

Studying Wahab Khar: A Thought on his Sufi Doctrine and Poetry

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Abstract:

Wahab Khar is one of the most prominent Sufi poets of the 19th century Kashmir. A Sufi poet, who makes one, not only feel but touch Allah (God) indispensably in his verses. The current research paper proposes to bring before the readers, Wahab Khar's versatility of thought and diction. The paper tries to put on the fore, Wahab's mystic doctrine as carried in his poetry. Being a Muslim, an adherent of Islam, his Sufi poetry relies on the very foundation of the religion of Muhammad. ^(PBUH)The paper, through the Sufi verses of Wahab, aims to interpret various concepts that are put forward in the Holy Quran relating the concept of God, position of Man, and the Universe.

Keywords: God, Man, Universe, All-pervading, Holy Quran, Seeker, Love

Wahab Khar is considered one of the most prominent Sufi poets of the nineteenth century in Kashmir who achieved and tasted the heights of success as a poet during his lifetime. Partly his success as a poet depends on his being a spiritual guru (saint) of a high order. Born at village *Shaar* situated at the foot-hills of *Wastooriwan*, Wahab Khar lived a long life of about a hundred years. Prof Shad Ramzan in his monograph "*Hindustaan Adbek Memaar---Wahab Khar*" has documented the time period of 1810-1812 wherein the date of birth of this Sufi poet falls and the year 1912 as the year of his death. Wahab Khar's father, a black-smith by profession, was himself a poet. Moreover it has also been said that Wahab Khar's grandfather was also a poet and both Wahab's father and grandfather had been great Sufi saints of their times. In addition to this, *Haet Khar*, Wahab's father was also well-versed in Persian. All this implies that Wahab got poetic temperament in inheritance. From his childhood he had been witnessing and adoring his father's saintly and poetic persona that in turn significantly influenced his thinking, attitude and behaviour. His initial training in spirituality was given to him by his father and later for seeking higher spiritual knowledge he went to Rahman Sahab of Pingal-gom, Pulwama. During this time Wahab almost remained in a world of ecstasy. At last, Wahab approached Ahmed Sahab Machaam, a great Sufi saint and guru of his times. Remaining attached to him and his spiritual teachings, Wahab understood the niceties of Sufism and became capable of documenting and recording his spiritual experiences in words, thereby bringing to the fore a Sufi poet of high pedigree. Wahab Khar's association with the Sufi doctrines was intense and capturing the same essence in words made him a Sufi poet of

elite order. Even being illiterate, his faith in Islam and his devotion to God enabled him to document his mystic experiences so well.

According to Wahab, man is powerless before the supreme power of God. It is God who has created man along with all other creatures. He has produced life from non-existent material. He is crazy about such a God who is the master of the whole universe:

Parwardigaaran Paedi kor har keh

Aenthas be koor pilay

Hud o laa hud chu laa nihaayat

Tor chu na duh tye raat

(qtd.in Ramzan 93)

The God has created every being (thing)

How could I achieve the end of the Universe?

The All Pervading God knows no boundaries

There doesn't exist the day or the night.

The universe for Wahab is infinite. It cannot be held in the palm of one's hand. The chain of creation has to be located with a unifying thread of the various elements. As such, Wahab finds no limits that could de-limit the vastness of the universe. Further, his inward eye encapsulates God in all His creation. He envisions and breathes God everywhere. For him, God is all-pervading.

Wahab as a Muslim in general and a Sufi in particular seems well-versed in the doctrines of his religion. His verses are an elaboration or interpretation of various Quranic verses. In one of his famous poems "*Tchandani Kul---Sandalwood Tree*" Wahab has earnestly worked on the various parameters governing various facets of human life, its evolution, the lineage of various Prophets, the purpose behind their arrival, the place of Prophet Mohammad ^(PBUH), the exalted stature of God and much more. The following verses of "*Tchandani Kul*" would help us understand Wahab's Sufi poetry better correlating his poetic craft with the theory of creation. It reinforces the Quranic message that mentions *Hazrat Adam* to be the first human being whom God created and both *Hazrat Adam* and his wife *Hazrat Hawa* (Eve) to be the source of the whole human race:

Saarni zaetchan baadshah thownaye

Aadam chui morsalye

Az Jannat aayas Hazrat Hawa

Tehinzaye chay zuriyaat

(qtd. in Ramzan 93)

He chose him (Adam) to be the king of all clans

Adam being the messenger of God

In the Heaven, Hazrat Hawa accompanied him

The whole world populace is born out of them.

Hazrat Adam, being the first human, Wahab addresses him as the king of all clans and God's messenger. He says both Hazrat Adam and his wife Hazrat Hawa are the parents of the whole human race. In his poetry he documents and narrates the episodes about man's birth and further evolution.

God has time and again sent many Prophets on the Earth to ensure that human civilization moves ahead positively and society gets cleansed of the materialistic impurity encircling it. Wahab says:

*Saerey Paegambhar safar kadnewin
Dushmanan chukh muqabalye
Hazrat Ibrahim Jad I Paegambhar
Nabi soan taj morsalye*

(qtd.in Ramzan 94)

He made all Prophets to travel and disseminate His message
And made them fight their enemies
Hazrat Ibrahim ^(AS) is the first Prophet
And our Prophet (Mohammad) ^{PBUH}, the crown.

This is yet another reference to God's supreme plan and its execution in sending down on the Earth Prophets so that through various eras the word of God spreads and flourishes like a fresh spring. In these lines Wahab clearly indicates that the reason behind the arrival of Prophets in this mortal world is nothing but to spread the true knowledge of God among people and remove the hurdles that impede their pious missions. As stated in the Quran, Wahab documents Hazrat Ibrahim's stature of being the first prophet of the human race and Hazrat Mohammad ^(PBUH) as the seal on all prophets---The last and final of all.

Comprehending God within the boundaries of religion and then abiding by the principles of being an ardent seeker has been a priority for Wahab. The magnanimous concept that Wahab holds of God is something quite evident in the following lines:

*Hazrat Isahas Zewwun zabaan Aayi
Aelim daana waetis na mulye
Waeldus dopun jawaab demi paanye
Yudwye aasi arsaat*

(qtd. in Ramzan 94)

Hazrat Isa mastered speech right from his birth
Intellectuals and wise men could not compare his worth
He said to his mother, "I would answer all queries"
What if there exists a maddening crowd.

While describing the fact of Prophet *Hazrat Isa* being able to speak right from the moment of his birth, Wahab brings forth God's supremacy in creating a Prophet from an ordinary human. Analyzed further, the lines reveal Hazrat Isa conversing with his mother and saying, "I would answer all queries," which points out that *Hazrat Isa* is convincing his mother and taking all the responsibility to face and answer the world regarding his parentage. Wahab while portraying God's picture paints Him in colors of miracles which show His being powerful enough to enable a woman to conceive and give birth to a child without any male intervention, a fact documented in the holy Quran of *Hazrat Isa* having been born to his mother *Hazrat Maryam*, a virgin. Further Wahab says:

*Hazrat Jaleelas guel phael naaras
Beyun beyun posh e zaath*

*Hazrat Ismael qaarbaan I karni aaw
Malkaw kodh shrak e talye*

(qtd. in Ramzan 94)

For Hazrat Jaleel ^(AS), fire embers changed into blossoms
The flower blossoms were of different varieties
Hazrat Ismael ^(AS) was about to be sacrificed
But the angels saved him from the wrath of dagger
Taking a cue from the lives of various Prophets, Wahab again describes God as the final decision- maker. It is only according to the wish of God that things occur on any particular plane. To the one whom God blesses with the gift of life, no one in the world can change his destiny. Wahab explains God's this character by giving examples of Hazrat Jaleel and Hazrat Ismael. It is this God, the master of the Earth and the Skies whom Wahab Khar yearns for. He continuously requests God to provide him with His holy glimpse. Adoring God, Wahab says:

*Guur guur kariyo malini kraanay
Az roz saanay haa madno
Soun koun chukh yewaan, ath kya maanay
Az roz saanay haa madno*

(qtd.in Saqi 18)

I would sing a sweet lullaby to you
Stay at our home today, O beloved!
Why don't you come to our home, what does it imply?
Stay at our home today, O beloved!
The poet refers to God as an innocent infant whom he would like to enchant with a melodious lullaby. He wants to caress and love God. God's pure being appears to Wahab as the innocence of an infant and waits His glimpse:

*May laye lusum wutchaan watye
Su kas patye goom
Be chus draamut yaaras patye
Su kas patye goom*

(qtd.in Ramzan 76)

The tireless wait of the beloved has shattered my being
May I know whom did he follow?
I have left in pursuit of my beloved
May I know whom did he follow?
In the above verses, Wahab Khar says that he has left everything behind in pursuit of God. And his tireless wait for beloved has almost shattered his self. Still God evades him and that has turned his thirst for spiritual salvage more intense. It is here at this point that Wahab--a seeker, realizes that to visualize God's pure self, one needs to be pure himself. No man can

capture the sight of God's essence without being pure at heart. An impure self can never conceptualise God. He says:

*Path wan raeyil oosus naaz
Kya kari pare pare, cham ne aawaaz
Bae tchatith trowus tabardaaran
Yaaro wan, bala yaaro wan.*

(qtd.in Saqi 11)

In past, with grandeur I was a Deodar of dense forest
What would I do being speechless?

I have been reduced to pieces by woodcutter
Tell me my love, Oh Beloved just say something!

In the above lines Wahab says that earlier he misunderstood the world as a permanent abode and took himself as being strong and secure according to his worldly position. But when he started to understand God, he was reduced to being a non-entity. He feels himself to be nothing but a part of a bigger scheme. He says that he needed to change into a seeker in order to taste God's reality. And to be a seeker, one has to shun all materialistic attractions and love God. This pure love sprouts out from the bosom of a Sufi, only when he turns pure in heart and mind. Only then, does God batter a seeker's self and remoulds and casts it in a frame fit to be God's abode. Wahab says:

*Wolnas baalan te aaran dulye
Duniya zanti nendri zolye
Ami tez letri karinam gan
Yaaro wan, bala yaaro wan.
Tuuri saet kornum biryanye
Jaan jaan garinum saamaanye
Gaatijaar theoknum wuste kaaran
Yaaro wan, bala yaaro wan*

(qtd.in Saqi 11)

He rolled me--a grand Deodar down to hills & brooks

Life is like a moment of sleep

This swift axe cut me into slices

Tell me my love, Oh Beloved just say!

He hammered me into small pieces

Then crafted them into delicate items

The craftsman brushed all over me his wisdom and was all praise for me

Tell me my love, Oh Beloved just say something!

Accordingly Wahab feels being sliced into a million parts by the sharp stroke of love without an identity of his own. God comes forth to reshape and recast him in a new form, as an ardent seeker. Wahab says, God broke down his material self and then remolded him in a new self--- a self that was well acquainted with its origin and its end. After being redressed in the apparels of an ardent seeker, God was all praise for him. It is a stage where a bruised traveler

reaches his destination positively. But a seeker does not easily get to taste the victory of achieving the final destination; he has to pass through various stages leading to God:

Band karnownus naw yaa satay
Sui naar tchaalun peyoom
Chus lalnaawaan mankali zetye
Su kas patye goom

(qtd. in Ramzan 76)

My mystical Instincts led me to the way of nine and seven Sufi stages
I had to bear the brunt of those fiery stages
I am holding fast that hot spark of ember inside
May I know whom did my beloved follow?

Wahab says that his mystical quest turns him restless and makes him move on the path to God. He says, in order to enter the premises of God, a Sufi is required to pass through various stages. He narrates his ordeals in passing those stages. He draws our attention to his continuous pursuit of God and of the spiritual development of his soul. For him, it is not easy to be a Sufi in real sense. For that one needs to burn himself tirelessly in the fire of love. An ardent seeker has to be patient enough to bear the brunt of all the hurdles that come between him and God. True lovers always run after the true essence of God. They every now and then want to feel God in their own way. He says that for being one with God, a lover should pass through all the stages required for attaining that union.

Maqaam e besar gatsh laarun tye
Tami jaaye Mansuuran duet nye Rath
Phirnue tee ruuz aashqan tye
Chus haertan tye wutchith haerath
Maqaam Mehmood sar kartan tye
Paegaam taemkue chay rahmat
Laa dapith shah chye praznaawtan tye
Chus haertan tye wutchith haerath

(qtd. In Ramzan 80)

Keep chasing the stage of eternal divination
Mansur gave his blood for that cause
This quest boggles the lovers
I am left wonderstruck after experiencing the divine miracle.
Do explore the highest stage of divinity
That divine message is a blessing pure
Knowing God requires negating all duality
I am left wonderstruck after experiencing the divine miracle.

Chasing eternal divination, the quest for truth of God and his own existence does not allow a seeker to rest and hence he keeps chasing the stage wherefrom he can enter the realms of God and be one with him. This quest of seeker is fuelled by love that springs only from the bosoms of true lovers. Giving the reference of *Mansur*, a renowned Sufi saint of all times,

Wahab argues that one could achieve a true union with God only if he fearlessly and purely loves Him. He says:

Shama zaaqoom hat I kay ratay
Su gah zulmaatas pyoom
Ath zulmaatas laal kya chitye
Su kas patye goom

(qtd. In Ramzan 76)

I lit a candle by feeding it my blood
That glow illuminated my inner darkness
Oh! This darkness carries in bosom priceless diamonds
May I know, whom did my beloved follow?

These verses show that a seeker's self illuminates only by his tireless efforts in making a communion with God. It is then, the light of his illuminated being that removes doubt and ignorance and opens his inner eye to see God. In this regard, Prof Shad Ramzan says:

The poet illuminates a candle by feeding it the blood of his throat and by that light enters the very darkness of self. The dazzling light of candle pierces the darkness within. And through this light the dazzling pearls come on to the front. And the one, who is encapsulated in the darkness, screams out in astonishment after experiencing this miracle. (Translated by self from Hindustaen Adbaek Meamar—Wahab Khar 65)

To conclude, Wahab Khar's Sufi poetry puts forward his concept of the doctrine of Sufism. His understanding of the true nature of God is quite evident in his poetry. Accordingly, he has deliberated on a number of methods that are to be brought into operation during the making of a Sufi. The yearning for God and passing through various stages of soul's purification can turn one into a Sufi who can visualize God through his inward eye.

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