

Literary cultures in Kashmir

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Language is the unique faculty of human beings that facilitates communication, promotes social life, cultural exchange and evolution of communities. One of the most mesmerizing properties of the human language is its creativity. From the inception of community life human beings have produced intellectually fertile and aesthetically pleasurable compositions in the form of folk-lore. The adoption of script marked the production of literature in true sense. There has been an alluring tradition of literary production in Kashmir¹. The composition of such a mammoth literary corpus reflects the fecundity of Kashmiri intellectual make-up that has been shaped by the society which has been a boiling pot of ideas. From the reputation of being Sharda peeth and hub of Sanskrit scholarship to the adoption of Persian language and culture, Kashmir has produced scholars and poets of repute who have won national and international acclaim. The later period of Kashmiri history saw a gradual drift from the elite Persian and Sanskrit culture to the production of vernacular Kashmiri literature. The process of vernacularization and nativization was the upshot of socio-cultural and politico-economical transformation Kashmir was undergoing. The literary culture of Kashmir appears to be two pronged viz. Persian and Sanskrit promoted by elite and Kashmiri vernacular promoted by common masses. However, Persian and vernacular are not situated in water-tight compartments as they often had sites of production outside the court and elite circles. The frequent borrowing from Persian and their affective nativization led to the development of typical composite literary style. The compositness became more pronounced with the popularization of Leela Genere

that borrowed heavily from Sanskrit. To explain this cross-fertilization, it is mandatory to explain historical pressure points and lay bare the trends and decode the historical forces that promoted the convergence and contrast in Kashmir's literary culture.

Literature in Kashmir in fact represented itself overwhelmingly in poetry as the best side of the life is always expressed in poetry. The prose in Kashmiri has been scandalously missing. The mystical appeal of Kashmiri poetry received impetus as it became a channel for assertion of popular or common culture typically called "Aam culture" against the privileged standard elite Persian culture or "Khaas culture". The reason for the absence of prose is to be explored in the political milieu of the development of Kashmir's literature. The prose always reflects events, happenings and dissent in a direct way while poetry to quote Maloray 'avoids direct statement' which suited the political circumstances of the age. The poetry became predominately devotional and mystical not only because of the prevailing totalitarian socio-political order but actively as the resurgence of the age old mysticism in Kashmir's socio-cultural set-up which received tremendous impetus in the milieu of political tyranny gross injustice and social depravity.

At this crucial juncture it became exceedingly mandatory for the poets to take into account the target audience or readership which indeed was common and sundry. The nativization drive was the process of restructuring and re-fabricating the Kashmiri culture itself in a definite geo-political setting. The translation and adoption of Masnawis from Persian both romantic and war epics in Kashmiri tended to have a profound impact on Kashmir's cultural landscape. The champions of this nativization and affective transformation was Mahmood Gami. The translation of Nizami's Shireen Khusrow, Yousuf Zulekha and Haron. Rashid have enriched Kashmiri literature. Usually the tale is borrowed one but landscape is unmistakably Kashmiri. His translation in Kashmiri verse of Attar's tale of

Sheikh Sanaan is full of didactic appeal and open to interpretation as Hafiz Shirazi puts it in one way.

***Gar murade rahi ishqī fiqiri ruswai makun
Sheikh sanan kharka ruban khanai khumar dasht***

Thus a new literary culture emerged that was fabricated on great Persian culture and on the other hand vernacular aspirations. This trend was further reflected in Mumin Shah's adoption of Attars' Mantaq-al-tayoor

***Marhaba-ai-hud hudai janai-i- man
Marhaba-ai-hud hudai saman-ai-man
Marhaba-ai-hamraz-ai-man
Marhaba-ai-hud hudai ambaz-ai-man²***

Mahmood Gami's nearest contemporary Rusul Mir often hailed as the poet of untamed passion and vernacular romanticism too could not avoid incorporation of Persian diction as following of his lines reflect.

***Kakulai parchen parashan bar rukhai semanai tu
Kya shuban dewani husnas khate rehan ai sanam³***

The development and popularization of Leela genre opened up a new channel of Sanskritizing the Kashmiri literary culture. Swami Parmanand and Krishen Joo Razdan's contribution to popularizing Shiva Bhakti, Rama Bhakti and Krishna Bhakti is indeed immense. Parmand's *Shiv-lagan* is a classical example of nativization of Sanskrit in Kashmiri language and literary culture. Although Krishna Razdan uses the Kashmiri idioms, the presence of Sanskrit is unmistakable as the line would explain.

***Gand gand chem aiman pannai
var dem mai yandar chukh dayal⁴***

This trend was further elaborated by Vishna Koul. In his magnum opus of translation of Ramayana titled as "*VishnuPratap Ramayana*" which contains thirty thousand verses is teemed up with Sanskrit words. Bul Bul Nagmi also contributes to the same

process as he is a stalwart of Leela genre. Even the romantic tale of Nalo-Daman begins with highly Sanskritized words but with a greater scope of fitting in nativization paradigm.

*Namastai sai chai gunpat namaskar
Pita chus aiswun shambo jatadar
Ganpatai namai poozai huand aid
Sadai pravan chai tam saith sad sad⁵*

The development of devotional poetry especially genre of what is seen by literary historians as an upshot of decaying political order and social crisis in Muslim society. Naat writers of Kashmir especially Abdul Ahad Nadim habib-ullah Newshehri, yaqub sarfi, Haqani Iassa Khan Fida Shams-u-din Kamili, and Gh.Rasool Nazki helped not only in the development of an effective idiom for the devotional poetry but also helped maintain the required elegance, exultation and sublimity of the genre. However it should not be played undermines the contribution of non-Muslim poets like Prakash Bhatt and Anand Ram to the genre who writes

*Az meay dadan kar dawa
Yaa Muhammad Mustafa(S.A.W)
Chus ba aamut bawumaad
Mata kar tam na wumaad
Buaz tam looluk sadaa
Yaa Muhammad Mustafa(S.A.W) ⁶*

The other area of polemics and didacticism are treated by literary historians so far as the process of culmination of devotionalism or development of a particular genre pertaining to a particular sect or community is concerned. However, the historical dynamism underlying the production of such distinctive genres has hardly been elaborated so far. For example Maulvi Anwar Shah Shopianis poetry is seen only as a part of development of essentially religious kind of poetry; here the revivalist agenda of the emerging Ahli Hadith Movement in Kashmir is overlooked. In fact

such a poetry is a typical example of literature being pressed into the service of propagation of revivalist agenda. Similarly Shia polemics especially Marsia is being treated as the development of a devotional poetry rather than as an effective medium of concretization of a distinctive sectarian identity besides being a shared area of literary production between the poets professing Shia and Sunni faiths even sometimes between Muslim and non-Muslim poets. In the genre of Marsia the target audience or responsive audience is exceedingly shia. Poets professing shia faith have particularly invented and subsequently developed, a unique form of marsia which in reaction become more powerful and overwhelming this unique kind of marsia has not only helped the community to maintain its separate identity but also to sustain it as dissentors. Thereby, the socio-textual site of literary production goes unheeded in the annals of our literary history.

Concluding the argument it is unwarranted to ascribe a single cause to the development of literature. When approached through the multi-disciplinary theory there opens up a wilderness of possibilities in literature being firmly grounded in the matrix of history. A literary historian needs to be extra conscious while dealing with literature and particularly in Kashmiri literary culture where many elements go hand in hand in its making. Every work of art is a cultural artifact and leads to enrichment of the knowledge of cultural history. The areas of convergence and contrast are to be explored from a historical point of view rather than from the standpoint of "art for arts' sake". Kashmiri literary culture is a fertile ground for decoding such historical forces which shaped literature in past and account for potentialities in future

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2. Saqi, page No. 47
 3. Tang, page No. 186
 4. Azad, page No. 437
 5. Azad, Page No. 462
 6. Azad, page No. 509

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