



The Kashmiri Epic poetry a Treasure trove with Historical Background

Reyaz Ahmad Naik

Deptt.: Revenue

Country: India

➤ ABSTRACT:

Poetry is one part of the literature and prose another but, poetry the first complete written evidence available with us and the first creation of thoughtful art and almost world renowned poets & scholars like chauser, lal ded, shekh-ul-Aalam, Mehmood Gami, Rosul Mir, Shamsu Rehman faroqi, Galib, John Donne, Wordsworth, John Keats, etc were the legendary literary figures of the world literature and representation of human values, matters, psychology, habits, superstitions, bravery, weakness, ethics, religion, relationships, rivalry, alienation, catharsis, pathos, etc

Epic form is the part of poetry with great power of presentation of social as well as religious characters and matters, having the capacity to adjust thousands of poetic line within its structure. This is the only literary poetic form which can be stretched very long. "*SHAHNAMA*" an epic poem in Persian literature has a poem of sixty thousand (60000) verses, it is not like Ghalib and Nazim to be followed by specific rules it is free from all these rules which couldn't be limited with short range of expression. It is actually a medium between story and expression with some little followed rules like first and second verse should be rhythmic in nature and every two verses should follow this rule with prosody.

Kashmiri epic poem is very rich and treasure trove of Kashmiri literature, most part of this poetry has been derived from Persian literature through translation, political, literary, and religious affiliations with Iran and central Asia. Mehmood Gami the great literary figure of Kashmir whose poetry (Shereen Khusraw an epic) had been translated by Karl Burkhart in German language said to be the first complete epic poem in Kashmiri literature. Gami wrote and translated at least eleven epics followed by Maqbool Shah Kralwari, Ahmadulla Hakbari, and Ab Gani Thoker who wrote & translated nine epics. The history of epic poem is very rich in Kashmir and a lot of material is available in book shapes. The aim of the paper is to highlight the epic form of Kashmiri literature with its quality and effective nature and treasure-trove measure and also to highlight the different contributions towards it.

➤ INTRODUCTION

This paper will highlight the most important part of Kashmiri literature called 'Epic poetry' with historical background and comparison with some other Epic poetry of the world. This poetry is really a treasure Trove part of Kashmiri literature. Its rampancy advocates the reliability & tenability not only in Kashmiri literature but almost in all languages & literature of the world. Beowulf epic poem, the most important literary piece of work in English language consisting of 3182 alternative lines. '*Shahnama*' the Persian epic poem consisting of 60000



alternative lines, which is one of the most famous literary piece of work translated in many languages including Kashmiri language by Wahab Pararray Hajini.

Some most famous epic poems of the world literature:

- I. The epic of Gilgamesh (2000 BC)
- II. The odyssey (800 BC)
- III. The Mahabharata (350 BC)
- IV. Virgil – the Aeneid (19 BC)
- V. Ovid – Metamorphoses (8 AD)
- VI. The Nibelungenlied (13th Century)
- VII. The Iliad (800 BC)
- VIII. The Song of Roland (11th – 12th Century)
- IX. The Saga of Grettir the strong (The Icelandic sagas) (13th – 14th century)
- X. Ludovico Ariosto – Orlando Furioso (1532)
- XI. The Divine comedy (1308 – 1321)
- XII. The Lusiads (1572)
- XIII. The Faerie Queen (1590)
- XIV. Paradise lost (1667)
- XV. The Rape of the Lock (1714)
- XVI. Epic of Manes (Published in 1792)
- XVII. Silappatikaram (2nd Century CE)
- XVIII. Don Juan (1819) &
- XIX. The Cantos (1915-1962)

Are some most important epic poems or heroic poems of the world literature.

These epics have preserved & exposed the whole social as well as religious-political scenarios of the world, for future references.

Kashmiri literature is rich with these epic or heroic poems. Hundreds of epic poems are available in Kashmiri literature, like 'Yousuf Zelaikha,' 'Aknandun,' 'Vazira Mall,' 'Kisaie Hazrat Ayoub,' 'Kisaie Hazrat Idrees,' 'Laila Majnoon' Heemal Nagraie, Peer nama, Gulirez etc. These epic poems are mirrors of Kashmiri culture even if translated from Persian language. Hence epic poem is a lengthy narrative poem, ordinarily concerning a serious subject containing details of heroic deeds & events significant to a culture or nation.

➤ **Objective:**

Objective of the Paper is impartial & fair minded assessment & introspection of Kashmiri epic poetry containing social, religious, serious & political as well as critical and satirical subjective matters. Therefore, the analyses & assessment must be at par with the nature of narratives, & translations thereof.



1. Historical Back ground & techniques:

Epic poem or Mathnavi is a poetic genre consisting of two same rhyme or similar in sound especially with respect to the last syllable. Its technical structure & outer allegory make it different from other poetic forms, every couplet is different from one another. But, the story remains constant and continue till end. An epic poem is a long, narrative poem that is usually about heroic deeds and events that are significant to the culture of the poet. Many ancient writers used epic poetry to tell tales of intense adventures and heroic feats. Some of the most famous literary master pieces in the world were written in the form of epic poetry. Epic poems were particularly common in the ancient world because they were ideal for expressing stories orally. These works continuously respected till date. Many student at colleges & Universities level read famous examples of epic poetry.

Before the development of writing, epic poems were memorized and played an important in maintaining a record of the great deeds & history of a culture. Later, they were written down & the tradition for this kind of poem continued. Time & again an epic is along, often book-length, narrative in verse form that retells the heroic journey of a single person, or group of persons. Elements that typically distinguish epics include super human deeds fabulous adventures highly stylized language and a blending of lyrical and dramatic traditions.

An epic poem, in general is an artistic creation of different themes having characters, dialogues, scenes, plot, time, place, customs, etc. Epic poems are dramatic nature poems or poetry with distinguished features resembled with drama & novel form. The only difference between these forms are style. drama in prose form & epic in poetry form but other setting is almost same.

All the couplets have chained relationship & its plot is circumspect & chary, expressed story should be a strong plot, correct atmosphere, time & place & rule of prosody incorporated. Prusodial master have proposed seven meters for Persian poetry and these all are not mandatory for Kashmiri & urdu epic poems.

These are:

- i. Mutkarb Musman Mahzool.
- ii. Hizij Masdas Maqsoor.
- iii. Bahri Ramal Musdas Mehzoof or Maqsoor.
- iv. Bahri Khafeef Musdas Maqsoor.
- v. Bahri Sarih Musdas Majnoon Maqsoor.
- vi. Behri Hizij Musdas Akhrab Mehzoof
- vii. Bahri Mutkarb Musman Asr Maqbooz

(فَعُولُن َ فَعُولُن َ فَعُولُن َ)
(مَفَا عِيلُن َ مَفَا عِيلُن َ مَفَا عِيلُن َ)
(فَلَعْلَاتُن َ فَا عَلَاتُن َ فَا عَلَاتُن َ)
(فَلَعْلَاتُن َ مَفَا عَلُن َ مَفَا عَلُن َ)
(مَفْتَعِلُن َ مَفْتَعِلُن َ مَفْتَعِلُن َ)
(مَفْعُول َ مَفْعُول َ مَفْعُول َ)
(فَعِلُن َ فَعِلُن َ فَعِلُن َ)



Epic poetry may be in other meter too as per requirement. Kashmiri poets have adopted two meters Bahri Hizij Musdas Mahzoof for amatory epic poems & Bahri Mutkarb Musman mehzoof for serious & decacytic epic poems. These prosodic meters derived from Persia and are not fully supportive but shall be adjusted both in Kashmiri poetry as well as in Urdu, because both the languages have no own prosodic rule & procedure. It is prevalent that some language have borrowed some rules from other language and adjusted as per requirement and need. English language already borrowed prosodic as well as grammatical rules from Latin etc. English language is considered a stress-timed language unlike French, which is a syllable-timed language. In poetry stressed & unstressed syllables are often put together in specific patterns. In poetry these patterns are called meter, which means 'measure'. Here are the most common meters you find in English poetry (I) Iambic (II) Trochaic (III) Dactylic (IV) Anapestic (V) Spondaic (VI) Pyrrhic (VII) Amphibrach & (VIII) Amphimacer, first four meters were commonly used in English language while as remaining rarely. Here are some literary terms for each the length as regards number of feet:

One foot	=	monometer
Two feet	=	diameter
Three feet	=	trimeter
Four feet	=	tetrameter
Five feet	=	Pentameter
Six feet	=	hexameter
Seven feet	=	heptameter

These feet in Kashmiri are called 'Rakun' and the meter system which had been introduced by Al-Khalil Ibn Ahmad of Basra (b-718) in Arabic language, which was adopted by Urdu & Kashmiri languages are still in use and Kashmiri language is syllable timed language like Urdu & Persian. Meters are measured in "Avzans" in short & long syllables with the symbols.

/-Λ-Λ/-Λ-Λ/-Λ-Λ/, /ΛΛΛ/ΛΛΛ/ΛΛΛ/, /-ΛΛΛ/-ΛΛΛ/-ΛΛΛ/ etc

e.g / - / / Λ /

↓ ↓
Short Long

ولو ه باغوانو نو به ارک شان پيدا

like this: / ΛΛΛ - /ΛΛΛ - /ΛΛΛ - /ΛΛΛ - /



Analysis:

ن پی دا کر	بہ ہا رک شا	غ وا نو نو	و لو ہا با
^^^ -	^^^ -	^^^ -	^^^ -
↓ ↓ ↓ ↓	↓ ↓ ↓ ↓	↓ ↓ ↓ ↓	↓ ↓ ↓ ↓

2. First period:

Epic poems in kashmiri literature had a great importance because religious matters & religious historical events are mainly the subject of these poems. Sheikh-ul-Aalam (RA) the famous and pious Reshi of kashmir origin and founder of 'Reshism' in kashmir is the founder of epic poem. His "*Sadoosi Masla*" is the first religious hand written epic poem available with us. Its subject is based on one hundred thirty religious matters discussion & it is technically an epic poem. Persian effect has been seen in the poem which reveals the witness of dominance of Persian literature in Kashmir.

After Sheikh-ul-Aalam (RA) till Mehmood Gami no evidence and written material is available which can confirm further literary material in this regard because this 350 years gap is dark period in kashmiri literature. If a serious & sincere research shall be initiated some clues and material may be exposed in public for further enquiry so that this gap may fill. Researchers, scholar and authors have discussed may optional as well as socio-political reasons which became hurdles for development of epic poem, during the dark period of Kashmiri literature (from sheikh-ul-Aalam to Gami) but some evidences have been exposed by Naji Munwar a retired govt. teacher & researcher he found two epic poems of Mir Abdulla Behki "*Aqayed*" & "*Vakayia*" which was written in kashmiri language before Mehmood Gami, Mumin sahb a religious poet has translated one part of Farid-u-din Atar's epic poem '*Manteq-U-Tair*' in Kashmiri language shah Qalander another religious poet has compiled '*Sultan Audam & Guljan*' According to Najir Munwar, "if a narrative element is essential part of epic poem then shah Qalander who born before Mehmood Gami is the first poet who initiate this tradition".

Prakash Ram Kurgami is another poet who also born before Mehmood Gami compiled "*Ram Avtar Charit*" Ali Jawad Zaidi, says "First epic is Prakash Rams "Ram Avtar charit" it is said to be the Ramayan of Kashmir" Mohd Ahmad Andrabi says "Ram Avtar charit is his epic and perhaps first kashmiri epic" These are some evidences which reveals the story of epic poem after 14th Century till Mehmood Gami (1765 – 1855).

Gulam Nabi Atesh a renowned kashmiri researcher reveals that he has seen an epic in Naji Munwar's personal library which was written in Persian as well in kashmiri languages in 812 Hijri & another epic poem "*Tooto Naam*" compiled by Abud palla in 1201 Hijri who was contemporary to Mahmood Gami.

Now, the discussion charity the traditional adaptation of the theory that Gami was father of epic poetry in Kashmiri literature. No doubt he compiled at least eleven epic poems which are truly and technically the perfect epics, but neither he is father of epic poetry nor he initiated writing of epic poetry in kashmiri literature.



His Yousuf Zilaikha, Sheereen Khusrov, Sheikh Sanan, Laila Majnoon, Haroon Rashid etc are truly his excellent literary contributions to kashmiri language all of his epic poems are translated from Persian literature, urdu epic poetry is also sailing in the same boat. So far as Kashmiri literature is concerned Persian language has dominated it through socio-economic, socio-cultural & socio-religious ways. Three effects have been observed while talking about Kashmiri poetry (I) Entomological, (II) Subjective (III) Stylistic. Kashmiri epic poetry consisting many subjects like religion, social issues love affairs political issues, economic matters and exploitation by some social character as well as fake fraudulent religious gurus. Exploitation by some govt. servants etc.

Mahmood Gami became primogenitor for epic poetry in Kashmiri literature, he elevated epic genre and made it a strong form for future epic poets in Kashmir. His artistic adeptness, his vision knowledge, approach & vast research introduced him a great epic writer.

Time & again Kashmiri epic poetry has been borrowed from Persian literature and almost 90% literature of epic poetry has been translated from Persian literature, some has been emulated from Urdu too. Meanwhile, some pure kashmiri stories were accommodated in epic poems like "*Ahwali Kashmir*" "*Haba Khatoon*", "*Aknandun*," "*Wazira Mall*," "*Grees Naam*," "*Aagar Naam*," "*Noor Mall*," "*Aijaz-ul-Quran*," "*Alle Shahr*," "*Patwar Naam*," "*Heemal Nagrai*" & "*Malli Naam*" These are pure Kashmiri origin epic poems.

2. Second Period:

The second period of epic poetry in kashmir started from Mahmood Gami & some contemporary epic poets were Baba Khalil, Peer Ali Shah, Walli-ullah Motto who compiled & presented three heroic poem "*Heemal Nagraie*," "*Chali Asrar*," & "*Zarooriyati Deen*". Wali-ullah Matto got his name through *Heemal Nagraie* heroic poem, and it is very much famous epic poem. According to Prof. Shafi Shouq "Without expletive decorative exposition he stressed internal beauty of the story". Mohd Yousuf Teng a renowned Kashmiri scholar has interpreted its all qualities in a scholarly manner and proved it a master piece in Kashmiri literature.

Prof. Gh Mohd Shad writes "its language is captivate, simple, easy & classic. In this poem events has been pasteurized properly and it is not only for airing & recreation but a moral poem..... Which make it different in Kashmiri literature.

Maqbool Shah Kralwari was another famous literary figure in kashmir after Mehmood Game if any poet got name & fame he is Maqbool Shah Kralwari (1802-1899), His epic poetry is very much famous in Kashmiri literature because of close affinity to social problems and exploitation his epical perconality has presented and translated some famous heroic poems like "*Gull Rez*" "*Grees Naam*" "*Peer Naam*" "*Yousuf Zilaikha*", "*Manzoor Naam*," etc he got his name in kashmiri literature through "*Gull Rez*" epic poem. It is actually translated poem of Ziya Nakishbi's a Persian poet but Maqbool's artistic approach and adeptness make it master piece. This poem is really a big achievement and artistic model. Some scholars claimed its grandeur as parallel with "*Shurks*" (14th century poetry of Sheikh-ul-Aalam) Because this was very much famous in nook & coner of kashmir valley.



Syed Rasool Pompoor has rightly said, “Maqbool’s artistic approach & miraculousness is that he converted original work into local chatoyance its character seems to be local. *Ajab Malik* & *Noashlab* are signs of life & are still in out tip of tongue”. His all artistic work is very much famous and is true legend of kashmiri literature.

3. Third Period:

This period was revival of epic poetry. Poets & authors were engaged with traditional approached subjects like amatory poetry but, the new atmosphere open the doors for new subjects and both types of epic poem have been subjects and both types of epic poem have been compiled & written (1) Razimia (2) Bozmia or Ashqia. “Rama Avtar Charit” of Prakash Ram Kurgami was only Razmia poem written before Mehmood Gami. But new lot of poets introduced both types in ‘Kashmiri literature Lakhman Ju Bulbil, Ab Wahab parray, Ameer Shah Kreri, Syeed Maqbool Shah, Syeed Muzfar Shah, Ali Shah, Gh Mohd Hanfi, Peer Mohi-ud-din Miskeen, Khazir Mailk Safiyee, Kafi Shah, Abdul Gafar Farig, Azeez ul lah haqeenah, Ahmadullah Haq Bari, Mehdi Trali et. These are the poets who elevate and levitate the epic poem through their deep knowledge & concern. They bestowed boniness and life to the genre. Peer Mohideen Miskeen a renowned epic writer has written & translated some Urdu epic poems like, *Soni Mahiwal Yousuf Zilaikha*, *Zeba Nagar*, *Laila Majnoon*, *Chando Bandan* & *Heer Ranja* this was first experience by any poet to translate urdu heroic poems into kashmiri language, because it was tradition to translate only persian or Arabic epopees. Ab Ahad Azad writes, Miskeen’s status is not less than his forgoer and this is the fact that he was born for epics. He is in this regard abreast to Nazim, Mehmood Gami and Maqbool Shah Kralwar”.

4. Fourth Period:

Epic writing was honourable job during 18th & 19th century in kashmir every poet feel, proud to be an epic writer Reading & writing of epic poem was pleasant and Amusing job. Yearners were managed to Organize epic assemblage for recreation & beguilement . Because this was the only option of entertainment through out the world. Gulam Nabi Atish writes “ people participated in epic assemblies without any barrier of old and young they were trying to perish all sorrows & miseries.” Radio & TV or other optional avenue was available. Some heroic character of these epic poems are still alive like, “*Ajab Malik*” “*Noash Lub*” “*Sheereen Farhad*” “*Laila Majnoon*” “*Heer Ranja*” “*Yousuf Zelaikha*” “*Sum Pahalwan*” etc. Mataphysical characters & events were fulfilled today’s Gap of Hollywood films but, stress was on imagination not visuality.

4.1 . Anwar Shopiani was fourth generation epic poet and strict religious propagator he used poetry as a tool of communication among general masses, and was great religious poet after Sheikh-ul-Aalam. His Masnavi “*Taleen-o-Sunat*” & *Ahsan-ul-Kisas*” are two religious epics.

4.2 Lassa Khan Fida was contemporary to Anwar Shopiani. He translated four epic poem, “*Gulzar Haqeeqat*” ‘*Gull Bakawali*’ ‘*Qisa Shah Bahram*’ & *Chahaar darvesh*’. He introduced mysticism (Sufiyat) in his epic poems as a tool of communication and spreading of his inner message of “Self realization & recognition”. He was actually a mystic poet and his mission was to introduce a real concept of God.



Some other parts had participated in the mission like Mohd Noor-U-din who wrote “*Aagar Naami*” Gh Mohd Lone wrote four epic poems “*Mala Naami*” (1931) “*Makri Zan*” “*Qisaie Bahraam*” & “*Skinder Naami*” these epic poem are real artistic presentation & treasure trove for Kashmiri literature.

Another 20th century epic poet syeed Mubarak Shah who translated sheikh Yaqoob Sarfiz creation “*Magazi-un-Nabi*”. Ahad Zargar “*Gull Sanober*” translated from Urdu literature. Ab Ahad Azad “*Qamar-U-Zaman Badruna*”, Gh Mohd Mehjoor “*Fah Fah Qutin*” etc.

After 1950 epic poetry was almost extinguished but a great poet and epicist Ab Gani Thoker Mashoor came into his own and gave a full strength to epic poem. He is said to be the second great epic poet after Mehmood Gami & Maqbool Shah Kralwari. He translated, compiled & wrote nine epic poems which is a great achievement and bestowment for kashmiri literature. He was born on 1925 AD & died in 1995 AD. He was a great poet he wrote total of 23 books including Nine epics. His epics poems are, *Bulbul Hazar Dastan*, *Vazera Mall*, *Khalid Bin Waleed*, *Nidaye Kabah*, *Sumbul-o-Afza* ‘*Gull-i-Bamboor*’ ‘*Gareeb Moondi Hund Faryaad*’ *Saari Jannat*, *Ayoub Saber*,. All these epics are undoubtedly, great & big contribution in the field of literature. He was illiterate man but full of knowledge & pungent. His vision & goal was up to the mark, he used to memorize stories and then converted into poetic form. He somehow got contacts of some reputed scholars who help him a lot and also participated various cultural activities as well as literary debates. He was active member of “*Bazmi Adab Vasaknag*” a literary organisation aided by state cultural academy. His willing power and competence help him to preserve such a noble work. No doubt he was traditional poet but his contribution is matchless. Though he faced lot of problems and death of his younger son, but he never left his persistence and verve. His consistency and dedication bestowed & donated valuable gifts to Kashmiri literature in the shape of books & different collection of poetry. I have introduced his all creative work through my research consisting of 316 pages in 2012 at Kashmir University under the guidance of Prof. Shad Ramzan former HoD Kashmiri. Gh Nabi Atish a renowned researcher and author published a Monograph through Sahitya Academy Delhi in the year 2015 under the title “Ab Gani Thoker” he acknowledged & acclaimed my research work in his monograph & interpreted Ab Gani thoker Mashoor’s poetry in same manner with some changes, I have published three books in the year 2017 in which I discussed Mashoor’s work properly one among three is “*Mashoor te Shayri Hund Tanqeed*.”

Mashoor’s contribution to Kashmiri literature is more enough than others. Time & again his 23 books including Nine(9) epic poems are obviously a great bestowment& honour.

Hence, Kashmiri epic poem gradually developed from long ago. Written evidence is available from 14th century when sheikh-ul-Aalam initiated the process. Every language has its own literature written or in an oral form likewise kashmiri language has bulk of literature in written form and can compete with all world level literary languages.

➤ Conclusion:

Epic poem is considered to a treasuretrove gift of natural phenomena. Every literary language have preserved the whole character of society in poetry & prose, and poets & authors are mediums. They are trying hard to



expose all good & bad, black & white, sorrow & happiness, grandeur & abjectness, auspicious & haggard, even socio-political, socio-religious & socio-economic exploitations.

Epic poem has covered almost all subjects of the society in a long narrative format and made an organic whole of all social character. Poetic narration of events is more effective than prose exposition, that is why heroic poems considered to be the natural grandeur.

Kashmiri epic poem or heroic poem or Masthnavi is the sign of proud & pride, its essentiality acknowledged by reputed scholars & researchers & sociologists. Epic poem has preserved Kashmiri as well as Iranian cultures in a single code and assimilate both the cultures. This assimilation preserved the old historical facts that Kashmir was hub of all literary activities and its relationship was strong with central Asia especially Iran. Hence, epic poem is undoubtedly a treasure-trove for Kashmiri literature, and is technically a true masterpiece, and magnanimous artistic work.

➤ **Books and Further Readings:**

1. Shouq Shafi & Naji Munwar, "*Nov Kashri Adbuk Tareek*", Srinagar: Kashmiri Deptt. Kashmir university Hazratbal 1992
2. Rehman Rahi "*Kahvaet*", Delhi: JK offset printers 1979
3. Kamar Rase "*Tarjumay Ka Fun Aur Revayet*", Aligarh: Education Book House Muslim Market 2004
4. Dhar. T.N, Kundan "*Saints and Sages of Kashmir*", Delhi: APH Publishing Corporation, Ansari Road Daryaganj, India
5. D. Hymens "*Culture & Society*", Bombay: Allied publishers Pvt
6. "*Kashur encyclopaedia*", vol.4, Srinagar: Cultural Academy (J&K) 2002
7. Kundan Lal Kundan, "*Tareekh I Mathnaviyan*" (Tehqeeqi Va Tanqeedi Mutala), SK Offset Printers Methya Mahal, Delhi
8. Merriam Webster's Encyclopaedia of Literature: Merriam Webster Incorporated, Publishers Springfield Massachusetts USA.
9. Naji Munwar: "*Pursaan*" Srinagar: JK Offset Printing press Sazgari Pura 1998
10. Nazir, Gulam Nabi: "*Kashr Shayri Ti Balaghat*", Delhi: Chaman Enterprises 2004
11. "*SHEERAZ*", '*Mathnavi Tayli Ti Az*' Mohd Yousuf Taing: Cultural Academy Srinagar (J&K) 1982
12. "*SHEERAZ*" (special No.) "*Kashur Luali Mathnaviye*" compiled by Amin Kamil, Cultural Academy Srinagar, (J&K). 1976
13. "*ANHAAR*", '*Kashris Manz Tehqeeq*': Kashmiri Deptt, university of Kashmir (J&K) 2005
14. "*ANHAAR*", '*Taqabali Adb*': Kashmiri Deptt. University of Kashmir (J&K) 2001.
15. Jameel Jalbi: "*Aristo Say Eliot Tak*" Delhi: Education Publishing House 1992