HUMANIST VALUES IN KASHMIRI POETRY: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

Mushtaq Ahmad Zargar (Muntazir)

Kashmir has been, historically speaking, a land of spiritual catholicity, tolerance and humanism. Its culture is an intermix of South Asian, West Asian, Iranian and Central Asian strands and patterns of living and behavior. It has had a Hindu and Buddhist past upto 13th century A.D. thereafter; it was influenced by Islamic world view and value system. The Iranian and Central Asian Sufis migrated to the valley and propagated Islamic beliefs and values thereby converting an overwhelming majority of Kashmiris to Islamic way of life. Abdul Rahman Bulbul Shah, a central Asian Suharwardia saint and Mir Syed Ali Hamadani, an Iranian Kubravi saint, did play a pioneering role in this regard during 14th century A.D. Thus Islam was introduced in the valley by Sufis and saints, whose spiritual approach and catholic outlook oriented Kashmiri people to a humanistic ethos. During subsequent centuries, thousands of central Asian and local Sufis inculcated norms of tolerance and humanism, among the people of the valley.

The impact of Sufism on Kashmiri poetry has been immense. The Vedanta Philosophy & Buddhism had already oriented Kashmiri mind to an appropriation of mystical interpretation of life. Sufism gave an additional impetus to this approach. It directed Kashmiri mind to an appropriation of such values as catholicity, tolerance, human brotherhood, spiritual fellowship, pluralism, liberalism and inclusivism and specially to an appropriation of the philosophy of WAHDAT- UL- WAJUD originally propounded by Ibn-Arabi, a thirteenth century Spanish Sufi philosopher of exceptional spiritual Catholicity. It oriented the Sufi poets to horizontal and pluralistic

Lalla Ishwari and Sheikh Nurud-din wali popularly known as Nundi Rishi, were local spiritual leaders who guided the people through their vernacular. They were distinguished poets of Kashmiri language and inspired thousands of Kashmiri Sufis, many of whom wrote sufi poetry themselves. Prominent among them were Habibullah Nawshahri, Ropi Bhawani, Mahmood Gami, Shah Gafoor, Waliullah Motto, Abdul Ahad Nazim, Rahman Dar, Shamas Faqir, Abdul Ahad Nadim, Wahab Parray Hajini, Wahab Khaar, Wazzi Mahmood, Krishan Joo Raazdaan, Azizullah Haqqani, Parmanand, Maqbool Shah Krallwari, Master Zindi Koal, Samad Mir and Ahad Zargar.

The Vedanta Philosophy as culled out from Upanishads through the Brahma sutra of Badaryana by Shankar Acharya, Ramanuja Acharya and others, has a Kashmiri Version as well. The Kashmir Shavism or Trika philosophy is also one of the formulations of Vedanta as evolved in the historical and cultural context of Kashmir. Lalla Ashveri was committed to this basic vision of Kashmiri formulation of Vedanta philosophy.

The composite culture of Kashmir is rooted in diverse Ideological, Theological, Philosophical and Spiritual traditions. The prehistoric intimations and the earliest historical clues suggest that ancient Kashmiries were deeply steeped into tribal rituals, customs and practices. With the passage of time, the risis from mainland India impacted the original inhabitants of Kashmir. Consequently, ancient people of Kashmir were converted to Hindu beliefs, values, rituals & practices. With the advent of Buddhism, Kashmir became a center for Buddhist learning and Scholarship. The majority of the people of the valley became followers of Buddhism. However, around 12th century A.D the people of the Kashmir were reconverted to Hindu beliefs & modes of worship. During early 14th century A.D, the Central Asian Sufis & Saints started orienting the

people of the valley to Islamic beliefs, values and practices. At the end of the 14th century, the majority of the kashmiris were wedded to Islamic view & way of life. As Islam during 14th century was propagated by Sufis from central Asia & Persia, the Kashmiri people naturally appropriated the Sufi version and interpretation of Islamic beliefs and values.

The cumulative impact of all these traditions fructified into an eclectic Kashmiri mindset. The basic orientation of Kashmiri art & thought was dictated by Sufi beliefs & values in continuation with the archetypes rooted in Hindu-Buddhist Collective Unconscious. In view of the same, the Kashmiri poetry pioneered by Lall Ded (a Trika Vedantin) and Shaikh Nuru-din (a Muslim risi) in 14th century A.D too was oriented to an exploration of spiritual questions & concerns of life.

Lall Ded (14th century A.D) was an accomplished Vedantin & subscribed to a non-dualistic interpretation of Reality. For Lal Ded, Brahman, Atman & Brahmanad are non-dualistically oriented into a relationship of identity. The plurality, multiplicity & diversity are mere appearance. When we are liberated from the fetters of Maya, we realize that the only reality is Brahman. From this monistic vision flows the universalistic vision of religion in which all historical, geographical, racial, cultural, societal, political, economic & sexual differences are resolved into spiritual fellowship leading to an inculcation and appropriation of such humanist values as love, compassion, tolerance, equality, liberty & fraternity. The following verses of Lal Ded incorporate a scintillating and illuminating humanist vision and mission:

Shiv chui thali thali ro:za:n

Moza:n hiyund ti musalma:n

Truk hai chukh ti pa:n panun par za:n

Sui chai sa:hibas za:ni: za:n

God is immanently All-pervading, Do not think in terms of Hindu and Muslim, realize your essence if you are spiritually attuned. That will lead you to God-realisation

Lall bo: tsa:yes soman ba:ghi baras Vuchim shivas shakath mi:lith ti wah, Tati: lai karim amriti saras Zindai maras ti me: kari kiya

Me! Lalla earnestly entered into the spritual sanctum sanctorum, found shiva and shakti blissfully embracing each other. There I was permeated with spritual nectar. I do die while living and fear no loss thereof.

Latan hund ma:z la:ryo:m vatan Aki: ha:vnam akici: vath Yim yim bo:zan tim ko:ni matan Lalli bu:z shetan kuni: kath

I underwent deepest spiritual agony in my quest for truth, then my master showed me the path to one lord. Anyone listening to me must of necessity fall into ecstasy. The mystery of all mysteries was divulged to Lalla.

Sheikh Nuru-din wali typically represents the composite ethos and culture of Kashmir. Born in the 4th quarter of 14th century A.D, his birth synchronized with the mass conversion of Kashmiri society to Islamic beliefs, values & practices. Sheikh was an illiterate man but he symbolized the native genius of Kashmir. He was nurtured in classical Rishi tradition of Kashmir and was powerfully impacted by the Sufi beliefs, values and practices as well. Sheikh was a life-long seeker and mystical practitioner of the highest order. In his poetry, he emphasized on such values as piety, godliness, self-control, tolerance, human brotherhood & compassion. He also launched a frontal attack on the formalities espoused and prac-

HUMANIST VALUES IN KASHMIRI... Mushtaq Ahmad Zargar (Muntazir) ticed by the theologians of 15th century A.D Kashmir. Conversely, he emphasized on the appropriation of mystical experience leading to the realization of soul and God.

Za:th grashuth kiya : chui so:da: Za:th grashuth kiya muda chui Za:th no: tho:vnai qabi:li juda: Sa: rinie bronh gada: chui

What is there in caste, and ancestry is pointless; caste and tribe are not a mark of honour, Pious and righteous people rank topmost

Sa:ri samhao ak'sie razi lamhao Adi kiyazi ravihe: kahan ga:o

If we could all assemble and pursue the same goals, we would save ourselves from disintegration.

Al'ma porvo: vophike haosai Tshalas chiv za:ga:n akis akh Chivi chiv a:mit ' mi:th ti masai Potsh lotsh Di:shith yiva:n tsakh Kav, chu: guma:ni as chi kha: sai Tatino moklev sa:si manzi akh

You seek knowledge to fill your stomach, you play tricks against each other, you are lost in of grandeur, you do not tolerate the presence of the guest. How do you deem yourselves special? Not one of you amongst thousands will be delivered on the day of judgement.

Kunh yiyi tse:kun be:gharzaye: Kas a:si dilas tiyuth vusath Jantiki tamah ti doz khini baye: Dayi chi: kara:n yaba: dath.

Who will bow to Thee without a personal motivation thereof? Whose heart will be that wide and large? God they bow to Thee for the reward of heaven and fear of hell.

Yath Vavi ha:le: tsoong kus zale:

Ti:li kanî zo:lmas ilim ti di:n Prakath tra:vith sokath pa:le: Sorui ilim chhus Alif la:m Me:m

Who would have lightened up a lamp across this furious wind, I placed the oil of God-realization and faith in it. Who would give up ways of devil and appropriate ways divine, all knowledge is comprised of Alif La:m Mi:m.

Hazrati a:dam mo:lo: Ami hava: tati: a:vo: Adi kati vepan du:mb tsrolo: Kolas ham kol kiya: hedvo:

Adam is the father of the entire mankind, Mother Eve was also derived from Adam and then how can we classify people into high caste & low caste. How can fellow human beings denigrate one another?

Akis ma:lis ma:ji hinden Yiman die: thavith kiya:e Musalma:nan kya: vi henden Kar bandan to:shi khuda:e

Children of the same parents can ill-afford hating one another. If Muslims and Hindus indulge in mutual hatred, How can God be pleased with them.

Yath dunyahas za:th ha:vith kiya: me:li: Gatsi: cha:k adijan yeli kha:k me:li:

Zath yus dapa:n za:th chhe miya:ni: Tas agil ti bod da:ni: mo

What would you get by displaying high caste tantrums? Your bones will be pulverized after you are buried in the crust of the Earth. Whosoever claims to be the only highborn, Is surely devoid of reasoning and wisdom.

Par zanen kandi karakh na:limati: Kandi karakh yim mat' khaya:l Ba:zri no moli me:la:n ya:vun yati: Kandiyo tsi ka:tsas kinakh lal

O! Man, you would love to embrace women folk not wedded to you, You would love to indulge in sensual amusements. You cannot purchase youthfulness in the marketplace here. Why to exchange pearls against the siliceous substance.

Su chhuni vucha:n qi:las ti qa:las Su chhu vucha:n dilkis ha:las kun Zikri haq par zev dith ta:las Dev ra:zi honz yi: za:las kun

God is not interested in formalities of behavior. He takes into consideration only the condition of human heart. Remember God is the depth of your being, so that you realize your spiritual destiny.

The philosophical or theosophical formulations of Ibn-Arabi have inaugurated an anti-establishmentarian response in the entire Islamic world. The onto-cosmological doctrine of Ibn-Arabi is acclaimed as "Unity of Being" or WAHDAT- UL- WAJUD. While monotheism stresses the absolute unity of God, Ibn-Arabi underlines the absolute unity of all things in God. Accordingly, for Ibn-Arabi, the multiple religions are various interpretations of the cosmic situation. Our differing conceptions of God and religion are a function of our differing conceptualizations dictated by our historical & cultural dynamics. All religions as multiple versions of the Absolute

HUMANIST VALUES IN KASHMIRI... Mushtaq Ahmad Zargar (Muntazir) are equally true.

The Sufis inspired by the vision of Ibn-Arabi, turned out to be great humanists. They traveled across Asia, Africa & Europe and developed cordial relations with Christians, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, Confucians and Pagans. The men of God mingled with all irrespective of caste, creed, gender, race and culture. Their hospices became therapeutic centres to suffering humanity. The impact of Ibn-Arabi's WAHDAT-UL-WAJUD, was registered by Kashmiri Sufi poets with exceptional zeal & zest.

Most of these Sufi poets have been inspired by the philosophy of Wahdatul Wajud. The cultural Unconscious of Kashmiri people had already been deeply inspired by Vedanta, Buddhism and Shaivism. Sheikh Nur-ud-Din's Kashmiri poetry and Persian poetry in general deeply oriented Kashmiri people to an espousal of humanist values through an appropriation of pantheistic vision in Kashmiri poetry.

Meno zo:n huma o:s Me gari o:s Shahansha Kas vani dushman kas vani do:s Pani ba o:s baha:nai

(Sochhi Kra: I)

I could not fathom the doctrine of Pantheism, For the Lord of the Universe is embosomed into my very being. Whom to regard an enemy and whom to consider a friend. He is ultimately real and I am just an appearance.

Me vuchh har sha:yi su Ya:r, chhuno: kanh moyti kha:le: Vanie bo: Seeri asraar, yino: a:sakh voba:li.

(Shams Faqi:r)

I found my Beloved all-pervading, Not an atom is devoid of Her. I would reveal to you the ultimate secret, perchance you might turn

Bie andri nibri chhus pu:shi:di ra:z Kas kari sajdi tae kas pari nima:z

(Ahad Zargar)

My interior and exterior constitute ultimate hidden secret of the Universe. Whom should I prostrate before and pray?

This vision has led to the emergence, articulation and appropriation of values of tolerance, freedom, pluralism, love and empathy; the values appropriated and propagated by the Sufis across the history of Islam. In fact Sufism in tandem with poetry has been the main spiringwell of humanist values in the ongoing march of Islamic civilization. The contemporary Kashmiri mindset is essentially oriented to and directed by the world-view and value-system espoused by Sufis. The present chapter is addressed to an exploration and analysis of the value-system incorporated into the Sufi poetry of Kashmir.

The romantic poetry in Kashmiri literature starts with Haba Khatun culminating into 20th century Mahjoor and post Mahjoorian ongoing era. From the metaphysical mystical outpourings of Lalla Ded and moral/spiritual exhortations of Sheikh Noor-ud-Din wali, Haba Khatun's lilting earthiness, a paradigm-shift of substance as well as style is negotiated and registered in the annals of literary history of Kashmir. While Lalla Ded is deeply theocentric, Haba Khatun is manifestly homocentric. The emotional content of Haba Khatun's poetry is in stark contrast to devotional content of Lalla Ded's poetry. Lalla Ded and Sheikh Noor-ud-Din display a deep and abiding quest for absorption into what is ultimately real. Haba Khatun's poetry signifies perennial human need of search for mutual affection and interpersonal togetherness. This shift of perspective orientates Kashmiri mind towards human concerns, interests, aspirations, hopes as well as failures, frustrations, anxieties and

struggles. In Haba Khatun's poetry we feel for the first time that man is not merely a moral agent of responsibilities and duties, he is entitled to seeking a measure of love and happiness. Her pangs of separation burst into the following folksy and earthy stanzas:

Tsi kamyu: soni miyani bram dith niyu:nakho: Tse kihozi gayi: miya:n' die

Which co-wife deluded you into love Why have you grown allergic to me

Shra:vnas shi:n zan bo: gala:n a:yes
Ya:vni phoj me: hi:
Chonuy bagh tai tsie volo: chha:va:n
Tse kihozi gayi: miya:n' die

Like summer-snow I went on meltingMy youth bloomed into a flowerIt is your and it is for you to bliss out in it Why have you grown allergic to me.

Bi chhasae zami:n tsi chhukh asma:nie Si:ras tsi chhukh sarpo: shBi chhasae niya:math tsi chhukh mezma:nae Chha:v miya:n' da:nie po:sh

I am earth and you are the heaven
You provide cover to my hidden secrets
I am the feast and you the guest of honor
Enjoy the pomegranate flowers of my youth

Vali ves' gatshvae kretshe: Luki mat' kadnas retshe: Timan te: miyon hiu: gatshe: Volo: miya:ni poshe: madno:

Come on friends let us go hunting knap weed (vegetable)

The people have been taunting us around Would that they too experience my agony Come on my flowering friends

Romanticism is the basic response of Mahmood Gami's poetry. It is the driving force of his poetic personality. He is a lover of both human and natural beauty. His poetry demonstrates his inner restlessness; His pangs of separation, his quest for communion, his search for self-fulfillment, in psychological frustrations and his personal isolation are characterizing features of his romantic approach to persons, affairs and events. It seems that Mahmood Gami has lost something most adorable and his poetry is an endless celebration of his ideal beloved. Mahmood's ceaseless search for ideal beauty orientates him towards creative freedom, love, compassion and empathy so central to the articulation and crystallization of a genuine system of humanist values:

Asta:e Asta:e ba:gi babir vothra:vas tae

Kongi kostu:r' mushki kofori tan na:vas tae

With ineffable love I would throws flower-petals of the garden in his wayl would groom his body in saffron and camphor perfumes

Ma:las ti mokhtas mangi kiya roni da:ma:nastae Sa:zas ti sormas kari kiya yeth sa:ma:nastae Tas nae khosh a:v adi kas kiyut pa:ravas tae Gatshtae ves' ya:r antan astae astae

Of what use is wealth, pearls and ornamental garments What for this music, decorations and were withal of life What for the embellishment if it does not gladden him Go get my friend by slow and steady persuasion.

Gachhi kuthisie tha:vae vothra:vith Lachhi na:viyo: karae intiza:r

Achhi da:r zan ro:zae pa:ra:vith Manina:vithantan ya:r

I shall get the drawing room done up
I shall go on weighting for the lord.
I shall do up myself like a doll
Persuade my darling friend and get him

hereSoni sund za:npa:ni mokhtiv ja:lar Sadfuk karhas pa:e lo:lo: Rokhsa:r ho:vnam kha:bi a:yi:nas Za:jinas ashqini kra:ye: lo:lo:

I would get a golden palanquin done up with a cover of pearls for he I would fix its footwork with oyster shells

.She showed her splendor to me in the dream

And burnt me in the hellfire of love.

and' and' phyu:rus ba:las
Valnae a:s kand' za:las
Atino moklan paye:
Gam chhum ya:r ma: ra:ve:

I circumambulated mountains
I got entangled into a network of pin pikes
One just cannot liberate oneself from here
Alas I might loose my friend.

Rasul Mir is perhaps the most outstanding romantic poet of Kashmir. He is a turning point in the onward march of romantic and humanist values in Kashmiri poetry. Rasul Mir's unalloyed aesthetic experiences are profoundly axiogenatic and value-centric. One of the characterizing features of Rasul Mir's poetry has been his delightful delineations of the features of his beloved. By celebrating the tresses, eyes, lips, nose, neck, figure, gait, caprices, innuendos etc of the beloved, Rasul Mir is projecting a humanist value system by recourse to sophisticated hermeneutical strategies. The follow-

Rosul Chhu Za:nith di:n-o mazhab rokh ti zulf cho:n
Kavi za:ni kiya gov kufur tae isla:m niga:ro:
Your countenance is Rasul's religion, your tresses his sacred
law Wherefore should he care then for Kufur and Islam?
Bomi chani mehra:bi masjid roye: cho:n rashke: sanam
Don achhan tal jalvigar chhum ka:bi tae butkha:ni cho:n
Your eyebrows are the arch of Kaba and your face outshines the beauty of Idols.

The splendor of Kaba and temple are simultaneously under the gauge of my eyes.

Qad cho:n alif la:m zulf mi:m dahan cho:n Por agli sabag shakli alif la:m niga:ro:

Your fit ure is like 'Alif', tresses are like 'la:m' and mouth is like 'mi:m'. Human reason is accordingly instructed in letters 'alif', 'la:m' and 'mi:m'.

Za:i` va:nkan ba:l yeli la:gi shuma:r Pachh lagnas ganzirnas lachh tae haza:r Ami sha:yi no: moklan pa:ye: lo:lo: Rindi poshi ma:l gindine: dra:yi lo:lo:

If she takes up counting her treses
It will take millions of fortnights thereof
Here there is no chance of liberation, wow, wow
The insolent lovely gale is out on the way to play.

Following Haba Khatun and Rasul Mir, romanticism in Kashmiri poetry culminates into Mahjoor's poetic narratives. Mahjoor was not oriented to sufi poetic hermeneutics. He was directly or unambiguously a fully-fledged romantic poet celebrating terrestrial beauty both human and natural. He talked of rose gardens, colorful horizons, luxuriant jungles, green fields, transparent

HUMANIST VALUES IN KASHMIRI... Mushtaq Ahmad Zargar (Muntazir) water-falls and gushing springs.

Despite appropriating traditional features of Kashmiri poetry, Mahjoor is a trend-setter and a turning point as well. Even patriotic, nationalist, political, historical and revolutionary themes are versified in a romantic mode. In view of the same, Mahjoor's appropriation of humanist values can be traced by recourse to an analysis of his romantic themes and figures of speech. However, Mahjoor's projection of humanist values can be traced ever from his didactic couplets as well. For example.

Niya:e tra:viv ma:e tha:viv pa:niva:n`

Poz muhabat ba:gra:viv pa:niva:n`

Give up discord and cultivate affection amongst yourselves

Share authentic love amongst yourselves

Dod chhu muslim hiyund chhu shakar sa:f sa:f
Dod ti biyi shakar rala:viv pa:niva:n`

True Muslims are white like milk and true Hindus are sweet like sugar. Mix the milk and add the sugar to achieve the synthesis of love.

Mashi:dan, mandaran, girjan, dharamsa:lan ti asta:nan
Yiman yi:ten garan atsnuk kunue darva:zi tha:vun chum
For Mosques, Temples, Churches, Gurdawaras and shrines there I
have to establish one and the only main gate facilitating the entry
into them all.

Nevertheless, Mahjoor's dominant mode of poetic expression is romantic and therefore, his beliefs and values or assumptions and postulates are to be traced and appropriated through his widespread romantic creativity. The following verses will bear it out

:Vanva:n dra:yakh peth thazarye

:Vignev sha:ba:sh kariye :Changi sa:z va:ya:n chhakhae di :darye:Gri:s` Ku:r` na:zni:n sondarye:

I heard you singing on the heights
Like one playing on the harp in ecstasy,
And the fairies clapped their hands in joy.
O peasant girl, what grace! What beauty.

Tsa:kh miya:nis loli ba:gas dra:kh ta:ra:ja:
karith Ho:sh niyu:tham roshi ro:she: posh chha:vith tsolhamo:
You entered my garden of love and dismantled it beyond repairMesmerized me through your antics fled away after enjoying the flowers

Jangi manzi marnuk tsyoha: lo:las andar hardam marun
Jangi khoti drog pev a:shiqan ya:ra:ni cho:n

One dies in a moment on the battle field, but One dies by inches in
a loving relationship

For Lovers your relationship spelt greater loss than the battle field.

Vanti ha ves' be:vafa:yi: she:vaye: dilda:r chha:
Na:zni:nan mahjabi:nan qatligha:rat ka:r chha:
Tell me O! Friend, is disloyalty a way of life with my beloved
Is bloodshed the profession of beauteous and splendorous damsels?

Dar jang kara:n ka:ri khanjar dasti rangi:n cha:n'
Ham panji dast:n chhue ni rustum sa:m niga:ro:
Your colourfull hands work dagger-like on the battle field
Even Rustum and Tsam can not compete you O! my beloved.

With the advent of modernity, new trends emerged in Kashmiri poetry. Following Habba Khatoon of 16th century, Mahmood Gami, Rasool Mir, Maqbool Kralwari and others celebrated

the pangs and pains of Human heart during the 19th century. In the 20th century Mahjoor, Azad, Nadim, Kamil, Rahi etc. introduced socialist ideas in Kashmiri literature. In the second half of the 20th century Rahi, Kamil, Hamidi, Shouq, Gulshan Majid, Farooq Naazki and Rafiq Raaz under the impact of contemporary global crisis, gave went to a sensibility characterized by alienation, uncertainty, anomie and nihilism.

Thus in its historical evolution of seven hundred years, Kashmiri poetry has passed through several phases viz; Sufism, Romanticism, Progressivism, Modernism and Post-Modernism. However, in all its phases, Kashmiri has been informed by abiding humanistic values. Kashmiri poetry in its various phases such as Mysticism, Tasawwuf, Romanticism, Progressivism and Modernism has all along displayed remarkable catholicity of spirit and vision in appropriating humanist values such as love, tolerance, pluralism, freedom, fellowship and brotherhood. These values have been the characterizing features of Kashmiri poetry since 4th century till date. We can say that despite changes in the substance and style, an appropriation of human values has remained a continuous feature for poets belonging to diverse beliefs and standards of criticism and evaluation.

In the obtaining socio-political scenario of Kashmir, a recapitulation and grasp of the humanist traditions in Kashmiri may not necessarily serve as a panacea for the resolution of all the problems. However, it can be submitted without any reservation, that such a venture will go a long way in minimizing or undermining the rigidities and fixations foisted upon the Kashmiri mind by interested groups or motivated sections. Literature is the most portent anti-dote against ideological obscurantism or theological regimentation. It inspires our depth-psychological responses and plumbs, the authentic core of human existence. Such an exercise inspires the horizontal and multilateral attitudes of catholicity, pluralism,

liberalism, tolerance, mutual appreciation and respect, spiritual fellowship, inter-religious and intra-religious brotherhood, mutual interaction and love. A critically and methodologically informed account of the humanist tradition in Kashmiri poetry, therefore, will be instrumentally helpful in inspiring Kashmiri youngsters to undertake a self-exploratory and self-interrogatory voyage and grow orthogenetically, both ideologically and spiritually.