

Book Review

Kulliyat-I Shaiku'l 'Aalam by Asadullah Afaqi, Published by the Life Foundation, Iqbal Basti Rauza Bal Charar-I Sharif, Kashmir, 2008, pp.623.

Hamid Naseem Rafiabadi*

Mullah Ahmad for the first time compiled the poetry of Nuruddin (*Kalam-i-Shaik*) in Persian and named it *Noor Namah* and also wrote a voluminous book entitled as *Mirat -ul-Awliya* in which he made a detailed explanation of Sheikh's poetry in Persian. About 80 years from the death of Shaikh Maulana Kubrawi. He compiled a *Rishi Namah*. It might have been available to the sixteenth century scholar and scribe Baba Nasibuddin and his follower Baba Dawud Mishkati .During sixteenth century A.D and after wards even the real life of Shaikh Noor Din has been presented shrouded in fantasy and legends due to the absence of authentic literature on this subject, and it seems that the actual details in this regard also were lost sight of. Not only this that Sheikh's life has been shown shrouded in legends and everything is being presented in such a mythical way at times and different theories of miraculous nature have been propounded to explain even the minor details of his life which are piled heap after heap from the conception of the Shaikh in his mother's womb to his expiry. Therefore everything assumes the form of miracles and legends.

Ghulam Nabi Gawhar, a renowned scholar on Shaikh Nooruddin (in *Shaifah-i-Noor*, Gulshan Publishers, Srinagar 1997p-PP-12-13) says for example:-

After sixteenth century the fashion of compiling *Rishi Namahs* has also aggravated the situation and it is very hard to search for the

* Professor, S.H. Institute of Islamic Studies, University of Kashmir, Srinagar.

material which may be authenticated easily. The footnote scholarship in this regard has made things more complicated. The spirit of degeneration has led to a mosaic situation and under the impact of defeatist mentality with every poem of the Shaikh a Ghazzal has been invented and with every couplet a background has been provided. Worst still such a fabricated background has been provided as stories that it became old wives tale and hence a bundle of fairy tales have got circulated among the masses.

He says further that the history of Rishi school of thought is indicated in the *Rishi Tazkirahs* and the *Tazakurat Rishi Namahs* and the selection of the poetry of Shaikh or the compendium of his poetry or compilation or explanation may be called *Noor Namah*. But people could not keep this distinction in mind hence they confounded both and the poetry of Shaikh has been erroneously called *Rishi Namah* and the history of *Rishiat* has also been called *Noor Namah* though in its earlier phase this demarcation was quite explicitly clear.p-13.

But it was in 19th century that Baba Muhammad Kamal and Baba Khalilullah basing on the *Noor Namahs* compiled their *Rishi Namahs* and put Shaikhs poetry in the backdrop of different stories. Perhaps these people considered that a pious saint like Shaikh was not supposed to be a poet as it was a prohibited field for him in the psychological setting they were over whelmed with. Therefore they wanted to get a justification for his every transcription hence everything took shape of analogies and metaphors.

This provided basis even for our moderate researchers like Peer Ghulam Hassan Khuyihami, Mohiuddin Miskeen, G M D Sofi P M K Bamzai. Even the progressive writer Abdul Ahad Azad has got a detailed chapter based on it in his famous book on Kashmir Poetry and Language. (p.14)

Moreover the rationally contradictory *wakh* of Lala need to be differentiated from the *Kalam* of the Shaikh .Therefore we have to evolve a paradigm and to set a criterion for this also.

In order to collect the poetry of Shaik Nooruddin into a published book form, a compilation was published in two parts in which process Motilal Saqi played a crucial role but this was a work which needed more than one man as it deserves a complete team to accomplish this great work. (P.17)

Many other Kashmiri writers have tried in their own way to compile poetry of the Shaikh in book forms .In this regard Amin Kamil, Abu Naim and Ashraf Qari are some important names who have in one way or the other not only presented *Kalam –i Shaikhul Alam* but have even at times provided some explanation of the poetry of the Shaikh .In this regard the efforts of Academy for Art and Culture J& K has also played a very important role by issuing several special issues of *Shirazah* on the life and message of the Shaikh. Professor Rashid Nazki Ghulam Nabi Aatish Rasul Ponpor Rashid Aafaq and Parimoo and other researchers have also contributed substantially to the subject .Professor late Muhammad Farooq Bukhari in his book *Kashmir main Islam ka Manzar our Pasimanzar* has contributed a very valuable research article on the life and achievements of the Shaikh .Professor Qayum Rafiqui in his book *Sufism in Kashmir* and the Urdu book on the life and poetry of Shaikh scribed by Hamidi Kashmiri have also provided vital information on the subject.

Dr. Bashir Bashir's Book *Yiman Padan Me Vetsar Gotshy*, a research based book in Kashmiri on Sheikh-ul-Alam (RA) which was recently published is also an attempt to present some more dimensions of the holistic thought of the Shaikh.

However so far as a full-fledged and well documented research, on the Sheikh is concerned the credit goes to three scholars of Kashmir who deserve our fullest appreciation, were

produced by Professor Ishaq Khan, Ghulam Nabi Gawhar and Asadullah Aafaqi .Ishaq Khan has written a monumental book titled *Kashmir's Transition To Islam –the Role of Muslim Rishi* which has run in several editions from its publication in late eighties .This book has been translated into Urdu by Dr Badruddin Bhat.

The books written by Ghulam Nabi Gawhar a well qualified scholar and a legal authority and a literarily figure, are also very valuable on the subject. He has authored *Shaijah-i-Noor*, really a marvelous book in Urdu .His interpretation of Shaikh's poetry is very remarkable and astute .Being one of the custodians of the scholarly traditions on Shaikh he really has made a niche for himself so far as the writings on the Shaikh and his literary contribution are concerned.

After this brief survey on some writings on Shaikh and his poetry and message we can appreciate the immense value of the scholarly eclectic and holistic approach of yet another stalwart on Shaikh Nooruddin I mean Asadullah Aafaqi who has devoted his whole life to the study and explanation of the poetry and mission of Shaikh, researching on the authentication of the *shruks* of Shaikh ascertaining the details mentioned about the life of Shaikh and pondering on the very subtle and esoterically oriented verses of the Shaikh whole his life. After these preliminary efforts in this direction *Aiyena i-Haq Kulliyat-I Shaikhul al Aalam*, by Asadullah Aafaqi, and published by Life Foundation, Iqbal Bisti Rauza Bal Charar –i-Sharif (along with index introduction and miscellaneous items)is a great contribution presented single handedly by Aafaqi so far as the total poetical compositions of Shaikhul Alam are concerned. I may say it without any hesitation that the work produced by this man so meticulously could be produced by an academy or an institution. But since the author is really enthusiastic and has considered himself and his clan indebted to the Shaikh from the core of his heart and soul that he could compile such a compendium of Shaikh's poetry .What academies

and Chairs named after the Shaikh could not achieve has been achieved by Asadullah Aafaqi who has worked for some time in the Shaikhul Alam Chair University of Kashmir as a researcher.

He says while endorsing this fact:

“My family being near to this friend of Allah has been receiving benefits from him generation after generation.”(P-35)

The uncle of the author happens to be great scribe Khalil Baba who had prepared about 16 copies of *Rishi Namahs* and had distributed these among his friends and relatives.

According to the author no attempt has been made to preserve the *Kalam* of Shaikh in past in a systematic manner .There were some people who consciously wanted in earlier times to pay no heed to preservation of this poetry. But by God’s grace most of his poetry was safeguarded indirectly according to the author .One of such modes of preservation was facilitated by many *Tadhkira* writers who while describing any story have quoted Shaikh’s *Kalam* between the lines .This has consequentially made possible the receipt of most of his *Kalam* by the subsequent generations.(p-35.)

The author claims to have discovered almost all the poetry which was preserved in most of the *Rishi Namahs* .Though in this book he has not included the total poetry he had got hold of. For example some *manajat*, *ghazzals* and *rubayat* could not be included herewith. Since these all items were somehow or the other related to history therefore this portion needed detailed historical discussions side by side the couplets and the present book was not intended to be inclusive of all these details. Moreover this could also complicate the meanings and the purport of the *Kalam*. But the author intends to include this portion in another book consisting on the life history of the Shaikh and that book too is under publication...Remaining the poetry dealing with the

jurisprudence in his poetry where the issues related to prayers, fasting ablution etc have been mentioned that was already dealt in with in the book named *Name-Haqq* according to the author.p-36

It is not that difficult as claimed but a reader needs Islamic back ground for understanding it, who considers Islam as the complete code of life.

For so many years people who are materialists have been attempting to hide the actual status of this revolutionary poetry by showing him as a recluse or a monk

And these traders of religion have been successful to an extent but thank God Shaikhs Kalam being extant they were not successful in these sinister desighns. (p-38)

Rather this message worked against infidelity, polytheism and renunciation and materialism and took the Islamic message to every nook and corner of Kashmir. He was opposed by self indulging shaikhs so called *Ulama* and *Darwesh* used to blame Shaikh as deviant faith holder and a man of rags etc. He was imprisoned, and conspiracies were hatched to get him martyred. But still he undauntedly saved Islamic light when there was deliberate attempt to extinguish it. (p-38)

I have compiled for recitation to get guidance as it leads to straight path it is a criterion of truth and false hood

According to Aafaqi though many poets have tried to imbibe impact of Shaikh's poetry as we can discern easily from their compositions but no one among them could get the style and the structure of shaikhs poetry (*aakaruk rang*) as they thought this *Kalam* is inimitable and exemplary and has to stay such till the Day of Judgment . As has been mentioned by Baba Nasibuddin that only the crest or the external form of Shaikh's Kalam could be imbibed by the people and not the inner core, the fluency and the

eloquence of it .What to say to compose a similar poems having profound impact the Shaikh's compositions had. (p-64)

There is a general confusion whether it has been spread deliberately by some people or it has got some how concurrence that the poetry of the Shaikh was intermixed with that of Lal Deds poetry .But according to the author there was no possibility of getting of Shaikh's Kalam intermixed with any other poetic composition given its tone and tenor. (p-64)

However according to the author this is true that some of the poems of Sheikh are attributed to Lal Ded but nowhere we find any intermixing. (P-65)

He gives example of the ignorance of some of the scribes who have misread some Islamically oriented words phrases and metaphors and have given them twisted and farfetched interpretations arbitrarily. For example *aleenas* which is an Islamic escholotigcal station of bliss after the death of the righteous was misconstrued to be *waaj nageenus* due to misunderstanding and ill understanding of Islamic vocabulary and terminology. (P-66)

However, the scribes have committed mistakes in writing the poems down the ages. For example *nanzhan* was written by these scribes as *canjiran*, *balaghal ulah* has been written as *bul ghula*, and *warq* has been as *waruk*. (P-68-69).

These are only few examples of the interpolations, though unconsciously and unintentiolly due to ignorance, made by the scribes over the period of time. The solution to this problem is suggested by the author as follows:

So through collating and comparative study of the manuscripts we can get lot of help in order to ascertain the actual words and stanzas. Secondly since many People have memorized this poetry as the composition of a God's friend, hence they have taken great caution in this regard.

The deliberate attempt on our part for authentication and preservation of the Kalam of Shaikh will be rendered very easy by all these facts .Therefore the propaganda of some people that there are problems in identifying the actual poetry of the Shaikh though tenable but can't be entertained at its face value because we can definitely ascertain the corpse of this poetry by concerted and systematic endeavours by taking help from the people who are experts of this subject.

His poetry is transparent and no doubt can be entertained about it as that will be baseless. (p-76)

Justice Ghulam Nabi Gawhar had long back suggested

In order to compile the authentic poetry of Shaikh we need a Sanskrit knowing scholar, two Persian knowing scholars one historian and a linguist so that the interpolated poems can be sorted out. (*Shaifah-i-Noor*, Gulshan Publishers, Srinagar 1997, p-15)

I believe apart from Sanskrit Persian and Linguist scholars we need most of all profound Islamic scholars who are well versed with the spiritual and philosophical legacy of Islam as well as world religions which have flourished in this part of the world. .Coming again to the book under review we find that the author firstly had made an attempt through *Aiyena Haq* in 1968 to present Shaikh's contribution before the people. He did not publish its second edition despite the great demand for last so many years as he was in search of the *Kalam* after toiling day in and out. In this regard he says:

I was able to get hold of numerous manuscripts and pondered on each and every couplet .I was successful to b great extent to identify the actual text of Shaikh's poetry. (p-43)

The author claims that he has included almost all the poetry of the Shaikh in this edition except some poems .He cites the following reason for not including these poems.

I did not include these some poems as I feel that Baba Khalil has taken these poems from Buddhist book *Budh Charat* or these may be from some predecessor Rishis of Shaikh like Zulka Rishi, Meeran Rishi or someone else. Still I am attempting so that I may find any manuscript of some contemporary of this leader of Kashmiri's Islamic movement so that all the guess work will end in this regard. (p. 44)

The considered opinion of the author is that we can get success in both the worlds by following this message contained in the poetry of Shaikh. (p-78) .He calls him *mufakiri-islam* Islamic revolutionary leader. (p-36)

He has presented his poetry as a literature for life and not only as literature for the sake of art. It can serve as guide to all those poets, literary figures who want to bring a pious moral and spiritual revolution in Kashmir. (p-37).

This conviction of the author is strengthened really once we read the subtle but esoterically rich poetry of the Shaikh who is not only the epitome of perennial Kashmirî wisdom but also a guiding light representing the spiritual and moral flavour of Islamic traditions. He seems fully conversant with the past legacy of Islamic Gnostic heritage. It is because of this reason that he refers to Rumi, Mansur and Shah-i-Hamadan and other such luminaries of Muslim history .I was recently in an international seminar of the Historians of Asia at JNU New Delhi where I presented a paper on Mansur and Nooruddin and the interest evinced by the audience comprising of the scholars from USA ,Pakistan, Malaysia, Indonesia ,Brunei and India representing Islam, Christianity ,Hinduism and Sikhism convinced me about the universal appeal of the Shaikh's message and thought.

The book has a very beautiful get up and excellent printing apart from haven being printed on the best art paper. However I found only one opening stanza irritating that reads:

Poshi pozai p-19, which smacks of the pagan practice of presenting flowers to the pantheon of gods and goddesses and known as act of worship through offering of flowers , hence a non Islamic approach to start any pious work that too of Shaikhs very sacred poetical gems. But taken in total this contribution of our prolific and erudite Shaikhul Alam scholar will facilitate more research and study and will render this enterprise easier for our young generation .This compendium of Shaikhs poetry is a seminal contribution to the scholarship on Shaikh and will remain a standard work and will prove as a guide for all the students researchers and lovers of Shaikh's *elephantal* and vitalist thought and teaching. I look forward to the other valuable books the author has already started working on and pray to Allah to prolong his life so that we are gifted with more such wonderful contributions on this standard bearer of Islam in Kashmir.

Aameen!

This is really an achievement for which Asadullah Afaqi deserves our heartiest appreciation and since congratulations.