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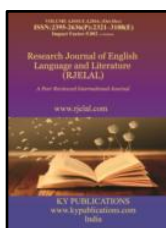
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## SEXUALITY IN SUFI POETRY WITH REFERENCE TO SOME SIGNIFICANT KASHMIRI SUFİ POEMS

SYED KAUSAR ANDRABI

Email : [justnedv@gmail.com](mailto:justnedv@gmail.com)



### ABSTRACT

Sexuality like all other aspects is an important aspect of life, though it has been neglected at broader level. It surfaced broadly in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century till then it was regarded as taboo. Sexuality gained so much importance in modern era as it emerged as phenomenon that helps to express a personality partially with respect to sexuality. In this modern era, sexuality classified people as per its own categories. Sexuality is shaped as per the social, religious and cultural structure of the society and is linked to class also. There has been a paradigm shift in the treatment radically given to sexuality from past to present era. Though sexuality surfaced in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century but it was only in 20<sup>th</sup> century that it got its recognition with the emergence of Psycho analytical movement led by Sigmund Freud. Due to the socio- cultural rejections sexuality in Kashmiri poetry could not surface as prominent theme but could be seen wrapped in words dating back to Lal Ded. Sexuality can't be always seen as an erotic element as from the Islamic perspective it too has its importance as Divine element, being the whole universe its outcome. Sexuality can be viewed as Divine or Eros depending on its channelization. Sexuality has got its roots embodied in Love and hence is its transformation. The paper aims to highlight the significance of sexuality as an important domain for the socio- cultural development in sufi and humanistic life with special reference to Kashmiri sufi poetry.

Key words: Shiv shakti, kafir (infidel), havas (desire, lust), roup-e-sunde qube (Silver doom).

My Mind isn't in Meditation  
But My Heart Meditates.  
Mind doesn't stop Thinking,  
Heart sows smell of LOVE.  
Mind whirls, Eyes ripple, Heart Bleeds  
What the secret it is?  
As that of the Maidenhead!

Sex is an essential aspect of life like that of Birth and Death, without which life would be dull and boring. Up to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was regarded as taboo and overt to discuss about sexuality or sexual desire, except as a part of erotic love. In certain societies,

sex is still considered taboo. Even in the arena of literature, the very detail of sex has been avoided as "Grey Area" by all the great Philosophers upto very long. Owing to the lack of research in the field of sexuality, it was thought there is need to explore

this neglected area. This paper may help to explore the development of sexuality and its relation to Sufi and humanistic life.

In the modern era, sex has been diversified as people identified themselves as gays, lesbians, straight, bi-sexual, bi-curious, exhibitionists, submissives, dominatrices, swingers (people who engage in partners exchange), switchers (people who change from being gay to being straight and vice-versa), traders (gay men who have sex with straight men), born again virgins (people who have technically lost their virginity but pledge to renounce sex until marriage), acrotomophiliacs (people who are sexually attracted to amputees), fuvverts or furies (people who dress up in animal suits and derive sexual excitement from doing so) or feeders (people who over feed their, generally obese partners). (Mottier 1)

Sexuality is an attempt to define partially who we are? To identify a person and define his personality partially with respect to sexuality. It is not the sex as an activity that has gained so much importance in the modern era. As sex emerged as a phenomenon in this era, hence it is regarded as "Modern Phenomenon". Sexuality surfaced to a larger extent in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe. The over-response to the concept of sexuality is the cultural negation of the fact for so long. It doesn't mean that people in the past didn't practice sexuality but there was radically different treatment given to it as compared to that of the present age. It was and is still a cultural object and regarded as taboo. Up to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the concept of sexuality was overt. It takes into account the social meaning and aspect of societies and the way it is looked at, though sex is natural and no human machinery has so far designed it. But sexuality or sexual experiences vary from one culture to another and from period to period. Different time periods have viewed and shaped sense of erotic pleasures. Sexuality is widely shaped by religion and social domains and links it to class, race and social setup especially gender tendencies. In pre-industrial Europe, sexual practices were regarded as oblivion in terms of religious and moral domains and were related to sin. The social transformation as a result of industrial

modernization in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century leads to the emergence of sexuality.

The Psychoanalytical movement in the 20<sup>th</sup> century led by one of the most influential Psychologists of all the time – Sigmund Freud led to the recognition of Sexuality as one of the significant domains. His work regarded as the most referred in this field is his theory of Unconsciousness – that the Primary motivation for all things in life is Sex.

As per Freud's theory of Sexuality and Psychosexual development, children go through five stages of sexual development: Oral phase (fixation on mouth due to nursing), anal stage (bowel and bladder elimination), Phallic stage (discovery of genitals, development of Oedipus complex), Latency stage (dormant sexual findings) and genital stage (matured sexuality). Freud mainly focused on Phallic stage.

The most useful approaches to Freudian criticism are to dreams and fantasies. Freud regarded Libido (psychic) sexual at base, and is not channelized into sexual activity but expressed through dreams and fantasies. Dreams, fantasies and personality disorder are result of pleasure principles versus Reality principle. To Freud, artist is introvert and it is the Desire that is the motivating force – an undue desire. He puts at separate lines daydreams and artistic creation though he did accept that psychoanalysis failed to explain how artist achieved his successes. Dream and Art both are attempts to transform their primitive Desire into the socially and literally acceptable forms with an aesthetic cover. A novel, a poem or any piece of art, music and painting can be analyzed and expressed in terms of Phallic symbols – the assertive male organ and the receptive female organ. It is the expression of authors underlying unconscious desire. The artistic creation at ego level can be described as pleasurable encounter or activity with primitive level involving both artist and audience. Art for making unconscious conscious (Kleinians) describe it as encounter between mother and infant, contentment at the breast and separation, harmony and rebellion. In view of Anton Ehrenzweig, the work of art is just like a womb receives fragmented projection of artistic self. (Frankland 109)

The genesis of sex is deep-rooted in the cult of love. Sex is the transformation of love. If love gets transcendent, it becomes sublime and sex is grandeur, otherwise lust is propagating. We are trying to resolve sex. The more we are fighting against it, it has become obsessive, a heresy.

Sex is the ultimate union with the beloved whether human or transcendental. The Sufis too are in the state of craving for union with their beloved. It is the heights of love, imagination that the Sufi wants ultimate union with his beloved and expresses through sexuality and to attain this state he personifies his beloved. The ultimate unity is only possible when the boundaries dissolve. In love the boundaries get diluted but in Sufism, there is dissolution, diffusion of boundaries and individualities and fusion of love and souls commence with each other and their fusion is eternal.

Sexuality to a Sufi is union of spirit with mortality. Sex is actually what God has designed and is not construct of any human mind. The early Sufi's favored celibacy as they thought marriage, family and all other worldly pleasures are means of distraction from the absolute devotion to God. It is because of Rabi'a al-'Adawiyya that Sufism became God centered, i.e., God as beloved. But marriage is Sunnah and Quran itself rejects monasticism. Imam Al-Ghazali (RA) regards human sexual desire as devastating having potential to cause extreme destruction and needs to be checked through marriage whereas Shaykh Ali al-Hujwiri (RA) felt that marriage isn't the only means to control lust. According to the Quran, chaste virgins will be at the service of believers; sexual pleasure here on the earth induces men to serve God in order to obtain those pleasures (4:10). Ibn Al-Arabia gives the philosophy of Father - Heaven Mother Earthly dualism which holds that it is the union or marriage of divine spirit (male) with Nature (female) that results in the existence of all living beings. Sex is natural and designed deliberately by God to incarnate human existence on the earth. Marriage is the symbolic representation of union of souls on the earth to which sex is the gateway. Hence sex in other words can be said is the way to symbolize and realize hidden things of God and the nature of union

with your beloved and ultimately – the Ultimate One. (Hoffman-Ladd 83)

Sexuality to a Sufi is a mystical encounter between Human and Divine and it is contemplated along gender lines or physical imagery. Sexual imagery is metaphor of physical love. It is due to the lack of fixed representation of Love, Ultimate union or fusion at the spiritual level that it is expressed in terms of sexuality – takes the form of encounter between lover and beloved, and links it to the union of Masculine and Feminine principles of the Godhead. So, sex is sacred at all levels. Male and female are biological genders while as Masculine and Feminine are universal, transcendental symbols of all realities including soul and the spirit. God is Masculine and He has declared Himself as "He" and all prophets are Masculine. The way man comes in women's body to give and get pleasure, to soothe her desires and impregnate her, the same way Sufi expresses his pleasure when he as a feminine invites her beloved to sex and get his soul impregnated with transcendental One. (Kreeft 7)

If we consider sex as a sin, then the God Himself is the creator of the sin and has revealed Himself sinfully as the whole universe is the outcome of this sin. As per Sufism, the purpose of being here in this world is spiritual marriage, union with the eternal one. In this, it is the soul that gets impregnated by God but man can't impregnate the Spirit (God). This is the reason to define masculine nature of Almighty. Physically we don't get impregnated very often but at the spiritual level we try to transcend so as to get our soul impregnated. As per Pantheism, men or women both are revelations of God but God is Masculine not male. And if spoken in terms of Divine revelation, God has revealed Himself as father to us. To this aspect all people in the world are to be Feminine in relation to God. Men, while approaching God spiritually needs to be Feminine. That is why we have seen that all Sufi poets take the female tone while longing for their union to the Spiritual one. (Kreeft 8)

As per Islam, Sexuality – the total surrender, has the treasure hidden in it and bears best fruits when judiciously involved. In the article entitled "Men, Women and Boys: Love and Sex in

the Works of Sa'di", Minoo Southgate has studied the presentation of sex in the works of Mushrif al-Din Sa'di of Shiraz (ca 1213 – ca 1292). The worldly poets couldn't find sacred texts in unison but the Sufi or mystic looks for parables to get the underlying meanings. Secular themes and imagery is infused with transcendental quality in the Sufi texts. In Sufi poetry we find worldly imagery of wine/intoxication and the erotic motif of youthful love. This imagery in poetry show textual ambiguity related to symbolism of the heavenly objects / concepts to that of the worldly ones. There exists a tension between the duo as the heavenly objects/concepts are non-toxic, so there is prosecution. Mansur al-Halaj (d: 922) described "the state of mystical love using imagery that was not very different from profane love poetry. Sufi sensibility didn't develop independently from poetry; rather, the mystical sensibility of the Sufis refined the theme and diction within Poetry" (Tourage 22)

Sexuality in literature can't be equated with pornography but it is an attempt or purposeful strategy to equate symbolic practices as the world of unseen is continually manifested in this world. As Rumi (RA) says:

"All these (my poetry) are hints (ramz) and the Purpose is this."

In spiritual poetry the greatest secrets are revealed in succinct words veiled by mundane subject matter. Sex is the transformation (of desire) into Love (extremist stage), where lust is evolved and every part of the body becomes Love; it is the ultimate union of lover to his beloved. As per Sufi context, the sexuality has been complete surrender to his beloved for ultimate union or when a seeker is in path, he is personifying his beloved and imagining his surrender in craving for union with his beloved.

In Kashmiri language due to cultural onset erotic element is less surfaced in poetry as compared to the other major languages. But its presence can't be completely ignored. The sexual tendencies in Kashmiri poetry can be traced dating back to Lal Ded, the 14<sup>th</sup> century mystic poet. In one of her Vaakhs (واکھ) Lal Ded describes Shiv and Shakti as:

شَو تہ شَکَتِ کَتِیوُ دِیوُنْتہم  
تَمو رُتہم کاتِیس جاے

(Where did Shiva and Shakti I found:

They are embodied in my Body.)

Lal Ded is in voyage to find solace in being one with the Spirit which is already in unison with soul in the immortal world and has been polarized in this mortal world. Shiv represents the Masculine Principle and Shakti the Feminine Principle. As per the primordial doctrine, Human is hermaphrodite Spirit and Soul embedded into his Being. Lal Ded is lamenting that though Shiv and Shakti were embedded in her being why couldn't she realize these polar energies as identified in Tantra or in Daoism as Ying Yang forces of Heaven and Earth. Shiv Shakti (Tantra) or Ying Yang (Daoism) are two non-dual entities which attain individuality in this material world at Physical level. Lal Ded bears pain and tension because of the fissure between non-dual core Being and the sexually polarized male-female Body. And it is developed by the realization of presence of intermediate Energy Body, i.e., androgynous (both male and female) in nature and it is this device which holds the reason behind all the forces of the spiritual evolution. The duality between Being and Body to get to non-dual deity is difficult to bridge unless it is catered by immortal practices. The body is said to be Divine-Cosmos-Copulating within itself in nature, sublimating sexual energy into tenuous bodies, projected as various demiurge. As per Tantric practices, sexual energy is the highest form of energy and has two features:

- The energy of creation
- The energy of expression

This energy is used to connect to the highest spirit or the actual source of creation. ([www.chakras.net](http://www.chakras.net))

Though in this Vaakh, Lal Ded doesn't directly describe Sexuality but Shiv and Shakti evokes the Visual imagery of sexuality as Shiva (Linga) represents Phallus (the dome portion of the altar) and Shakti is Yoni and represented as surrounding area of the Lingam. Besides Lingam and Yoni meaning male and female genitals, Lingam is the symbol of male generative power and the Yoni the female creative power of godheads. Shiv and Shakti are the symbols of divine Consciousness – of Spirit and Soul. Shiva symbolizes consciousness of masculine Principle and Shakti feminine Principle,

the activating power and energy. Other familiar terms used to describe this primordial principle are Purusha and Prakriti. Purusha –Consciousness, Spirit and Prakriti – Nature, Soul. Lord Shiva is usually considered as Ishwara (omnipresent, eternal, formless Divine Principle), Purusha (Consciousness, masculine Principle, Atma) and Prakriti (Manifestation nature, activation energy, and power) – hence a trident we can call. Shiva (Purusha) is a masculine Principle which is unchangeable with no desires (desireless) and having paternal tendencies. Shakti (Prakriti) is feminine Principle, is changeable having desires and the warmth of love, and maternal tendencies. Shiv and Shakti is existent in all of us as non-dual entity at super-conscious but physically they have been identified and individualized as male and female in this mortal world. We can see the union between male and female at sexual level but at spiritual level, it is union of man with immortal (even women seeker in this path becomes man after she realizes the amalgamation of these non- dual energies – spirit and soul or Shiv and Shakti in her Being), or mortal with Divine. Hence transformation of this sexual energy to super-conscious or to the level of spirit or we can say spiritual sexuality is the fusion of dual energy at the physical level to realize its non-dual existence in our Being. In Linga, the Phallus is the symbol of male creative power and the water-basin represents the female manifestation nature. Buddhism also favors that actual enlightenment is in female sex organ. The actual phrase in Sanskrit is: “Buddhatvam Yosityonisamasritam”. Even in Rumi’s poetry we find Phallocentric orientation. Lacan uses the term Phallus in order to emphasize its symbolic reality. He calls the Phallus a “signifier” because it is the most salient element that can be grasped in the realm of sexual equation. The moment of coitus is blissful as there we get the streak of God’s creative power. The copulation of Shakti and Shiva marks the struggle for being eternal which goes from desire to desireless, from outward to inward.

Another important poem from Kashmiri literature is the *Sheshrang* (شیش رنگ) poem – the masterpiece by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Sufi poet, Rehman Dar. The poet in this poem describes the eternal love in terms of the earthly love between a

lover and the beloved. The lover here symbolizes the seeker and the beloved the Ultimate one. The poet dramatizes his craving to his beloved which is not less than the worldly drama occurring between the lover and the beloved. While describing his strain in the path of love he sometimes seduces his lover and sometimes blames his fortune. While the poet is longing for the spiritual union there surfaces sexuality in the poem but is half-hidden in the enfold of words. He upholds the feminine tone in his poem as it has been already described in this paper that in relation to God all needs to be feminine. So the poet (seeker) as a feminine lover does all the fashioning to her body as is done by the bride when she is going to have sexual union with her groom:

یاونہ اُسیس تَن ناؤن ٲَے

ہاوسہ چُھ نہ چھاؤن

۔

روغن میہ وتھرو تھایوم گن ٲَے

یوری ما آسہم پگن

(In my youth, I cherished my body

In desire, He isn’t consuming;

۔

I decorated my room, lend an ear

He may be proceeding to me.)

Also, the lover keeps all the roads and ways leading to her home decorated in the thought that her beloved may come. Actually, the poet describes all the proceedings the seeker or the lover is supposed to do to get his soul impregnated with the God. And ultimately when the soul of the poet gets impregnated he finds his beloved all around and his passion, agony comes to an end and his individuality and identity auctions in his union and emerges as HE.

One of the land mark poem “Kafir sapdith korum iqar” in the Sufi cult of the Kashmiri literature is from the master Sufi poet of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Abdul Ahad Zargar. He is eco-spiritual. He has described spiritual sexuality in the manner that seems inseparable from Sufi state:

یس ستی نکاح چُھ با تدبیر

تہنڑ مے ببہ چو دامہ دامہ شپر

یُتھ نہ گانگل کری کانہہ اغیار

کافر سَپدیتھ کوڑم بقرار

(The One you are supposed to marry, suck the milk from her boobs;

So that none can betray you.

After being infidel, I accepted.)

Ahad Zargar believes that he is married to the Almighty and he sucks the milk from His breast. And in this spiritual sexuality, he present Almighty as feminine to get his soul nourished by the spirit by sucking his beloved's breasts. Here we see the mother and the beloved play the role in one spirit. As per Freudian perspective it can be said as encounter between mother and infant, contentment at the breast and the separation in males in childhood (penis envy in females). Ahad Zargar is courageous enough to declare himself heathen, infidel. Needless to mention that he has attained that stage where he has overcome the duality of the non-dual spirit and soul. In his poem we see that the divinity extends to all realities and cosmos is undoubtedly integral part of God's self-revelation. In his approach to spirituality, he has the tone of Mansoor al-Halaj where his soul is One with Spirit, truthful with the deity as revealed in these verses:

مے لود آدم مے دتس جان

مے سوز مجھ پتھ قرآن

مے نشہ نون دزاو ملک جبار

کافر سپدته کوزم یقرار

(I created Adam, I invigorate him, I sent Mohammad (SAW)

with Qur'an.

With me was revealed consoler the God

After being infidel, I confessed.)

Here, we can say that Ahad Zargar as seeker has overcome the tension between the non-dual energy of Being and the sexually polarized male female Body which we have found in Lal Vaakh. Sexually he is not craving for union with his beloved as he has married and is sucking his beloved's breast, i.e., transmission of energy has been done, soul-spirit is in unison.

The trend-setter poet in the cavalcade of Kashmiri Sufi poets of the 19<sup>th</sup> century is Rasool Mir. He adopts romantic tone with dominating sensual attitude. In his love to his God, he personifies his beloved and used bold symbols of beauty and the body. He was well aware of his bold expression to his beloved that he himself regarded his poetry collection as "book of fire" (نارِ کتاب). He makes love to his beloved and also warns her about the

meaninglessness of life and frailty of this physical world. Rasool Mir uses mystical imagery that was not different from profane Love poetry. Sexuality surfaced openly in his poetry as his lover seems more to be earthly than the spiritual one:

حلقہ بند ٹلی شوان نارِ پستان  
تی وچتھ ملگن گوو دل پریشان

o

پیہ وچھس رویہ سندی فچے معرفت زن ووتھمت نیچے  
روے ہاوتہ دل پھر دے چاو دود معصومن لگیو

(Under your necklace elegant passionate  
boobs,  
It turns down the heart of the seers.

o

Your red chest bears domes of silver  
As if the knowledge of Spiritual Truth down  
mounts from the heaven.  
let you be known otherwise the heart will  
suffocate Breast feed the innocent Ones.)

Here, Rasool Mir as Sufi and aesthetic personifies his beloved and praises her body and boobs. He asks his beloved that your body seduces and invites the seekers; you should come out and be known to those who are in the path of seeking and nourish them to cherish their souls as the mother's breasts feed her young ones. Rasool Mir is longing for the impregnation of his soul by the Divine Spirit. We find the duality between the spirit and the soul. There we find intense passion in his love and his craving to attain the non-duality in the existence of his Being. And if Mir's poetry is reinterpreted in Freudian terminology, it can be easily said that it is the repressed childhood emotions in latent stage (dormant sexual feelings) which takes vent in his poetry – in expression of his love to his beloved.

Thus we can conclude that Sex is sacred at all levels. Sexuality is an attempt of transforming profane to sacred, so that all in His grace unite but there is need of vast understanding and exposure. Sex should emerge as discourse in upcoming times to liberate it from the bondages of mundane and social constructs. We need Sex to rise. It is not only a separate dimension of life but ultimately linked to mystical experiences in a number of ways.



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