

Kashmiri proverbs, Riddles and Epigrams.

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Abstract

Some characteristics of folklore are 'continuity', tradition, oral transmission, anonymity and straight - forwardness.

Kashmiri mind has concocted many proverbs to expose the traitors and treacherous elements in the society. Thus, the fund of proverbs and idioms is a sort of sophisticated verbal weaponry at the disposal of every Kashmiri speaking individual who confidently makes an appropriate use of them whenever the need arises.

Usually these pungent comments do not irritate because they are often generalized and aimed at reforming the target. They frankly advise to change the behaviour for better social life. They seem to take a hard look at what goes on around. Our social reality stands exposed in them. These comments strike at the venality of those chameleonic characters who show to be pious and God-fearing.

The English term 'Folk' which gained currency during the romantic period in the 18th century A.D referred to peasantry and common masses. This term is also related to the German word '*volk*', implying people or nation. The word is used to emphasize the fact that the folklore emerges spontaneously from ordinary

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communities. With the complexity of social life, various peculiarities were fixed with folklore.

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One of the most important kinds of folklore is folk-literature which includes stories, songs, lullabies, proverbs, sayings, riddles, puzzles, puns, epigrams, gossips, jokes, idioms, phrases, chantings and rhymes. What ever the genres of folk literature, all of them have their roots in the culture and psyche of the community that they belong to. Amongst these genres proverbs, riddles, idioms and epigrams are like gems. They tend to be very brief, effective, motivating, compact, well-knit and meaningful. It's only these short utterances or pieces of expression that I have selected to comment on in this write-up (not in detail, but only very briefly).

Given to the tragic history of Kashmir, from ancient time to our contemporary age, there have been ups and downs which have left long lasting impressions on the minds of people. There have been innumerable occasions when people were shocked to find their friends turned foes, their leaders turned treacherous, their well-wishers turned butchers, their affectionate kith turned affectacious, their sincere associates turned hypocrites and their preachers turned sycophants. Kashmiri mind has not wasted any of its time to expose these cheats. It has been very active in pulling down the facade from the face of such elements that very shamelessly tried to exploit their own people. The reaction of the Kashmiri intellect has resulted into a huge mass of forceful, penetrating and piercing folk literary pieces recognized as proverbs and riddles etc.

This fund of proverbs and idioms is a sort of sophisticated verbal weaponry at the disposal of every Kashmiri-speaking individual who confidently makes an appropriate use of them whenever the need arises. When a person pretends to be very gentle, noble, humble, simple and harmless but practically turns to be of

playing volte-face (volt-fas) with his fellow-beings, we have a ready-made and ever-green verbal grenade to hurl on him in the form of '*Gabbi buthi rama hoon*' an equivalent of 'A wolf in lamb's clothing'. Suppose a person pretends to be indifferent to worldly pleasures but in practice play bad-tricks to make his fortunes; Kashmiri intellect has coined an apt saying to taunt such a false character in the shape of '*Gursus mael te tsur heth paktin*' i.e. Intending to have churned milk but hiding the pail behind. Some times we take it for granted that our companion is trustworthy, reliable and honest but are shocked to find him engaged in breach of trust, dishonestly and corruption, we express this unbelievable situation in the form of "*Tsup gaw gudaem khav*" i.e. a gentle cow eats up the ropes. Actually we want to reject double standards, deception, falsehood, superficiality, shallow-mindedness, trickistry, mockery and disguise. There are instances when somebody gives you the notion that he or she is your benefactor but plans to inflict maximum harm to you cry out: '*Vethe mudur te dille om, hutte makets te nael gudom*' i.e. outwardly showing to be sympathetic but nourishing a bad intention inwardly.

A typical example is that of a well-knit Kashmiri riddle which symbolizes 'gizzard' in this way "*Dup te dupendalaz, ander tsum te neber maz*" what an extreme camouflaging is to wear flesh outside and hide the skin inside. Similar to it is the phrase "*Dembis dund Aasen, or under humul asum*" i.e. to be dangerously introvert or revengeful.

When power hungry politicians make promises to come to the rescue of suffering public, the Kashmiri intellect least believes their word and takes it as mere lip-service. It term it as "*nine guri te tille talaw*" i.e. horse-loads of salt and pools of oil' as "*nage-raad gade wuchheni halal te kheni haram*" i.e. Fish in a spring allowed to be seen to be seen and forbidden to be eaten. Thus a common man hardly believes any healing-touch policy or zero-tolerance claims of politicians. Seeing a pseudo-hero trying to deceive his

associates by artificial make-up and modern gallantry, you pounce on him "Maji ne Lackke te satarus gilaf" i.e. mother headdress and violin well covered, or the couplet:

A parikenykey kralia katio yepore tarto sekay

Yas ne ketis tamack chilam su kiya sana thekay

i.e. why should a worthless and bankrupt person pose to be well-off hero.

Usually these pungent comments do not irritate because they are often generalized and aimed at reforming the target. They frankly advise to change the behaviour for better social life. They seem to take a hard look at what goes on around. They are sharply critical and devastatingly invective. Our social reality stands exposed in them. Our contemporary reality is repulsive enough to justify the existence of these comments. They are forceful enough to uncover the ugly face of sycophants and hypocrites. It's actually our painful awareness of the corruption and moral degradation of our so called well-wishers. These comments strike at the venality of those chameleonic characters who pretend to be pious and God-fearing. The discrepancies between their word and deed is well estimated in these tips. Their credibility is aptly questioned. These pieces are good example of discriminating intelligence, collective wisdom and exhaustive social experience. They show us the hind-sights of the grandiloquent of our society who are always busy in hatching plots to exploit the simple, ignorant and plain commoners.

Looking at our formal literature right from Lal Ded to present time, we find that this folk tradition has been carried on and followed by almost all the poets of who were interested in social themes. Sheikh Noor-ud-Din Noorani has excelled in such themes. One example can clear the point:

Ammi tusbeeh, aase te jundie

Ammi fundie se athe yiyee no