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## Sheikh-ul-Aalam's Poetry in The Light of the Quran and the Hadees (Ahadith): A Short Analysis

**Mohd Nageen Rather**  
Student IGNOU  
Department of English  
Kashmir (J&K) Srinagar

### Abstract

Sheikh Noor-ud-din (c.1377-c.1440) is one of the most revered and beloved of the Sufi-saints that have ever lived in Kashmir. He was the founder and most popular Sufi saint of the Reshi cult of Kashmir. Amongst the people of the region, he is also known as Alamdar-e-Kashmir (the standard bearer of Kashmir) and Nund Rishi. His message of simplicity, universal love and an egalitarian philosophy has inspired countless Kashmiris over the ages. Sheikh-ul-Alam was a great religious poet of Kashmiri language. Since the poet was a man of religious temperament, the theme of major portion of his oeuvre was the frailty, transitoriness and unsatisfactoriness of all earthly enjoyments, and complete surrender of one's soul to God. To be didactic was the first intention of Sheikh's poems. He was a poet of commitment. He used his poetry as a vehicle to spread the word of Allah to common masses in their own language and tone. The present paper is an attempt to present a brief analysis of Sheikh's poetry in the light of the Quran and Ahadiths.

**Keywords-** Sheikh Noor-ud-din, Sufi-saints, Religious poet, Quran, Commitment

### Introduction

It is undisputed that the Shaikh called himself a *Reshi* and adopted time tested and well established system of *Reshiyyat* to define himself and execute his socio-religious mission. He used the terminology given by this indigenous system and freely appropriated it for his purposes and had little difficulty to express his different religious views in its terms. (Maroof-2011-12:84) His poetic '*shruks*' are, by virtue of their simplicity and beauty, amongst the most profound gems of wisdom ever uttered. . "Sheikh-ul-Alam was an icon. He was not just a Sufi poet, but also a preacher and touched all facets of life," (Aziz Hajni: 2015) His poetry is the spontaneous expression of his spiritual experiences and observations. He, in fact, has poured his very soul in his verses. His poetry reveals the grandeur of the saint as a great soul and poet of high order. He made his poetry the message of his faith, love and brotherhood,

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peace and respect for all creeds and beliefs, but his message has not injured or diminished the quality and grace of his *Shruks* and longer narratives. "It is worthwhile to say that Shaikh-ul-Aalam's *shruks* represents the language of the common man, Like a master he has converted his feelings, experiences and observations in living images and word pictures. His *Shruks* and other longer poems are quoted from the pulpit in the religious sermons enjoyed and adored by the literate and illiterate equally, refreshing their faith and religious knowledge." (Motilal) He was a great poet and had a flair for prosody, used similes, metaphors, hyperbolas and other forms of expression, rich and effective with aplomb. His verses are quoted in day-to-day conversation by the common people and such verses have attained the status of proverbs, wise sayings and parables. Most of his verses are coloured with the admonitions, suggestions, instructions, good tidings borrowed and derived from the holy Quran and Ahadith. Sheikh-ul-Alam used poetry just as a vehicle to disseminate to the people the message of Almighty Allah and teachings of Prophet (SAW). He emerges as a popular religious poet.

#### DISCUSSION

To express Islamic philosophy and ideals through poetic forms is an art effectively practiced by poets like Sheikh Sa'adi and Iqbal. Sheikh-Ul-Alam stands equal to them in it. Muhammad Asad Ullah Wani regards his poetry the holy Qu'ran in the Kashmiri language similar to Maulana Jalal Uddin's Roomi's masnavi-the Qu'ran in Persian. Sheikh gives precedence to good deeds, to control one's wishes, to remove ignorance, to avoid greed and avarice, religious tolerance, fraternity, national integration, and liberalism in his verse. Abdul Ahad Azad says that: "The essence of the teaching of Sheikh-ul-Alam is living in isolation, dependence on God, total surrender to Him, and belittling the world." All the themes of his *shruks* are related to the fundamental principles of Islam. For instance, the Oneness of God, the teachings of the Quran, the last apostle, Muslims, and so on. A reader comes across a numberless *Shruks* whose origin is traceable to the Quran and Ahadith. Some translated couplets in the light of Quran are

*Laila ilallah sahi kaurum /wahi kaurum panun pan; wajood trawith maujood saurum/ her maukh wuchum panun pan;*

**Trans:** "No sooner did I proclaim the unity of God, Than I surrendered myself to His jurisdiction, Diffused My-Being in His Omnipresence, Reflective remained I to His Omnipotence!" (Alchemy of Light)

**Al Quran:** "Your God is one God; there is no God save Him, the Beneficent, the Merciful. Lo! In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the difference of night and day, and the ships which run upon the sea with that which is of use to men and the water which Allah sendeth down from the sky, thereby reviving the earth after its death, and dispersing all kinds of beasts therein, and (in) the ordinance of the winds, and the clouds obedient between heaven and earth: are signs (of Allah's sovereignty) for people who have sense. (Al-baqarah-163 & 164)

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Quran and Hadees is the background of Sheikh's poetry presented in the common language of the people of the land. 'He used his poetry as tool to spread the knowledge of absolute'(Wiki.)

*Mohammad te chaur yaar berhaq ganzrak /timan nish andyo dunihi nyay; jaan te paan youd timan path banzrakh / souy chai tour kich boud rahkai; anis athawol pai keth sezarakh /yamath na wizrakh peere sanz jai;*

**Trans:** "Let thou take Mohammad (saw) and His four disciples as paragons of life. Solutions to all thy affairs wilt thou get from them. Devote thy being to their defined doctrine. A vast empire wilt thou find in Hereafter. Able not a blind be to impel without a staff. Thus shalt not thou be righteous without Thy Prophet." (Alchemy of Light)

**Al Quran:** 'O ye who believe! Obey Allah, and obey the messenger and those of you who are in authority; and if ye have a dispute concerning any matter, refer it to Allah and the messenger if ye are (in truth) believers in Allah and the Last Day. That is better and more seemly in the end. (Al-Nisa- 59)

In the following couplet of Sheikh there are echoes the Quranic verse .About Sabr (Patience) he says

**Trans:** "If you are under the fury of God./Do not try to avoid it./If he puts you to a hard and fast test. Consider it to be the source of comfort./If you do this you are sure to be a chosen one."

**Al Quran:** 'Verily, Allah is with those who are Patient.(Bakarah.153 )

Similarly the following verses of Sheikh are based on the Quran and Ahadiths of Islam

*Paran paran te par gay /tim khar gay kitabe bora het*

**Trans:** Reading and dry scholarship has left many unenlightened and uninitiated/ like donkeys they carry burdens of books on them (Malik: 88)

**Al Quran:** The parable of those who were entrusted with the torah but failed to discharge their responsibility is that of donkeys carrying the burden of books. (Al-Juma)

Sheikh-ul-Alam tried to infuse the individual with a firm faith in an ever watchful God and in accountability on the day of judgement which is also the most recurrent theme of his poetry. But he knew that the only way to achieve this is to create in people a strong desire for the salvation in the Hereafter. (Malik:2013p97)This verse of is a soft rendition of a hadith which the poet puts as thus:

*Yete chuw dapaan aes chi khaase/ taete no makli saase manz akh*

**Trans:** Here you claim to be the most pious and the choosen/there not one per thousand will be salvaged. (Malik:89)

**Hadith:** They will ask how many from how many. The reply will be, nine hundred ninety nine from one thousand. (Sahih-al-Muslim:Reported Adullah Ibn Umar)

This is a long hadith which says that on the day of judgement the angles will be asked to separate those who have to enter Hell. Another verse of the poet which echoes the meaning of a Hadith is as under:

*Aagar hokhan te henar grezan / tele maale aasi wander raaj*

**Trans:** Rivers will dry up ; gutters will roar/Apes, dear, shall control the affairs then.

**Hadith:** When societal affairs are entrusted to the undeserving then wait for the hour of doom.(Bukhari)

Truth for Sheikh-ul-Alam was the basis of a higher status in this world and the Hereafter. He always insisted people to speak truth and never shy away from whatever results will come out. He believed that lie has an immediate sweet taste but it turns out to be the sweet poison. Here he conforms to the Quranic verse.

*Pauz dapan pan zan natakh /apuz dapan lagi ras; Mohammad(s.a.w)trawith  
Iblees ratakh /khaudai wuchui khatakh kas.*

**Trans:** Tremored shalt thou be alike a leaf in pronouncing the truth. As luscious and dulcet wilt thou be in telling lies and falsity. Truthfulness – an attribute – great of Mohammad(s.a.w) wilt thou leave to hold Iblees. Hide not thee the cardiac waves to omniscient God.(Alchemy of Light)

**Al Quran:** O ye who believe! Be careful of your duty to Allah, and be with the truthful.(Al-Imran-102)

Penitence is considered by the poet as the sure passport for the salvation of a sinner. He had a firm faith in repentance and in washing away the dirt of sin as he draws this faith from the Quran like this:

*Touba youd karakh yami baue sara tarakh/ touba karun chhe tarwuin naw;  
touba raste panou tati ki the ubrakh /yati chhe ter te wushun,*

**Trans:** Penitence shalt make thee to cross the abysmal ocean of this world. Repentance art the ferry across the brook. How art thee be safe O me, with no renunciation there. Where severe colds and scorching winds do prevail!

**Al Quran:** O ye who believe! Turn unto Allah in sincere repentance! It may be that your Lord will remit from you your evil deeds and bring you into Gardens underneath which rivers flow, on the day when Allah will not abase the Prophet and those who believe with him. Their light will run before them and on their right hands: they will say: Our Lord! Perfect our light for us, and forgive us! Lo! Thou art Able to do all things. (Al-Tahrim-8)

Idol worship is against Islam and the Sheikh clearly says so when he tells Muslims not to follow the Hindu's path but the path of Allah (haq). He tells them, "Don't forget Prophet Muhammad. If we go to hell for our wrong doings, it would grieve the Prophet" (SAW) (Aslam:2015)His poetry is replete with admonitions, suggestions and lessons for Muslims to follow Allah, His Apostle and the Quran, leaving no room for doubt that the Sheikh was a

great religious poet guiding people in line with the Word of Allah and His Messenger (saw). Let's see the following couplets which bear direct resemblances to the message of Allah:

*Aashiq tim yim paak rachan badan/lashaq hoore thawnak khidmachi; Aahaw te houshaw ladrekha badan/ade mukhe tim wuchan surachi; bihishtas bronh bronh timay khuar ladan/yim yeti loula tihide riwan yechi.*

**Trans:** Lovers true maintain the purity of their psyche and substance. Indeed wilt they find Hoors-chaste for aid and substance. Pale art they of their sights-deep and grooms-mute. Thus wilt they achieve the divine mercy and beneficence. Entrants first boarding the heaven wilt be the men. Who will dissolve themselves in love and passion of their Lord!"

**Al Quran:** And who guard their modesty . (Al-moominoon-5)-and that ye draw not nigh to lewd things whether open or concealed. (Al-inam-151)

These couplets, based on the principles of the Quran and Ahadith ,are enormously educative, suggestive, instructive and reformatory for all and sundry.

*Nazar karizina parden zananan/ twa ulag te pulag wazi; twa chuh lage imanas/ kroadh no musalmanas pazi.*

**Trans:** "Let not gaze the woman unfamiliar and strange. Let not lose thy virtue and welfare with such doings. So shalt not thou put thy faith to a butt of accusation. Thus a muslim – shalt shun his huff and hate."

**Al Quran:** Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and be modest. That is purer for them! Allah is aware of what they do. (Al-Noor- 30)

The above couplets of Sheikh-ul-Alam followed by English translations and having their thematic affinity with the holy Quran and teachings of Prophet (SAW) show that the poetry of Sheikh-ul- Alam is fundamentally religious advocating the supremacy of Allah and firm faith in Islamic teachings .Interestingly "that Islam never denounced poetry without qualification is itself evident from the verses of the Quran which condemn poets for their lack of commitment to truth and dispositional wantonness. To quote the verses in translation: 'And as for poets, it is the perverts who follow them. Do you not see that they wander aimlessly in many a vale? And say that which they do not. Save those who believe and do righteous deeds and remember Allah often...' (Sura: Shu'ara, 224-227)" (Mudasir:117) but " unfortunately, his poetry has been interpreted by different scholars in a manner that satisfies the colonial mindset—secularism is the only theme which has become predominant. Many India-centering scholars (non-Muslims, especially) have presented the Sheikh as a representative of secular ideology. They have deliberately tried to interpret the *shruks* to suit their vested interest. For instance, Professor RL Shant has (in "Bhakti Movement and Sheikh Noor-ud-in Wali", Kashmir Insight 5, 5 (May 2012), pp. 17-22) tried to link the Sheikh with a movement (Bhakti) that has nothing to do with Islamic tenets. This is being done deliberately to project the Sheikh as a secular saint who "is neither a Hindu nor a Muslim...but a pure human being" (Shant, *ibid*). The truth is that the Sheikh was only a true Muslim who had studied the Quran

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and the Hadith deeply and which he asked the Muslims to follow.”(Aslam:2015) It was the result of reverence of the people for Shaik-ulAalam and established sacred oral tone of his poetry that many people committed it to memory and this tradition continues for centuries M. Maroof Shah says that “people see value in claiming and appropriating great saints in their own camps as if God needs advocates and Truth needs any defence.” Nonetheless,Shaik-ul-Aalam commands a place of respect and reverence as a great saint and a great religious poet. In fact he is one of the foremost preachers of Islamic teachings in a language that is Kashmiri’s own.

### Conclusion

Sheikh-ul-Alam’s poetry is actually a highly loaded text which comprises different religious features. Obviously “poetry was always believed to have value because of its potential to be an efficient means for communicating religious, moral or other universal truths.”(Mudasir-2011-12:103).Sheikh used poetry as a vehicle to spread the word of Allah to common masses in their own language and tone. Sheikh Noor-ud Din Noorani—one of the most popular Sufi saints of Kashmir is well rooted in the Islamic tradition of Quran and the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)(Tasleem.War-2011-12:115) Mostly of his poetry is vividly tinted with the admonitions, suggestions , instructions good tidings barrowed and derived from the holy Quran and Ahadith. He used poetry as a means to disseminate, to the people, the message of Almighty Allah and teachings of Prophet (SAW). He emerges as a deep-rooted religious poet producing the poetic replicas of the religious doctrine which he himself was a staunch believer of.

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