



The Impact Of Soo Ham Soo And Wahdat-Ul-Wajood On Kashmiri Mystic Poetry

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Abstract:

The doctrine of Soo Ham Soo has been one of the important reflections of the philosophical tradition of Kashmir. Soo Ham Soo is a Hindu doctrine based on the philosophy of ‘I am He/ You are what I am’ i.e. the blend of creator and creation. Soo Ham Soo is a Vedic Philosophy. Kashmir, during 14th century A.D has witnessed a mass conversion into Islam. People enmass converted to this religion, however, certain important philosophical and cultural traditions of previous religion remained alive, because of the fact that Islam came to Kashmir through Central Asia. The Central Asian Spiritual and Mystic taste was enrooted into a Soo Ham Soo like philosophical doctrine commonly known as Wahdat-ul- Wajood (Oneness of Being). The present paper focuses on the impact of these doctrines on Kashmiri Mystic poetry. The 14th century Kashmir had a strong poetic taste. The poets of that age like Lal Ded and Sheikh ul Alam have played a pivotal role in assimilating both the doctrines through their verses, this tradition has remained a continuous process even up to this time. The great contemporary mystic poets of Kashmir like Shams Faqir, Souch Kral, Ahad Zargar and the like have all through been influenced by these doctrines, their whole poetry bears testimony to this fact.

1.Introduction

Soo Ham Soo is a Sanskrit Phrase, Soham means “ I am He/ That” when it applies to a person’s name according to Vedic Philosophy it means identifying oneself with the Universe or Ultimate reality. Some Vedic scholars say that when a child is born it cries Koham-Koham, which means “Who am I? Who am I?”

The universe in terms responds back with the words “Soham! Soham!” which means “You are the same as I am! You are the same as I am!” or “you are what I am ! You are what I am”. It also stems from a Sanskrit word which means “Self Pride”, furthermore it means that the self in its original, pure, primordial state, is wholly or partially identifiable or identical with the ultimate reality that is the ground and origin of all phenomenon.

In Tantrism Soo ham is a natural mantra, a meditation technique that is done without uttering a word. Shri Ranganathananda (1908-2005) explained that Soo ham consist of two Sanskrit words Soo and Hamm. In order to understand Soo Ham, we have to look at our breathing process. During Breathing, we in hall air and then exhale it. This process produces two sounds. The breath comes in with the sound Soo and go out with the sound Hum. This mantra is also known as Hmsa Mantra. Every time the breath comes in and goes out, one repetition of the Soo ham mantra takes place. Thorough this mantra we contemplate our oneness with the ultimate reality. This mantra is also known as Universal reality because of the fact that is vibration is already a part of the breath, and everybody breathes

2.Soham In Kashmir’s Trika Philosophy

The Pranayaama Kriya (Breathing Technique for the vital Pranaa or life. Prana enters the body through the breath and is sent to every cell through the circulatory system. Prana creates life by allowing the heart to beat) that was performed extensively in Kashmiri pandit households was nothing but Ajapa japa or SOHAM (Sooo plus hummm...). It is a Kriya Yoga and also an essential ingredient of Kashmir’s luminous Shiva thought which is primarily aimed at realization of existing identity with universal consciousness. SOHAM when reversed becomes HAMSA OR HAMSO which means ‘I AM THAT ’. HAMSA OR HAMSO also refers to SWAN. Kashmiri poets have used word RAAZHANS for the word HAMSA or HAMSO. And in Kashmir’s Shaivism HAMSO or HAMSO is nothing but Atman like Shams Faqir a Kashmiri Sufi Poet used the word RAAZHANS in his poem Shuniya Gatchthuy (Beyond the Limits). Another aspect peculiar to TRIKA DARSHANA or Kashmir’s Shaivism is that it accepts no restrictions

between caste, race or sex. TRIKA never accepted the supremacy of VEDIC CASTE SYSTEM.

3. Doctrine

SOHAM- Soo or SOHAM is reflected in the Wakh¹ of Lal Ded, Shrukhs² of Nund Reshi (Sheikh Ul Alam) as also in the poetry of Wahab Khaar, Soachh Kraal, Shamas Faqir, Ahad Zargar, Nyaam sahib, Ahmed Batwaari, Rehman Dar, Rahim Sahib, Shah Qalandhar and many more Sufi poets of Kashmir. This concept emerged in Sufi poetry due to a unique blending of Mahayana Buddhism, Vedanta and Islamic Tassawuf (Mysticism) in Kashmiri thought. I quote some other poets who used this concept:-

(1)

Yot yithh zanamuss kenh chhunaa Laarun
Daarnaai daarun Soham Soo
Brahma Vishnu Maheshwar Gaarun
Daarnaai daarun Soham Soo.³

After being born ,What is here to gain ;
So hold SOHAM kriya for existence .
Create Brahma , Vishnu and Maheshwara
And own SOHAM kriya for existence .

(2)

Raahe badh Nishi kar Traahi Bhagwaan
Puniyee Paap Traavithh kar Yaksaan.
Voan samad Miran Shastra heyoo
Paru OM Soo Om SOHAM Soo⁴
Be away from the misleading path
Think not of evil or Good but be unvarying ,
Samad Mir speaks the message of shastras
And recite OM and SOHAM soo .

(3)

Tosas Om ki Punn Khaer Massaai

¹ Short Poems of Lal Ded consisting of four lines.

² Short Poems of Shaikh Ul alam usually consisting of four lines.

³ Shah Gafoor

⁴ Samad Mir

Baa Rasaa rasaai Kornuss Tayaar
 SOHAM Soo Yaar Vuchha Novanussaai
 Baa Rasaa rasaai Kornuss Tayaar⁵
 I spun Omkar in shahtoos and offered it to the lord
 And he completed me slowly and steadily .
 He made me to befriend SOHAM soo
 And he completed me slowly and steadily .

(4)

Mar Zinda par SOHAM soo
 Hamas Damas Saeit zaan⁶
 Die while existing and recite SOHAM SOO
 Know linkage of breath control with HAMAS.

4.Wahdat-ul Wajood

Wahdat-ul wajood is the most complicated and controversial theory which is discussed and opined about in almost all shades of Islamic schools of thoughts particularly in various Sufi ideologies. Simply speaking, theory of Wahdat-ul wajood has two connotations. According to Ibne Arabi's theory, existence is only one i.e. the Creator who is present everywhere in this universe, and there is no room for any other existence in this universe because two entities cannot exist at the same place. Therefore he concludes this universe exists within the Creator's existence. The Creator is infinite/undetermined but universe is finite/ determined. Where the Creator's existence becomes finite/ determined, it no longer remains the Creator's infinite/undetermined existence, rather it becomes creation. In other words, in one way this universe is the Creator's reflection/existence; but, in other way, this universe is creation.

There is another connotation of Wahdat-ul wajood, which is based on sufis' spiritual experiences. 'Sufis' during meditation/ 'mushahda-e- zaat', experience only one existence i.e. the Creator. Therefore many 'sufis' believe in only one existence i.e. the Creator; all the rest is either deception/unreal (in view of many 'sufis') or finite/determined forms of the Creator's single existence (in view of many other 'sufis').

⁵ Assad Parray

⁶ Ahmed Raah

Major ideas in Sufi metaphysics have surrounded the concept of *wahdat* (meaning "unity"). Two main Sufi philosophies prevail on this controversial topic. *Wahdat al-Wajud* literally means the "Unity of Existence". On the other hand, *Wahdat al-Shuhud*, meaning "Apparentism" or "Unity of Witness", holds that God and his creation are entirely separate. Some Islamic reformers have claimed that the difference between the two philosophies differs only in semantics and that the entire debate is merely a collection of "verbal controversies" which have come about because of ambiguous language. However, the concept of the relationship between God and the universe is still actively debated both among Sufis and between Sufis and non-Sufi Muslims.

On the highest level, *wajūd* is the absolute and nondelimited reality of God, the "Necessary Being" (*wājib al-wajūd*) that cannot not exist. In this sense, *wajūd* designates the Essence of God or of the Real (*dhāt al-haqq*), the only reality that is real in every respect. On lower levels, *wajūd* is the underlying substance of "everything other than God" (*mā siwā Allāh*)—which is how Ibn Arabi and others define the "cosmos" or "universe" (*al-'ālam*). Hence, in a secondary meaning, the term *wajūd* is used as shorthand to refer to the whole cosmos, to everything that exists. It can also be employed to refer to the existence of each and every thing that is found in the universe.⁷

God's 'names' (*asma'*) or 'attributes' (*sifat*), on the other hand, are the relationships which can be discerned between the Essence and the cosmos. They are known to God because he knows every object of knowledge, but they are not existent entities or ontological qualities, for this would imply plurality in the godhead⁸.

The other connotation of '*wahdat-ul wajood*' implies this universe is finite forms of the Creator's infinite single existence; this connotation actually is based on the belief that because the Creator's existence is single and spread everywhere, there is no room for any other existence because two entities cannot exist at the same place. Actually the opinion that two entities cannot exist at the same place is not scientifically a valid opinion. It is our common observation that x-rays pass through a person's body and make a reflection of that person's body, which we see on screen. X-rays and the person are two separate entities. When x-rays pass through the person's body, actually two entities i.e. x-rays and the person exist at the same place. In other words, two forms of matter can exist at the same place, if one form is thin enough to penetrate through the other form. If one form of matter can penetrate through the other form, why not Allah the Creator can penetrate

⁷ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/sufi-metaphysics>.

⁸ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/sufi-metaphysics>.

through this universe? One of Allah's qualitative name is 'al-lateef' which means the most thin, refined and sophisticated. Allah is the most thinnest entity of this universe and can penetrate through the whole universe; in other words, Allah exists at every bit of this universal space which is occupied by created entities.

One argument in favor of theory of Wahdat-ul wajood is given on the basis of al-hadid-3 which states: " He is the First and the Last, and the Outward and the Inward; and He is Knower of all things". The believers of Wahdat-ul wajood argue that if Allah is the most apparent and the most hidden, it concludes existence is one and that is Allah the Creator. Actually this conclusion is not correct. No doubt Allah is the most apparent/ outward and the most hidden/inward but it does not mean existence is one. Actually it means that because Allah is the most thinnest and spreads everywhere in space, and because space covers everything, it means Allah covers everything; the outer most part of everything is covered by Allah; there is nothing upper most/ more outward/ more apparent than Allah. Similarly there is nothing innermost/ more inward than Allah because space exists at the bottom of everything, and Allah spreads everywhere in space, it means Allah exists at the bottom of everything. These meanings of 'al-zahir' and 'al-batin' have been clarified by our Nabi (saw) himself in a hadith. In short, it is misconception to infer theory of 'Wahdat-ul wajood' from this Quranic verse Now we dwell on the issue why sufis experience one existence during meditation/ ' mushahida-e-zaat'.

Before creation of this universe, everything contained in this universe existed and still exists in Allah's mind. Then Allah created His creations which will be destroyed/ annihilated after people would have gotten reward/punishment of their deeds. When the whole creations (including paradise and hell) will be undone/ annihilated, only one existence will be left and that is Allah.

"Oneness with God" has been one of the dominated themes in Kashmir poetry from the age of Lal Ded up to the age we live in. from the distant past up to the present time, different schools of thought and different intellectuals of our society have provided spiritual inspiration to the Kashmiri intelligentsia. Although Kashmiris have gone through many changes during the course of history both in terms of religion i.e. their conversion from one religion to another and in the standard of their life, there is however an important aspect of their life which has not witnessed any change and that is the spiritual any change and that is the spiritual aspect. It has been one of the most

illuminating facts of their life that have not made any compromise with this aspect despite the availability of all sort of worldly pleasure.

Communal harmony has been a trademark of Kashmiriyat. People of Kashmir do not believe in the barriers that separate communities. Materialistic pursuit has no place in their hearts and minds. It is only the humanistic aspect of life which is a determining factor for them.

Since Islam came to Kashmir via Central Asia and not directly from Arabian Peninsula, it is because of this reason Islam came here with the Central Asian Spiritual taste which is commonly known as Sufi Islam. In Sufism the doctrine of Wahdat-ul-Wajood had made its foothold and the resemblance of this doctrine was found in the native Kashmiri doctrine of Soo Hum Soo, it was this resemblance that made native Kashmiri poets like Shamas Faqir, Wahab Khar, Momin Sahib, Ahmad Batawari, Rahim Sahib, Niyam Sahib, Samad Mir, Asad Mir, Shah Gafoor, Ahad Zargar and others to accept it without any hindrance. Both the doctrines lay a great stress on self introspection. In Kashmiri Poetry these two doctrines get mixed in such a way that their separation became impossible. These doctrines encouraged the value of peace, harmony, brotherhood, love and other noble virtues in the Kashmiri Mystic poetry.

The essential quality of poets from Lal Ded, Sheikh-ul-alam and others up to the present time is didacticism, in spite of that fact they have not ignored the aspect of poetic beauty in their masterpieces.

Kashmiri poets have very much emphasised the process of soul dissection in order to reveal inner success of one's personality. Moral and spiritual education has been their main concern with which they want to bring spiritual upliftment which they consider essential for human life. For them one's soul is important than the mind, for the later cannot comprehend the ultimate reality while the barriers of faith and community if there two things do not help in the establishment of justice. 'Oneness with God' has been a major theme in Kashmiri poetry and a constant inspiration for the reading public. It has purified their hearts and minds by driving out malice and ill will from their inner self and for attaining perfection. This way all kinds of grievances will be driven out and love and humility will take its roots in their hearts.

5. Conclusion

So, it can be concluded that the doctrines of Soo Ham Soo and Wahdat-ul-Wajood have remained the central theme in the Kashmiri mystic poetry. Lal Ded and Sheikh- ul-Alam

were the pioneers on this front. With the passage of time, the magnitude of this assimilated poetic trend has grown more and more. Although various great trends in the field of Kashmiri poetry have been witnessed like romanticism, progressive movement and even post-modernism, but the blended doctrine of Soo Ham Soo and Wahdat-ul-Wajood are still alive in Kashmiri Poetry. Shams Faqir's "Shuniyah Gatchthi" (Beyond the Limits), Rahman Dar's "Maatch Tuler" (Honey Bee), Ahmad Batwari's "Nye" (The Flute), Souch Kral's "Dapyomas Te Dopnam" (I ask and He replies), Momin Sahib's "Janawaran Henz Daleel", (The tail of birds), Mahmood Gami's "Sheikh Sanan" and other such Mystic Kashmiri poems are the best examples of these doctrines.

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