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Prominent Sufi Terminologies and Their Usage in Kashmiri Sufi Poetry

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Abstract

Kashmiri Sufi poetry is a profound blend of mysticism, philosophy, and cultural expression, deeply enriched with symbolic language. This research explores the symbolic motifs and imagery that define Kashmiri Sufi poetry, examining how poets employ symbols to convey complex spiritual themes and the soul's journey towards union with the divine. Central symbols, kun fa yakun, Anal Haq, Fanna Fillah, Malkoot and Nothingness, reflect both personal and collective experiences of love, sacrifice, and transcendence, grounding abstract Sufi ideals in tangible, culturally resonant forms. This paper delves into the works of prominent Kashmiri Sufi poets, influenced by Persian literary traditions, employ intricate metaphors and symbols, drawing on Arabic script and lexicon to convey their spiritual experiences. Kashmiri Sufi and mystic poetry serves as a profound medium for exploring spiritual themes and the human experience. This body of work often employs rich symbolism to convey complex ideas about love, divinity, and the quest for truth. Symbols such as the rose, the nightingale, and the river frequently appear, representing the soul's yearning for union with the divine and the transience of worldly existence. The intertwining of Persian and Arabic symbols in Kashmiri Sufi and mystic poetry reflects a rich cultural and spiritual heritage. This abstract explores how these symbols serve as vehicles for expressing profound themes of love, divinity, and existential quest within the poetic landscape of Kashmir. This study highlights how these elements contribute to the enduring legacy of Sufi thought in Kashmir, enriching both local and global literary traditions.

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Introduction

The study of Sufi poetry in Kashmiri is a profound experience for sensitive readers, as it allows them to connect with the deep thoughts of Kashmiri Sufi poets, who were aware of the issues of their time. These poets were familiar with both scholarly and social matters, and they addressed the eternal questions and concerns about life, existence, the universe, and divinity, these poets tackle eternal questions, ideas, fears, and uncertainties. They articulate their observations with a refined, timely linguistic expression, transforming personal experiences into poetic works. Each Kashmiri Sufi poet builds a unique poetic identity through this approach, embodying a refined linguistic awareness and creative insight emblematic of an awakened poet.

In poems like Tamseel-e-Adam (Representation of Humanity), Dapyomus te Dopnam (I told him and He said to me), Shash Rang (Six Colors), Tsandan Kul (sandal Tree) Nye (Flute) and others, whether in classical or modern verse,

the poets weave shared themes of mystical thought and faith through their distinct linguistic styles and expressive creativity. This commonality of theme becomes a testament to their distinctive linguistic style and the creative trajectory that defines each poet's work.

A similar situation exists in Kashmiri Sufi poetry, where certain shared terms reflect a collective heritage of Kashmiri language and poetic tradition. Each poet, according to their linguistic understanding and creative perspective, employs these shared terms with unique meanings.. It is significant to note that some of these terms in Kashmiri Sufi poetry bring forth the imagery of both cultural and spiritual dimensions. For instance, the "Yindraazun Darbaar" (The court of Lord Indra) echoes with Mansur's cry of "Ana al-Haqq" (I am the Truth), and Bayazid Bastami's phrase "Subhani ma azhama sha'ni" (my being is pure, and my glory is exalted) resounds in the dome, reflecting an eternal echo of spiritual insight. Though Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi's perspective may be

unique, the essence remains unified. Similarly, Sheikh-ul-Alam's vision of God retains its individuality, yet his timeless legacy continues to illuminate like an eternal beacon.

Kashmiri Sufi poetry, rich with spiritual intensity and profound metaphor, frequently engages with key Sufi concepts. These ideas, while rooted in the broader Islamic mystic tradition, acquire unique dimensions in the hands of Kashmiri poets. Among the most notable are:

Ana al-Haqq (I am the God)

"Ana al-Haqq" is an important term in poetry, deeply tied to the spiritual status of the eminent Sufi Mansur Hallaj in the Islamic world. This term signifies a mystical state that is connected to the concept of "Ana Allah" (I am the Truth). It represents the stage of "fana fi Allah" (annihilation in God), where the seeker's ego dissolves, merging into the divine reality. At this stage, the seeker perceives within themselves the divine light—a light that, according to Sufi belief, was the source from which Adam was created. It is believed that humans carry a fragment of this divine light, remaining incomplete until reuniting with the eternal light. This eternal light shines within the seeker, affirming that their existence is part of the divine existence. When Mansur Hallaj reached this state, he uttered the famous phrase "Ana al-Haqq", meaning "I am the Truth". Many interpreted Hallaj's statement as a claim to divinity, asserting 'I am God,' while its true meaning was to express his oneness with the divine light, seeing himself as a part of it. However, society at the time deemed him guilty of heresy, and he was punished accordingly. Since then, "Ana al-Haqq" has become famous in Sufi discourse. When a poet uses this term in their poetry, it usually alludes to Mansur Hallaj and symbolizes this profound mystical state." Since then, "Ana al-Haqq" has become famous in Sufism, symbolizing this profound mystical state. When poets incorporate this term into their verses, it often appears associated with Hallaj's spiritual experience, though it primarily represents a state within the mystical journey itself."

اللہ تم ہو جو چہم درمنے
بہ کیاہ وئے تی گو ظہور
عابد تم زابد اتہ شایہ زینے
واحد تم کے چہے شیخ منصور
آن تمی تفرعم دپ نے چے
بہ کیاہ وئے تی گو ظہور

*God and His essence lie deep in my heart
I can't explain (but) that is what I call as manifestation of God
Devotee and the ascetic are yet to be born there
Sole (possessor) of "it" is Sheikh Mansur
"I am", he said even without drinking the realization (of God)
I can't explain (but) that is what I call as manifestation of God
(Shams Fakir)*

نقطہ پیو عانس غان پیوس ناو
غان سہن محروم کزن ٹاو ٹاو
تمہ شہچہ منصور ملرنہ او
ناو در او تے کب در ناو

*Ain's trait shaped Gaieen appearance
in public revealed the utterance
That brought at front Mansur's annoyance
A brook has a course's residence.*

Raaze Honz (Swan King)

"Another important Persian term frequently used by Sufi poets is the concept of the paz or falcon. This term is locally interpreted as Raaze Honz and has become deeply embedded in the regional tradition. In the local context, Raaze Honz symbolizes a spiritual path towards divine blessing and ultimate liberation. The Swan king (paez) is seen as a bird of every color, embodying the mystical journey beyond the boundaries of worldly constraints towards the light. Thus, it becomes a powerful symbol of liberation, free even within the confines of existence.

However, in the works of some Sufi poets, this concept is also applied to the seeker on the spiritual path, portrayed in the form of the falcon ascending towards the divine journey.

"The swan king (Raaze Honz) also symbolizes power (Jabroot), faith (Iman), and majesty (Jalal Allama Iqbal has used this symbol of the falcon with these same meanings, endowing it with these qualities. In Kashmiri Sufi poetry, Shams Faqir skillfully used the symbol of the falcon with great artistry. His poem Shenyiye Gacheth (Above the Nothingness) stands as a representative work in Kashmiri Sufi poetry.

Shams Faqir has used an old saying in the poem in which the Raaze Honz get caught in the Trap and the crow narrates its message to the owl. The owl hears the message and dies alive after hearing the message. However, as the falcon listens closely to the crow's words, it grasps the hidden meaning behind it, he understands the gesture and frees himself from the trap by making the same pretense. Thus the poet talks about how much his Creator cares for man and seeks his salvation directs the wise to do things from time to time.

Thus, the whole poem is a symbolic expression of the man's ability to overcome the pain of separation from his own existence and then to reconcile with that existence.

زاب ولہ راز ہونہ گندو نا بالے
مے ہاو گوڑہ بالہ چون دیدار
سنت تے فرض ئیس لکھا بالے
تس نوو نلرے زالے کانہہ
تس پن جنتس منز پوشہ ڈالے
مے ہاو گوڑہ بالہ چون دیدار

*Let you play your turn of Chowghan, O Swan king!
My poor self awaits your holy glimpse.
One who abides by Sunnah and Farz
No one would aflame his flesh and bones.
Paradise would offer him flower showers
My poor self awaits your holy glimpse.*

Kamdev (CUPID)

"Kamdev" is considered the god of love. "Kam" refers to sexual love and desire, similar to "Cupid" in Greek mythology. Cupid's role is the same as Kamdev's in Hindu mythology. However, the only difference is that in Greek literature, Cupid is depicted as blind, whereas in Hindu literature, Kamdev represents beauty, love, joy, and happiness, embodying the emotional and sensual aspects of love.

In Sufi poetry, however, the beloved is usually an expression of the Divine, the essence of truth. Kamdev here represents the heart's longing and the deep restlessness of the soul in its search for union with the Divine. The Sufi poet becomes a devotee, yearning for the divine presence, often describing a

state where the love of God takes the place of earthly desire, with Kamdev sometimes serving as a symbol or metaphor for this spiritual love.

In Sufi poetry, the beloved represents the Divine Essence (ق ح تاذ). Just as Kam Deva stirs the heart with the intensity of love the seeker is the devotee whose heart is made restless by the love of the Divine. Therefore, the Divine Essence is sometimes referred to as Kamdev or Madan (another name for Kamdev).

کامہ دیو با میناں یارو
پامہ چائے برس برس
نامن کرے شو مارو
کس ونہ سوندر سوندر
(وہاب کھار)

*O god of beauty, dear beloved
Your taunts, I would bear with utter patience.
Countless though, I would keep mugging up your names
To whom would say I 'lovely lass?*

مَنْ عَرَفَهُ نَفْسَهُ فَقَدْ عَرَفَهُ رَبَّهُ (He who knows himself, knows his Lord)

This Arabic saying supports the idea that understanding oneself leads to understanding God. Allah created humans as the best of all creations and endowed them with intellect. This blessing of intellect invites humans to reflect deeply on their existence. The Quran mentions the creation of humans in Surah At-Tin (95:4): "أَفْخَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ فِي أَحْسَن تَقْوِيمٍ" (Indeed, We have created man in the best of stature).

The idea here is that humans have been given the gift of intellect and the ability to reflect upon themselves and their existence, which is a unique and valuable blessing. The highest reality in Sufi thought is to understand the true nature of one's self, which is considered to be a reflection of God. This realization is at the core of Sufi practices, where spiritual seekers (saliks) engage in deep contemplation of their inner being, not only to understand themselves but to discover their connection to the Divine. The famous Sufi teaching "مَنْ عَرَفَهُ نَفْسَهُ فَقَدْ عَرَفَهُ رَبَّهُ" encapsulates this pursuit of self-awareness as the key to divine knowledge.

Attaining the ultimate truth requires the seeker to know themselves and unite with their true essence, thereby giving practical and real proof of this saying. This is a fundamental principle of Sufism, rooted in the Quranic directive that "humans are created in God's image" or the Biblical verse stating that "God created humans in His own image and likeness." Thus, the one who understands themselves understands God.

By contemplating one's own creative existence, man can recognize his own existence, and by contemplating this existence, he can recognize the Creator: The term "مَنْ عَرَفَهُ نَفْسَهُ" (Whoever knows their self, knows their Lord) also emphasizes self-recognition, and our Sufi poets have also adopted it in the same sense. Because the Sufis have always preferred to explore their own existence and have made it the covenant to bring it – because by burning the lamp of one's own being, man can attain true knowledge of the secrets of the universe. The Qur'an has also repeatedly revealing this idea in the same place that reality is not far from the existence of man. However, in order to discover the truth, it is necessary to purify one's existence-because hiding one's existence from

worldly deception is not the good news of success – which is mentioned in Surah Al-A'la.

The Quran repeatedly highlights this idea, urging humans to uncover the truth within themselves, as their existence is intricately connected to divine reality. To achieve this truth, one must purify their being. Cleansing oneself of worldly deceit and delusion is essential for success, as emphasized in Surah Al-A'la (87:14): "فَقَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ تَزَكَّى" ("Successful indeed is the one who purifies themselves.")

من عرفه نفسه حديث زان
بیمیں سرکڑنے پنہ ئے پان
پھولی گل جعفر فقیرس
نرہ نرہ منور فقیرس
(لالہ کرگامی)

*Whoever knows their own self has understood the saying
those who recognized their own essence
The flower of Ja'far blossoms for the seeker
Each particle of the Seeker glows with divine light.*

"Muheet" (محیط)

The literal meaning of the word Muheet is "that which encompasses something." However, Sufis have used Muheet to describe the Divine Light (Nur-e-Zaat), of Gods essence, signifying that he encompasses everything. It refers to the infinite nature of God, beyond the bounds of limitation or comprehension Kashmiri Sufi poets frequently employ the term Muheet to convey the divine manifestations of God's power and the radiance of His essence, which reflects in countless forms and colors...

Ahad Zargar says

بہ چہس محیط بہ چہس بسیط
بہ ما اسم گل شین محیط
از من یادگو گل سمسار
کافر سبتہ کوڑم اقرار

*I am the All-Encompassing; I am the Infinite.
It's me who may be Dominant over all the things (created)
From my own self the entire universe came to existence
Affirmed only after becoming rejecter*

In Kashmiri Sufi poetry, Muheet is a term intricately tied to spiritual ecstasy and enlightenment. To grasp its deeper meaning requires intense devotion, reflection, and effort.

Nothingness (کینہ نہ)

"Nothingness" is a local philosophical term. Although in Persian mystical philosophy, this term is sometimes associated with the concept of "non-existence," it is mostly used to denote a state of existence that transcends ordinary perception. It represents a reality beyond the manifested, often described as a state of the void or "nothingness." Kashmiri Sufi poets have used this term in different ways to express diverse spiritual states. Traditionally, nothingness signifies a level of divine truth that is unattainable in the material world. It is a state where the knower and the known dissolve, and the "non-existent" take on the form of the existent. In Islamic mysticism, the concepts of adam (non-being) and wujud (being) were elaborated upon by scholars such as

Imam Ghazali and Ibn Arabi. A central belief is expressed as:
"God created the world from the void."

In local interpretations, especially within Shaivism, a parallel term "Shun" is used, meaning "emptiness" or "nothingness". According to this philosophy, Shunya is understood as pure consciousness and a state of bliss, often equated with the supreme reality.

The Sufi contemplates the meaning of "nothingness" in the context of divine estrangement. In Kashmiri poetry, this tradition is often expressed through the mysticism of Lal Ded. Modern existential thinkers and creators often view nothingness as a fundamental aspect of human existence, a reflection of the paradox of being. In Sufi thought, "nothingness" holds various interpretations. For some, it signifies a sense of estrangement or alienation from the Divine, which is temporary, or a latent, unmanifested state of existence. The idea of nothingness is also closely connected to the concept of self-realization

کینہہ نے اوس کیابتام اوس
 کینہہ نس مانہ با چٹھ کیا
 کینہہ نے مانہ با چٹھ کیا
 پائے اوس بو بہانے
 (سوچہ کراں)

*In 'nothingness' was an existence
 To 'nothing' what denotation
 Known to none but saint of higher conscience
 He is the entire, me only a deception.*

(Songs of Soch Kral by Mustaque B Barq Pg. 48)

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