

Kashmir's Contribution to Literary Tradition: Poetics and History

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Abstract

The Kashmir's intellectual tradition, philosophical system, and the tradition of literature have been eternal and it has progressed through dialectical and antinomical system of epistemological creation. It has also developed continuously from one *acharya* to another and they have contributed in continuing the ontological, epistemological, and metaphysical discourses on the knowledge system. The historiography on intellectual tradition of Kashmir have generally focused on highlighting the tradition of tantra, *sakti*, *sakta*, *mantra* and meditation. Subsequently, Hindu concept of *vac*, *kaul* tradition, heart of Siva, Kashmiri pandits and others have also been the subject of discussion. However, the other aspects of literary tradition like poetics, nature, history have not been adequately discussed. Viewed in this context, the present paper deals with Kashmir's literary contribution to the field of poetics and History

Keywords: Literary, Poetics, History, Nature, Kashmir

Intellectual Tradition of Kashmir

The historical account of Indian history and its intellectual tradition expounds that India has been subjected to poly-colonial realities where different colonial masters have ruled upon the cultural textures which have been repressive and damaging. To hegemonize a culture is to colonize a nation because culture represents the tradition of knowledge and intellect. The phenomena of western enlightenment, scientism, positivism, and rationalism have been instrumental for the western colonial power to subjugate and colonize India. It allowed the colonizers to appropriate, misappropriate and distribute the intellectual tradition of India in different parts of the world and thus the Indian intellectual tradition particularly art, philosophy and literature have been pushed into margin especially after Macaulay's focus on English education. In this context, the paper highlights the literary tradition of Kashmir.

The Kashmir's intellectual tradition, philosophical system, and the tradition of literature have been eternal and it has progressed through dialectical and antinomical system of epistemological creation. It has also developed continuously from one *acharya* to another and different *acharyas* have contributed in continuing the ontological, epistemological, and metaphysical discourses on the knowledge system. The literary and philosophical tradition like theory of *Rasa*, *Dhavni*, *Vakarokti*, *Alamkar*, *Auchitya*, *Pratyabhijna*, *Spand* developed in Kashmir during the period between ninth and fourteenth century in which Abhinavagupta, Anandvardhan, Kuntak, Bhamah, Kshemendra, Bhattataut, Mammat, and Ruyyak contributed. All these theories have clearly divulged the fact that they encompass both the *ontic* and *thetic*, *ousia* and *eidos*. On the one hand, they represent the metaphysics of epistemological realities but on the other, they also espouse the ontological absoluteness

Similarly, the Kashmiri School of *Shaivism* or *Tirka* School of philosophy propounds the fact that there is an absolute reality as *para* which is the abode of all realities and it is this place where all contraries, binaries, and heterogeneousness dissolve into one reality or the metaphysics of presence. It believes in the ultimate power of *Shiva* where there is no contrary but continuity. The texture of *Shaivism* is widely present in the collective unconscious of Kashmir and as a result, the folk tradition of Kashmir is teemed with such references such as the mystic poetry of Lalleshwri or Lalded and Nundrishi '*Shrukhs*' have explicit references of *Shiva* or *Shaivism*. The plenitudes of Kashmir *Shaivism* or the rubrics of *Tirka* philosophy with its locus on *parasamvit* have influenced and shaped the ontological and epistemological realities of art and aesthetics.

The historiography on intellectual tradition of Kashmir have generally focused on highlighting the tradition of tantra, *sakti*, *sakta*, *mantra* and meditation in Kashmir. Subsequently, Hindu concept of *vac*, *kaul* tradition, heart of Siva, Kashmiri pandits and others have also been the subject of discussion. However, the other aspects of literary tradition like poetics, nature, history have not been adequately discussed. The paper deals with these aspects.

Poetics in Kashmir Literature

In Sanskrit poetics of the region, the rendering of ethological theories has been done in such a way that it establishes the relevance in all the time. There is an accreditation of long and multifunctional chain of poets in Kashmir's speculation which is also seen as synonym of Divine and Visionary. Poet is the publisher of demountable path in the way that he has to express his mental folk. In Kashmir literature, poet is considered as the presenter of permanent and immortal cultural tradition in which one can see the images of noble and great path of life, of supernatural element of goddess *Saraswati* which helps in accomplishing and expanding the incomplete material without any reason. Poet transforms the stone hard monotonous material into pleasurable and absolute material which

brings delight. In this context, the scholar and acoustics of Kashmir, Anandvardhana. in ninth century gives validation by saying that 'in the world of poets (poems) earlier observed meanings and materials feel new and pleasurable like the tree in spring season'.

Subsequently, Mammat and other scholars argued that poet can make any material superior to God made material. He is limitless, heartfelt, pleasurable and free from boundation of nature's laws. Thus, the elements of world and outside are integral part of poet creativeness. Further Mammat analyses that past and non-existent becomes present for poet. All the place and time becomes the present for him. All the situations become dependent on him. By his talent he expresses the world in the same way in which he imagines. All these situations are alike with poets.

In Sanskrit poetics of Kashmir, a poet is considered as one who has the integrity of initiator, creator and listener, and this is the reason why Acharya Bhatout considers the similar experience of Poet- Listener- Hero as complete process of poem. Subsequently, Bhatout highlights that the success of a poet depends on how much he is capable in presenting the statement, creativity and contemporary culture. All these processes make poet universal and permanently alive. Simple and natural contract of equilibrium and supplementary of thoughts and experiences are found in a poet. In the eleventh century, Acharya Kuntak noted that poet is utmost nearest of the knowledge than others (*barkoniti*), because he has the capacity to sense the mystery of taste, word, nature and natural elements. Kuntak concluded that a philosopher can become successful only when he is also a poet.

In the series of Kashmiri poets, the name of Kshmendra is taken with due respect. Kshmendra was the disciple of Acharya Abhinavgupta and is not only counted in Kashmir's but also among those scholars of India who have contributed in creative (*Lakshyagranth*) literature and theoretical thinking. He is considered to be the installer of rationale thinking. In the field of poetics, he has

written *Auchityavicharcharcha* and *Kavikanthabharan*. In creative literature, he wrote *Bhrihatkathamajari*, *Bauddhisatvavadankalplata*, *Dashavtaarcharit*, *Ramayanmanjari* and *Bharatmanjari*. In the literature of Kshemendra, contemporary folk art, culture and flowability of time are reflected. *Kalavilas* and *Suvruttilak* can be considered as important example. In Bilhana's *Vikramandevcharitam* (1040), it is emphasized that the great poets are rich in natural talent. Their talent helps them in creating new poems and giving happiness. Subsequently, Bilhana did not focus on etymology and noted that the poem should be enjoyed by common folks.

Like poet Bilhana, Kalhana has also mentioned the poetic theme in *Rajtarangini*. Kalhana wrote that the praise of the poet is everlasting. The attributes of good poet make the ambrosia inferior. Poet has the vision of knowing internal feelings of everyone and by that he creates new meaningful poems. The description of natural and supernatural powers were also the part of poetic tradition of region of Kashmir.

Natural and Super-Natural Power in Literature

Allegiance of poets and scholars of Kashmir towards natural and super-natural power is explained by Acharya Abhinavgupta. In his writing titled *Tantralok* he highlighted Kashmir's natural beauty and knowledge tradition. The red, white, yellow, black colours ornate the nature of Kashmir. These four in the form of proved quadrant are the director of power. As he noted that the supernatural power of visible and invisible is filled in pearl necklace which is delivered by thirty-six elemental powers of Lord Shiva. This is the possible hypothesis of natural art of the Lord of the World. Further he pointed out that the universe is extremely captivating and no one can be deprived from the miracle of its diverse nature.

The description of nature is evident in Kavi Bhallat's *Bhallatshatak*. It is a collection of free verses with multiplicity of allegory. The important quality of Bhallat reflects in beautifully representing the state of mind of vacuity, hope

and despair. In one of the verses, he wrote that after seeing the panoramic flowers of the large silk cotton tree, the parrot thought that if the flowers are so beautiful how sweet must be their fruits. Thus, he looked after the tree very well and luckily the tree bore the fruits. The parrot had the hope that on ripening the fruits must be very sweet, instead on ripening only cotton was formed which was blown away by the God of wind. In this particular verse, there is an indication of conversion of hope into despair and reality of world. Acharya Mamata mentioned many verses of poet Bhallat in tenth ullas of *Kavyaprakash*.

In the field of Kashmir's literature the name of poet Makhank is also significant. He composed an epic called *Shrikanthcharit*. In this there is fascinating literary description of the war between lord Shiva and Tripura. Makhank was the disciple of Sanskrit poet and resident of Kashmir Acharya Ruyyak and both the master-disciple were the assembly priests of Kashmiri King Jaisingh (1129-50 B.C). Makhank mentioned about all the former kings and the great poets of Kashmir. The mentioned poets in *Shrikanthcharit* were in following pattern - Nandan, Ruyyak, Lankk, Ramyadev, Loshtdev, Prabhakar Devdhar, Mandan, Shrigarbh, Shri Anand, Suhal, Anand, Garg, Gunn, Govind, Janakraj, Jalhan, Jinduk, Jograj, Tejkanth, Trailokya, Damodar, Prakat, Shasht, Kalyan and Shambhu.

Historical Writings

Kashmir is utmost famous for historical poetic writing. Among them poet Bilhana, Kalhana and Jayanak are prominent. Bilhana after receiving a traditional Sanskrit instruction left his homeland in search of fame and received the patronage of King Vikramaditya VI. The King appointed him *Vidyapati*. Thereafter Bilhana composed an epic in eighteen cantos, '*Viramankadevacharita*' as part of the *itihasa-akhyayika* tradition where he gave an unreal heroic personality to the king. Bilhana did not perform the duty of a chronicler. His royal patronage influenced him to distort facts. To whitewash the unlawful usurpation of the Chalukya throne by his patron, Bilhana invented the story that the god Siva had preordained that

Vikrama should succeed his father. As if to confirm this supernatural preordination, the *Vikramankadevacharita* informs us that at the prince's birth flowers fell from the sky and Indra's war drums resounded.

Poet Jaynayaka, the writer of another text with historical description *Prithvirajvijay*, is also the resident of Kashmir who came to Ajmer by obtaining the asylum of Prithviraj. Jayanak wrote a historical poem titled *Prithvirajvijay*, where the victory of Prithviraja Chahamana over Muhammad of Ghor in the first battle of Tarain (1191) was celebrated. Jayanaka portrays Prithviraja as Rama and his wife as Sita. Prithviraja fought against *rakshasa* (*mlechchas*) as like of lord Rama. Jayanaka wrote a divinized history which was based on outrageous distortion of history.

The *Rajatarangini* (*River of Kings*), one of the earliest historical documents written by Kalhana, is a long Sanskrit narrative poem of eight thousand metrical verses divided into eight cantos called as *taranga* or wave. It is a continuous history of the kings of Kashmir from mythical times (1184 BC) to the date of its composition (AD 1148–49). The colophon of the work informs us that its author, Kalhana, was the son of Champaka, the minister of King Harsha of Kashmir (AD 1089–1101). The *Rajatarangini* is the only Sanskrit work so far discovered which may be called a history, and Kashmir the only region of India with a tradition of historical writing.

For the first three *tarangas* or books, Kalhana had to rely heavily on legends, mythology and tradition, and quasi-historical documents. There is a discussion of king Ranaditya who reigned for three hundred years. Amidst these, the writings moves to book four from where reliable historical description began. What is interesting is to see how the tone of the narrative changes in the description. In the first section, the author, who was a brahmana, the son of a minister, and a learned Sanskrit scholar, paints a picture of what, from his point of view, was an ideal world, one in which sons succeeded fathers, and in which the brahmanical norms of varna and gender hierarchies were strictly

followed. However, in the next two sections, he documents in detail how these norms were violated. He attains a high degree of accuracy in point of facts, and of the genealogical and topographical information he provides. Chronology is one of the integral characteristic of history-writings. The *Rajatarangini* has for its chronological basis the Kali, the Laukika and Saka eras. At the very outset he had set forth his ideal of a historian, 'that man of merit alone deserves praise whose language, like that of a judge, in recounting the events of the past has discarded bias as well as prejudice.'

Rajatarangini is rich in information which also described about the physical appearance of humans, their food and dressing habits. Subsequently, it also deals with the economic aspect of famine, food prices, taxation, currency and other related aspects. The depiction of Kashmir as a planned city goes back to the third century millennium. The book represents the historical realities of the political system, governance, and administration in Kashmir. Amongst the 'horrors', according to Kalhana, is the phenomenon of women rulers. As is obvious, not all present-day readers will share Kalhana's perspective, even as they might derive information from his writing.

Ancient Indian authors in general were not used to treat past events as purely human, or of their occurrence in any chronological order. In these two respects Kalhana stands for the most part fully vindicated. He himself testified that 'virtuous poet alone is worthy of praise who, free from love or hatred, ever restricts his language to the exposition of facts'. Facts that a historian provides depend on the variety and quality of his sources. The basic characteristics of Kalhana's writing lies in the emphasis on objectivity which has been the founding principle of the historiographical tradition. The idea of objectivity maintains that there is a correspondence between the intentions and actions of the people and the historians should exert themselves to comprehend the mental world of the people in the past. In the words of objectivity rests upon the 'commitment to the reality of the past, and to the truth as correspondence to that reality; a sharp separation

between knower and known, between fact and value, and above all, between history and fiction.’ Kalhana focused on application of cross-examining the witnesses separation of the subject and the object, distinction between the knower and known for maintaining the sense of neutrality and in to recover the past. He finds the similarity between the judge and the historian. He emphasized that the facts were in the records which the historians needed to discover. If the historians were impartial, followed a proper scientific method and removed his/her personality from the process of investigation, it was possible to reconstruct the past from these facts. It was thought that once all the facts were known, it was possible to write ‘ultimate history’ which could not be superseded.

Conclusion

On the basis of the above deliberation, it can be said that Kashmir is the authentic and motivational source of not only the Sanskrit literature but also of the entire Indian Literature. Kashmir has been an important centre of India’s knowledge tradition. The region has given birth to many Sanskrit scholars during the period between ninth and fourteenth century who contributed in various fields of literary tradition. The contribution of Kashmir in Sanskrit literature is immense in the field of poetics, history and discussion on natural and super-natural powers. It has been the centre of origin and discussion of the onset points related to literature, culture and cognitive aspects. Historical writing led by Kalhana focus on maintaining objectivity led to the historians’ search for ‘authentic’ sources. Overall, it can be argued that the prosperous literary tradition of Kashmir has provided a new direction to Indian literature, art and philosophy, and history.

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