, grandfather all my forefathers. Are all born here (in Kashmir). Are all absorbed in this soil. They have arranged the fields and granaries. They dug the streams, cleaning them of stones. They discovered the Sharda peeth (seat of learning as Kashmir was called). My sister *Bengashi* is buried in this soil. Ali Juv is here who cradled me. Subhan Shah was born of this very soil. He gave me the sense of playing and singing. Khatji Ded is also here. My Khatji Ded. She brought me up with great care. The whole village pays her tribute.)

Makhan Lal Kanwal

Makhan Lal Kanwal is a well known Kashmiri poet whose contribution to Kashmiri literature is well acclaimed. A Sahitya Academy awardee with six poetry collections to his credit has equal flair for nazm and ghazal. According to Hamidi Kashmiri “*kanwal chu aeshkIk' kbaab yeerna baavojuud samaajci kbasI vasi ta beyan mushkailan andar ti hena aamut drI: NTh' gatsbaan,*” (Besides weaving the songs of love, Kanwal also appears engrossed with social and other issues of life.” Kanwal’s love for his motherland, its people and concern for communal harmony is reflected in his poetry.)

Some samples of his poetry are given as follows:

From the poem *puush'tan* 'Let it last':

*ba dayo asi kaeshir'an mobbat ta miltsaar puush'tan
asi hend'an tay musliman vaeNsan yobay pyaar puush'tan
aes' chi lali haend' zur' ta zumlc vath tamiy asi haemlts
asi nundIn' aehii ta shaphkath loola guphtaar puush'tan
akh aekis saet' dokh ta sokh aes' baegravaan maayi saan
akh aekis zur' aallvaan aes' asi yi samtsaar puush'tan
aes' chi kaeshir janatul phirdoos chiy kashmir soon
aes' maetsbil baeskiin dar asi loola verbaar puush'tan*

(Oh God, let the love and brotherhood last forever for us Kashmiris. Let this love last for ages for us Hindus and Muslims. We are descendents of Lal who has shown us the way to live. We have blessings and affection of Nunda Rishi, let our discourse full of love last long. We share miseries and pleasures with each other with love. We sacrifice our lives for each other, let this unity last long. We are Kashmiris, our Kashmir is a heaven on earth. We are lovely residents, let the treatment of love last long.)

A few verses from the poem *aes' kaeshir* 'We Kashmiris' are:

*asi jaarI rachun vaarI paeTh'an TooTh gulistaan
rash'vaer panIn' raech ath aes' haend' ta musulmaan
asi phor chu barith aes' paraan gita ta beyi koraan
athIvaas DeNsbith soon meharbaan asi yezdaan
yeti aes' chi kaeshir' baTa ta musulmaan vuch rozgaan
aend' aend' chi koh ta sheena saNgar nagma saen' bozgaan
kodrath chu soon miltsaar DiiNsbith shiina phot' sozgaan
yeti lasna baapath yaara chiy aes'akh aekis lozgaan
prath marbalas p'aTh aes' karaan yikvaTI chi rozgan paay
insaeniyath asi taeTh' aes' kaeshir chi tshaTaan maay*

(Oh friend, we have to properly guard our dear garden of flowers (Kashmir). This is our valley of Rishis, we Hindus and Muslims are its guardians. Our memory is full of readings from the Geeta and Koran. Observing our brotherhood, God is kind to us. Look we Kashmiri Hindus and Muslims live here together. Our love songs are heard by the hills and snow clad mountains that surround us. After witnessing our brotherhood, nature presents us with baskets full of snow. To live here with dignity we take care of each other. At every stage of life, together we take care of living conditions. Humanity is dear to us, we Kashmiris shower affection.)

A few verses from the poem *raech karan* 'We shall guard':

yi chu maal'un lalibund ropI taal'un
yath nunda resh' bormut lool dohay
yi chu aagur gyaanuk tay dyaanuk
vola aeth' baNDaaras reach karav
yeti bend' tay musalmaan baey baaren'
soakha doakha chiy nakba pheke' akh aek'sInd'
yeti vartaavas manz lool phakath
vola aeth' miltsaaras raech karav

(This is Lala's home, Lala's silvery fortune, Nunda Rishi has always showered his love here. This is an origin of knowledge and meditation, let us guard this divine storehouse. Here Hindus and Muslim brethren take care of each other in moments of joy and sorrow. Here only love is in vogue, let us guard this very brotherhood.)

Kanwal's love for his motherland Kashmir is expressed in his poems *panun vatan* 'Our Country' and *yeth aaNgnas manz* 'In This Compound'. A few verses from *panun vatan*:

panun vatan panun jabaan
dohay haesiin dohay javaan
panun vatan janat nishaan
chu maa raNghan zaetsan sanaan
yi vaehdatuk chu paasbaan
yetiy cha loola joy ravaan
panun vatan suman pholaan
ta maay heth lasaan basaan
chu lool bas yetiy ayaan
tavay kaNval chu nagma khvaan

(Our own country, our own world is ever young and ever beautiful. Our own country is like heaven, does not discriminate on the basis of castes and colours. It is a guard of unity, here the stream of love flows. Our own country blossoms like a flower and lives with affection. Love is visible only here that is why Kanwal sings his songs here.)

In his poem *yath aaNgnas manz* "In this Compound" the poet depicts the beauty of Kashmir, shows his concern for the deteriorating situation in the valley and prays for the return of good times.

yi aaNgun loola nyayan proon sbahid
yi aaNgun rinda mastaana ta zaahid

yi aangun baamI voth allabu akbar
yi aaNgun shanKha kbot hii shiv shaNkar
kbabar both aaNgnas manz kya chu DeNsbun
sapIz yath aaNgnas manz yaarI maeri
magar vakh vaati pbeerith yun chu laezim
karIn maet' miiTh yeth' metsi yiy mukadar
cha amci aeDran saenis vojuudas
amic kbushbu baesith saenis rubas manz
zuvin yath aaNgnas manz may dobdish
vuzin yath aaNgnas bubraayi amreth

(This compound (Kashmir) is an old witness of love lore. This place (Kashmir) is home to spiritual men, saints and sages. This compound is witness to a call that God is great (Allah u Akbar from the dome of a mosque). From this compound rose a call to Lord Shiva (from a conch shell). Having described his motherland Kashmir as a cradle of communal harmony, the poet becomes apprehensive about bad times due to violence and militancy and expresses his fear in following verses as: "Do not know what is to be feared in that compound. Because in this compound a friend has been killed." Having expressed his anguish, pain and apprehension, the poet shows optimism about good times again in the following lines of the poem. "But time will come when return (to our land) becomes inevitable. Kissing and hugging this very land and soil is our fate. Our existence is made of this very soil. Our soul exudes its fragrance." In the closing verse of this poem the poet prays to God for amity and affection to last long in this land like this. "Let affection be born in this compound always. Let Amrit (divine water) ooze from this compound.)

Ghulam Nabi Janbaaz alias Dholwaal

Dholwaal, who hailed from the Kishtwar area in J&K, was a versatile poet cum singer. His contribution, both as a poet and singer is phenomenal. He was a very popular singer and was widely admired. Besides writing on varied topics, his contribution towards communal harmony is remarkable. He not only wrote but made the concept popular through his singing. Some of his popular verses from *Kalami Jaanbaaz* (1996) are given here.

*aeK' raam vonuy aeK' rehmann vonuy
naavlc cha pharakh matlab chu kunuy
ya yeti maanun ya tati maanun
maanun tse peyiy sahib chu kunuy*

(One called you Ram and the other Rehman. There is a difference of name only, the meaning is the same. You may either accept Him here or accept Him there. You shall have to accept as the Lord (God) is only one (same).)

Similarly a verse from his other popular song was on the lips of every Kashmiri:

*naazneen yaara myaani yiy chu mulakaat
asal kath tariy na phikeri tath chi vanaan masavaat*

(Oh my lovely dear friend this is the crux of meeting. You may not understand the real point, that is what is called equality (of humans/religions).

Habib Ullah Arahgami

Arahgami who lived from 1923 to 1988 in Bandipora, Kashmir, has beautifully depicted the communal harmony in the following verses. From his *kulyaati LalI aaragaem (Anthology of Lala Arahgami, 1994)*, a few lines are quoted below.

*masjidan mandran darmsalan tI girjan hund tsI shab
hend' muslamaan sikh tI eesaey tim laban tsey nish najaath
yuth nI thaeviv tsakh zid dly tath chu naraaz khoda
maay mobbath baegraevin suy chu tubunduy boD ziraath*

(You are the lord of temples, mosques, and churches. Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians seek salvage from you. Do not relish hatred, jealousy, enmity, God hates such things. Do share love and affection, that is your best food.)

Fazil Kashmiri

Another prominent poet, Fazil Kashmiri, is deeply influenced by Krishna Bhakti “devotion of Krishna.” Fazil, a devout Muslim, has written two collections of devotional poetry *Balak Avastha* and *Krishna Leela* dedicated to the devotion of Lord Krishna

besides many other poetry collections. Fazil keeps the Kashmiri ambience in mind while writing Krishna poetry. He uses all Kashmiri flowers for worshipping Krishna. It would not be out of place to say here that Fazil has the same status in Kashmiri literature that the famous Krishna devotee Rasa Khan has in Hindi literature. In his poem *Sath Kori* ('Seven Daughters') Fazil says,

*myon maal'un naegraayun naagraad
tath nishay vaatak b il dil rooziy tse shad
khor zI vabraevith taetiy neNdra karav
myaani yaavan tsuura lolo taet' basav*

(My parents' home (*maika*) is the spring of Nagraj (a prince of naag desh). Once you reach there your heart shall fill with joy. Spreading our feet we shall relax over there. Oh my beloved lover we shall reside over there.)

Fazil is famous for his *Krishan Leela* 'Leela of Lord Krishna' and invokes communal harmony while describing Krishna leela. He writes:

*Krishan gav pooshevun gaNgaayi bund jal
chalaan bendis musalmaanas diluk mal
Kriscen' bapaer'il hend' v sikh
nazar kuniy timan pyaTh chu travaan kishin
bisar aadnuk chuy ralavaan kishin ji*

(Krishna is like the everlasting water of the Ganges. It washes away the dirt of hearts of Hindus and Muslims, Christians, businessmen, Hindus and Sikhs. Krishna mixes all shades of destiny together.)

Mohmad Shafi Shaida

Shaida in his poetry collection entitled *Amaar* (1990) portrays communal harmony in the following way:

*yi cha brahman zaaadan bInz dartii,
piirI vaer phekiiran darveshan
yeti gyaan teNden pyaTh chuy lukan
koraan daraan yeth shabras maNz
yoasI vath cha gatsbaan yeti asthaanan*

*soay vath cha gatsbaan maykhaanan kun
yus baaNg paraan subhan chu yet'an
shaamas chu ceraan yeth shabras maNz*

(This is the land of Brahmins, valley of Faqirs and sages. Here religious knowledge oozes out at will. The Koran is read at ease over here. The path which leads to pilgrimage centres also takes to the centres of leisure. One who gives a call for *namaz* in the morning, drinks nectar in the evening in this city.)

Prose

Usually prose has followed poetry in all world literatures. However, in case of Kashmiri, the gap has been wider, it has developed at a much later date. While Kashmiri poetry dates back to the twelfth century when *Chuma Padas* and *Mahanay Prakash* were written, prose in Kashmiri had to wait till the last quarter of the nineteenth century when the Bible was translated into Kashmiri and later in 1940 when the first Kashmiri journal named *Gaash* ('Light') was published, comprising both poetry and prose sections. Many other journals followed it at various intervals. Establishment of Radio Kashmir in 1948 necessitated writing of prose in the form of the spoken word, reviews, skits and dramas etc.

6.1. THE SHORT STORY

The most prominent form of prose has been the short story writing in Kashmiri. Dina Nath Nadim, Soom Nath Zutshi, Aziz Haroon and Noor Mohmmad Roshan were the earliest short story writers. The *Jawaabi Card* ("Reply Bound Postcard") by Nadim and *yeli phol gaash* 'When Dawn Broke' by Zutshi were the first short stories to have been published in the March 1950 issue of *Kongposh*, a literary magazine. Thereafter the short story, popularly called *Afsana*, emerged as an important literary genre in Kashmiri. Within the fifty years of its journey, the Kashmiri short story is rated as one of the best in Indian literature. The

short story writing in Kashmiri started in the progressive movement in literature that is why the theme content was the common man and related issues like poverty, illiteracy, exploitation etc. and issues like communal harmony were inherent in such descriptions and are not prominently depicted. In T. N. Raina's words "short story in this period was firmly rooted in the soil."

Dozens of new writers appeared on the scene and prominent ones were Akhtar Mohidin, Amin Kamil, Ali Mohamad Lone, Hari Krishen Kaul, Bansi Nirdosh, Amar Malmohi, Avtar Krishen Rahbar, Ratan Lal Shant, Hriday Kaul Bharti. Akhtar Mohidin and Hari Krishen Kaul were leaders in this genre, published several collections of short stories and wrote through the first few years of the present millennium. Both have been awarded by the J&K State Academy of Art Culture and Languages and the Sahitya Academy. Like many other writers they did use mixed characters in their stories; however, communal harmony is not reflected as a prominent theme in their stories. In *pagab* 'Tomorrow' one of the best short stories of Hari Krishen Kaul, he uses Makhan and Sula characters from the two communities as classmates who remain oblivious to their religious identities and innocently strive to remain together in the same class for childish and silly reasons. The narration assumes significance as it helps dissolve the religious boundaries. The protagonist in his other short story *Pata Laraan Parbat* 'The Parbat (hill) Chases' being frustrated sits at the back of a tonga to move away and realises that Parbat hill, which is an important symbol or representative of Kashmir's religion, culture and history, is chasing him and he finds it difficult to remain untouched or away from it i.e. Kashmir. The author tries to convey that despite several issues, the bondage

with Kashmir and its civilisation is deeply rooted in the psyche of Kashmiris irrespective of their religion.

According to R. L. Shant (Personal communication) “harmony can be read in my stories in the form of absence of tensions between the two principal religious groups of Hindus (Pandiits) and Muslims of Kashmir.” This may be true in case of other short story writers as well. Elaborating his point he says, “In my story “curfew” teacher Soom Nath’s beleaguered house bears the brunt and is a target of all anti-Governmental demonstrations by the majority community. His father’s sympathies are with the minority protesters against undue drabbing. The non-Kashmiri (non-Muslim) MP police is hated by the local Muslim policemen whom Soom Nath feels obliged to invite in order to not be singled out as an opponent of popular communal thinking. Playing the see-saw of pseudo-harmony in communal relations is Soom Nath’s fate. He has to appear liberal to anti-Indianism and secular in the face of blatant communalism in an atmosphere charged with narrow anti-India protests. This is the typical attitude expressed by minority characters in pre-90 short stories in general.”

The subject of communal harmony was taken for granted since the political situation in the valley remained more or less stable and harmonious upto 1985. The situation started deteriorating after that, culminating in a sudden and maiden communal riot of significant magnitude in the history of post-independence Kashmir, in Anantnag district in 1986 in which Hindu property and temples were destroyed. The spiraling incidents of violence, through bomb blasts and other protest marches etc. thereafter led to the emergence of full scale and well organised militancy in 1990. It was for the first time that communal harmony was openly threatened.

6.2. NOVEL

Amongst all genres of literature, the novel in Kashmiri has remained very poor. Akhtar Mohidin's *Dood ta Dag* ("The Sickness and Pain") (1958), is considered as the first novel written in Kashmiri. This genre could not keep pace with the development in other forms of prose like the short story and drama. Since then, very few novels have been written. Amin Kamil's *gaTi manz gash* 'Dawn in Darkness' written in the backdrop of *Qabaili* (Tribal) raid on Kashmir is an important novel which reflects the political scene post-independence and highlights the communal harmony between Hindus and Muslims, a political slogan of that time. The story drawn in Bandipora close to the Indo-Pak border shows a young Muslim girl, Fatima, a teacher by profession, living in rented accommodation in Baramullah.

The girl is loved deeply by Ram Krishen, a Hindu shopkeeper. During the same period there is *kabaili* raid in which Ram Krishen gets injured while saving Fatima and dies in her lap. Fatima refuses to marry another man named Hasalal who is from her own community, because his father had helped *kabailis* in conducting the raid and Fatima is shown as a daughter of a freedom fighter. The novel assumes significance as it exposes the nexus of kabails with selfish and vested elements on one hand and highlights the communal harmony amongst two communities of the valley who are shown fighting the attackers unitedly to save their own honour and that of the whole of Kashmir. Amin Kamil has to a certain extent been successful in his narration, depicting the psyche of local people in whom communal harmony is well enshrined.

Aes' ti chi insaan 'We Too are Humans' by Ali Mohamad Lone, a novel being considered a reportage by critics is written on the famous Amarnath yatra in which a pilgrim's empathy

towards an elderly labourer, a local Muslim, is depicted passionately when the pilgrim prefers to abandon the yatra halfway and returns to accompany the labourer to a hospital in Pahalgam. Ali Mohamad Lone is primarily known as a playwright who has dramatised this novel through his lively dialogues.

Literature after 1990

The last decade of the twentieth century AD turned out to be the most pathetic period for both Kashmir and Kashmiri literature. It was in January 1990 that about three lakh Kashmiri Pandits (Hindus), under a well-planned and orchestrated conspiracy, were forced to leave their centuries old homes in Kashmir and flee to safer destinations in other parts of the country. The foreign sponsored militancy in the valley of Kashmir proved to be so harsh and draconian that under a fearful, threatening and bloody atmosphere created by the militants and their supporters, lakhs of people abandoned their homes and establishments in the shortest possible time and fled to the safer areas in other parts of country. Given the three choices i. e., to convert to Islam, flee from Kashmir or get killed, they chose the second option. The displacement of such magnitude reminds us of the world's largest and most dreadful displacement which had occurred during the partition of India in 1947.

Displacements had taken place earlier too in this part of the globe popularly called a heaven on earth, but not of such magnitude and tragedy. Reflections of such earlier displacements are found in the folklore to some extent but not much is represented in the literature. Perhaps Kashmiri language or literature was not equipped to such an extent then as it is now. Like many other disciplines and areas of study, literature too was

severely affected by the militancy. A large chunk of writers too became the victims of this historical tragedy and were forced to migrate from the valley. A few of them were killed by the militants.

Like other people, the writers and cultural activists had a lot of miseries and events to share. This resulted in the creation of a treasure of literature in Kashmiri also termed as the Literature of displacement. It is a fact that the number of books written in various genres in Kashmiri after this, exceeded by several times, the number of books written in the same time span before the displacement. Even though the writers inside the valley remained dumbstruck for obvious reasons for some years after the tragic exodus of their fellow writers from Kashmir, they subsequently broke their silence and large number of books were written there too. However, the subject matter differed. A new concept and terms like *bala apaerim* and *bala yepaerim kaeshur adab* 'the Kashmiri literature from across the hills and of this side' came into existence. While the writers from this side of Pirpanjal mostly expressed their nostalgia and pathos, gave vent to their miseries, hardships and sufferings, the writers across the Pirpanjal i.e., inside the valley, wrote about their side of sufferings, the encounters, excesses by both militants and armed forces, caged life, hardships etc. The situation became conducive for many new writers who appeared on the scene and contributed a lot on both sides. As a result a voluminous treasure of Kashmiri literature has been written during last twenty-seven years.

Although the main focus, subject and theme of the literature of displacement has been the sufferings, nostalgia, gloomy and unsure future but surprisingly the undercurrent of such writings remains the love for humanity in general and Kashmir the lost motherland in particular, pangs of separation

from dear ones, the lost glory of brotherhood and communal harmony of Kashmiris. This is very much evident in both poetry and prose. The bitter, pathetic, nostalgic, emotional and sharp reactionary literature of the nineties has given way to a more pragmatic, thematic and rational viewpoint in the early twenty-first century writings. Kashmiri literature of this period has truly emerged as a richer, responsive, and critically viable one.

7.1. POETRY AFTER 1990

In poetry, almost all the poets who were well known earlier continued to write. However, some more names emerged as substantial ones who had started writing just before displacement from Kashmir. A few samples of their poetry which are relevant to this study are given below.

Arjan Dev Majboor

Majboor, a versatile and celebrated poet of Kashmiri was influenced by Nadim and his progressive outlook. He wrote about both poverty and nature. He composed five anthologies of poems. He essentially remains a poet of nature and his last collection of poetry, “*tyol*” (1995), is a classic one which dwells on human issues and highlights his concern for humanity in general and agony, pain and destruction of Kashmir and thousands of years of its legacy of brotherhood and communal harmony.

*laryan jaayan vuchakh buthy khasta gaemit
darodevaar aasan aavsemit
barith lola guThhan gaaman pakaan gatsb
yibandy tasveer cesbman manz rachaam gatsb
rltsar paTha kaerith aebii mangaan gatsb
tsl naaras manz ti posbe kul' rvaan gatsb*

(You would observe the defaced houses and buildings. The walls and doors would be in bad condition. Walk through the villages

and meadows showering your love. Preserve their pictures in your eyes. Asking their welfare seek their good wishes. Go on planting flowers even in the embers of fire.)

The poet further recalls the good old days of Kashmir, its natural beauty, and it being the abode of angels, saints, Sufis and Rishis.

*gulaalan hInz phulay aasij tayas pyaTh
kulim poshan chalaan buth sheenIciy tshaT
phulay saenje hInzly yetskael' chaavakh
vasaan shaman otuy lot lot malaeyikh
vanaan tim gyaan zariyik kbaasI laegith
su manzar aksnaevith Dael' anizem
modur tresha tatic yets kael' anizem*

(The *gulilala* i.e., the red flowers would be in full bloom. The snowy winds would be cleaning /washing the face of the *kulim* flower. You would enjoy the blooming mustard flowers after long. The angels touch the soil there slowly during the evenings, while dressed in thin silk. They speak words of wisdom. Imbibe and bring for me the same scenery as a gift. Bring for me the sweet drinking water of that place I have been longing for.)

While in exile, the poet traces a picture of his Kashmir, an abode to Rishis, saints, scholars, of great men from various fields. Seeks peace from spiritual souls for his motherland Kashmir. Asks his messenger to remain alert.

*atij tapI resh' vuchakh tapsly andar mas
timan kbencal karakhynasa havavas
kaeshiri kits mangukh aehi ta shaenti
shapha zakbman gamanyaksar daphaeyi
gatsbi mumkin satan naagan di nazra
vuchakh vaerragI maenz'asluk nazraara
vuchakh ledr'an palan likhith tsI sezra
rums rums keashiri proon thazra*

(In Kashmir, you will see Rishis in deep meditation. Do not disturb them at all. Seek from them peace and good luck for Kashmir. Let wounds heal, let the worries vanish. If possible, visit the seven springs of Kashmir. Even in destruction you will see the real beauty. You will observe simplicity carved on yellow stones. In each and every part you would observe the décor of Kashmir.)

In the following verse, the poet feels concerned about the changing times in Kashmir and warns of consequences:

dodur insaen' kadran kyazji tsaamut
zamaanas sareisly kbur kyazji amut
reshan hInd' kenb vatsan aenzem tsI tsaerith
ba praary lolIkiy dasvaana paerith

(Why have human values turned hallow? Why is the whole world entangled in twists? Bring along a few words of wisdom of the Rishis. I shall wait for you wearing gloves of love.)

Prem Nath Shad

Prem Nath Shad is a very popular poet of Kashmiri who has published seven poetry collections so far. Rehman Rahi, an eminent poet of Kashmiri calls him *shaad chu akh busan shinaas ta lola mot shaeyir* 'Shad is an admirer of beauty and a romantic poet' (2009). His concern for Kashmir, its beauty, people and communal harmony is reflected prominently in his poetry. Some samples from his book *Sarva Sibul* (2001) are given below.

hend' muslim sikb ta i:saeyi
kbhuuna milvan baey baey
meshiravav dly tay doginyaar
sholanavoon laala zaar
vahdatIc vath asi chi havaan
granth geeta beyi qoraan
soon miraas son milatsaar
sholanavon lalazaar "vatsun"

(Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians have the same blood and are brethren. Forget hatred and divisiveness. Let us help the flowers to bloom. Showing us the path of unity are the Guru Granth, Geeta and Quran. Brotherhood is our heritage. Let us help flowers to bloom.)

paak butraath paak rozan jay saen'
naami naamosh aalmas manz maay saen'
hend' ta muslim doad ta shakar nam ta maaaz
loolakuy raaaz rozji andvand loolaraz
hend' ta muslim akh aekis kambras kuvath
baegraan aamIt' chi patIvath maeriphat
nyaay aenzraan lol soon amaar soon
paanIvaen' athvaas soon milatsaar soon "milatsaar"

(Our place of stay is the sacred land. Our affection for each other is famous world over. Hindus and Muslims are like milk and sugar, nail and flesh. The secret of love shall remain for ever. Hindus and Muslims are backbones to each other. We have been sharing love and affection since ages. We sort out disputes with love and care. Our unity and brotherhood with each other is well known.)

Some verses from his book *Yaadan Hund Aadan Gaam (The Village of Memories)* (2006):

*laani liikhith mazhaban hund ebtiraam
hend' ta muslim sikh barabar cham kaesbeer
mandran ganTa maesbeedan manz azaan
baey bandut shero shaker cham kaesbeer
"cham kaesbeer"*

(We are destined to respect various religions. Kashmir comprises Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. Bells ring in temples and call for namaz in mosques. Kashmir's brotherhood is like sugar and milk.)

*kul aalmas manz aelishaan
vatnas panInis zuw korbaan
yeti atbIvaas kaNchaan aay
yeti raetshraavaan mobbath maay "vatan panun"*

(In the entire world it is majestic, we shall sacrifice our life for the country. Here we desire brotherhood. Here we preserve love and affection.)

Disgusted with the present situation in Kashmir, the poet prays to his almighty for the return of good old times as follows:

*beyi pholi gul shaalamaeras praen'paeTh'
naalamati ruTi jaar yaaras praen' paeT'
raaj kari miltsaar mohabat doosti
aay huri sabras karaaras praen' paeT'*

(The flowers shall bloom again in Shalimar like old times. A friend shall embrace his friend like old times. Brotherhood, friendship and love shall rule. The patience and peace shall prevail like old times.)

In his "*pot nazar*" (2010), the poet yearns for good old times as follows:

vuThan pyaTh pholun gotsb asun praen' paeTh'an
su soakh aangnas manz gindun praen' paeTh'an

(Smile should adorn the lips like old times. That very leisure should play in the compound like old times.)

me diyitav suy panun lokcaar vaapas
su aangun suy sokhal samsaar vaapas
gulan hInd' rang dilan hund sreh ta sangat
modur maachur molul miltsaar vaapas

(Please return that very childhood to me. Return that very compound, that very leisurely life. The colour of flowers, the love and companionship of hearts; sweet, honey like, precious brotherhood.)

Rafiq Raaz

Rafiq Raaz is one of the well-known poets of the present day, who has been awarded by the Sahitya Academy. In his poem *hijratas maNz* 'In Exile', – *dastaveez-2006*, he remembers the good old days of communal harmony and peace in Kashmir in these verses.

yaad phir' phir' pevaan chum path kaal
az ti shahmaar h'uw valith chum naal
az ti kaet'ah naphar aechan tal chim
bansi vatal gulaam ahmad shaal
sheikh subhaan aml daar tI kaakh
Krishna pyare ashok razzaakh draal
keN h patab chum nI keus chu kot logmut
teji mushtaak tay bihaariy laal
vaavI yikh na kaeshiiri sael karith
oorI phiirith vanakh me tooruk haal
kye yi cha poz baTan kabay garl ruud'
az baTav rus chu kya kaeshiiri haal
maNdras nish su gurdhaarI ti cha
vaan taetinLy behaan cha harpaal

(Repeatedly I remember my past. Even now it hangs around my neck like a snake. So many persons appear even now before my eyes, Banshi Watal and Ghulam Ahmed Shaal. Sheikh Subhaan, Ahmed Dar and Kaakh Krishna, Pyare Ashok and middleman Razakh. Do not know who is where. Tej Mushtaq and Bihari Lal.

Oh wind, take a round of Kashmir and return with news of that place.

Is it true that only eleven families of Kashmiri pandits are left behind? Tell me how Kashmir looks like without them. Is that Gurdwara near the temple there? Does Harpal run his shop near that place?)

Sunita Raina Pandit

Sunita Raina is one of the youngest poets of Kashmiri who came to prominence in the last two decades, having published four collections of poetry. She is a poet of ghazal and her poetry touches a variety of topics like love, longing, pain, separation, despair, friendship, exile, nature etc. Her love for her motherland Kashmir is depicted in her poem *kaeshiir* “Kashmir” (unpublished), as given below.

*gonmatan hund than chu soon
nunda r'esh' sund abimaan chu soon
lali hund atam gyaan chu soon
arni vuzIn' vanI vaan che soon
penJi kola baeTh' tay prath kaINh veer'
saerly kaeshiir saen' kaeshiir
miilI pac'an vati vati yi khaeniv
navi anImaanuk nov taemiir
saeriy kaeshiir saen' kaeshiir*

(Our place (Kashmir) is the seat of poet seers. It is the pride of Nunda Rishi. It is the spiritual knowledge of Lal Ded. It is inspiration for the poetry of Arnimaal. Meadows, banks of streams and every willow tree. The whole Kashmir is our Kashmir. Engrave on every milestone on the path. Slogan of new development with new style.)

In her second poem entitled *asi cha subhIc aash* ‘We are hopeful about tomorrow’ (unpublished) the poet expresses her optimism about the return of good times.

*asi cha subhIc aash
zindagi naev, naev jaraeni
sholi beyi resh' vaer saeniy
lekhi kalban beyi baeThis p'aTh*

navi zamaanIc naev kabaeni
aasi kalmas naev ravaeni
mIIsri DekI akaash
asi cha subhIc aash
siryi kbasi peyi taaph balan
graz noviy vothi saaph naalan
gul pholan bul bul geran baeth
lagi phulay beyi kaeND zaaalan
Tuur' jaman beyi kaDan vaash
asi cha subhIc aash

(We are hopeful of (tomorrow) morning; new life and fresh youth. Our valley of Rishis shall shine again. Kalhan shall write again on the river bank a new story of new times. The pen shall flow with new speed. The sky shall open up for us. We are hopeful of tomorrow. The sun will rise and sunshine shall spread on the hills. The pure water of drains shall flow with noise. Flowers shall bloom nightingales shall sing songs. Flowers shall adorn the thorny bushes. Buds will open up in bloom. We are hopeful of tomorrow.)

Ashok Saraf Ghayal

Ashok Saraf Ghayal is yet another poet who has come to prominence during this period. Known for his typical diction and selection of vocabulary, he has also written many songs on communal harmony. Some of the verses from three different unpublished poems are given below.

aliph alah tI be bagvaan monum
kboda zeeeran tI zabran maNz me zoonum
chu paez' kin' suy kunuy yus poz me moonum

(I treated *alif* (first alphabet of Urdu) as *Allah* and *be* as *Bhagvaan* (God). I realized God amongst various diacritical markings. One whom I accepted as truth is really one and only one.)

maay mohbath kaeshr'ut raetsbraev'tav
baey baNdut aalmas vetsbnaev'tav
heNd' musalmaan bood sikh saeriy raelith
akh aekis saet' aan maeniy thaev'tav

(Do preserve love, affection and Kashmiriat. Explain the brotherhood to the world. After joining together, Hindus,

Muslims, Bhods and Sikhs should repose trust amongst themselves.)

*peer paNdit paadshah aalav chu soon
roph tI beNzey kaeshbiryah huNd nuNdI boon
kool pronny ziNda thavun haajath chu soon
kebeth kasam sny prooN hyuw prazlaevtav
maay mohbath kaeshr'ut raetsbraevtav*

(It is our belief that Muslim priests, Pandits are like kings. Folk songs of Muslims and Hindus are very lovely. To keep alive our heritage is our duty. Swear that you shall make it like that of old times. Do preserve love affection and Kashmiriat.)

*resh'peeran ya nuNda resh' lari lor
yiy keNbh sor suuNc sopnan maNz
tiy sooruy yiyi dubaarI pbeerith,
katha me vaen' az vuchiv pagah
deevi aaNghan daergah yikIvaTI
gaNTaa vaayan baNg paran
yikIvaTI byoNd kyo muslim rallmill
yikvaTI roozan lasan basan*

(Rishi Peer or Nunda Rishi, whatever they thought in their dreams. All that shall return again, I am making forecast today, you shall see it tomorrow. All people shall visit temples of the Goddess and pilgrimage of the Dargah together. Muslims and Hindus shall live together and perform day to day chores together.)

Jagan Nath Sagar

Jagan Nath Sagar in his poem *javaebi khat* 'Reply to the letter' (*paarId' tsib* – 2004) has portrayed the age old harmony beautifully in the verses given here. The poem is basically nostalgic about the beauty of Kashmir and age old traditions of communal harmony, which got shattered after the militancy, which the poet wishes to recreate with his friend in Kashmir.

*me khat coon jaarI az yetskael' vootum
me nay kanh pay patah chum toti vootum
rivun traevith zyunas keya chu kboisun
karav beyi naadI yeti yoor reshut paalav
reshut paalav tI dIyibund byool gaalav
reshut paalav tI navi sari dam sambaalav*

reshbut paalav tI gaTi manz̄ z̄uul z̄aalav
reshbut nani vaanI chay akh̄ baed̄ karaamath
thavIn' laezim̄ cha akh̄ aeksInz̄ dilas sath

(Oh my dear friend I received your letter after a long time. Although I have no proper address, still I got it. Stop weeping, why be afraid of living. Let us again make promises to follow Rishism from now onwards. We shall follow Rishism and get rid of hatred. We shall follow Rishism and start relaxing afresh. We shall follow Rishism and kindle a lamp in the darkness. Rishism really is a big miracle. It is essential to respect each other's sentiments.)

Ayaz Rasool Nazki

Dr Ayaz Rasool Nazki is a well-known poet, painter, writer and translator, he is the son of well-known poet cum broadcaster Mir Ghulam Rasool Nazki. His poem titled *Panun Kashmir* “Our own Kashmir”– (Muqam-e-raast-2004), reveals how strong the mutual bonds of affection and goodwill were between Pandits and Muslims in Kashmir before 1990. A vegetable seller woman keeping separately, fresh stock of vegetables for a fatherly Pandit buyer; a Pandit guiding his fellow Muslim colleague not to misuse his GP fund savings kept for rainy days and secretly helping him with cash; a butcher reluctant to sell mutton to his Pandit buyer on “Ashtami.”²³ These are some of the facets depicting the age old bond between the two communities, that the poet has spoken about in this poem. The poem, which I thankfully reproduce here, has been translated into English by Mr. Autar Mota (Facebook).

Panun Kashmir

panditaab̄ subIbaey
puuz̄ā karithly
parbat̄ vasibee
kaeTh̄ darvaaz̄ay
Dall̄ pyaTh̄' aamIts
sabz̄ī vaajen'
aalav̄ diyibe
“dopmaȳ mabra
raaz̄Ibaayī aasiy
nerlvun̄ vonmut

Dallaci ala taey
 miyi boed' naaŋgan
 gev hyuv haakha
 pambuch' tsaakha
 sooruy mabra
 thovmav shiirith"
 "adl saa kauriy
 navinly pholinay
 DekIsIy diyanay
 batah tay aay"
 panDithab dahi baji
 daphtar atsibe
 philan peThkan'
 mahmad shaphiyin
 vuchibe arz'i
 naad dith anibeas
 dapibeas maal'ya
 G P fund chinI
 yiithIkan' kbarcaan
 candI manzi diyibeas
 ropyas bah sheth
 beyi maa diyibe
 kaeNsiy baas

panditah paaNtsi baji
 daphtar neeribe
 vaapas garI kun
 residency pyaTh
 akhbaar vaelis
 heyibe dili bund
 taaZTh akhbaar
 panInis maehlas
 agah hamaamas
 vaetith khasibe
 Puj vaanas pyaTh
 "van sa ada
 vaaray chukha sa"
 "vaaray mabra
 kar'tav hukma"
 "raani maNz thav-taa
 sin paava akh"
 "dopmav mabra
 az chav aeTham
 tohi chuwna yaad"

Our own Kashmir

(Early in the morning, after his daily worship and prayers, the Pandit would come to Hari Parbat, and then to Kathi Darwaaza, a vegetable selling woman from Dal lake, Would call him, "Sir! This way! Sir, when you left your home, your wife must have surely told you to buy, green gourds from Dal lake, two bundles of radish, some brinjals, some tasty green leafy *baak*, four bundles of **pumbutch* (green lotus seeds). Sir, all this here, Sir, have kept here separately for you to carry along." "Well, that is fine my daughter, may you prosper! may your husband live long! may he have sufficient to eat!")

And then at 10 am, the Pandit would enter his office, and on top of his files, would suddenly notice an application from Mohd Shafi, there and then he would call for Mohd Shafi, and say to him, "Dear, G P fund is never spent like this." And then secretly, would handover twelve hundred rupees from his own pocket to Mohd Shafi, A secret that none would know.

At 5 pm, the Pandit would move out of his office towards his home, Buy the latest English newspaper, Published from New Delhi, From a vendor on Residency Road. Reaching his own Mohalla, Near Agha Hamaam locality, he would enter a butcher's shop," How are you dear Qadda² (Qadir)? Is all going well?" "Yes Sir, All well. My pleasure to serve, Please order what you want" "Dear give me a *paav* (250 gms) from the upper leg portion. "Sir! today is **Ashtami*, Don't you remember?"

7.2. PROSE AFTER 1990

Like poetry writers, prose writers too were the same who used to write before displacement and were well known writers especially in the genres of Drama and Short story. Such people continued to write with the same zeal and vigour. However, as in poetry, there were a few additions to this pool of prose writers and some fresh names appeared on the scene, contributed a lot in the shortest possible time and carved a niche for themselves on the canvas of Kashmiri literature. Some of the important names of prose writers who besides writing on varied subjects,

contributed a lot towards communal harmony, are mentioned here.

Makhan Lal Pandita

Makhan Lal Pandita published his first short story collection *karnaph'ur* 'Change of Times' in 2001. Pandita has a typical rural diction and stands today as a tall short story writer. He has so far published five collections of short stories. He describes his style of writing like this, (Personal communication) "My short stories bear an imprint of such Muslim farmer friends with whom I have spent considerable time during my childhood and youth. During my service I was posted out of my village but whenever I returned home, I would spent considerable time with them and chat for hours." Some excerpts from his stories are given below.

Shobavati cha goDnic herath gari nebar jemi manaavIn'. tas chu yaad pevaan yeli 1986 maNꣳ baykaaTic kaal ditsaayakh tI vostI abmId' an'oov nI vaTukh. shiin oos kaall sakh p'oومت. soa tI tasuNd necuv gayi shin maNDaan maaNDaan vostI ahmd'un garI. timan aes tsbey kariith jay tI aki dob' kin' aes' vuchaan shuuba vati Hind' yina vaTukh nini kinI na. shuubavati vuchiith dits rabti vostI ahmdis yaane khaaNvdas krakh 'aayi ho'. kaaNgIr ruTith korus shuubavati giLL, 'tse kyaaꣳ onuth nI vaTukh'. 'nabi baykaaTb oosukh na kormut'. 'maaji paethran chaa baykaaTb asaan', tami vonus. shuubavati tI ahmadn'an don baetsan tsol osh dadraayi niirith tI ahmud draav vaTukh heth patI patI. kath cha rozqaan (girdaab)

(Shobawati is celebrating her first Shivratri outside home in Jammu. She remembers that when in 1986 a call for boycott was given, Ahmed the potterman could not bring Shivratri utensils. It had snowed heavily the preceding night, and she along with her son went to Ahmed's house walking through snow. Ahmed's house had a thatched roof. Peeping through a ventilator they wondered whether Shubawati or her family would come over to take away Shivratri utensils. After spotting Shubawati, Rahat, Ahmed's wife shouted "Oh they have come." Holding the kangri in her hands, Shubawati said "why did not you bring Shivratri utensils to our home?" "Oh, was not there a boycott call?" "Can there be boycott between mother and son?" she replied. Tears

rolled down from the eyes of both Shubawati and Ahmed and his wife.) “Incidents stay on” (*girdaab*).

This extract is self-explanatory about the cordial relations both Muslims and Hindus shared in Kashmir before 1990. Following is an excerpt from his story *karnaph'ur*, when Abdullah barber visits Ramji in Jammu. They discuss the good old days they had spent in Kashmir. While replying to a query from Ramji, Abdullah mentions.

“su oos suy vakh, libaazI ti oos gatshaan, mohbath oos. von' chu vakh badhyomut. poz agar boozakh az chunI nevis p'aTb ikhtiyaar. shuris chu pevaan adbi saan peesh yun.”

(Those were good times. There was affection and concern for people. Times have changed now. Frankly speaking, one cannot rely on one's son these days. One has to show respect to even a child.)

Elaborating further on his stories Pandita says that various characters of my stories like Ahmed barbar, Ali Bhat, Akbar Dar, Abdullah potterman, Rahat Ded are not imaginative ones but real ones with whom I had direct liason and have spent considerable time. They were helpful and human. In another story ‘from hospital to home’ he shows the spirit of friendship and concern between the elder generation of the people of the two communities, like Prem Nath and Lala. The latter one regrets his son's mistreatment of Prem Nath in one of the incidents.

Mohidin Reshi

Mohidin Reshi is yet another short story writer who is famous for writing mini stories. He has won the Sahitya Academy award for his collection *aena tI aatash-2009* (Mirror and Fire, 2009). In his story *amaanat* ‘Entrusted Thing’ on the recent floods in Kashmir (2014), he has nicely depicted the Hindu-Muslim relationship when Rashid, a Muslim who has purchased an

abandoned house of a Hindu, while searching for his wife's jewellery kept in the puja room of the house after the floods, he comes across an idol of Lord Shiva. While his wife Halima tries to grab it, Rashid her husband says "no it shall be with us as *amaanath* "the entrusted thing" of the Razdan's, the original owners of house."

Roop Krishen Bhat

Roop Krishen Bhat, a linguist and short story writer has published three collections of short stories so far. Most of his short stories are written in the backdrop of militancy in the valley and the implications of displacement. Many of his stories are embedded in the deep rooted social order of Kashmiris, reflect the tendency of brotherhood, peace and simplicity of the Kashmiris and are the best examples of communal harmony. The first short story collection *harda vaav* 'Winds of Autumn' was published in 2001. It has a lead story by the same name, which represents the true picture of relations of Muslims and Hindus shared before the 90's. It is a story of two families from different communities who lived in total harmony and lived for each other. After the migration of the Hindu family from Kashmir, their house wears a desolate look. The front door facing the Muslim neighbours remains shut. Zaina Ded, the elderly lady, while staring at the door becomes nostalgic about the good old days they had shared together with their Hindu neighbours.

*aeth' soncas aes z̄i tas peyi aaNgnI apaari sedi s'od vesbi maali hINz̄i jaayi
kun naz̄ar. tas z̄an laej vaeNji kuniy thaph. yeli ti tas ath jaayi kun naz̄ar
aes pevaan, tas aes' ami jaayi hINd' baNd daari darvaaz̄I kheni z̄an
yivaan. daechun atbi thovun buth' labi dith il biiTh saNj̄udgi saan vesbi
maali hINdis darvaaz̄as vuchni. z̄aenI dedi troov z̄'uuTh voshaa. shaayad
aes sooNcaan z̄i darvaaz̄I ti chu aeti il Duun' kul ti magar vesbi maally nI
kuni buud. soa niyi z̄an shur' baets beth harda vaavan paanas saet' Dwith.*

amaa kot sana gaeyi tim saeriy veshi maal, sarvI juw, poosbi, raani, pici tI aashu?...

(She was under the same thought process when she caught sight of Veshi Maali's house across the compound. Her heart beat increased. Whenever she would have a glimpse of that house, the sight of closed doors and windows of the house would shatter her. She put her right hand close to her cheek and seriously gazed at Veshimal's door. Zaina Ded let out a sigh of grief. She perhaps thought that the door was very much there and so was the walnut tree but alas Veshimal was nowhere seen. As if autumn winds had swept her away along with all her family. She pondered over where all those Veshimal, Sarvajoo, Poshha, Rani, Pica and Rani had gone.)

Zaina Ded remembers that as a bride she had come to Sarvajuv's house first. Sarvajuv, Veshimal's husband and her husband Khala Rather were friends. After the sudden death of Khala Rather Sarvajuv saw to it that Ghulam Ahmad continues his studies and helped him seek a teacher's post. Sarvajuv's son Pushkar Nath and Ahmad were classmates and friends. For both Zaina Ded and her son Ahmad, Sarvajuv's family had done a lot of good. Ahmad's wife did not appreciate it and instead would taunt her mother-in-law for being unnecessarily worried about her Hindu neighbours. Confronting his wife, Ghulam Ahmad, Zaina Ded's son rebukes her and says,

"Isey kya patah chay yi aaNgun kya chu saani baapath. yi chu nI baTI aaNgun baelki myoon lokcaar; dedi hINdi yaavnuk babaar chu aeth' aaNgnas manz barjastI goomut. yi chu saani baey baradari huNd garah soon path kaal, soon tavariikh, tsI kya zaanakh amic kadr."

(You shall not understand the importance of this compound for us. It is not the compound of a Pandit but representative of my childhood; the spring of youth of Ded has withered away in this very compound. It is witness to our brotherhood, our past, our history. You will not understand its importance.)

The harmonious relationship between the two families of two different religious communities has been beautifully depicted in this story.

Bhat's next story in the same book *patab* 'Address', is a passionate nostalgia. Its main character Roshan has to change several rented houses in Jammu after displacement, and he remembers his good old days in Kashmir, Hamid-Ullah his teacher, Salam postman, Sultan Haji's family living on a boat, life near river Jhelum, his neighbourhood etc. The dream of his sweet memories comes to an abrupt end when his wife Tosha, spotting smoke coming out of their bedroom shouts to him, and to her question about what has happened to him, why he is lost in ideas, he murmurs "Tosha I have lost my address."

The story on the one hand depicts harsh times faced by migrants at Jammu after displacement, having lost their identity besides everything else and on the other hand recounts the good old times, communal harmony, sincerity in relations before militancy broke out in Kashmir.

In yet another story of the same book *phaarokun hands up* 'Faroq's Hands Up', the narrator speaks about the love and affection his *maasi* "mother's sister" from other community used to shower upon him while in Kashmir before displacement. The story depicts the bondage people had, irrespective of religious differences.

Roop Krishen Bhat's second short story book *ba chas kashir-2008* 'I am Kashmir', has several stories which depict the communal harmony people used to live with. In the story 'Encounter', two childhood friends Rashid and Rahul come face to face after more than a decade in an encounter, with the former as a militant and the latter an Indian army officer. An excerpt from the story is given here.

"panInis kariibi yaarI suNd haal vuchith gav rahul ti jazbaet'I panun phaRIz maeshraevith aav rasbiidas naz'diikh. rahulnis lahjas maNz aes'ajeeb hamdardii. rasbiidan troov z'nuTb phrakha, tas laaj aeshis kuniy dadraay. yi osh oos na zakbmlci daji huNd bael'ki dilici daji huNd."

(Looking at the condition of his very close friend, Rahul became emotional and forgot his duty, he came close to Rashid. Rahul's tone softened, it conveyed unique sympathy. Rashid heaved a long sigh of relief, tears rolled down his cheeks. These tears were not the result of the pain of his wounds but that of his heart.)

In other excerpts from the same story, communal harmony and mutual respect amongst people from different religions is prominently depicted, e.g.,

duniyabas maNz̤ kati chi aek'siy astaanas beNd', musalmaan tI sikh saejdl karaan. dashi gaNDaan ya prakram divan, manat maNgaan tI taebhar kbalaan. yi sooriy oos kaeshiiriy mumkin. tamiy aesis resh'vaer vanaan.

(In the entire world there is no other place where people across different communities like Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs would bow, seek boons, offers yellow rice or parikrama at the same pilgrimage place. All this was possible only in Kashmir. That is why it was called valley of Rishis.)

Some excerpts from the *pot aalav* 'The Echoes' story of this book *ba chas kaeshir* highlight the one-to-one relationships between people from two different communities.

gaphaar raethIr oos sarvI juvun hamsaay ti tI lokcaaruk jaar ti. tim aes'yi daep' zi ti akiy naall̤ zaet kadaan. doh'dobas aes' yikvaTI asaan. caabe garI kaami aashanakh ya baazIr' kaami yiman zan aes paanI vaen' kuniy aeT.

(Gafar Rather was Sarvajuv's neighbour as well as childhood friend. They were so close to each other that hardly ever would they miss out on each other's company. Whether at home or at market they would always be seen together, carrying out their daily chores.)

Next excerpt from the same story depicts the friendship Taravati had with her Muslim friends Saja and Hajra, and would remember and miss them day in and day out.

dedi peyi beyi saaji tI hajrI yaad. bargah doh kbaNd gatsbi hees timan vuchnas dapaan aasas, "tsey kya bi vuchaanly chiy nI?nazrly chakh nI gatsbaankuni. zamaanah goy saenis aalNgnas atnasly akhtiy aesity ded tI kaakh sakh yaad karaan. dapaan aes' amah taravati cha sanah vaaray. tasInzan kathan huNd chu lool aamut.

(Ded again remembered Saja and Hajra. In normal course if she would miss seeing them for a day or so they would impatiently tell her, “you are not seen at all. Why do you remain out of sight? You have not entered our compound for a long time, even Ded and Kaakh were remembering you badly. They were wondering whether Tarawati is all right. We miss talking to her.)

Taravati while in exile, on her death bed, in her murmuring voice named her Muslim friends in these words and passed away.

von' kath chivoom aalvas p'aTb aalar divaan. pakaanay chas pakaan...

(Why are you calling me again and again now. I am coming ...)

The story *panIn' il parId'* 'Own and Strangers' of the same book very nicely depicts the theme of communal harmony existing between Kanta Ji's family and that of Halima's, both of whom are living as neighbours in Indira colony Srinagar. The story reveals the extra care Halima's family took of Kanta after Kanta's husband was killed in an accident. The closeness between two families is nicely knit into this story. However, after the displacement of Kashmiri Hindus, Kanta is forced to live with her son in Mumbai but misses her home and her neighbours day in and day out. She compares the two communities of neighbours and people, those of Mumbai and Kashmir, and craves to return to Kashmir, her real home. She is thrilled when one day she receives an invitation card from Halima regarding the marriage ceremony of Halima's daughter Firdoos in Kashmir and prepares to attend the same. The following excerpts from the story throw light on such a relationship.

liphaphuk patab pariib badleyi kaNta ji hINz caal Daally. tas ph'uur buthis beyi rang h'w. liphaphas maNz oos saallkaad. yi oos phirdoosni khaaNdruk davat naaml. phirdoos aes kaNta ji hINz khaas vesi il hamsaay baayi haliimIn' kuur. yiman paNtsan vaeriyen kaNtaji kaeshiri panInis makaanas maNz kuniy zaen' rozuan aes jimay maaji koori zI aasI tas vaer' gaNdiib shoNgni yivaan. pozay buuziv yibINdiy darmI hec soa tati kuniy zaen' ruuzitb. kaNta ji oos haliimun boD absaan. amiy aes yi

phirdoosas koori bINd' paeTh' rachaan. von' yeli phirdoosas kbaNdar oos asuNd saalas gatsbun oos laezimi. aekhr aes koori bINz jaay.

(After reading the sender's name on the envelope Kanta Ji's composure (mode) changed, her face lit up with joy. It contained an invitation card. It was the invite of Firdosa's marriage. Firdosa was the daughter of Kanta Ji's close friend and neighbour Halima. The five years Kanta Ji had stayed alone in her house, one of these very mother and daughter duo would come to take care of her (sleep in her house) during nights. Truly speaking, it is because of them that she was able to stay alone over there. Kanta Ji was truly indebted to Halima. That is why she would take care of Firdosa like her own daughter. Now that Firdosa was getting married she was obliged to attend the marriage ceremony. After all Firdosa was like her own daughter.)

tas p'av yaad z'i yeli aki phiri tas(kaNta ji) TayphaiD korun timI maaji koori kithIkani aasI tas vaari vaari Dekas p'aTh sarId aabI paci thanaan. barabar aekis baphtas kaerhas daayi bInd' paeTh' timaardaeri. su saath kati mashi tas. tami doha lajaayi saarinIy mohI valen zantI rey. mahluk mahI aayaav tsasith. Kaetya jaan luukh chi tati adaa yorIk'. aekh vari oos kaNta ji bambyi aamtis goomut. yath vaeriyas maNz laejnl tas patab z'i timan yim z'I garI hamsaay chi timan kya chu naav tI kya chi karaan. yim ti gaeya luukh, asi kati banan tim panIn' hamsaay.

(She remembered how once when she was down with typhoid, this mother and daughter duo would cover her forehead with ice. For one full week they served her like a servant. How can she forget that. At that time the entire Mohalla was put on alert and they came to enquire about her health. How good are the people over there, unlike those of this place. It is more than a year now that Kanta Ji has been living here in Mumbai. During this one full year she could not even know the names of the two neighbours; they do not have to talk about their professions. Do such people deserve to be called humans? Nowhere else shall we find people like our neighbours we had in Kashmir, Kanta murmurs with sorrow.)

Kanta Ji argues with her son in these words.

me haa chi tim vaeNsi bInd' hamsaay, panInyan bIndi kbhootI ti zyaaDI hamdard, me ha chu gatsbun. tob' yiyitav ya matI yiyi tav. bi kaDI panIn'an paeNsan tikaTh.

(For me my age old neighbours are very important. They are much more sympathetic to me than my own relations. I have to go, whether you come or not, I can buy my own ticket.)

Omkar N Koul

Omkar N Koul, a linguist, has written two collections of short stories. In his short story *tas ma laej maen' nazār* "Look May Hurt" in his collection *Mulaakaat* (2001), he describes a scene in which an over-crowded passenger bus is stonned by agitating mob and a young Hindu woman sitting on the bonnet of the bus with her child, falls down and is badly injured. She is shocked and blood oozes out from the injuries on her face. Consoling her, a young Muslim fellow passenger utters these words,

*fikir ma kar aes'ay tse baey chiy, musulmaan ta baTI chi saeriy biviy, aesay
zuv dimav caani baapath.*

(‘Do not you worry, we are your brothers. Muslims and Pandits are all same people. We can sacrifice our lives for your sake.’)

In his other short story entitled *kaensi buuzus nI* "No one listened to her" in the same collection, Zeba, a Muslim illiterate woman, requests her neighbor Mohanlal, a teacher, to teach her son Rashid for his tenth class examination. He agrees and refuses to take any fee. Rashid does well in his studies. In the meantime, the militancy spreads in the valley and Hindus become their soft targets. Scared of the worsening situation, all the ten households of Hindus in a Muslim majority village, decided to leave the village for unknown destination. The author writes:

*yeli yemi gaamI manzI hendev b'ot tsalun, swa aes a'kisiy a'kisIy zaarIpaarI
karaan zji panun garIbaar il gaam traevith ma tsalin. 'aey dimav tubundi
baapath panun zuv taam. gvaDI maaran tim asi il patI twahi. magari
afsuus kaensi buuzus nI. (When the Hindus prepared to leave the village,
she started begging each and everyone not to leave their homes and hearths.*

She would say, we (Muslims) will give our lives to save you. First they'll have to kill us before they can touch you, but no one listened to her."

After a few days when militants from neighbouring looted the deserted houses and burnt them, Zeba was furious and abused the militants loudly. The result was her son Rashid was killed in a neighbouring village within a few days.

In a similar short story entitled *kbata* 'Fault' in his collection *Aekbri faesII* (2009), Omkar Koul describes the incident in a remote village where there was one Hindu family amidst hundreds of Muslim households. When the valley was engulfed by militancy, one morning there was a notice written outside their house and shop warning them to leave the village immediately leaving all their property, otherwise they will be killed. Worried about the situation, some Muslim neighbours gathered and started talking among themselves in whispers. In the meantime, their Muslim neighbor Zaina was furious and started abusing the militants who had put up the notice. Koul describes the incident in these words:

luukh aesy tswasur gwasur karanly zi Zaina vaeets aangnas manz tI tsaaren notice lekhan vaalen baji baji lekI. tas laeg' gaamIk' ziTb' samjaavni zi yiman chunI kenb parvaay. magar zainan kaer na tshwapI. vijay kumarn tI phuulan ti samjaev, 'asi chunI kaanh parvaay, tsI mI gaabar, aesy nay traavav garI baar. aesy gatsbav kot twahi traevith. gatsbav kas nish? yi bani ti bani yetiy....zaenan yeli masaa masaa tshwapI kaer, phuulan tsaeny panun garI tI caevIn caay tI toornas phikri zi aeziky haalaath vuchith pazIhaan nI tas krakI dini tI lekI tsaarni.

(The gathered people were whispering among themselves, Zaina entered the compound and started abusing those who had pasted the notice outside their house. The village elders started assuring her that the family need not worry at all, but Zaina continued abusing the militants. Vijay Kumar and Phoola too told her, 'we will be safe, don't worry about us we will not leave our home, where will we go and to whose home? Whatever is in our fate we will face it here.' Zaina stopped crying. Phoola took her inside the home and served her tea and told her keeping in view the delicate situation she should not have hurled abuses.)

The next morning the news spread like wild fire that Zaina was killed during the night itself. The whole village mourned her death and no one cooked or ate food till the police arrived and her bullet-ridden body was buried. Vijay Kumar and Phoola were upset as she had sacrificed her life for them. They felt now all the people are scared and have started avoiding them. The next day early in the morning Vijay Kumar and Phoola left the village after locking their house and shop for unknown destination.

Mehfooza Jan

Mehfooza Jan an Associate Professor in the P.G. Department of Kashmiri, University of Kashmir is a poet, short story writer, and critic. In one of her short stories entitled *ebsaas* "Feelings", (*Vaakb-42*) she depicts the age-old mutual trust between the two communities of Kashmir. Khaliq Vagey the gardener employed by a Kashmiri Pandit for his orchard continues to work in his orchard after the Pandit's death and even after the exodus of his employer's wife to Jammu along with other Kashmiri Pandits. She continues to pay him salary and he takes care of the orchard. After the death of the Pandit lady with a sunstroke in Jammu, when a Muslim neighbor suggests Khaliq Vagey to get the orchard transferred into his name by bribing the Patwari, he outrightly refuses and curtly says, "This orchard and the Chinar tree inside it which the Pandits used to nourish with dedication was of no use to them, they went on their way leaving everything behind, of what use shall all this be to me." Khaliq Vagey is in no mood to usurp the property belonging to his masters i.e. the Pandits and turns down the suggestion of his neighbour. Such a blunt reply leaves the neighbor remorseful and shameful.

Novel

Chaman Lal Hakhoo has written two important novels in the post-displacement era, *Nangi PathIr* 'Valley of the Naked' and *Vosturvanuk sIb* 'Lion of Vosturvan'. In his words, "The phenomenon of harmony in Kashmiri Hindu-Muslim relationships, popularly described as Kashmiriat, that has roots in the antiquity and continues to be a part of the general psyche of the Kashmiri people even today, is aptly and objectively dealt with in various ways in the modern Kashmiri literature."

Vosturvanuk sIb is considered a monumental work, a historical account mostly dealing with the balancing act of a love-hate relationship between Muslims and Pandits of the valley of Kashmir. For Muslims there was no problem but the Pandits always nursed belief and disbelief in equal measure.

In the first chapter of the novel, the mystery of this relationship is unfolded when Sheikh Mohammad Abdulla announced at the Dargah, for instance,

“...And remember, not a Muslim nation, nor a Pandit nation, nor a Sikh nation, nor Christian nor Bhudhist nation, ... a Kashmiri nation... our journey is one, our goal is one, our behavior is one, our reaction is one...” (P. 33)

This is surely a political dimension of the Kashmiriat which got manifested in various ways in the years that followed. In the same context Sheikh says: “Kashmiris have one constitution, *Naya Kashmir*. Kashmiris have one faith, Islam... fraternity... brotherhood. Kashmiris have one faith – freedom from aristocracy, freedom from Maharaja’s rule. Kashmiris have one path, path of struggle, peaceful struggle, peaceful disobedience, peaceful protest, peaceful boycott. Our journey is a long one, our journey is difficult, our pathfinder is Islam, our inspiration is the Holy Quran, our beacon is Mahatma Gandhi; Mahatma Gandhi’s Ahinsa or nonviolence will light our path, I

say, stand on your legs, my Kashmiri brothers, my Muslim brothers, my Hindu brothers, arise, open your eyes, Kashmiri youth, rise and say: This Kashmir is Ours.”

Thus the tone of the novel is set for an equal status and opportunity for Kashmir Muslims and Pandits in the new political dispensation.

Maybe that piece was a political necessity but novelist Hakhoo has adequately delineated the subject of religious and cultural harmony on the societal level in the novel. Here is a sequence that unmasks the weaknesses and strengths of a Hindu-Muslim relationship in the dialogues between two Muslim women in the village where Pandit Dinanath worked and lived as a revenue official.

Ashim was intelligent (P.50). Purposefully, she cried from the kitchen: “O, Pandit, hot tea is ready in the Somavar, the morning cold has reddened your running nose, your face is only partially visible from under you skull woolen cap. Look, I say, have a couple of cups of the hot brew, that certainly will not make you impure, even if it does, have a bath in the Gupt-ganga spring, that will revive your purity, and if you survive the cold you can go straight to the heavens.”

Dinanath shouted back: “Now, listen, my sister, do not try to make me sick by thinking about right and wrong, when I was young and blood was warmer, that was the time to convert to Islam, now in this old age whatever am I supposed to gain.”

Sometimes the relationship looks strange. It is interesting to note the following piece. (P.57) between a pragmatic Muslim and a Hindu strategist.

Abdul Samad faced Dinanath and said, “It is a fact that we Muslims are in a majority, but the reality is that a crowd cannot solve problems, strategy does; scholarship shows you are on the

right path, when two of us, a pious Pandit and a pragmatic faithful Musalman put their heads together we will surely succeed, there is no doubt that you are an exceptionally intelligent person, you are educated, worldly wise, experienced; you and me, we do something, you tell me what to do, I shall certainly do it, find a way out, I am with you, the whole village is with you, please, have a quick bath, a prolonged Pooja, get ready, I am waiting for you.”

The bond, the emotion, the companionship between the members of the two communities on the societal level or rather on the domestic level ultimately got translated into a sound political thought. The following passages (PP-517, 518, 519) may be seen as a pertinent example.

10th May 1944, Mohammad Ali Jinnah thundered in Partap park in Srinagar: “The source and strength of Muslims’ independence is the acceptance of the two nation theory.” Elsewhere, Sheikh Abdullah retorted: “True source of our independence is the unity of Hindus and Muslims.”

Pandits and Muslims hugged each other. Muslims shouted: Adam had two sons, one opted for the grave and the other for cremation.

Dinanath declared in a speech at Ganpatyar temple: “It is possible that the slogan is a temporary measure, but we Pandits have a hope.”

After one hour, on the stage at Jamma Masjid, Jinnah declared: “For Muslims, there is one Kalima, one platform, one flag.”

Dina Nath was in distress. He said to Ahmad lone: “What is happening! Will Muslims accept Jinnah or the Hindu-Muslim unity slogan of Sher-i-Kashmir!”

“Do not be so weak hearted, Pandit,” said Ahmad Lone, “Soon, you will witness the fall of this irreligious Jinnah. We are Kashmiris, not Arabians, nor Persian, nor Toorani, nor Dahalvi, we are Kashmiris, pure pious Kashmiris ...” Sheikh Abdullah spoke at a Pandits’ function at Sheetalnath: “...Pandits’ fate is the fate of Muslims. If a Muslim prospers, Hindus too shall. Muslims are a working class, they gave a fitting reply to Jinnah at Baramulla where he was hooted and chased out of the valley.”

According to R. L. Shant, an eminent short story writer, (Personal communication) “As we know in post-90’s Kashmir, sense of togetherness and tolerance among common people suffered the most even though they were only prey to actions of others. In my short story *tshen-2005* ‘Dis-connect’, for example, loss of mutual confidence in general becomes a major reference point. But in stories written prior to 90’s such confidence is seen as losing ground by the day, for the reason that obviously this loss is more evident in the security perception of the minorities. But the façade of mutual trust had a centuries old tradition to stand on. That is why references to such trust (pre-90) are balanced. Post-90’s these become more defined, pointing to an emerging mistrust. “Shant further elaborates that, “the exodus of the 90s exposed the fragile connecting thread in spite of strong traditions of relationship. While *tshen* systematically shows that the disconnect is not only psychological, but real and physical.” The sea change in ‘the connect’ has eroded natural human traditions of love, care and concern that existed before.

7.3. CONCLUSION

Communal harmony of Kashmiris is unparalleled in the history of India, despite many significant aberrations and onslaughts resulting in violence, pain, anguish, destruction and mass displacements of people. The beauty of human relations in this

part of India is that the majority of people in both the communities are peace loving and God fearing. They are ready to share each other's worries, miseries and problems and left to themselves would like to live in peace and amity. However, it is sad that the politics of the Indian sub-continent does not guarantee that.

I would like to close my description with a poem by one of the good poets of the contemporary period, Ashok Gauhar, who, having lived through pain and misery of displacement for about twenty-six years, still aims and prays for that age-old communal harmony to return amidst the two major communities of Kashmir. This poem is a real tribute to communal harmony in Kashmiri literature by a displaced poet that would help close this book with an optimistic note.

yi kya gav "What has happened"-(unpublished)
zæenith cha moklaevmIt's panIn' pahchaan yi kya gav
insaanIsund dushman banyov insaan yi kya gav
meNdis sberiikb harphas gava aes'hend'ta musalmaan
nam maaaz doan jisman andar kunny jaan yi kya gav
cha doan sbur'an hInz mooj kuniy butraath apuz cha
baarIn' baneyi az aek aekis mehmaan yi kya gav
soa nek naemi saen' su miltsaar be misaal
badnaam revayath cha dar jahaan yi kya gav
akeb sbar su aNgun beyi banun goish soon saman bal
mas myul vuchith pholi be zameen asmaan yi kya gav
petrun yi maa dushmanas yus phaas traevith gav
soonuy janath jahnam aesiy lallvaan yi kya gav
vath beki alag aesith magar maenzil ta kunny oos
tseti maa moThuy kboada ta me bagvaan yi kya gav
miltsaarI bapath kyaazi chu sabraav caman soon
garhar judaeyi kavI banith zolaan yi kya gav

(Deliberately we have finished our identity. One human being became an enemy of another human being. We are witness and party to every action of each other. We are like nail and flesh of two bodies in one life. The mother of two children is the same land, is it not true? Brothers have become each other's guests, what has happened? That fame of ours and that exemplary brotherhood. That reputation is spoiled across the world, what

has happened? It is not the enemy's botheration who sowed the seeds of disintegration. My only desire is that the compound should once again become our meeting point. The land and sky would have become joyous seing our integration, what has happened? Our heaven has turned into hell; only we are bothered, what has happenend? Routes could be different but the destination is the same. Perhaps you forgot your God and me mine, what has happened? Why has our garden turned into a desert for want of integration? Oh Gauhar, why has our separation chained us, what has happened?)

NOTES

1. *Pambuch* is the fresh variety of seeds held inside the green shell of a lotus flower. These seeds are soft, watery, white, and sweet to taste. About twenty seeds are generally held on a spongy green bulb. Once exposed to heat and air, the shell of the seeds turns hard and black and the soft white seed inside dries up and changes its colour to yellowish brown. In Kashmir these lotus seeds are eaten raw. A good amount of dried lotus seeds are used by Kashmiri Pandits as *Homa Samagri* (Material for burning in a sacred fire or Yajna Agni).
2. *Qadda* is a short name used for Ghulam Qadir in Kashmir.
3. *AsbTami*. Eighth day of Bikrami calendar considered auspicious by Hindus. Kashmiri Pandits do not consume any non-vegetarian food on certain days, specifically Tuesday, Ashtami, and many other auspicious days. Pandit ladies eat only one meal on *AsbTami* after cleaning the kitchen and washing all the utensils afresh. Ashtami Fast in a Pandit household is a part of Kashmiri Pandit tradition and culture.

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