

PERSIAN LITERATURE OF MEDIEVAL KASHMIR (14TH – 16TH CENTURY)

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Abstract:

The Iranian and Indian civilizations, two of the earliest and creative, have played vital and dynamic role in the formation and shaping of the world history. Iranian influences in Kashmir appeared strongly after the establishment of Sultanate (1320-1585) there, much more was the introduction of Persian language and its literature. During the course of time it became so strong that it was the official language of the state till Urdu was introduced in the 19th century. Many luminaries worked hard to spread it and produced a body of literature that has left its marks on the life of the people there.

Keywords:

Persian language, literature, Iran, Central Asia, Kashmir.

Introduction:

Till the end of the 16th century, Kashmir played vital role in the Indian sub-continent as an independent state. With its separate identity, Kashmir had its relations and contacts with Iran and other Central Asian states. Besides political and cultural ties, there was large scale free trade with Iran and Central Asia. It was then that Persian language replaced the Sanskrit as the state language, even though one of the powerful Hindu rulers of Kashmir, Lalitaditya, in the 8th century had invaded Khurāsān, Bukhārā, Samarqand, Tāshkent, etc, the main centers of Avesta, Pahlavi and Persian speaking belt of Iran and Central Asia. However, the effects of Persian language were visible at the end of Hindu rule in Kashmir when a remarkable handbook, *Lokapraksha* on Kashmiri administration in Sanskrit language, was written which has many Persian and Arabic words.¹

Persian Language:

Persian may have been adopted by one and all in spite of the fact that Sanskrit was not forgotten. This is why that Hindus also learned the language and excelled in it to translate various Sanskrit works in Persian.² Besides those that were translated during the rule of Sultan

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¹ *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, Eng. Tr., M. A. Stein, Vol. I, Delhi edition, 1979, pp. 130-31, n2.

² Shirivara, the poet historian of Zainul-Abidin, was fond of Persian and translated Maulan Jami's *Yousuf Zulaiikha* into Sanskrit. Bhat Avtar learned *Shahnamai* of Firdausi by heart.

Zainul-Abedin (1420-1470) there was one Tilak, son of a barber, who served in the court of Mehmood Gaznavi³ - the powerful king of a vast land of Persian speaking belt, and translated Sanskrit works in Persian in Kashmir.⁴ There must have been few others like him who in the beginning would have helped to work as translators between the people of Kashmir and non-Kashmiris; like the one who translated the meeting held between the Rinchan from Ladakh (who became the first Muslim to rule Kashmir) and Saiyid Sharfud-Din,⁵ the Turkish saint called commonly Bulbul Shah. These were the days when Islam in Kashmir was not widely known and only few were its adherents.

Thereafter many missionaries entered Kashmir, from Central Asia and Iran, and played dynamic role in the formation, shape and establishment of Islamic culture there which gave birth to the various religio-philosophical, socio-cultural and literary movements. These foreign adventures, *Sufis, Saiyids, Ulema and Mashaikhs*, established monasteries, mosques, schools and libraries across the Valley. In these centers of learning's Persian was the language of conversation at public level to change the entire horizon of Kashmir; its culture, history, language and way of living. It was only thereafter that organised schooling was started to impart education in Persian language. One such was established by Mir Mirak Indrabi, who came from Indrab-Afghanistan and his monastery at Malaratta Srinagar was famous for the learning of Persian.⁶ On the other hand some of the natives also went outside to get better education in Persian speaking areas. Sheikh Suliman and his son Shiekh Ahmad Khushkhawn went to Samarqand and thence to Kulab (Tajikistan) to receive Islamic education and to learn Persian language.⁷ Sheikh Sultan Kubra and Shiekh Bahaud-Din Ganjbakhsh

³ Farukhi Sistani, a court poet of Sultan, shows desire of the Sultan to invade Kashmir in the following Persian couplets:

*Mā rā rāhi Kashmir hami ārzū āyad
mā ze ārzū'i khwesh nītābim bayak moui
Gah ast ki yakbar bakashmir kharamaim
Az dast butan pehneh kuna'im az sar but gav'i
Shah ast bakashmir agar Izad khahād
Imsal nyaram tā keen nakashm zo'i*

(We have desire to see Kashmir. We will not let off our desire. It is time that we will at once walk into Kashmir. If God wishes we will be in Kashmir this year. We will not sit idle till we will not take it); Farukhi Sistani, Devan-i- Farukhi, Tehran, p. 325.

⁴ Abdul Qadir Sarwari, *Kashmir main Farsi Adab ki Tarikh*, Hyderabad, 1968, p. 35.

⁵ Anonymous, *Baharistani Shahi*, Ur. Tr., and Ed., Akbar Hydri, Delhi, p.16.

⁶ Baba Dawood Mishkati, *Asrarul Abrar*, Ms, p.297.

⁷ Peer Ghulam Hassan, *Tarikhii Hassan, Tazkiratul Awliyay Kashmir*, Ur. Tr., Vol. II, Srinagar, 1960, p.195

went to Khatlan to receive guidance in mysticism under the leadership of Khawja Ishauqe Khatlani.⁸ Sheikh Yaqoob Sarfi, a luminary of Kashmir, went to Samarqand to receive his education under the guidance of Shiekh Hussein Khawrazmi. He was a reputed poet and prose writer and produced numerous prose and poetical works. These occurrences paved way for establishing solid ground for the Persian language and literature in Kashmir.

Persian Literature:

The credit for laying the concrete foundation of Persian goes to Mir Saiyid Ali Hamdani -a pioneer among the Saiyids who traveled to Kashmir in the 14th century and they were together responsible for the spread of Islam at a larger scale. Mir Saiyid was a great religious leader, a preacher, a renowned saint, an eminent scholar of his age, and a poet too. He wrote many books on the subject of government, logic, philosophy, medicine, etc. His poetry, under the pen name of Ali and Alai, is full of mystic and pious ideas and views. *Chihal Asrar* is the collection of this poetry.⁹

While preaching Islam in Kashmir the associates of Mir Saiyid Ali Hamdani also created wonderful Persian literature. One of the earliest was Saiyid Tajud-Din, who had complete hold on astrology and other sciences, and wrote a treatise, on the truth of Islam, *Siraj*.¹⁰ Like him, Mir Saiyid Haider wrote two books in Persian, one on the subject of mysticism, *Nafatul Irfan* and second on the truth of Islam, *Hidayatul Mustarshideen*.¹¹ Mullah Ahamd Alama a disciple of Saiyid Sharfud-Din and the first Sheikh-ul-Islam of Kashmir wrote books in Persian, *Fatwai Shahabi* and *Shihab-i-Saqibl*.¹² The distinguished Saiyid Jamalud-Din Muhadis established a school in Srinagar and his book in Persian is

⁸ Mohammad Raza Akhoonzada, *Tuhfa 'i Kashmir*, Urdu Tr. *Tuhfatul Ahabab*, Lahore, 1997, pp. 264-65.

⁹ Sultan Qutbud-Din, during whose rule Shah Hamdan came to Kashmir was himself fond of poetry and used to say verses under pen name Qutbi. Noorud-Din Jaffer Badkhshi attributed the following verses with the Sultan, in which he shows his faith with Shah-i-Hamdan and warmly welcomes his arrival into Kashmir:

Jānam fidā bar qadm khāki tu bādā ya amir

Ruham fidā bar sharifi tu bāda ya amir

Qutbi agar chi kard gunahan zi had-u-wad

Ākhar marā nasib shifā 'at ziy u badā a amir; (O! Lord my life may be sacrificed to the dust of your feet. My soul may be sacrificed to your distinguished name. If Qutbi committed unlimited sins, O! Lord at least your intercession may be to my share); Nooud-Din Jaffer Badkhshi, *Manqabatul Jawahar*, Ms, f 10/b.

¹⁰ Qazi Mohammad Ashraf, *Tazkiratul Arifeen*, Ms, p.35.

¹¹ Ali Ibni Raza, *Kuhlul Jawahar*, Lahore, pp. 34-35.

¹² *Tarikh-i Hassan, Tazkira Awliya-i-Kashmir*, p. 413.

*Tathirul-Qaloob*¹³.

Mir Mohammad Hamdani like his father, Mir Saiyid Ali Hamdani, was a writer of many books; one was *Iskandaria*, a treatise for Sultan Sikander, during whose rule he arrived in Kashmir. He also wrote a book on logic known as *Shamsia*, besides 45 other books on Persian literature.¹⁴ Mir Saiyid Mohammad Isfahani has written commentary on a book namely *Tanveer-i-Sharhi Siraj*.¹⁵ Mir Mohammad Baqir compiled many books in Persian, the best is *Noor*.¹⁶ *Ahadis-i-Suniya*, on the sayings of Prophet of Islam (PBUH), was the Persian work of Saiyid Hussain Shirazi, performing the duty of Qazi of Kashmir.¹⁷ Baba Haji Adham who came from Gazna wrote *Maqamat* in Persian.¹⁸ Mir Saiyid Mohammad Baihaqi said many verses in praise of Sultan Sikander, under the Nome de gore Dervish and had a Persian *Divan*.¹⁹

The golden period in the Sultanate period, rather one of the best in the entire history of Kashmir, was that of Sultan Zainul-Abidin. He had good command on Kashmiri, Persian, Tibetan and Sanskrit languages and used to say the verses²⁰ under the Nome de gore of Qutub; like:

Ay bigard shama' rawait ālami parwanai
Wazz lab-i-shirin taw shori 'ast dar har khana'i
Man ba chandin āshna'i mi khwarram khun jagar
Ashna rāhal in ast way bar begānāi
Qutub miskeen gar gunahi mikunad' aibash makun
'aib nabūd gār gunahi mikunad dewāna' i²¹

(The whole world in the shape of a butterfly is around your candle like face. It is the talk everywhere of your sweet lips. I in so many acquaintances am sorely grieved. It is the condition of a family woe that may be on to the stranger. If poor Qutub commits sin, do not blame him. It is not a fault, if a mad commits sin).

The Sultan was a prose writer also and his two books were *Shikayat* and Question and Answer. His court had many learned men²²

¹³ *Kuhlul Jawahar*, p. 5.

¹⁴ Ahamad Ibn Saboor, *Khawariq Salikeen*, Ms, f 30/; Abdul Wahab Noori, *Fathat-i-Kubrai*, Ms, f 80/a.

¹⁵ *Kuhlul Jawahar*, p.6

¹⁶ *Kuhlul Jawahar*, p.6

¹⁷ *Baharistan-i-Shahi*, p.17; Haider Malik, *Tarikh-i-Kashmir*, Ms; Hassan Beigh Khaki, *Tarikh-i-Kashmir*, Ms, F 28/a; Dawood Mishkati, *Asrarul Abrar*, Ms, F 44/6.

¹⁸ Khawja Mohammad Azam, *Waqat-i-Kashmir*, Amritsar, p. 85.

¹⁹ *Baharistan-i-Shahi*, p. 279.

²⁰ J.C. Dutt, *Kings of Kashmir*, Calcutta, 1830, pp.149-50.

²¹ *Tarikh-i-Hasan*, Vol. II, p.195

²² Qazi Jamalud-Din, Mulla Nadri and Mulla Jameel were also court poets. Among the learned men were Maulana Ziai and Maulana Fathi, *Baharistani Shahi*, p.340; Saiyid Mohammad Amin Mantqi Baihaqi was a distinguished Sufi saint and a mystic poet; *Waqat-i-Kashmir*, p.55.

and among them was the court poet, Mullah Ahamad Kashmiri. He translated *Mahabarta* and *Rajatarangini* into Persian as well as *Dasvatra* into Persian²³; and wrote *Miratul Aloom*²⁴ besides being a historian too.²⁵ Khawja Mohammad Azam writes:

*Maulana Ahamad Kashmiri afsh Shu'ra bud dr tarikhi khud nivishtas*²⁶
(Mulla Ahamad Kashmiri was great poet, he wrote history).

Like wise in the court at that time was Mullah Kabir, the teacher of Sultan and Shiekhul Islam. He is credited to have written *Sharhi Mulla*.²⁷ Also came then Mir Saiyid Hussein Qumi, from Qum (Iran), to stay at Zaingir where he established a school and wrote a book on the truth of Islam, *Siratul Mustaqeem*.²⁸ Mullah Alma Ansari, one of his companions, wrote a commentary on the book of Mullah Saeed Hamdani.²⁹

Thereafter some more towering personalities shined on the sphere of Kashmir. Mullah Mohammad Ani Harvi, a student of Maulana Jami, came to Kashmir and was appointed as a college teacher. Mir Shamsud Din Mohammad Iraqi came to Kashmir twice and established a monastery at Zadibal Srinagar, where Persian was taught. The distinguished Mir Qazi Mohammad Qudsi was a close associate of Mir Iraqi. He was a poet and has composed a remarkable *Mathnavis*.³⁰ Mir Danyal wrote a treatise in Persian.³¹ Saiyid Abdun-Nabi or Abdul Gani, a close friend of Mir Iraqi, wrote a treatise *Anwarul Huda*,³² which is a commentary of *Nafhatul Irfan* of Mir Saiyid Haider. Maulana Mir Saiyid Raziud-Din (d. 957 AH / 1550 AD), a headmaster of an educational institute at Qutbud Din Pora, wrote many high reputed books on various subjects in Persian. Mullah Abdul Wahab had good command on mysticism, logic and riddles and wrote many treatises on these subjects.³³ Mullah Hajji Ganai, Maulana Kamalud-Din Ganai and Qazi Ibrahim, the historian, were prominent men of learning and the Qazi wrote a history *Qalmraiu Kashmir* in the year 1520.³⁴ Likewise, Mullah

²³ M. K. Parmoo, *History of Muslim Rule in Kashmir*, Srinagar, 1969, p.63.

²⁴ M. Aslam, *Gauhar-i-Alam*, Mss, p.83.

²⁵ G .M. D. Sufi, *Kashir*, Vol. I, New Delhi, 1979, p.347; *Kashmir main Farsi Adab ki Tarikh*, p.59.

²⁶ Kh. Mohammad Azam, *Waqat-i-Kashmir*, p.95.

²⁷ Sufi G. M. D, *Kashir*, Vol. I, p.347.

²⁸ *Kuhlul Jawahar*, p.5.

²⁹ *Kuhlul Jawahar* , p.6.

³⁰ *Waqat-i-Kashmir*, p.97.

³¹ Mohammad Ali Kashmiri, *Tuhfatul Ahabab*, Ms, pp. 84-91, 278-282, 322-25, 413-17,.

³² *Kuhlul Jawahar*, pp.7-8.

³³ *Waqat-i-Kashmir*, p.85.

³⁴ *Kashmir main Farsi Adab ki Tarikh*, p. 93

Hussain Qari also wrote history of Kashmir.³⁵ Mir Saiyid Hussain wrote a commentary on *Awradi Fathia* in the name of *Anwar-ul-Bahi'a*.³⁶

It was because of such wonderful works that Kashmir was called *Iran-i-Sager* (little Iran) and provided enough space for learning the Persian language. It was not only then but thereafter as well some excellent works in Persian were produced there and together these works and their language have changed the social scenario in the region which is still found in the life and culture of the people.

³⁵ *Kashmir main Farsi Adab ki Tarikh*, p. 93.

³⁶ Saiyid Sibti Ali, *Shajra'I Mir Saiyid Hussain*, Srinagar, p.8.