

## SHAIKH-UL AALAM'S POETRY AS TOOL TO IMPART AWARENESS OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN KASHMIR

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### ABSTRACT

*The universe is believed by some great astronomers to have begun with a "Big bang," a terrific explosion some 15 billion years ago. Surprisingly religious and languages have almost always had miraculously "Big bang" to start with without any previous history, leaving the world to thinkers and scholars to wonder as to how such phenomenon could appear suddenly and instantaneously. Unable to understand as to how could nations and languages, all of a sudden throw up great souls, saints, poets and writers with such a momentum that, to whatever distance their thrust reached, smaller insignificant particles were charged to appear as brilliant stars.*

**Keywords:** Public perceptions, distance education, counselling.

### Introduction

Kashmir has been unique in having had two such surprises, two Big bangs, in the personalities of Lalla Arifa and Shaikh-ul Aalam, one following immediately on the heels of the other. Shaikh-ul Aalam also called Shaikh Nuruddin and Nund Rishi is remarkable Kashmiri saint who belonged to the Rishi order. He was one of those famous personalities of the medieval times who had also special concern with religious education of Islam. Born in 1377 C.E, corresponding to 799 Hijri in village called Kaimoh (old name katimusha) 7kms to the west of Bijbehara which is 60 kms south east of Srinagar. His father was Shaikh Salar ud din; his mother Sadra was called Sadra Moji or Sadra deddi. It was the period when the Kashmir was ruled by Shah Mir Dynasty. It was the time when Shah Hamadan and his disciples in Kashmir had already worked for the preaching of Islam and much transformation to this direction had been made. Shaikh-ul Aalam used his poetry and discourses as tool to spread the true knowledge of Islam, i.e., religious education. So in order to impart religious education in the contemporary times in Kashmir we can use poetry as a tool to make it easily understandable to mass as it is in the native language of the people and is also known as the kashur Qur'an. Most of the poetry is values based and provide the basics of the ethical society. So in this paper I want to highlight those Shrukhs (Poetic verses of Shaikh-ul Aalam) of Shaikh-ul Aalam which helps us in contemporary times to impart religious education in Kashmir

Education in its general sense is a form of learning in which the knowledge, skills, and habits of a group of people are transferred from one generation to the next through teaching, training, or research. Education frequently takes place under the guidance of others, but may also be autodidactic. Any experience that has a formative effect on thinking, feeling, or acts may be considered education.

Etymologically, the word, “education” is derived from the Latin *eductio* (“a breeding, a bringing up, a rearing”) from *educō* (I educate, I train”) which is related to homonym *educō* (“I lead forth, I take out; I raise up, I erect”).ii

Education began in the earliest prehistory, as adults trained the young of their society in knowledge and skills they would need to master and eventually pass on. In pre –literate societies this was achieved orally and through imitation. Story-telling continued from one generation to the next. As cultures began to extend their knowledge beyond skills that could be readily learned through imitation, formal education developed.iii Religious education is the teaching of a particular religion (although in England the term religious instruction would refer to the teaching of a particular religion, with religious education referring to teaching about religions in general) and its varied aspects – its beliefs, doctrines, rituals, customs, rites and personal roles. The secular concept is substantially different from societies that adhere to religious law, wherein “religious education” connotes the dominant academic study, and in typically religious terms, teaches doctrines which define social customs as “laws” and the violations there of as “crimes” or else misdemeanors requiring punitive correction.

Religious education provokes challenging questions about the ultimate meaning and purpose of life, beliefs about god, the self and the nature of reality, issues of right and wrong and what it means to be human. It develops pupils, knowledge and understanding of religions, other world views that offer answers to these challenging questions. It offers opportunities for personal reflection and spiritual development. It enhances pupil’s awareness and understanding of religions and beliefs, teachings, practices and forms of expression, as well as of the influence of religion on individual, families, communities and cultures. Religious education encourages pupils to learn from religions, beliefs, values and traditions, while exploring their own beliefs and questions of meaning. It challenges pupils to reflect on, consider, analyze, interpret and evaluate issues truth, belief, faith and ethics and to communicate their responses. Religious education encourages pupils to develop their sense of identity and belonging. It enables them to flourish individually within their communities and as citizens in diverse society and global community. Religious education has an important role in preparing pupils for adult life, employment and lifelong learning. It enables pupils to develop respect for and sensitivity to others, in particular those whose faiths and beliefs are different from their own. It promotes discernment and enables pupils to combat prejudice. iv

#### **Body of the Paper:**

Islam, major world religion promulgated by the prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) in Arabia in the 7th century C.E. The Arabic term Islam, literally “surrender”, illuminates the fundamental religious idea of Islam-that the believer accepts surrender to the will of Allah. Allah is viewed as the sole God-creator, sustainer, and restorer of the world. The will of Allah, to which human beings must submit, is made known through the sacred scriptures, “the Qur’an” which Allah revealed to his messenger, Muhammad (S.A.W). In Islam Muhammad (S.A.W) is considered the last of a series of prophets (including Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus), and his message simultaneously consummates and completes the revelations attributes to earlier prophets.

Retaining its emphasis on a un compromising monotheism and a strict adherence to certain essential religious practices, the religion taught by Muhammad (S.A.W) to a small a group of followers spread rapidly through the Middle East to Africa, Europe, and the Indian subcontinent as well.

#### **Early developments:**

The beginning of religious education in the Islamic tradition in the second half of the 7th century are not easily distinguishable from the beginnings of a number of other disciplines- Arabic philology, Qur'an interpretation, the collection of the sayings and deeds of Muhammad (hadith), jurisprudence (fiqh) and historiography. Together with these other disciplines, Islamic education is concerned with ascertaining the fact and context of the Islamic revelation and with understanding its meaning and implications as to what Muslims should believe and do after the revelations had ceased and the Islamic community had to chart its own way. During the first half of the 8TH century , a number of questions-which centered on God's unity, justice, and other attributes and which were relevant to human freedom, actions and fate in the relevant to human freedom, actions and fate in the hereafter- formed the core of a more specialized discipline, which was called Kalam (speech) because of the rhetorical and dialectical speech used in formulating the principal matters of Islamic belief, debating them, and defending them against Muslim and non-Muslim opponents.

Gradually, religious education came to include all matters directly or indirectly relevant to the establishment and definition of religious beliefs and it developed its own necessary or useful systematic rational arguments about human knowledge and makeup of the world.

Shaikh-ul Aalam (the upholder of the banner of Kashmir) Shaikh-ul Aalam (the leader of the world), and Nund Ryosh (the pious Rishi), as he is called all over the valley, Shaikh Nooruddin Noorani is the most revered saint of Kashmir and a living symbol of the Kashmir culture. His immense popularity among the Kashmir masses in general, and the Kashmir Muslims in particular, as well as the impact of his teachings upon the religious attitude of Kashmir's can hardly be underestimated.v

Shaikh Noor-ud din Noorani, commonly known as Shaikh-ul Aalam, is an icon figure of Kashmir, venerated as much today as he was six centuries ago.

What places him over and above all other religious saints of the valley is the impact of his teachings on the collective Kashmir consciousness, enshrined in Kashmir verses known as Shrukhs which still resound in every household of the valley history has proved that Shaikh-ul Aalam's significance has an abiding and universal value which transcends the boundaries of time and space.vi The republic of Plato starts with moral questions about justice or right? Similarly the Shaikh asks the question what is virtue or right and answers the same. It is said that the saint had the first learning in breaking off from all worldly ties and concentration on the search for truth –one Almighty Allah. Secondly, he had to abandon excessive eating and drinking and use only the clothes that were coarse garment. He had to follow the principle of contentment with a life of poverty and renunciation so as to be near to god. Finally , he had to search pious and godly men in order to be benefited in moral principles and spiritual love for Allah and man.vii

When asked his definition of Musalman (Muslim), he said:

One whose body emits fragrance and mind incense  
Who attends with reverence the discourse of the wakeful?  
Full of pious deeds and free from anger,  
May verily, be called a Musalman.<sup>viii</sup>

According to Shaikh, one who does not shun his daily duties and who has genuine desire to earn his livelihood legitimately is a man who adheres to morals. The man who tames down his ego and who has a capacity to put up with harsh word or insult behaves within the domain of moral laws and is a Musalman. The Shaikh strongly endorses that a man who preaches what he practices is really to be accepted as a pious

man and is an asset for society. The man who shares meals with others shall attain heaven and one who gives up anger, greed, attachment, arrogance and egotism is a pious man.<sup>ix</sup> The moral has its own connotation for the Shaikh. A man is pious if he is humble and regards himself lower to others. He exalts others superior to himself in virtue and right. Such pious man keeps company of the good, abandon the wicked.

The people whom we can consider pious are the one who day and night restrain themselves from all that is evil. The pious beings make a beautiful explanation of things that are virtuous and never covet what others possess. Wealth does not tempt people who are morally sound. Finally it may be said of him:

Living in the back woods, one who subsists on chicory?  
Who dedicates himself to search for truth?  
Who tightens his belt and acts with patience?  
Realizes his body to be mortal.<sup>x</sup>

Religious education for the shaikh ul Aalam is of paramount importance and has been much praised by the commentators of his poetry. However, the highest education for him is the religious education, which is against the backdrop of his commitment to Islam. The Qur'an teaches the prayer:

“O my lord! Advance me in knowledge.”

And:

“He grants wisdom to whom. He pleases and he to whom wisdom is granted receives indeed a benefit overflowing; but none will grasp the message but men of understanding”.<sup>xi</sup>

In response to his commitment, the Shaikh wants his disciples and Kashmir's in general to strive wholeheartedly for the sake of knowledge. According to Aafaqi, it means that every manner, oratory, fashion, step and every breath of Muslims needs to be according to Islamic teachings. The saint thought that an illiterate can neither understand concepts such as the transcendence and immanence of Allah, nor the rationale involved in religion and its practice. He comments that placing before such a man even jewels of advice and wisdom, shall fall flat.<sup>xii</sup> An illiterate man would to the surprise of all, seek pear from a willow would to the surprise of all, seek pear from a willow tree. On the other hand, a man shall use his knowledge like sugarcane by chewing it to seek the best juice out of everything that matters in spirituality. The man of knowledge learns both from fools and wise like Aesop.

Within any way questioning the general contention, one may perhaps asks whether education really has quite the power to transform society that educationists and saints have thought, particularly the religious education. A society and an individual in modern sense have the higher influences from the modern sense have the higher influences from the modern university education. There are educationists who believe that religious education thwarts what is called creative genius. However, the shaikh wants religious education to be the source of all knowledge that is why he questions as to why the reader of the Qur'an is not consumed by its power. The reader of the Holy Book is asked as to why he did he not turn a dead body and why did he not culminate in ashes? Why did he consider the Qur'an as dead and himself alive? He reminds his readers of the holy book, how Mansoor- Hallaj, burnt himself in the love of Allah.<sup>xiii</sup> To the saint the

source of all knowledge is the the holy Qur'an. His belief is that holy book, for the readers, is a source of all mundane and heavenly secrets of the two worlds. Those who wept while reciting and understood its meanings are the men of scholarship and posses' true knowledge. The religious education has, therefore, an intellectual content for the poet. The saint was concerned for the poet. The saint was concerned to train the character as the mind and throughout the account of the secondary stage of education he is insistent that its objects are moral training as much as intellectual. To achieve that objective in his concepts of moral state, he is emphatic to control the baser elements in man. In his own language he desires every Kashmir to control his baser self. To this end he has a number of verses (Shrukh), which emphasize the disciplining of ego.

Alas! I have been done for by my ego,  
 In darkness he concealed his self  
 Could I but catch hold of it?  
 With scimitar would I slash his throat?<sup>xiv</sup>

Though Muslims all over the world regard the scriptures revealed to the earlier prophets as holy, the Qur'an revealed to the last prophet, Hazrat Muhammad <sup>(s.a.w)</sup> in their sacred book, explicating all the fundamental principles, as well as teachings of Islam. The Qur'an, it is very essential to note, does not propound a new doctrine but confirms in the Arabic language what went before it and virtually lays down the same way of faith as was enjoined on Noah and Abraham (42:3) .it is the last revealed guide to mankind and a perfect code of conduct for the believer, admonishing the unjust and giving glad tidings to the righteous (5:49, 46:12). The authenticity of Qur'an dictates according to which Allah never abrogates or causes to be forgotten any of his revelations, but according to the needs and exigencies of the time he confirms them or substitutes for them something similar or better.(2:106,13;39,16:101). According the Qur'an is essentially a religious book, not the philosophical one, though it deals with all those problems which religion and philosophy have in common: Allah, the world, the individual soul and their relationship: good and evil: life after death. It also throws light on such conceptions as appearance and reality, existence and attributes, human origin and destiny, truth and error, permanence and change, space and time, eternity and immortality. It is a book of wisdom (10:1) explaining the basic principles of Islam in a detailed simplified manner through a similitude that gives a workable idea of what is incomprehensible in essence. It would be a folly, in the words of the Qur'an itself, to ignore those fundamentals which are the guiding principles for every Muslim and wrangle about allegorical for none knows their hidden meaning except Allah (3:7). The contemplation on the verses of the Qur'an is very essential for every Muslim as it is the only way by which his heart will become illuminated and his actions purposeful. It is also very important to note that the Qur'an gives an exposition of universal truths and problems of life in a language and terminology which, the people immediately addressed, the Arabs, with the intellectual background they had

at the time of its revelation, could easily understand, and which the people of the other lands and other times, speaking other languages, which their own intellectual background can easily interpret. This is exactly what Shaikh-ul Aalam did by making the teaching of the Qur'an accessible to unlettered and educated agriculturalist in their medium. He says

Who is the blessed one to light the lamp in the stormy world?  
And use for its wax the knowledge and the religion.  
Teach people to discard the evil and to follow well,  
The source of all knowledge is Alif-Lam-Mim<sup>xv</sup>

In fact the Shaikh himself performed such a great task by making his verses a means for inculcating in the minds of common masses the true spirit of Islam: submission, dependence on Allah, obedience, contemplation, dedication and fulfillment of the duties of fellowship.

Why don't you study the Qur'an till your last breath?  
Why don't you annihilate yourself by reciting the Qur'an?  
How did you survive after reciting the Qur'an!  
Mansoor burnt his entire being while reciting the Qur'an.  
You are the reader of the Qur'an and still remain undisturbed.  
Oh! You are virtually robbed by a tyrant dacoit  
They alone read the Qur'an and still remain undisturbed.  
They alone read the Qur'an who weeps, during day and night.  
Till their body is reduced to a broken skeleton and dust.  
Listen carefully to the Qur'an and Hadith,  
One day you will be taken to paradise (by these only)  
The cruel will be burnt in the fire of Hell,  
Learned will get into the palatial buildings (of paradise)<sup>xvi</sup>

Shaikh-ul Aalam believed that the esoteric and exoteric elements of Islam can be comprehended fully by a man who understands the Qur'an because it is the surest means of approach to Allah, and the only way that can bring emotional equilibrium and intellectual upliftment, and also unite the creator and the created. Without making it sound too doctrinal and Metaphysical the Shaikh explains the three basic conceptual terms of the: Belief in Allah, Belief in prophet hood, and belief in life after death.

According to the Qur'an Allah is ultimate being or reality (31:30) the sole self-subsisting, all pervading, eternal and absolute reality (20:111, 32:2). He is the first and last, the scene and the unseen (57:3). He is transcendent in the sense that He in His full glory cannot be known or experienced by us finite beings-beings that can know only what can be experienced through the senses or otherwise and what inherent in the nature of thought or implied by it. He is transcendent also because He is beyond the limitations of time, space, and senses content.

Here is Shaikh-ul Aalam's rendering of these facts:

The omnipresence of Benevolent Allah is self-evident;  
 It defeats the frontiers of both time and space.  
 His compassion is well known; he feeds us the mortals,  
 Equips us with all amenities, even if we forget Him.  
 O Man! You go on compiling your sins here  
 Knowing that no one will accompany you in the grave<sup>xvii</sup>.

While speaking truth you tremble like a leaf,  
 In telling a lie you keep on delivering pleasure.  
 You sever your relations with Muhammad <sup>(S.A.W)</sup> and love Satan;  
 Allah gave you everything, how can you cheat Him.<sup>xviii</sup>

If you ponder over the ultimate one, you will get annihilated,  
 See the infinite shrines gloriously bright everywhere,  
 Your mind and reason cannot understand it completely,  
 No one has been able to drink that fathomless deep.<sup>xix</sup>

The second important principle of Islam, according to the Quran, is a firm faith in the finality of prophet Muhammad <sup>(S.A.W)</sup> who completed the mission of all prophets about whom the Qur'an states: "we have sent our prophets with clear arguments and revealed to them the laws and gave them the scale measure truth with the object that they establish justice among men (57:25).

Shaikh-ul Aalam very rightly believed that the message of prophet was not meant for any particular group of people living at a particular group of people living at a particular period or place but for the entire humanity. In most of his verses he calls Prophet Muhammad <sup>(S.A.W)</sup> "a blessing for all the people of the world "by virtue of his human approach to the mundane issues of a universal nature".

Treat Prophet Muhammad <sup>(S.A.W)</sup> and his caliphs as embodiment of truth,  
 They alone will solve all your worldly problems.

If you sacrifice your life and property for their sake,  
 That alone will be your highest achievements in hereafter<sup>xx</sup>

The world, according to the Qur'an, is neither intrinsically evil nor an abode of darkness: its main function is to serve as a prolegomenon to the world to come. The cleansing of the heart of vices and passion through the recitation of dhikr is not enough: what is required is cleaning it of excessive love of the world which clogs the average mind and makes him neglect death.

How Shaikh-ul Aalam projects these concepts through his verse can be judged from the following verses

You have entered into the covenant; full fill your promise,  
How long will it take you to recollect the covenant!  
You have left out the ass (Satan) in your land (mind)  
Surely it will eat your saffron field (spoil virtues)  
Who will offer you back and compensate for your loss?  
When the scimitar will strike your naked body  
Hence think of death before you actually face death  
So that you attain an elevated stature after your death<sup>xxi</sup>.

#### CONCLUSION:

The above discussion shows that the poetry of Shaikh-ul Aalam is full of religious and ethical teachings. So in order to impart the religious education in the contemporary Kashmir, Shaikh-ul Aalam's poetry plays an effective role, as it is in the mother tongue of the people which the people can easily understand and they can easily understand the spirit of religious education. The famous Quote about mother tongue, "mother tongue is the language of emotions. Besides imparting the religious education among masses in Kashmir it helps us to revival the cultural ethos, unity, positive values and moral standard.

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#### References and End notes

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<sup>xviii</sup> Ibid., p.14.

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