
*Folk-Lore - Origin,
Definition And
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Origin of Folklore

Although folklore is probably as old as mankind, the term “folklore” is of comparatively recent origin¹. By the middle of nineteenth century, Europeans had started a debate on the “haves” and “have nots” under the influence of German socialists. Accordingly and simultaneously the English antiquarian W.J. Thomas coined the word Folklore in 1846 with the purpose of looking into the “have nots” or economically lower classes. In the year 1846 William Thoams, using the name Ambrose Merton, wrote a letter to *The Athenaeum* in which he proposed that a “good Saxon compound, Folklore”, be employed in place of such labels as Popular Antiquities and popular literature². William’s conception of folklore and his essentially enumerative definition of folklore include among other things manners, customs, observances, superstitions, ballads, proverbs, and so on of the olden times³.

Early Folklore Studies

Interest in what would now be called folklore had, of course, existed long before the subject acquired its modern name. The works of Herodotus, Livy and Pliny contain references to popular beliefs and practices in ancient Greece and Rome⁴. In sixteenth and seventeenth century in England, lively descriptions of traditional ceremonies, domestic and communal, occurred quite frequently in books primarily conserved with

other matters. Among these may be mentioned Philip Stabbe's, "Anatomie of Abuses" (1583), Robert Burton's "Anatomy of melancholy" (1621) and H. Hession's "Memoirs and observations in his travels over England", it was first published in France in 1698 and translated into English by J. Ozell in 1719⁵. The first important work on the general subject of folklore was "Antiquitates Vulgares", or, "The Antiquities of the common people" (1725) by the British Clergyman and antiquary Henry Bourve (1696-1733) which was largely an account of popular customs in connection with religious festivals. In 1777 the British Clergyman and Antiquary John Brand (1748-1806) published observations on the popular Antiquities of Great Britain, which became the standard British work on folklore⁶.

In Germany, the philosopher Johann Gottfried Von Herder and the philologists Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm did pioneer work in folklore⁷. Herder published a valuable collection of German folk songs in 1778; the Grimm brothers made the collection of folktales "kinder - Und Haus" - märchan and household stories (1812-15) and Jacob Grimm compiled Dentsche Rechtsal Tertomer (1828) and Dentsche Mythologie (1835); it was latter on translated into english under the title of "Teutonic Mythology"⁸ (1882-88). The serious study in the domain of folklore began with the dawn of the current century. With the establishment of folklore societies in different parts of the world, scholars began to take interest in the subject and within a short period of its history the subject assumed the status of an independent branch of knowledge.

Definition of Folklore

Debates about how folklore should be defined⁹ have been waged continuously ever since the word was coined in 1846 by William Thomas. Most definitions concern the “lore” but some concern the “folk”¹⁰. Lore – the materials of folklore rather than the people who use the materials – has been described in terms of origin, form, transmission, and function. However, there has been no widespread agreement among folklorists about what folklore is¹¹. Mac. Edward Leech sees folklore as “the accumulated knowledge of homogeneous, unsophisticated people”¹². E.S. Martland defines it as anthropology dealing with the psychological phenomenon of uncivilized”¹³. G.W. Boswel defines folklore “as the unwritten history of ancient societies preserved in the minds of the people and handed down through ages by the medium of language or practise”¹⁴. In the International Encyclopedia of the social sciences, the term folklore has been defined as under:

“Folklore means folk learning, it comprehends all knowledge that is transmitted by word of mouth and all crafts and techniques that are learned by imitation or example as well as products of those crafts”¹⁵.

But A.Taylor, an eminent American folklorist has succeeded to great extent in defining the term folklore. His definition according to Mazharul Islam¹⁶ is the only one which seems more rational than all others, though this also does not cover all points and lacks in many respects. He defines:

“Folklore is the material that is handed on by tradition, either by word of mouth or by custom and practice. It may be folk songs, folk tales, riddles, proverbs or other materials preserved in words. It may be traditional tools and physical objects like fences or knots, hot cross buns, or Easter eggs; traditional ornamentation like the walls of Troy; or traditional symbols like the Swastika. It may be traditional procedures like throwing salt over one's shoulder or knocking on wood. It may be traditional beliefs like the notion that elder is good for the ailments of the eye. All of these are folklore”¹⁷.

After studying the different definitions of folklore, it may be plausible to express that folklore is the creation of civilization, the creation of the people who live in particular geographical area, share the same language, culture, mechanism or livelihood and living conditions, whose way of life and traditional heritage are bound by a common identity. It is transmitted orally or through one written process¹⁸ from one generation to other and from one country to other. It exchanges its position from oral to written traditions with the advancement of knowledge in that society. The knowledge in the folklore is the result of experience, experienced by persons, community or society as a whole. The individual gains knowledge through experience and when experience and knowledge is combined together it voices the same feeling of the society. This feeling gets its expression in the elements of folklore. In other words we may say that the creation of an individual when accepted by the society as its own wealth, it becomes folklore¹⁹. The elements of folklore are social products. They are created, retained and transmitted by the folk and as such it stands as the true mirror of the people and the society – not dead like a piece of glass but a living one²⁰.

Folk Literature

Society as an integrated collectivity of human beings possess the remarkable property of self expression²¹. The experiences gained by the community or the society when find spontaneous expression with some degree of aesthetic and artistic skill, it is termed as folk-literature²². Like creative literature, folk literature too has two broader categories – prose form and poetry form. Prose literature include folk tales, myths, legends, fairy tales, fables, animal tales, household tales, numskull tales, ghost stories, anecdotes, folk dramas, allusions, proverbs and riddles²³. The other forms like ballads,

songs, lullabies, rhymes, folk metaphors, parody and poetic sayings come under the category of folk poetry. Folk literature forms an important element of folklore. Out of twenty one definitions of folklore given in the standard dictionary of folklore, eighteen definitions treat entire folklore as folk literature²⁴. It has been observed that most part of the folk literature is generally being created and passed on by word or mouth. It has more social commitment than individual creative literature. While creative literature register, overall, the experiences of an individual, folk literature documents the entire society. Being the product of the society, it describes the society and the age itself²⁵.

Kashmiri Folk Literature in Tradition

Right from the distant past, Kashmir has been the seat of great learning²⁶. Besides, having contributed enormously for the development of ancient Buddhist and Hindu literature and philosophy, it has at its credit, of having initiated a remarkable work in the field of folk literature, particularly in folktales²⁷. But due to the lack of authentic historical record, it is rather difficult to reconstruct with some degree of accuracy the history of Kashmiri folk literature which it is believed had also a written tradition²⁸.

It is believed that Kashmir because of its rich cultural past, particularly in religious sciences and artistic expressions became the fountain head of the (Asian and latter European) tale treasures²⁹. The most frequently quoted evidence to support this notion is the famous "Pachatantra"³⁰, a collection of fables supposed to have been composed in Kashmir³¹.

Another equally important work in this written oral tradition is the '*Brihat Katha*'³², which according to Grierson was written in the Paisachi language, spoken by

the Pre-Aryan people of the Kashmir. Scholars opine that the work might date back between 700-400 B.C. *Gunadhya*³³ is said to be the compiler of this great tale collection. The original collection is said to have been in seven volumes. Six are believed to have been consumed by fire and the extant volume, the last one, is believed to have been used as the basic material by latter collectors.

In the eleventh century, the Kashmiri version of the *Brihat Katha* is revealed to have been used by *Kshemendra*³⁴ and *Somadeva*³⁵. The former has left a commendable work in verse under the title of *Brihat Katha Mangari*³⁶, the Bouquet of the Great Romance. The latter whose style is simple and elegant has written what is almost a master piece – The *Katha Sarit Sagar*³⁷. For the life of the middle classes the *Katha Sarit Sagar* is an invaluable source of information.

Towards of the second half of the nineteenth century, Kashmir became abundantly exposed to European adventurism³⁸. Their arrived a roll of European explorers, missionaries and administrative experts who played distinguished role in eradicating ignorance, poverty and disease, which had eaten the very roots of Kashmiri society³⁹. Among other things which occupied the attention of these zealous humans, language and literature received high impetus at their end⁴⁰. To have an accurate and objective insight into the behavioural patterns and the life style of common Kashmiris, these sensible souls began to study and discover the most authentic and reliable source of information i.e. folk literature. They believed that the literature of any society acts as a true mirror of that society⁴¹. It was with this intention, of course, that these people seriously undertook the job of collecting the different categories of folk literature.

During the period under review, the attention of common Kashmiri towards the richness and fertility of folk literature was drawn by J.H. Knowles⁴², an European missionary. He was the first missionary scholar who brought out a comprehensive collection of Kashmiri folk tales under the title of *Folk tales of Kashmir*⁴³. The same author penned down yet another book of great literary merit entitled *A Dictionary of Kashmiri Proverbs and Sayings*⁴⁴. Though the work suffers from variety of handicaps, but on the whole, its merit from the stand point of socio-literary history hardly gets minimised.

After Knowle's collection of Kashmiri proverbs and tales no other work on Kashmiri folk literature made its mark upto 1937. In the year 1937, Aurel Stein⁴⁵ and Grierson⁴⁶ brought out a small collection of Kashmiri folk tales under the title of *Hatim's Tales*⁴⁷. Encouraged by the pioneering work of European missionaries and scholars, some sensible Kashmiris also undertook the job of collecting Kashmiri folk tales. In 1955, one of the famous progressive Kashmiri writer Noor Mohammad Roshan⁴⁸ published a collection of thirty folk tales under the title of *Poshi Ther*. After Noor Mohammad Roshan yet another Kashmiri poet Shambu Nath Bhat Haleem⁴⁹ edited the collection under the title of *Bala Yar*. The collection contained six tales.

The first Kashmiri publisher Noor Mohammad of Noor Mohammad and Sons Publishers⁵⁰, deserves extraordinary credit for bringing out a series of low caste folk literature publications. He succeeded in regenerating the literary taste among the urban and rural Kashmiri people. Another work entitled "The Wit of Kashmir" was published by Sudarshan Kashmiri. The book contains a nice collection of allusions, sayings and proverbs.

Under Prof. Mohi-ud-Din Hajini⁵¹, Kashmiri folklore studies received new impetus and momentum. Conscious of the histo-literary value of folk literature, Prof. Hajini undertook serious scholastic work and published two important books *Kēshri Nasrech Kitāb* and *Luka Ras*.

With the establishment of Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages in 1958, the job of collecting different genres of Kashmiri folk literature was taken very seriously. Untill recently, the organisation besides having published special folklore numbers of *Sheeraza* and *Hamara Adab* has brought out ten folk songs collections and nine folk tale collections⁵². In addition to this two separate works on allusions, and sayings were also carried out in the recent past⁵³. Inspired of the Academy's commitment of preserving the rich cultural treasure, some independent and voluntary literary organisations⁵⁴ also came forward and dedicated their organisational journals for Kashmiri folklore studies.

With the opening of the Kashmiri department in the University of Kashmir, there started multiple of scholarly activities in the domain of folk literature. The department organised three day National Seminar on folklore and the papers presented by distinguished scholars were latter on published in a book form. The papers cover wide variety of themes on Kashmiri folklore and popular literature.

In the present times, serious efforts are being made by number of Kashmiri scholars and writers to study and analyse this branch of knowledge from wide range of academic perspectives. The scholars, who regularly contribute to the discipline of folklore studies include among others Som Nath Dhar, S.L. Sadhu, M.L. Saqi, Mohd.

Ahsan Ahsan, Prof. Manzoor Fazali, J.L. Handoo, Lalita Handoo, G.N. Nazir, G. N. Aatish, Dr.M. Ashraf, Gulshan Majeed, Shaad Ramzan and Farooq Fayaz.

Some Major Genres of Kashmiri Folk Literature

Generally the literature of every language comprise of two main expressions: Prose and Poetry. But the distinctive quality of the folk literature right from its inception has been that the two expressions run side by side. Whatever has been passed down from one generation to another in the form of poetry has been widely termed as song and the one transmitted orally in the form of prose has been described as *Katha*, *Daleel* or Story⁵⁵. The literary form which contain the merits of the two in a combined artistic style is termed as *Daastan*⁵⁶. However, when we seriously study the three major forms of folk literature, we come across certain marked variations which reveal the inherent peculiarities with which the three are endowed with. In order to have an objective and indepth understanding of Kashmiri folk literature, an attempt is made here to mention some of the major and distinctive categories of the popular literature of the Kashmiri language.

a) Luka Katha (Folk Tales)

The prose narrative having all elements of traditional story preserved through human memory transmitted orally or in the written form from one generation to another by professional story tellers or common folk come within the broader category of folk tales⁵⁷. It usually begins with a reference to the unknown teller who is said to have heard it in the recent or distant past.

The term folk tale has often been used in english language in a sense wide enough to include all kinds of traditional narrative. It has been applied to such diverse

forms as the religious myths of primitive people, the ordinary fairy tales, animal tales, and the elaborate frame stories of the Arabian Nights⁵⁸. In Kashmiri prose narrative, we have, as in other developed languages, wide variety of folktales. These include: *Pādshah Katha*, *Pari Katha*, *Janwar Katha*, *Bodha Katha*, *Chērey Katha*, *Shurey Katha* etc. These stories are primarily told for amusement, psychological comfort and the regulation of the socio-ethnic system. Kashmiris inborn fondness for story telling and listening can be discerned from the folk sayings like *Katha Kutāliy* or *Katha Garey*, which suggest that all Kashmiris possess the skill of creating tales.

b) Luka Pēther

This is a traditional dramatic presentation enacted by professional Bhands⁵⁹ or minstrels either on the rough stage or in open air. The Bhands perform these plays before the audience during the Urs days of distinguished saints and Rishies⁶⁰. The *Pēthers* are enacted for dual purpose of delight and information. The plot of these plays are crafted so typically that these often make the Vulgarities of the inhuman and oppressive officials the target of their satirical strike. This is said to be the only and most popular form of Kashmiri folk theater, which according to ancient chronicles was popular even before the period under study⁶¹. There are ample evidences available which suggest that these plays have come down to us in their original form as every effort was made by these professional bhands to preserve the original texts with least chances of interpolations and distortion⁶². The different *Pēthers* like *Rāza Pēther*, *Darza Pēther*, *Wātal Pēther*, *Gosen Pēther* and *Angrez Pēther* are current even today and are displayed during harvest and the festival days.

c) **Zarb-ul-Misl (Proverbs)**

Not to talk of language, but the dialects, spoken in any geographical part of the globe are replete with this kind of folk expression⁶³. To put it in the words of J.C. Messenger, “Proverbs are by far the most numerous and the most frequently employed of these forms of verbal art”, Kashmiri language is fortunate enough as it abounds in the folk material like proverbs. It does not only provide an objective clue of Kashmiri wit and wisdom, but it also reflects the different dimensions of collective Kashmiri psyche and the distinctive mentality of the people as well. The Kashmiri sayings like *Sher Singhun Draag, Badri Nathan Adri Mohar, Baga Shuhun Daftar, Salam Shuhun Sotch* help in unfolding the revealing secrets of the period under reference. The proverbs like *Wozeli Kani Tsop Kadun, Pushuk Ti Nai Tsholuk Ti Na, Drāgg Tcheli Dāg Tchelini*, provide the striking insight into the deplorable condition of Kashmiri peasantry at the hands of rapacious revenue officials.

In Kashmiri language, there are two words in currency for proverb – *Kahavat* and *Zarb-ul-Misal*. The word *Kahavat* literally means “a saying”, ‘Misl’ is derived from the Arabic word *Masal* or *Misal*, which means being like, equal, resembling. It signifies a proverb, a parable, an apologue, and an example, as well as a comparison, a simile and a metaphor. The two terms are used interchangeably in Kashmiri language. Both are used to signify proverbs of all the sorts including those which are simple maxims, not depending on any comparison or similarity.

Proverbs are traditional sayings which express truths or make comments briefly and pointedly. The popularity and repeated use of a proverb helps it greatly in bringing out an idea distinctly and forcefully in a few words. In the words of M.J. Herskovits,

“Proverbs are used to give point to some well meaning advice; to rebuke or praise a friend; to put an enemy in his place; to emphasis commendation or affection; to ridicule or blame”.

d) Pretche (Riddles)

Riddles as in other languages, constitute an important branch of Kashmiri folk literature⁶⁴. But like their counterparts in other Indian languages, they have received little attention from researchers and the folklorists. As is well known, the Kashmiri tradition of riddles is not of far distant origin, but we find references in Kalhana’s *Rajtarangni* which show that riddles were used in ancient Kashmir for ritual exercises⁶⁵. Riddles, like proverbs, make abundant use of metaphors; but while clarity of the comparison is essential for the proverbs, in the riddle it is concealed. The interest in the riddles depends largely upon the surprise which is caused when the unexpected similarity is revealed by the answer. For example:

- 1) *Āav Te Asān Drāw Ti Wadān.*
- 2) *Yaām Zāv Tām Khot Kēnī Peth.*
- 3) *Manz Bāg Saras Dazān Nār.*⁶⁶

- 1) *With the smile it came and weeping it left. (Snow)*
- 2) *The movement it was born, it straight way went to balcony (upstairs)*
(Smoke)
- 3) *A flame amid lake (Samavar).*

Because of their recreational and educational features, riddles are very significant from the sociological and the psychological point of view. Their great variety of contents and themes make them most interesting and inspiring subject of study. Like proverbs riddles also form an integral part of the peoples culture and tradition.

Astūr te Rivāyitche (Myths and Legends)

The term myth which apparently looks very simple due to its brevity has however, proved most confusing and controversial one. Many writers on folklore use the term myth to designate aetiological stories explaining the origin of animal or human traits, customs and beliefs, and gods and heroes⁶⁷. Miss Burne in her Handbook of Folklore, for example, prescribes the term even for stories accounting for the origin of prehistoric monuments⁶⁸ and local and personal names. Such a use of the word myth is based on the view of anthropologists and folklorists like Sir James Frazer, Sir G.L. Gomme and W.R. Halliday who regard myths as “the science of a prescientific age”. To use Gomme’s words⁶⁹. Lord Raglan and many other scholars define myth as narrative linked with rite⁷⁰. The assertion made by Raglan applies correctly on the myth, extant in Kashmiri. All Myths, which we have in our folklore are almost all religious and rite oriented. According to Malinowski, “Myths are regarded not merely as true, but as venerable and sacred. They are told when rituals to which they refer are to be performed, or when the validity of these rituals are questioned”⁷¹.

Legends

Legends are believed to be true and often contain important factual information⁷². They are not privately owned, told in any stereotyped way, or magical in their effect. In every village and town of Kashmir some stories are told which are believed to describe real happenings. These concern remarkable men of the past, ruins or movements which may be nearby, place names, political events and the beginning of certain customs and practices⁷³. Often these stories have been found with core of historical fact, but around that fact so much traditional fictitious matter seems to have been collected that it looks impossible to separate the fact from the age long addition of

the fiction. In short, the term legend is now used for any narrative which is supposedly based on fact, with an intermixture of traditional materials, told about a person, place or incident. In Kashmiri we have good number of legends in vogue. These legends have stood against the test of the time and these, of course, have helped in linking the broken knots of Kashmir history.

Luke Bēth (Folk Songs)

From a thematic and a structural point of view, folk songs form the most important branch of Kashmiri folk literature⁷⁴. In all probability it outnumbers in volume any other branch of folk literary material. It is rich in content and seems to more alive and in greater vogue than the folk tale or the ballad in all manner of situations – as a means of amusement in educating the young; to sanction institutionalised behaviour, in performing religious rituals and ceremonies; and to give point and odd colour to ordinary conversation.

The term folk song is not so simple to define. There exists striking difference among the folklorists with regard to the nature of folk song. Cecil. J. Sharp, the great collector of English folk songs define it as “The Song created by the common people as against the song which has been composed by the educated⁷⁵. But it is an agreed fact that the circumstances of origin of most of the songs are not ascertainable. The latest researches in the field have paved some way for ascertaining the periodicity of a given folk song with the help of the linguistic lab skills. To decide whether a song is a true folk song or not, one should rather consider its degree of integration with the culture of the folk. If it is integrated with the cultural pattern, it should be regarded as a folk song, whatever its ultimate origin be.

The indepth study of Kashmiri folk literature tends to suggest that there exists variety⁷⁶ of folk songs in Kashmiri folk literature. There are special songs connected with different occupations, festivals, seasons and social occasions. Besides these there are *Manzeli Bēth*⁷⁷ (lullabies) *Gindan Bēth*⁷⁸ (play songs) *Chakri Bēth*⁷⁹ (choral songs) *Nenda Bēth*⁸⁰ (weeding Songs) *Wanvun* (wedding songs) *Rov Bēth* (festival songs) *Pehely Bēth* (shepherd songs) *Lari Shah* and others. The wide range of songs mentioned are sung to different melodies, and infact, the melody provides the best clue to the recognition of the type. A close examination of the genre reveals that Kashmiri folk songs are usually intensely subjective; its forms are varied and simple, mostly a four line stanza with a refrain intended to suit numerous situations in life⁸¹. The entire folk song material may be grouped under the following heads:

a) **Watchun**

Kashmiri *Watchun*⁸² is more similar to Hindi geet both from style and thematic point of view. It generally comprises of seven or eight stanzas and each stanza contains four lines followed by a refrain called *Voj* at its end. This form is usually used to express mystic experiences, delicate sentiments of women and most particularly the heart strike emotional outbursts. This type of song contains abundant of information regarding the social composition, family crises and domestic strains to which Kashmiris in general and the women folk in particular were subject to.

b) **Wanvun**

*Wanvun*⁸³ is one of the most distinctive forms of Kashmiri folk songs. It is generally connected with the institution of marriage. The *Wanvun* songs vary in tune and content with change in situation and occasion in the entire process of marriage

ceremony. There are about scores of ceremonies connected with Kashmiri marriage on both bride's and bridegroom's side and there are special songs for each of these occasions "It is perhaps" writes J.L. Koul, an eminent Kashmiri scholar, "the oldest art forms of the folk song exclusively reserved for the fair sex"⁸⁴. Muslim *Wanvun* generally begins with the name of Allah and *Bata Wanvun* starts with the name of Shiv.

For example:

- a) Bismilah Kēriṭh Hemvey Wanvunaye
Sāhiban Anjām Unoye ⁸⁵.
(We begin with the name of Allah
and pray him to take it to the blessed conclusion)
- b) Shiv Kālam Karith Hemvey Wanvunaye,
Sāhiban Anjām Unoye ⁸⁶
(We begin with the name of Shiv
and pray him to lead us to the blessed destiny)

This category of Kashmiri folk songs help tremendously towards understanding the different facets of Kashmiri social life. The song, throw flood of light on the institution of marriage. It will be in the fitness of things to mention here that there can be no study of Kashmiri society complete, unless there is reference to this rich genre of Kashmiri folk literature.

c) **Rov**

*Rov*⁸⁷ songs are generally associated with religious festivals and are sung most often on the birth anniversaries of distinguished mystic saints and on Idd occasions. Women folk come out of their dwellings and divide themselves into two groups in a standing position facing one another. The recitation of a song is accompanied with a light swinging body action. The stress is laid on the front toes of the feet in line with the

rhythmic mood and the movement of the song. In *Rov* songs alone, the fair sex get a free chance to ejaculate their inner heartfelt urges and aspirations.

Rov Karvei Rov Ti Nai R̄ozey ,
Rov Karvei Rov Ti Nai R̄ozey⁸⁸

Samyvey Vigneu Rov Hai Karvey,
Sangarmālan Tchaye Lō Lō .

(Let friend assemble to recite melodious *Rov* Songs,
Shun solitude, come down in open to enjoy *Rov*,
The Son has faded, The sunlight has vanished.)

Wanvun and *Rov* are distinctly two genres of Kashmiri folk poetry in which women folk express their pleasing or displeasing state of mood, their sorrows and joys, dreams and descries, strains and stresses. These songs are the spontaneous outpourings of the subjugated and deprived women of Kashmir. These two genres are invaluable documents of the psycho-social life of Kashmiri women.

Lari Shah The *Lari Shah*⁸⁹ is the traditional minstrel to sing of natural calamities, social imbalances and political exploitation. It is slightly akin to *Shahr Ashoob*⁹⁰ of urdu poetic form. It is the typical name for a folk ballad pungently comic-cum-satiric in text and historically speaking a popular representative to voice the people's genuine grievances. Commenting upon the historical significance of *Lari Shah*, Prof.Hajini remarks, "It (*Lari Shah*) is distinguished for its 'homely metaphor, and picturesque portrayal of ridiculous situation, in which a common Kashmiri finds himself in an autocratic regime'; and it has proved to be a source of mental consolation for the enslaved folk during the centuries past". Major portion of this form is lost in verbal transmission by the illiterate bards, nevertheless we still possess some very fine pieces in the *Lari Shah*. Hakeem Habibullah, Munawar Shah of kulsoo, and Lala

Lakhman were said to be the recognised masters of this form. The narrator of this kind of song has been defined as folk historian for his deep commitment to human welfare and social cause. We find illustrative and revealing details about administrative bunglings, economic irregularities, religious superstitions, social evils and the destructions caused by recurring natural calamities like floods, earthquakes, fires, famines and droughts. Some of the significant pieces of Kashmiri *Lari Shah* which have come down to us include prominently the one under the title of *Bunil nama*⁹¹, *Bata Drag*⁹², *Sehlab nama*⁹³, *Angrez Qanoon* etc. etc.

In addition to the folk songs referred above, there is a good number of baby songs, cradle songs, mourn songs and shepherd songs, peasant songs, wheel songs and working songs. A careful analysis of these songs is sure to help in understanding the otherwise hidden aspects of Kashmiri social life.

Daastan

The form is the artistic synthesis of folk tale and the folk song. It equally bears the literary merits of folk poetry and prosody. The professional story teller while narrating the story in prose pauses for a while to give the adopted tale a poetic twist. Most frequently, the song is accompanied by folk musical earthen instrument known as *Tumuk Nari*⁹⁴ to make it more attractive, impressive and melodious. A number of long classical tales are interwoven in songs appropriate to the various situations in the plot. Some of the famous Kashmiri Dastans are *Aka Nandun*⁹⁵, *Hemal Nagrey*⁹⁶, *Kral Kur* etc. etc.

During the long chilly winter nights, when heavy snow fall paralysed the entire Kashmiri life, people who enjoyed no option to amuse themselves resorted to the

listening of these romantic *Dastans*. The sweet tone of professional Dastan tellers offered an intoxicative effect to the sullen and oppressed Kashmiris, who for the time being felt relaxed amid grim and gloomy conditions of autocratic governance.

REFERENCES AND NOTES

1. Allan Dundes, *The Study of Folklore*, p.4.
2. The term 'folklore' coined by William Thomas in 1846 received wide recognition and entire popular literature, observances, practices, customs, rituals and superstitions of humans are grouped under the wide category of folklore now. See for details Archer Taylor's *Folklore and the Student of Literature*, Vol.11, pp.216-221.
3. Allan Dindes, *The Study of Folklore*, p.83. Also refer Stith Thompson, *Folklore*, Funk and Wagnall's *Dictionary of Folklore*, Vol.1, p.408.
4. Leach, Maria. *Funk and Wagnal's Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend*, Vol.1, p.66.
5. *Ibid*; p.72.
6. *Encyclopedia of Britannica*, Vol.4, p.863.
7. *Ibid*.
8. *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, Vol.5, p.288.
9. There is a marked difference among the scholars of folklore studies with regard to the definition of folklore. There are twenty one definitions given in the "Standard Dictionary of Folklore" by Maria Leach. This clearly prove the gravity of the disagreement. Some folklorists have very incorrectly counted all practices which are traditionally oral in the domain of folklore. The assertion that "all the elements of learning that are passed through an oral tradition from generation to generation in a society belongs to the discipline of folklore has been disputed on the ground that vast material of folklore has been handed down to us in the written form. For details see Mazharul Islam – *Folklore The Pulse of the People*, p.4.
10. The word 'Folklore' in the beginning was hyphenated one and as such it was defined separately under folk and lore. But with the omission of hyphen, the theory of defining the term Folklore separately stopped forthwith.
11. G.W. Boswel, *Fundamentals of Folk Literature*, p.147, also see "Uses and Abuses of Folk Lore" in *Indian Folklore*, number , p.
12. Quoted in standard Dictionary, Vol.1, p.66.
13. Dictionary of Folklore, by Funk and Wagnalls.
14. Quoted by Ben-Amos. in his article "Towards a definition of Folklore", published in Journal of American Folklore (JAV) Vol.66, p.283.

15. *International Encyclopedia*, Vol.5, (Ed) David. L. Sills, p.497.
16. Taylor, Archer, *Folklore and the Student of Literature*, quoted by Mazhar-ul-Islam, *Op.Cit.*, p.12.
17. The definition though very elaborate, yet it fails to draw a line of demarcation between folklore and folk culture.
18. As already mentioned, the entry of folklore into the written form does in no way disqualify it from being a piece of folklore. The Dundes definition has long been disputed by eminent scholars.
19. The question of anonymity or authorship has also ceased to be the determining factor of the folklore. The latest theories suggest that even a creation of an individual; if acknowledged by the society either due to its literary merit or message as its own wealth, it has no restriction of being treated as a piece of folk literature. For further details see T.F. Henderson, *The Ballad in Literature*, p.95.
20. For a more detailed treatment see Allan Dundes, *The Study of Folklore*,
21. Leaves, F. R. *Literature and Society*, p.107.
22. M. L. Saqi, Forward, *Kashir Luka Bath*, Vol.4, p.7.
23. *Ibid*; p.8.
24. S. Maria, Leech. *Standard Dictionary of Folklore*, p.48.
25. Farooq, Fayaz. *Folk Literature as a Source of Social History of Kashmir*, paper presented in the three day national seminar conducted by the Centre of Central Asian Studies, University of Kashmir.
26. P.N.K. Bamzai, *A History of Kashmir, Political, Social, Cultural*, pp.94-95. Also see, Farooq Fayaz, Kashmir The Great Seat of Learning, *Kashmir Times*.
27. Gwash Lal, *Kashmir Through the Ages*, p.55. For detailed references see *Ancient India and Indian Civilization*, (Ed) Paul Masson - Oursel, Philippe Stern and Willman, pp.329-330.
28. Lalita Handoo, *Structural Analysis of Kashmiri Folk Tales*, p.12.
29. *Ibid*; p.27.
30. Panchatantra, The "Five Threads" or "Books" deals with politics and the art of government. The researches of Johannes Hertel and the attempt of F. Edgerton to construct the original text justify one in concluding that it was a handbook of politics (niti sastra) for the teaching of young princes.
31. Benfey and Hartal both maintain that the original version of Panchatantra was composed in Kashmir about 200 BC. See Ryder: *The Panchatantra*, introduction, pp.3-4.

32. Brihat Katha is believed to be the earliest work on Kashmiri folk tale. Scholars hold that the work might date back between 700-400 BC.
33. Gunadhya was a great sanskrit scholar who flourished in the court of King Satvahana. For more details see Durga Bhagwat, *An outline of Indian Folklore*, p.27.
34. A notable literary figure of eleventh century Kashmir. His works were utilised by Kalhana as source for penning down his famous chronicle *Rajtarangni*. A pupil of Abhinavgupta, he was born in a well to do family, some time towards the end of the tenth century. A. D. for details see Stein (Ed. & English Trans.) *Rajtarangni*. P. N. K. Bamzai, *A History of Kashmir*, pp.253-254.
35. A well versed Sanskrit scholar of eleventh century Kashmir. He has written what is almost a masterpiece, *the Katha Sarit Sagara*, its English Translation by Tawney is available in two volumes.
36. See R.C. Temple's "Foreword" to N. M. Penzer (Ed) *The Ocean of Story*, Vol.1, p.xii, quoted by Lalita Handoo, Op.Cit., p.34.
37. It is believed that this work was composed around A.D. 1070. Somadeva's Katha Sarit Sagara is said to be based upon the famous collection of stories Brihat Katha by Gunadhya, which is lost and no longer available. Refer '*The Wonder That Was India*' by A. L. Basham, *Rajtarangni* (Tr.) Stein.
38. After the defeat of the Sikhs in Anglo-Sikh war, European interest in Kashmir affairs increasingly redoubled. During the period of our study many European missionaries made valley their area of interest. Though in the beginning their activities were seen with doubt both by the rulers and the majority community but seeing their dedication in the development of human welfare, the attitude of the people underwent a drastic change. See P.N. Bazaz's "*Daughters of Vitasta*" and "*Inside Kashmir*". Also refer History of Srinagar, by M. Ishaq Khan.
39. Bazaz, P. N. "*Inside Kashmir*", p.107.
40. P.N. Tickoo, *Story of Kashmir*, p.79, Zutshi, *Political Awakening in Kashmir*, p.158.
41. Knowls, Introduction – *Folk Tales of Kashmir*, p.2.
42. J. Hinton Knowles, a missionary scholar, did pioneering work in the field of folklore studies by publishing two remarkable works "*Folk tales of Kashmir*", and *Dictionary of Kashmiri proverbs and Sayings*,
43. The collection contains tales. The introductory part of the book is the master piece of folklore research.
44. Kashmiri Language which has a very rich treasure of folk proverbs and sayings induced the scholar missionary to undertake the job of its collection. The proverbs

and the sayings are explained in the light of linguistic principles and the literary merit.

45. An outstanding scholar of history and literature, M.A. Stain translated Kalhan's *Rajtarangni*, in English. He came to Kashmir in the year 1888.
46. The author of the *Linguistic Survey of India*, Grierson, managed an access to famous story teller of Kashmir Hatim Tilwoni, and collected some valuable tales, which were latter on published under the title of *Hatims Tale*.
47. Hatim, a professional story teller belonged to Panzil Village of Pargana Lar, situated some thirty kilometers in the east of Srinagar. For details see *Hatim Katha*, a publication of Academy of Art, Culture and Languages.
48. Noor Mohammad Roshan, a writer with progressive ideological background, left writing completely. When interviewed by the researcher, he did not reveal the reason of his disinterest in literary activities.
49. Untill very recently, he was associated with All India Radio. In sixty's he made good contribution in the folklore studies of Kashmir.
50. Prof. Rehman Rahi in one of his speeches from Radio Kashmir Srinagar said that Zaina Kadal served as great literary spot where people of great academic merit would enter into live discussions and debates.
51. Gh. Moh-ud-Din Hajini, Prof. of Arabic Language in Sri Pratab College devoted all his time towards the development of Kashmiri Language and Literature. He laid the foundation of *Koshur Adabi Markaz Kamraz*, a leading literary organisation in Kashmir. His articles published in various national and international journals are well taken in the academic circles. For details see Hajini number '*Sheeraza*', an official organ of Jammu and Kashmir Culture Academy.
52. Cultural Academy is said to have started a fresh project of collecting unpublished folk literature in use both in urban and rural Kashmir. The major flaw of all the collections, published by Cultural Academy is that no reference regarding source has been given while recording almost all the literary compositions.
53. In addition to different folk song and folk tale collections, Academy undertook the job of collecting wide range of Kashmiri folk sayings, allusions and proverbs. For further treatment see *Kēshir Depety*, *Kēshir Talmihat* etc. etc.
54. "*Adbi Markaz Kamraz*", "*Maraz Adbi Sangam*", "*Daira Adab Delina*", "*Halqa Adab Sonawari*" and other literary organisations brought out special number of their Magazines and journals covering various dimensions of Kashmiri folklore. For details see *Anhar*, *Hamara Adab*, *Sheeraza*, *Samanbal* and *Saqafat* (Some of the prominent Kashmiri Journals).
55. See *Rajtarangni*, Introduction by Stein, Vol.1, p.26. For further details see introduction part of Knowles *The folk tales of Kashmir*, pp.3-5.

56. The word Dastan in Kashmiri Language has been adopted for Persian classical tales like *Yusuf Zalikha*, *Lila Majnun*, etc. etc. This literary form was abundantly used by Kashmiri poets during the period of our study. Various classical Persian Dastans were translated into Kashmiri Language by Mehmood Gami, Maqbool Kralwari and others. Refer Mohi-ud-Din Hajini "An Outline of the Growth of Various Forms in Kashmiri Literature", published in *The Literary Heritage of Kashmir*, edited by K.L. Kala, pp.31-35; *Kashiri-Adbuk Tawarikh*, Naji Manawar Shafi Shauq.
57. Lalita Handoo, Op.Cit., p.30.
58. See *Ancient India and Indian Civilization*, Op.Cit., p.334.
59. Bhands or Bhagats form a special class of folk performers. They used to play folk dramas popularly known as Pethers on different socio-religious occasions. Bhagats or Bhands of Akingam, Wathora, Bumai, Berwah, Patan and Drogmula have received great appreciation from art critics for their excellent performances. See *Kēshir Luka Pether*, and *Bhand-e-Jeshan*, by M.S. Bhagat. *Kashmir Provincial Gazetteer*, Lawrence, p.38.
60. Local mystic saints popularly known as Rishis. For details see Ishaq Khans, *Kashmir Transition to Islam, The Role of Rishis*, p.36.
61. Ved Kumari, Eng. Tran. of *Nilmat Purana*, Vol.1, p.108.
62. There is hardly any difference found in the text of the different folk Pethers, played by different Bhand groups. This is an unique example of an oral tradition, well recorded and preserved.
63. See for details, John Beams on S.W. Fallen's *Dictionary of Hindustani Proverbs* (edited by R.C. Temple), Benaras, 1884, cover page.
64. See M. Y. Teng, *Luka Adab Number*, (Forword).
65. M.L. Saqi, *Kēshir Luka Beth*, Vol.3, Introduction, p.10. Dr.Shaad Ramzan, *Kēshiren Luka Betan Hund Intikhab*, pp.13-14. (Sahitiya Academy publication).
66. *Ibid*; p.173.
67. Sol. Tax, *Anthropology Today*, p.328.
68. Her definition has a close resemblance with Deniel Brintions definition, described in *The Myth of the new world*, p.109. For reference see, C.S. Bume, *The Handbook of Folklore*, p.26.
69. Referred to by Indra Deva, *Folk Culture and Peasant Society in India*, p.80.
70. Lord Raglon, *The Hero*, p.120.
71. Malinowski, quoted by M. Islam, Op.Cit., p.20.

72. E. J. Lindgrem, *The Collection and Analysis of Folklore*, p.369.
73. *Ibid*; p.385.
74. Prof. G. M. Shaad, *Critical Survey of Kashmiri Folk Literature*, Folklore Studies - Part.I.
75. Cecil J. Sharp, *English Folk song : Some Conclusions* 1954 edition, 1955, p.48.
76. G. N. Nazir, "Critical Review of Kashmiri Folk Poetry paper presented in Centre of Central Asian Studies". The author provides detailed information about the different genres of Kashmiri folk poetry. M. L. Saqi, in his yet another paper throws some valuable light on some of the forms, which are not now in circulation : For example Berza Metche Hendiy Beth "*Vaan*" and others.
77. See Saqi and Nazir, "*Alav*", "*Saqafat*" and "*Sheeraza*".
78. Pardesi, Sadhy, *Kēshir Luka Beth*, Vol.7, pp.11,14-15.
79. *Ibid*; pp.114-118.
80. *Ibid*; pp.127-129. Also see Saqi - *Kēshir Luka Bath*, Vol.3, p.10.
81. K. K. Kala, *Literary Heritage of Kashmir*, p.127.
82. It is an oldest form of Kashmiri poetry. Sheikh Nur-ud-Din, the mystic poet of 14th Century Kashmir also refer to "*Watchun*" in one of his poetic compositions. Some scholars are of the view that the word has a sanskrit origin and is derived from "*Vakiyani*", a well established form of Sanskrit poetry.
83. In all probability the word "*Wanvun*" seems to be the form of *van van* which literally means repetition. In *Wanvun*, Stanzas are repeated with a pause to act as a cue to the other group.
84. J.L. Koul, '*Kashmiri Poetry : Some Forms and Themes*'. *The Literary Heritage of Kashmir*, p.88.
85. Lalita Handoo, Op.Cit. pp.14-15.
86. *Ibid*; Op.Cit., p.15.
87. See Saqi, Sadhu, Pardesi, *Kēshir Luka Beth*, Vol.3, pp.73-77, *Kēshir Luka Beth*, Vol.7, p.70, 81, 83,
88. *Ibid*; Saqi, Op.Cit, p.98.
89. Nishat Ansari, The *Lari Shah*, paper presented in the department of Kashmiri, University of Kashmir. See also Shaad, Nazir and Aatish. There is marked difference of opinion among Kashmiri writers with regard to the origin, definition and nature of *Lari Shah*. Some believe that it is a poetic genre, while others maintain, that the word '*Lari Shah*' denotes the narrator of the song. But our

research tend us to suggest that *Lari Shah* might have been a village faqir (mendicant) who hailed from *Ler*, a village in Pulwama district. The Surname 'Shah' is still used in rural Kashmir for folk minstrel, bhand or dooms. In all probability, since the village *Ler*, falls in a flood prone zone and during the period of our study has been subject to periodical devastation caused by securing floods due to being situated in the low lying area near *Kandizall* (a vulnerable point, in the course of river Jehlum, where breach was often caused to save the Srinagar city). Some elderly member of the 'Shah' family (professional folk singers) of *Ler* village might have composed a poem, describing the destructions caused by flood waters. The entire area including village *Ler* in the near past remained immersed under flood waters for weeks together. Secondly the consonant 'R' sound is generally pronounced as 'D' sound in both Urdu and Kashmiri. For example *Sarak*, is pronounced as *Sadak*, *Aligarh* is pronounced as *Aligadh*. *Lari Shah* is pronounced as *Ladi Shah*. When I personally visited the village '*Ler*', in the year 1997, I found some members of Shah family (professional minstrels) still living there. They even today earn their livelihood from singing and sweeping.

90. It is one of the creative literary forms in Persian and Urdu. It highlights the Socio-political evils and the imbalances in the system.
91. Saqi, Op.Cit., pp.147-168.
92. **Ibid.**
93. **Ibid.**
94. It is peculiar folk musical earthen instrument. It is generally being used in folk musical item *Chakri*. For details see M. L. Aima, *Folk Musical Instruments of Kashmir*.
95. This mystic oriented poetic tale has been written by many Kashmiri writers. There is no reference available regarding its original authorship.
96. See J. H. Knowl's – *Folk Tales of Kashmir*, pp.491-504. Refer also G. A. Madhosh, "*Psychological Interpretation of Hemal Nagraj*" Audio recording available in Radio Archives of Radio Kashmir Srinagar.

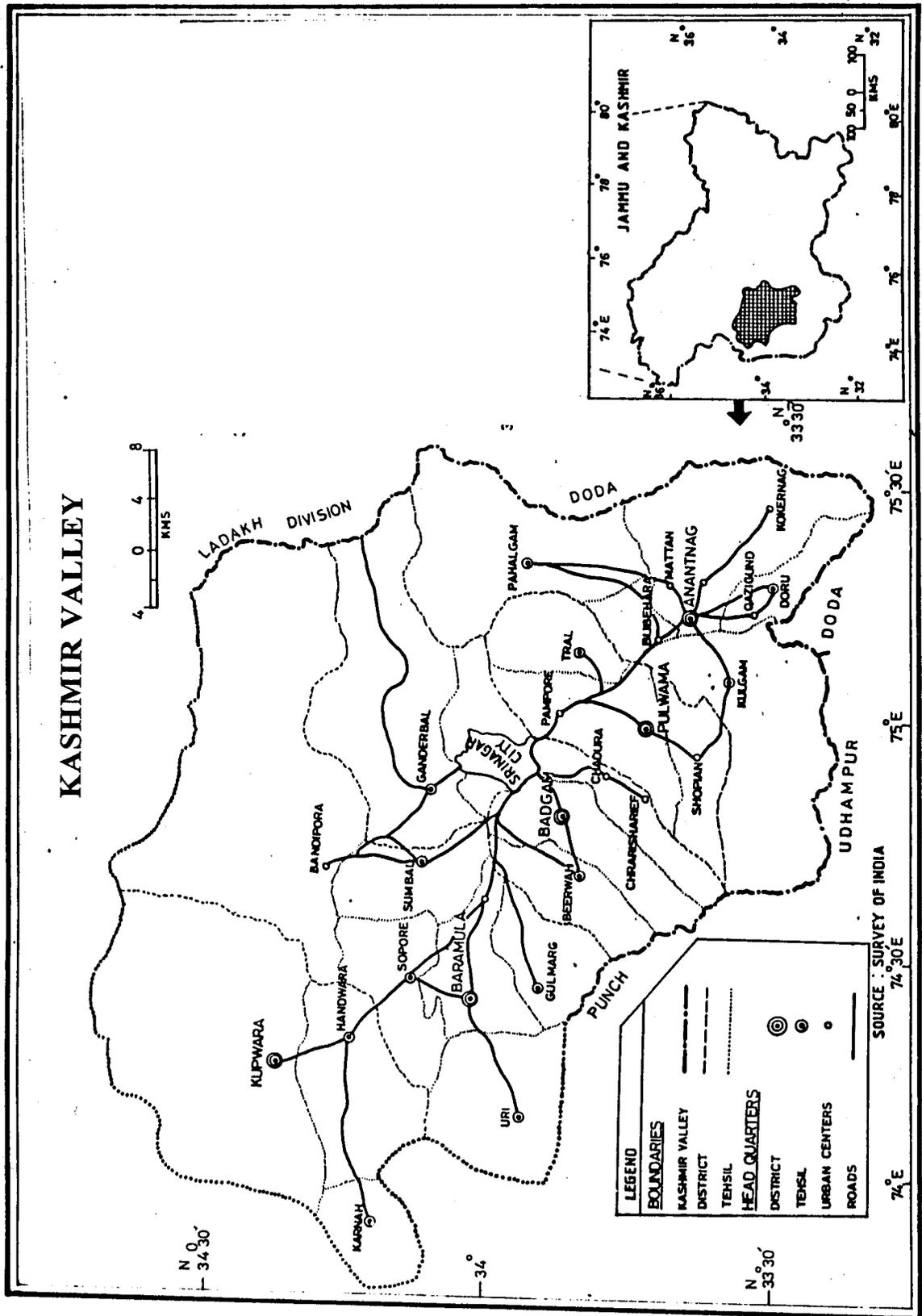


Fig. 0-1