



Shaikh Noor-ud-Din and Lal Ded: In Search of Ideal Society in Kashmir
(Fourteenth to Eighteenth Century)

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ABSTRACT

The impact of socio-religious reforms movements in Kashmir like Shaivism and Rishi Movement has been very prevalent for the betterment of the society. On one hand, Shaivism is an idealistic and realistic in essence, strongly advocating a pragmatic approach to life, on the other hand, Rishi Movement is considered to be the major source behind the spread of Islam in Kashmir. In this paper, I am going to map a relationship between Shaivism and Rishi Movement through Shaikh Noor-ud-Din and Lalla Maheshwari also known as Nund Rishi and Lal Ded respectively. Both of them emerged as the cultural leader of the populace at a time when Kashmir was at the crossroads of its socio-cultural and religio-political transition. Both the religious leaders, who are popular among the masses as the social reformers, played a significant role by exposing the exploitative machinations of caste-conscious Brahmans. For this purpose they used the common man's language to patronage message to the common masses. In this paper, I would use their shurks and vaakhs which provided the message and ideas for an ideal society free of casteism, injustice and irrelevant mass exploitation.

Keywords: casteism, mutual responsibility, Rishi movement, Shaivism, shurks, socio-political, socio-religious, Unity of Mankind., vaakhs.

Introduction

Sufism is the esoteric and spiritual dimension of Islam representing the inward aspects of Islam. Looking at the Arabic origin of the word 'Sufism', this term is already a problematic in Islamic civilization. Earlier it lacked the broad meaning which it has now acquired. According to Carl Ernst, the word Sufi was given prominence not by the Islamic texts, but rather by British Orientalists "who wanted a term that would refer to various sides of Islamic civilization that they found attractive and congenial and that would avoid the negative stereotypes that they themselves have often propagated." (Ernst, 1997:3)

The advent of Sufism in India is said to be in eleventh and twelfth centuries. One of the early Sufis of eminence who settled in India was al-Hujwiri or commonly known as Data Ganj Baksh in the eleventh century. It can be said that Sufism gained canonization with the coming of several classical Persian Sufis like Rumi, Attar, Saadi, Hafiz to name a few. So it can be said that before coming to India, Sufism had already taken a definite form.

Kashmir is well known to the world from the very earliest times, because of its geographical features, culture, civilization and its people. Its boundaries besides touching to India and Pakistan, also touches to the other countries of the world like China Tibet, Afghanistan etc. The state of Jammu and Kashmir is no doubt is the most beautiful region in the South Asian countries and is also gifted by the Almighty Allah with various natural resources. It for this reason that right from the ancient times the Valley of Kashmir due to its natural beauty, civilization, culture, unique history and its people not only known to the world, but also played a key role in drawing attention of the large number of people including the *Sufis, Rishis, Sayyids, Ulama*, poets, learned men and travellers. (Wani, 1993) The Mughal Emperor Jahangir had praised the beauty of Kashmir in the below Persian couplet:

Agar firdaus bar rue zamin ast

Hami ast o-hami ast o-hami ast

(If there is a paradise on earth it is here, it is here, it is here).

Dr. Sir Mohammad Iqbal said this verse in Urdu about Kashmir:

Werse mai ham ko aayi hai Adam ki jaidad

Jo hai watan hamara wo jannat-i-nazeer hai

Pandit Burj Narayan Chakbast has beautifully narrated the following couplet about Kashmir:

Zarra zarra hai mare Kashmir ka mehman nauwaz

Rah mai pathar ke tukdoo ne diya pani mujhey

The very basis or origin of Kashmir has been based on the oral legends. As Gauhar had mentioned in his



text that initially Kashmir was a waterlogged area called *Sati-Sar*. There was a demon who lived around this area and due to which no human could come and live here and it was due to the deeds of Kashyap *Rishi* that the demon was killed and human beings found an abode in this place. Thus the very foundation of this place is attributed to the miraculous deeds of a saint. Hence miracles, mythical actions and metaphysical tradition became the key element of this land's cultural essence. Not only *Sufism*, but also Buddhism and Shaivism¹ dominated the religious scene of Kashmir for a very long time. In such a "socio-religious scenario Islam and its mystic teachings found a congenial atmosphere during the fourteenth century." (Gauhar, 1988:44)

Sufism In Kashmir

The Islamic missionary activities in Kashmir started with the arrival of Syed Abdur Rehman also known as Bulbul Shah during the reign of Suhadeva² (1301-20.) He is said to be the major force behind the conversion of Buddhist ruler Rinchan Shah into Islam. Again, it is to be noted that his conversion was thoroughly political as he was dissatisfied by the Buddhist philosophy and the Brahmin dominated caste-ridden Hindu society. So he became the first Muslim sultan of Kashmir, renamed himself and was later known as Sultan Sadr Uddin. After his death there was again the political instability, as to who would take his place next. As a result, Kashmir was ruled by his wife Kota Rani. She married Udayanadeva, brother of Suhadeva. During all this time, Sultan Sadrudin's loyal minister Shah Mir always proved his loyalty by giving his full support to Kota Rani. Then Shah Mir became more politically ambitious, and eventually ascended the throne as Shamus-ud-Din after the death of Udayanadeva in 1338 and thus laid the foundation of the Shahmir dynasty which ruled Kashmir for two centuries.

It was during these two centuries and in the reign of Sultan Qutb-ud-din, the grandson of Shah Mir, Mir Syed Ali Hamdani paid three visits to Kashmir in 1372, 1379 and 1383, who belonged to the Kubrawi order. He was very influential in spreading Islam in Kashmir and had huge influence on the culture of Kashmir valley. He, on his third visit, was accompanied by seven hundred *Syeds* and *Ulemas*

who established centres of their activities in the various parts of the country. Again in 1393, Mir Mohammad Hamdani entered Kashmir with three hundred *Syeds* and scholars and stayed in the valley for twelve long years. He and his scholars established *khanqahs* in different parts of the valley.

Shaivism and Rishi Movement In Kashmir

The history Kashmiri Shaivism is shrouded in mystery (Singh, 2013). Archaeologists have discovered traces of Shiva worship in the proto-historic Harappa culture. The Shaivits in Kashmir were divided among dualists and monists. The former conception was closer to pantheism whereas the Monists were to a great extent aligned to the teachings of *tawheed*. The emergence of Lalleshwari or Lal Ded, a Kashmir Shaivite poetess, is considered to be as the popular exponent of monotheistic practices.

Lal Ded is one of Kashmir's best known spiritual and literary figures. Within Kashmir she has been idolized both by the Hindus as well as Muslims for nearly seven centuries, and for most of that period, she successfully evaded the proprietorial claims of religious monopolists. (Hoskote, 2011) In spite of being so famous among the masses, it is a pity that not much is really known about her life till the twentieth century. In 1920, the Royal Asiatic Society published its Monographs *The Lalla-Vakhyani or Wise Sayings of Lal Ded (or Lalla): a mystic poetess of ancient Kashmir*. This was the first printed edition of Lalla's poems or *vaakhs*. Hoskote in his book mentions that in 1914 Sir George Grierson came up with the idea of collection of poems of Lalla, but there were no manuscripts of Lalla's poems. Failing to find a copy, he consulted Pandit Dharma-dasa Darwesh who was a storyteller and a reciter, living in Gush, a village situated in Pakistan occupied Kashmir. He dictated 109 of Lalla's poems from memory and they wrote them down. Grierson's *Lalla Vakhyani* being the first written account of Lalla's *vaakhs* were followed by many other translations by Pandit Ananda Kaul, Sir Richard C. Temple, Professor Jayalal Kaul and more recently Coleman Barks, Jaishree Odin and many other writers like N K Singh and Jawahar Lal Bhat.

Lalla obtained such a hold on the people of country that her verses have become a household word. This is due to her songs illustrates her religion on its popular side, though they are not a systematic exposition of Shaivism on the lines laid down by the theologians who preceded her. As already mentioned above, very little is known about Lalla's life. Though according to popular tradition, she was the contemporary of Sayyid Hussain Simnani and

¹ Shaivism or Saivism or Saivism is one of the four most widely followed sects of Hinduism, which refers Shiva as the Supreme Being. They believe that Shiva is All, the creator, preserver, destroyer, revealer and concealer of all that is. Shaivism, like some of the other forms of Hinduism, spread to other parts of Southeast Asia, including Java, Bali, and parts of the Southeast Asian continent, including Cambodia.

² He was the king of Kashmir approximately from 1301 to 1320.



Syed Ali Hamadani. Mulla Ali Raina, who was first to mention Lalla in poetry says that she was a chosen disciple of Sayyid Hussain Simnani. The tradition of her association with both the Sufis is so strong that not only as Lalla always been remembered as Muslim but even as a great apostle of Islam by Kashmir Muslims. (Khan, 2002)

Lalla was born in Kashmir in the early thirteenth century and was married into a Brahmin family at a young age. Her married life was very traumatic as her mother-in-law always troubled her and filled her life with suffering. Her husband also ill-treated her. She suffered silently as she quietly devoted herself to spiritual practice. When she could no longer endure the pain given by her family, she renounced the material world. She then went to Siddha Srikantha to be accepted as a disciple. He became her guru and instructed her to the spiritual path. On completing her discipleship, she went out into the world as a wandering mendicant. All what she did from renouncing the world to becoming a mystic and gathering spiritual experience, these were not easy for a Brahmin woman to make in the Kashmir of fourteenth century. Hoskote mentions that as a disciple, she had been secure within her guru's house and then she set off on her own with no protection against the full force of social strata. She tells about her experience in one of her *vaakhs* that: *They lash me with insults, serenades me with curses.*

*Their barking means nothing to me.
Even if they came with soul-flowers to offer,
I couldn't care less. Untouched, I move on.* (Hoskote, 2011:xvii)

Overcoming the trials and humiliations that came her way, she grew in eminence to become a teacher. This transformation into being mature and deepening knowledge is recorded in her *vaakh*. In the following *vaakh* she defies her tormentors and the system of conventions they represents:

*Let them hurl a thousand curses at me,
pain finds no purchase in my heart.
I belong to Shiva. Can a scatter of ashes
ruin a mirror? It gleams.* (Hoskote, 2011:xviii)

Her *vaakhs*, symbols and allegories can be cryptic and yet the honesty of her poems or *vaakhs* deeply moved the people. She celebrates the "perseverance in the quest, contrasting physical agony with spiritual flight and dwelling on the obdurate landscapes that the questor must negotiate." (Hoskote, 2011:11)

She revolted against all the oppressive structures that stifle and kill the human spirit and critically interrogated practices of inequalities and injustice

that were current during the times. In one of her *vaakhs*, she says

*When can I break the bonds of shame?
When I am indifferent to jibes and jeer.
When can I discard the robes of dignity?
When desires cease to nag my mind.* (Khan, 2002:75)

Her *vaakhs* are not only a continuation of the tradition, it is also simultaneously a break or rebellion against the tradition. Her rebellion was unprecedented. She challenged the validity of all the socio-political and religious structures, and was deadly against maintaining the status-quo, thus she was perceived as a threat to the established social order. To neutralize the impact of this rebellion, the elite of the times, the custodians of the tradition declared her to be demented. These could be the reasons why we do not find any of her mention in any of the historical accounts written in Sanskrit during and after her time. She also rebelled against the educated elite of Sanskrit academia who were the custodians of knowledge and tradition. She did all these while attacking the parasitic forms of organized religion that have attached themselves to the spiritual quest and choked it. She criticized the idolatry in one of her *vaakhs*. She says:

*It covers your shame, keeps you from shivering.
grass and water are all the foods it asks
who taught you, priest-man,
to feed this breathing thing to your thing of stove?* (Hoskote, 2011:14)

When we talk about the Rishi Movement, Shaivism has a very deep impact on it. Linguistically, the word '*rishi*' is the derivation of the Vedic tradition, which means the seer of the supreme truth and keeping in view the status of Rishi in the spiritual field, he was highly venerated. In the Indian culture the status of a Rishi is above caste, creed and religion. (Pandit, 1997) The history of Rishi-cult is definitely an ancient development of India, also this Rishi-cult has played a major role in the formation and shaping the spiritual history of Kashmir. The radiant personalities of the Rishis have always remained popular for their kind and sympathetic behaviour. Their popularity was so great that in the local dialect Kashmir came to be known as *Rishi-Var*.

Rishis lived in the countryside and usually did not have any formal education. They even refused to do anything with the royal court and administration. It may also be noted that before the coming of Islam in Kashmir, rishis were there but again they were not socially active and preferred to live a secluded life either in caves or the tops of the mountains. Baba



Daud Mishkati points out that before the famous Rishi of Kashmir Sheikh-ul-Alam or Nund Rishi, the Rishis were actually ascetics among the Brahmans of Kashmir.

The definition of *Rishi* is the same as that of a Sufi. Literally it means a person with woollen clothes but in essence it refers to group of persons who are nearer and close to God; are pious and tolerant; are truthful and above all bestow their love to all kinds of life. This is the quotation given by Sheikh Shuhab-ud-Din Shurwardy as quoted by Baba Dawood Khakhi. (Pandit, 1997)

“A Reshi is one who as always engaged in piety and prayers, he prefers to remain celibate, he has no desire for property or offspring; he is unconcerned for means of livelihood; stays aloof in caves etc.; he eats and sleeps less; he abandons tasty foods and luxurious things; he wears simple clothing; is content with vegetables; he does not offend anybody; he is sympathetic towards all creatures; and is endowed with similar good and good qualities.” (Mishkati, 1654) With such deep commitment to spiritual growth and the Islamic philosophy of Divine Unity (*wahdat-ul-wajud*), which is not different from Hindu philosophy of no duality (*Advaita*), it is not at all surprising that the *Rishis* consistently preached complete harmony among different religions and peace and understanding among their followers.

Compared to the Sufi order, as propagated by Saiyid Ali Hamdani, the Rishi order was more liberal, non-missionary and rooted in the local traditions. The two stalwarts of this order were Lal Ded and Sheikh Noor-ud-Din. (Jagmohan, 2006)

Lal Ded and Nund Rishi

The saint poetess Lalleshwari was popularly known as Lal Ded or Lalla *Arifa*. She is by far the greatest litterateur produced by Kashmir. The real history of Kashmir poetry begins with this great lady of the land. She composed delectable *vaakhs* which were the characteristics of the earliest verse in the Valley. She was born somewhere between 1317 and 1320 in a well-to-do family in Pandrethan (ancient Puranadhisthana). She is said to have been married and was brutally treated by her step mother-in-law, who nearly starved her. She came out of her in-law's house and became a wandering ascetic. She used to move in forests with hardly any clothes on. Her sayings and verses along with those of Shaikh Noor-ud-Din constitute the essence of Rishi order. Lal

Ded's great influence finds expression in her own saying:

*Whatever I uttered with my tongue
Became a 'mantra' (Jagmohan, 2006)*

Lal Ded represented the *Trika* philosophy and was the most towering pillar of Shaivite tradition. However, it was only in 1779, more than four centuries after her death, that 60 of her *vaakhs* were first discovered and compiled in the Sharada script by the scholar and researcher Bhaskar Razdan. (Singh, 2000) Her poetry has a stamp of a born genius. Her imagery, phrases and metaphors are so spontaneous and familiar in the environment of Kashmir that one is left wondering at her power of expression and grasp of inner and outer reality of life around. Shaikh Noor-ud-Din was right when he said, “Lal Ded is an ‘Avatar’ and ‘Yogini’.” (Jagmohan, 2006:170) Another telling observation about her is, “Passion for God set fire to all she had.” (Mishkati, 1654: 193). This observation about Lal Ded was given by Sheikh Nasir-ud-Din. But the best description is her own:

*A tapasvin into the world came I,
And bodha illumined my path to the Self. (Singh, 2000:170)*

Lalla's teaching or *Vaakh* or *Vakyani* is her own term, shows her to have been a strong Hindu sectarian. It shows her as a Shaiva of the Kashmiri variety, well acquainted with the terms of the Philosophy of the Shaivas and with the Yoga doctrine of the same vision of the Hindus. Her *vaakhs* was not written during her lifetime. It was because of her power to impact her listeners that people heard her and formed her sayings into chants and mantras which continued to be sung even today. Her *vaakhs* conveys message of peace and harmony.

She revolted against all the oppressive structures that stifle and kill the human spirit and critically interrogated practices of inequality and injustice that were current during the times. Lal Ded's *vaakhs* are not only a continuation of the tradition, it is also simultaneously a break or rebellion against the tradition. Her rebellion was unprecedented. She challenged the validity of all the socio-political and religious structures, and was deadly against maintaining the status quo, thus she was perceived as a threat to the established social order. To neutralise the impact of this rebellion, the elite of the times, the custodians of the traditions declared her to be mad and insane, it is because of these circumstances that we don't find her mention in any of the historical accounts written in Sanskrit during and after her times. She also rebelled against the



educated elite of Sanskrit academia who were the custodians of knowledge and tradition.

Shaikh Noor-ud-Din, her later contemporary, was about thirty years younger to Lal Ded. He was born in 24 September 1373 A.D.³ in Kashmir. Since birth, Nund Rishi exhibited the signs of extraordinary saint right from the days of his childhood. His parents Sheikh Salar-ud-Din and Sodermaj were converts to Islam. It is widely believed in Kashmir that as a child, Nund Rishi refused to suck milk from his mother. Legend has it further that Lal Ded made a surprise appearance at his home and spoke these words to baby Nunda:

Thou wast not ashamed of being born; why then art thou ashamed of sucking (at the mother's breast) (Khan, 2002:97)

With these gentle words of Lal Ded, baby Nund Rishi immediately sucked milk from her breast, thus the infant tasted the first pleasure of the world under the guidance of a matured mystic. A later-day Kashmiri poet has summed up the incident in the following lines:

Oh thee, the full moon of the universe,

Immediately after thy birth, Lalla Arifa

Did adorn in her lap a cradle for thee.

She made you drink the nectar of life.

Bravo! My Lord, Oh generous Noor-ud-Din. (Gauhar, 1988: 20)

When Nund Rishi grew up to be a well-known saint with a great following, he paid his befitting tribute to the memory of Lal Ded in the following lines:

The Lalla of Padampur,

She had her fill of divine nectar;

A beloved Avatar of ours too (we would fondle in our laps),

O God, bestow s similar boon on me. (Parimoo, 1984:188)

There are three crucial sacred terms used in Kashmiri texts of the tribute that are obviously derived from the shastras: *deeva* (God), *avatar* (incarnation) and *var* (boon). The words confirm that Nund Rishi held Lalla in great esteem and looked upon her as a saint of remarkable achievement, having all the qualities of a divine incarnation. (Dhar, 1977)

It is further said that the name of Noor-ud-Din was given by Syed Hussain Simnani, to this new-born child whom his parents, out of love, called Nund (the pious one). Later the Shaikh used the same word "Nund" or "Nund Rishi of Kaimoh" as his pen name.

Little is known about his childhood but it is evident that he was more intelligent than other children of his age and therefore his achievements were ascribed mainly to his spiritual powers.

At various stages in his life Nund Rishi required guidance and received the same from a few mystic leaders but he was not enrolled to any mystic order. First one being Lal Ded herself. The second important personality with whom he was connected from his early age (with whom even his family had intimacy) was Syed Hussain Simnani. While praising him, Nund Rishi says that he was a guide and teacher of his father Salar Sanz. Baba Nasib, a 16th century biographer of Nund Rishi, while describing the contacts of the two confines their relationship to mutual love and appreciation. Thus no relationship of *pir* and *mureed* existed between them. According to the tradition, the third personality with whom Nund Rishi came in contact was Mir Syed Ali Hamdani, he paid his first visit to him when he was only seven years old. According to some chronicles, it was he who sent Lal Ded to infant Nund Rishi when he refused to suck milk from his mother's breast. (Parimoo, 1984)

Thus while he was fortunate enough to receive the effective patronage of Shahi-Hamdan, motherly love from Lal Ded and mental and spiritual company from Mir Mohammad, he received formal guidance from none. He squarely belonged to the Owaisi⁴ mystic order and received light from Prophet Mohammad directly. He has clearly described his genealogy in his verse. This small poem illustrates his spiritual descent:

The first Rishi was the Prophet Mohammad,

The second in order was Hazrat Uways;

The third Rishi was Zulka Rishi;

The fourth in order was Hazrat Pilas;

The fifth was Rum Rishi;

The sixth in order was Hazrat Miran;

The seventh (me) is miscalled a Rishi;

Do I deserve to be called a Rishi? What is my name? (Khan, 2002:45)

Nund Rishi was born in the era of social-political confusion, in the period of Kashmir's transition to Islam. Morally the society was in the throes of degradation. He understood that socio-economic inequalities characterising a caste ridden society. Its confusion had moved and influenced the saint so much that he reacted very sharply to eradicate it.

³There has been a debate over his year of birth. Some historians claims he was born around 1475 A.D. , others claim that it 1377 or 1378, as the correct date of birth

⁴The Owaisi or Uwaisi is a form of spiritual transmission in the vocabulary of Islamic mysticism that was named after Awais Malik (*Uwais al-Qarni*). It refers to the transmission of spiritual knowledge between two individuals without the need for physical interaction between them.



The common man or oppressed and suppressed had almost reconciled with the Kashmir dictum that is *Zulum Parast* or the worshipper of tyranny. However, according to some even during that period there were movements, which in a way tried to liberate or make people aware of the plight they faced. Nund Rishi sang in the same vein:

*Some demanded but were denied,
Some were granted and some snatched,
Some lost after they were dead,
Some had enough but passed away,
From some they snatched causing their death,
Some begged and begged and their faces
blackened,
Some were denied food,
Some were smart but were doomed to paralyze.*
(Gauhar, 1988:49)

The society that Nund Rishi represented was divided into two classes, namely neo-converts and old Hindu society. Therefore, the clash was imminent. One class was the new zealots of Muslims and the other traditional Hindu- both competed and outdid each other, in erecting their mosques and temples. Nund Rishi was sensitive to this issue and tried to maintain the social harmony. In one of his *shruks* he says:

*Two children from the same parents,
The Muslims and the Hindus.
Why this gulf of hatred between the two:
Be pleased with thy servants, Oh my Lord.* (Fazili, 2008:95)

Aware of the tension created between Hindus and Muslims during the reign of Sultan Sikandar, Nund Rishi wrote:

*We belong to the same parents.
Then why this difference?
Let Hindus and Muslims (together)
Worship God alone.
We came to this world like partners.
We should have shared our joys
and sorrows together.* (Hassnain, 2013:155)

The realization that Hindus and Muslims were children of the same God, whom they called by various names, served as a powerful message of harmony and reconciliation. Thus, Nund Rishi cried out in anguish:

*Children of the same parents,
When will Hindus and Muslims cut down the tree of
dualism?
When will God be pleased with them and grant them
His grace?
We belong to the same parents
Then why this difference?
Let Hindus and Muslims worship God alone.
We came into this world like partners.*

*We should have share our joys and sorrows
together.* (Hassnain, 2013:155)

Like Nund Rishi, Lal Ded also propagated the mystic idea of divine unity in simple language which had a deep and direct appeal to the common man. For her, true devotion did not imply various rituals and practices evolved by Brahman but meant seeking God within oneself and also in the routine of daily life. She also tried to teach that for God, no man is different. They are all same in the eyes of the God. She says:

*Siva abides in all that is, everywhere
Then do not discriminate between a Hindu and a
Musalman.*

If thou art wise, know thyself

That is true knowledge of the Lord. (Khan, 2002:74)

Her approach to religion was basically humanistic and individualistic. By going against the norm and rejecting the supreme authority of the Brahman, she helped the common man to accept the ideas of equality and the brotherhood of mankind, like what was Sufis trying to teach. She says:

*I renounced fraud, untruth, deceit,
I taught my mind to see the one in all my
followOmen,
How could I then discriminate between man and
man,
And not accept the food offered to me by brother
man.* (Khan, 2002: 74)

The idol worship was vehemently criticised by both Lal Ded and Nund Rishi. In one of her *vaakh*, she says:

*The idol is stone,
The temple is but stone,
From top to bottom all is stone.* (Khan, 2002:74)

In her criticism of the ritualistic practices of the Brahmans, she remarked:

*He does not need the kusa grass, nor sesame seed,
Flowers and water He does not need,
He who, in honest faith, accepts his Guru's word,
On Siva meditates constantly,
He, full of joy, from action freed, will not be born
again.* (Khan, 2002:75)

Similarly Nund Rishi evokes the same thought is one of his *shruks* where he says:

*O Pandit, the brother: O Pandits:
How long will you remain wedded to the worship of
the stones and springs?
Your thoughtless search did not bear any fruit;
Submit yourselves to the Lord and His messenger;
Aren't you solicitous of (spiritual and worldly)
success?* (Khan, 2002:118)

His main target was to reveal the real face of fake Mullahs. His advice was to beware of those fake Mullahs who wear the mask of being pious and take



the advantage of their fake identity. He ridiculed both Brahmans and Mullahs:

*These talkative Mullahs,
With long dyed beard,
Deceitful is their sweet speech,
They are author-minded liars.
Mullahs have become merchants of mosques,
The Pandit steals the idols from the temple.
One among thousands of them may deserve salvation,
Others are all the disciples of Satan.* (Adfar, 2011:125)

In the following quatrain, he tries to expose Mullahs, Sheikhs and Sufis collectively:

*The Mullah is happy with gifts and feasts,
The Sheikhs are mad after greed and lust,
The Sufis are happy to cheat others,
Their one time diet is three seers of mutton, a mound of rice.* (Adfar, 2014:126)

In the same manner, he ridiculed the Pandits also. He says:

*The old and infirm Pandit shall search,
A virgin girl his wife,
Might be on his pyre,
But will never prefer a widow as his partner.* (Gauhar, 1988:69)

Similarly Lal Ded also criticized the Pandits and Brahmans. She was disgusted by the hypocrisy and thus exposed his pride for claiming themselves to be the learned. She says:

*The thoughtful read the holy books
As parrots, in their cage, recite Ram, Ram,
Their reading is like churning water,
Fruitless effort, ridiculous conceit.* (Khan, 2002:75)

Both Lal Ded and Nund Rishi revolted against the social inequalities which was prevalent at that time and they manifested it in their verses. Their criticism of the exploitation and sufferings of the weak at the hands of the strong is evident in their works. The rich people busy themselves in the enjoyment and forget their responsibilities towards society, to help the poor and needy people and in the uplift of the society. Addressing to this fact, Lal Ded says:

*When can I break the bonds of shame?
When I am indifferent to jibes and jeers.
When can I discard the role of dignity?
When desires cease to nag my mind?* (Khan, 2002: 75)

Similarly Nund Rishi says:

*One amuses oneself by organizing in a musical concert,
Although aware, yet pretends innocence (about human sufferings),
(While) the other is being scourged,*

(Has) God himself willed it so? (Afaque, 2003:55)

Talking about the social inequalities, he also criticized the class difference which was created by the men for their own selfish reasons. He says:

*O Allah, how great are your secrets of indifference,
These secrets are exposed by your indifferences,
It is this indifference or care free attitude of yours,
That a donkey becomes a king,
And a king is trampled under the feet,
Some beg in order to survive and
A fool is granted respectability by you.* (Gauhar, 1988:50)

He also says:

*Some are born with virtue and grace,
Who have derived generosity of the ocean from a petty stream,
Some under the spell of intoxication gaze into the skies,
Their green fields have been devastated by locusts.
Some have earned huge profits without any investment.*

Some run away under frustration.

Their full shops do not attract a single costumer. (Gauhar, 1988: 51)

Through his *shruks*, he wanted to expose the evils of society which was rooted in the society and was determined to help the poor or under-privileged strata to bring them in a better position. He wanted a society free of all biasness. He always supported the poor people and in one of his verses, in order to encourage them, he says:

*Poverty is a shield against Hell
Poverty is the virtue of Prophets,
Poverty is the wealth of this and the next world,
Poverty is sweet and fragrant,
One who is steadfast in the path of Poverty,
So will be honoured here and Hereafter.* (Gauhar, 1988:75)

Conclusion

It goes without saying that both Nund Rishi and Lal Ded played a central role within the framework of cognitive, moral and social order in Kashmir. They redefined the reordered life-world of the followers of the Rishi order, requiring of them not only devotion to God but patterns of social behaviour. Hence, their messages were not confined to one race or one class, but addressed to mankind as a whole. They belonged to the universe. They expressed their thought in the simple language of his people, clothing their ideas with similes and examples familiar from their experience. Their verses therefore had an immediate appeal to the unlettered masses. Allusions to their sayings and verses both by the



Muslims and non-Muslims of Kashmir are quite common even today and have become almost proverbial. Above all the sayings of Nund Rishi and Lal Ded are the expression of the ideas of many thinkers of his time. In this way they and their sayings have the great importance. The very interpolations of their verses suggests that each word they uttered became a percept, a maxim of conduct for their followers with their roots in the local culture. The language which they spoke was not an individual inheritance but a social acquisition from the environment in which they grew up. Their poetry came to be the daily bread of many Kashmiris of the period, who formed their *Weltanschauung*⁵ in accordance with the picture presented to them by their two spiritual teachers. The importance of mystical poetry and literature to an average Kashmiri is evident even today to an observer of contemporary society of the valley.

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⁵ A particular philosophy or view of life; the world view of an individual or group.