



## Poets and their contribution to Kashmiri literature

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### Abstract

In this Research work the Researcher reveals some of the Kashmiri female writers, who have contributed a lot in Kashmir's poetry. We are all aware of the name of Kashmir, Kashmir, which is considered the crown of the India and Sufiana music of Kashmir, which is famous all over the world. Whether it is folk music or Sufiana, the contribution of Kashmiri writers has been equal in both forms of music. There are some famous female writers, whose name is still found on the tongue of the children of Kashmir, whether it is their poetry or their personal form. His poetry was called "vaakh", vaakh means that which is spoken, I have written about these famous female poetesses about their personal form and as author in this research work.

**Keywords:** literature, poets

### Introduction

The contribution of women to the religious and cultural life of Kashmir is indeed remarkable. No ceremony, either social or religious, could be performed without the participation of the women. In the sphere of fine Arts, women cultivated many arts and made efforts to preserve music, song, and dance. The most important contribution in this field came from an ordinary peasant girls like Habba Khatun, Lal Ded.

### Lalla Ded

Lal Ded was the earliest author in Kashmiri language. Her importance lies in the fact that she disseminated her message in the language of the masses her poetry contained the imagination, fear and hopes of the people. It is believed that the great hermit Lal Ded was born in the first quarter of the fourteenth century A.D and much before the accession of sultan sikandar. Lalla the poetess sage affectionately called Lal Ded or Lalamoj- mother lalla by all Kashmiries. Laleshwari – that was Lal Ded's real name, as she was born in a Brahmin family in village Pandrethan which lies four miles to the south east of Srinagar.at the age of fourteen Lal Ded was married, the boy with whom the marriage took place, had lost his mother, his father had married a second time. Thus Lal Ded had a step mother in law. After her marriage, Lal Ded was given a new name "Padmavati". Lal Ded suffered humiliation and mental agony in her husband's home. Her conjugal life proved to be full of trouble for her. Her step mother in law treated her harshly. Te wily mother in law's cruelty and torture out stepped the limits of compassion and decency. She literally starved her in a strange manner at the time of serving meal, her mother in law used to put a stone in her plate hidden under the little food, the heaped plate gave the impression of the brimful plate. The sagacious Lal Ded, as usual bore it all in a stoical manner and kept the secret of such inhumane treatment for twelve long years. What was more, she righteously used to stone returned after finishing her meals. However one morning Lal Ded as usual, was going to

fetch water, when one of her female neighbors sked her in a jocular style about the feast preparation in her home on account of the celebration of certain ceremony. The remark stung Lalla who let her proverbial phrase slip from her lips "they may kill a big lamb or a small one, Lalla will have her pebble all right". Per chance her father in law over heard the remark and tried to find out the truth which he discovered to his utter surprise. There in a plate lay a stone under the thin layer of rice, her father in law reproached his wife for her cruel attitude towards her daughter in law. But this hardened the wicked women further who suspected Lalla Ded to have carried the tales of her barbarism to her father in law. She nourished intense hatred towards her and even accused her being disloyal towards her husband. She wanted to turn her son against Lalla Ded. A time came when her husband too disliked her sublime detachment. Lalla Ded now had no second thoughts about her future even her husband turned against her. The worldly tortures life proved a blessing for her the suffering and torture provided her rigorous self-discipline and gradually she had "developed an inner attitude of holy indifference". Before quitting her home, a miracle (as some believe) occurred. It is mentioned that one day when Lalla Ded had gone to bring water, her mother in law asked her son to find out what she was doing. He found her engrossed in prayers. But when she was returning home with the pitcher full of water, her husband struck her with a stick. The blow broke her pitcher without spilling the water and this water she filled every vessel, and the residue was thrown on the rubbish outside. At that place a water tank was formed and it became known as Lllalatrags (Lalla pond). In a great mood of renunciation, Lalla Ded bade goodbye to her home and adopted the state of the wondering recluse, roaming in forests and lonely places. The mystic fervor led her to sing and dance clothed in scant dress. Her semi naked state was not liked by many persons her rapturous communion with almighty and moving about naked often landed her in trouble though without any effect. About her nakedness she says, "my teacher

spoke to me but one precept, “from without enter thou the inmost part. That to me became a rule and, therefore, naked began to dance. She came into contact with the muslim saint, Mir sayyid Ali Hmadani- popularly known as Shah Hamdan who had sought refuge in Kashmir from persecution in Hamdan (Persia). Legend has it that to cover her body before the great mystic, she plunged into a baker’s red hot oven and emerged thence dressed in silken robes to have discourse with him.

Lalla Ded was probably influenced by the sufi philosophy through shah Hmadan. In any case, she sought and found the basic truth permeating the outwardly incongruous cults and faiths Brahmanic pantheism and Islamic monism, saivism and Sufism and gave it the best exposition in her poems which came down as her vaakh (Sanskrit, vakhya), a four line stanza was current by middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Lalla Ded improved the vaakh to the standard of a composite metric from that came to stay. Her mystic vaakh quatrains attained instant popularity and were mostly communicated by word of mouth the lasting contribution of Lalla Ded’s vaakh is that these helped to make Kashmiri an adequate vehicle for the expression of philosophy thought. In fact her verses are placed by critics as “the earliest specimen of modern kashmiri” despite her use of Sanskrit vocabulary and archaic expression. In Kashmiri literature, she still remains unsurpassed for the depth of her meaning she lent charm and richness to the thought and literature of Kashmir. It was only after her that poets and writers started using Kashmiri language as a medium of expression. But her poetry in Kashmiri can be termed as the soul of Kashmiri literature. Her ideal facts in Kashmiri verse are apart from being the utterances of a holy women, expressive of grand and lofty thoughts, and spiritual laws short, apt, sweet, thrilling, life giving with the greatest moral principles.

The utterances of Lal Ded, couched in the popular idiom of her time, reveal her struggle towards self-realization, how she transcended desires and temptation:

O embodied one, dote not upon your body thus  
 Embellishing it, adorning it,  
 Providing luxuries for it;  
 Even its ashes will not endure.  
 In her quest for the absolute, Lal Ded spurned idols:  
 Idol is of stone, temple is of stone,  
 Above (temple) and below (idol) are one,  
 Which of them shall thou worship, Ofoolish pandit?  
 Cause thou the union of mind with soul.  
 Lalla Ded preached eternal truths that are common to all  
 faiths, in a language that struck the deepest chords in the  
 minds of the people, hindus, muslims alike:  
 Passionate with longing in mine eyes,  
 Searching wide, and seeking nights and days,  
 Lo; I behold the truthful one, the wise,  
 Here in mine own house to fill my gaze.  
 That was the day of my stars,  
 Breathless, I held him my guide to be.

The vekhyas of Lal Ded brought about a veritable, intellectual revolution in Kashmir. Research reveals specially that of prof. J.L Kaul, has shifted the uncritical or overzealous addition

which were made to the vakhyas of Lalla Ded from time to time. Out of the authentic vakhyas, thus retrieved, what is remarkable is the manner in which she established the secular tradition of harmony and tolerance the priceless heritage of kashmiris and, however indirectly it contributed to the glorious ere of mutual good relation among Hindus and Muslims during the reign of Sultan zain-ul- Abidin. Lalla Ded died more than six centuries ago but her memory is still fresh in the minds of kashmiris.

### **Habba Khatun**

Whereas Lal Ded was the first and supreme exponent of the mystic eperience in Kashmiri poetry, the most traditional impulse of love and song, deep rooted in folk literature, again came from a women some two centuries later in the charming person of a poetess queen, Habba Khatun. She and her successor, Arnimal, were the processors of the Romantic Movement in Kashmiri poetry. Their songs, remarkable for melody and spontaneity, expressed the deep craving of the heart and the soul a refreshing departure from the classical style of their predecessors.

Born in village chan jammu road in the dahar, off the Srinagar countryside for saffron fields, Zooni (that was her maiden name) was a precocious child, and learnt the Quran and Persian classics. Her fame spread but her father, scared by it, had her married off to a peasant who lived in the nearby village, Ledpore. The gifted girl burst into song which her illiterate husband did not appreciate. He and his parents found Zooni no good as a helping hand in farming. What had a house wife to do with airy song? They would taunt her. “out of the constant conflict of her early married life was born that nostalgic and melancholy stain in her songs that came to be characteristic not only of her poetry, but of all the poetry of this period”. (Prof J.L Kaul). Her lyrics which were a far cry from the mystic verse of Lalla Ded – bore the inimitable stamp of spontaneous bird-song. Her songs spilled beyond the village confines and reached the capital city of Srinagar.

One day while she was singing on a terraced paddy field, she caught the eye of prince Yusuf Shah, who fell in love with her, he asked her who she was, she replied in aquartrain; he knew that she was Habba Khatun, the name that had been given to her by the sage of pampoor, khwaja Masud. The prince arranged for her divorce, and married her. After the death of his father in 1579 A.D, Yusuf Shah ascended the thrones of Kashmir. Habba Khatun, the queen, became the royal patron of arts and letters. She and her loyal consorts, Yusuf Shah Chak, founded Gulmerg, the ‘meadow of flowers’ when they discovered this upland, flower –spangled meadw in one of their tours of the velley. No wonder Hanbba Khatun has been called the Nur Jahan of Kashmir. Yusuf Shah Chak spend much of his time in song and music. It is mentioned that Habba Khatun looked after the political interests of the tate during the fateful years. Habba Khatun was not destined to enjoy uninterrupted blissful life. The days of little joy too wings and flew away like migratory birds, leaving behind sad memories. Yusuf Shah failed to mentain the independence of his kingdom. His habits of neglecting the interests of the people cost him the usual public support. Besides, he was a well-known sybarite. At last, he submitted to Akbar’s men and was send to Bihar. What happened to his beloved Hbba

Khatun, is debatable. There are different views about her last woeful years. It is said she renounced the worldly life and took to asceticism. She spent the last twenty years of her life separated from Yusuf Shah Chak, as a wondering recluse, she lived in a hut at Panthachok, on the bank of river Vitasta. According to another version, which is quite interesting, it is said that after Yusuf Shah's surrender, the Mughal governor issued warrants for her imprisonment, but before these warrants could be executed, she had left the imperial abode to follow a simple ascetic life. But the last version appears to be quite incorrect, of his, while going through the event of those last fateful days, such a warrant of historic importance, if any, could not have been missed by any chronicler, local or Mughal, and this could have unlocked the whole history of this romantic poetess.

Habba Khatun is remembered more as a singer of songs than as a queen who advised the sultan on all matters of state, and was a source of strength to him. She sang of love in its many moods. One of her popular love-lyrics runs thus:

The distant meadows are in bloom  
Hast thou not heard my plaints?  
Flowers bloom on mountain lakes  
Come, let us to mountain meads;  
The lilac blooms in distant woods,  
Hast thou not heard my plaint?

Lol lyric is typical verse from that was popularized by Habba Khatun. A passion-laden complex of love and yearning, pinning for what is not attained in the path of love 'Lol' is a Kashmiri word which means somehow missing, here is one of Habba Khatun's well-known lyrics;

Come, friends, let us to banks braes,  
To gather yellow flowered dandelions;  
Silently and stealthily,  
Without a word of warning, he did  
Steal away from me.  
Dear, come, O come to me;  
They know it all they know,  
And now talk ill of me,  
In rumor and in gossip rude,  
When will the tangled web of fate unrevealed be?  
Dear, come, O come to me;

#### **Bahat Bibi and Dahat Bibi**

Bahat Bibi and Dahat Bibi were daughters of a village patwari. These two sisters were impressed by Sheikh Nur-ud-Din and became his disciples and under his guidance, they advanced considerably on the path of spirituality. They led a simple life, giving up even taking vegetables. They took wild plants which fell on the ground after ripening and their main item of food was the cakes of barely flour. When Mir Syed Mohammad Hamdani came to Kashmir in 1393 A.D., he held discussion with Sheikh Nur-ud-Din. At that time these two sisters were present there. They intervened in the discussion and were able to impress Hamdani. Some of their answers to the questions put by Mir Hamdani are worth recording. During the meeting, Mir Mohammad Hamdani asked Sheikh Nur-ud-Din as to why he had weakened his horse (body) Sheikh replied that being an inexperienced rider, he feared lest

the horse should go out of control and throw him on the ground. At this stage the two sisters intervened and told him (Hamdani) that for a relaxed soul, there was no need of a horse or a saddle. Mir Hamdani asked them who are those who have attained destination? One of the sister replied that they were those who were controlled over selves. Such a reply given with confidence, astonished him who again asked her whether she had achieved that stage, and received a quick reply that if she had not attained that power, how could she have dared to reveal this secret. She was again asked if she could tell him about her sex, i.e., whether she was a boy or girl. The answer was "nothing". Bahat Bibi was a learned lady and she delivered her saying in Persian. One of them (translated into English) is, "He who is relieved of the thoughts of existence is relieved of anxiety, and relieved of the sorrow and fears of hope"

#### **Taj Khatun**

Taj Khatun was daughter of Sayyid Hasan and wife of Sayyid Mohammad Hamdani. She was a saintly woman who spent her time in meditation in the garden built for her.

#### **Queen Subhatta**

Queen Subhatta was the mother of Sultan Sikandar. She was a deeply religious-minded woman. In spite of her pre-occupation in civil and military affairs of the state, she devoted most of her time to religious pursuits. She was a follower of Sayyid Ali Hamdani popularly known as (Shah Hamdan).

#### **Lachma Khatun**

She was a daughter of Malik Saif-ud-Din Dar, a military commander of Zain-ul-Abidin (1420-1470 A.D.) and Hasan Shah (1472-1484 A.D.) She was a devoted lady and was a disciple of Sheikh Baba Ismail Kubravi.

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