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## THE USE OF PERSIAN PROSODY IN KASHMIR

Genuine poetry has always been born of the revolt against arbitrary customs of expression for those customs, too, might have emerged because of a revolt against erstwhile customs. Poetry is essentially freedom and freedom is the consciousness of necessity. This is true of the prosodic conventions also which were always considered as sacrosanct and any deviation from the set rules is thought to be an unpardonable herself. But poets have always taken liberties with the set rules where the rules gyred, the their imagination.

فریاد کی کوئی لے نہیں ہے  
نالہ پابند لے نہیں ہے  
(مفعول مفاعیلن فعولن)

A departure in itself from hazaj musadas akhrab mahzooft, the couplet is a profound major statement on poets, attitude to prosody. Notwithstanding this undeniable fact, it must always be born in mind that only a poet with thorough mastery in the use of metrix can think of such a venture, anarchy is out of question, at least in poetry.

The prosody used in the Persian language was borrowed from Arabic and it certainly helped poetry in that language grow out of the amorphous but spontaneous and untutened poetic



expression the plebs. But the prosody borrowed from Arabic had to be modified, in keeping with the genius of Persian which had its own system of periodicity of equivalences, patterns of the ictus, suprasagmental features of sounds, etc. With the course of time, the prosodists of the language formulated a highly sophisticated system of rules of using and analyzing strees, quantity, syllable count, time etc. The classical notion of poetry did not allow any kind of deviation from the rules which continued ramifying and stiffening additively with every fresh treatise in the field.

This is what happened in Kashmir, too. Persian became the lingua franca in the 14<sup>th</sup>. Century, and several Kashmiris endowed with the art of expressing the best in the best order of words emerged as Persian poets. They acquired the craft by studying the Persian poets. They acquired the craft by studying the Persian classies, but in spite of their prowess, they had to encounter the interference of the vernacular in using the alien metres. Besides the unique phonological character of the Kashmiri languages, the language had its own well developed metre. It was vratati, based on syllables or ganas as well as matrik, based on matras. On the basis of division of syallbles, the vratati was of three types: sami vratati (having number of syllables equal in all the four lines), aradhi sami vratati (having the first and the third and the second and the fourth lines equivalent in the number of syllables) and visham vratati (having the number of syllables different in all the four lines). The vratati from can have 26 syllables in each lines (Sadharn) or more than 26 syllables in each line (dhandak). The earliest attempts to employ the Persian metre in Kashmiri as evidenced by the earliest extant ghazals, amply reveal how the poets endeavored the synthesize the two different systems of prosody.

Another basic problem that the Kashmiri Persian poets had to encounter was that the two languages have altogether different phonemic character; Kashmiri possesses as a C.V.C.V. pattern while as in Persian several types of consonantal clusters are



common for instance, /zʃ/, /rʃ/ etc. When a Kashmiri uses Persian words involving such contoid clusters he tends to interpolate vowels in the clusters to make them compatible with his native promunication. It may not be offensive in common discourse, but in poetic hemistiches it makes a lot of difference.

Persian prosody is based on the written character of the language, a fallacy that takes all letters as consonants. Every letter at the word-initial position is followed by any of the three primitive versels, /a/, /i/, and /u/, which are uniformly short. The final syllable of every Persian word is long, ending in an inert or *sakin* letter, except when accompanied by an *izafat*. Kashmiri language on the contrary has as many as sixteen vowels, eight short and eight long, viz /i/, /i:/, /e/, /e:/, /r/, /r:/, /a/, /a:/, /u/, /u:/, /o/, /o:/, /ɔ/, /ɔ:/ Since the longer vowels have a possibility of indefinite length, a Kashmiri singer could, therefore, lengthen a vowel to compensate the deficiency of two end even three shorter vowels. In a *pad* (a short verse of narrative nature) for instance, the rhythm is merely the impulsive flow of speech, ignoring the pulse of measure. This is never allowed in Persian poetry. The *ghazal* writers in Kashmiri following the Persian metre many a time use the impulsive flow, even today.

In addition to the sixteen vowels, there is the phonemic palatalization, medial and final as in /khal/ and /khal/ which poses problems in handling Persian metres. A word like /khal/ is not of the same measure as /kh'al/, or /kul/ is not of the same measure as /k'ul/, but Kashmiri poets do take and of course should take, such liberties in using Persian meters.

The alveolar nasal /n/ at the word final position (e.g. /para:n/) is not inert, but the grapheme for nasalization at the same word final position is inert and, therefore, does not count in scansion. The aspectual /a/ in the end of the infinitive affixes, is freely used for the actual /a:n/ in which the /n/ is counted.

In Kashmiri each vocoid is phonemic in nature, determining the morpheme. For instance we have a long list of



different words involving only two contoids /t/ and /r/, viz; tar, ta:r, tt:r, tir, tur, tu:r, tari, tari:, tari, tiri, tiri etc. In using Persian words in poetry the morpho-phonemic character of vowels cannot be ignored. For instance if we use the word darva:zah in the same pronunciation as it is in Persian, it does not mean doo+singular+masculine+Nominative, but door+ singular+masculine + Nominative + Emphasis. It is true of all those words which have an aspiration (lai hawaz) at the word final position, like vaftah, jamah, namah etc.

Among the non-graphemic sounds, or malfuzi letter the narration or tashdid of the Persian words rarely counts as two sounds in Kashmir verse.

In words involving /st/ cluster, the /s/ is dropped as in Persian, but in declerations, the /t/ is active and takes inflection. However, when such a cluster occurs at the line-end position, both /s/ and /t/ are dropped.

The alif at the word initial position of a word following another inert sount ending words is syncopated (e.g. pur-afstom).

With these and some more like these 'licentia vatum' or poetic licences, Kashmiri poets borrowed the whole prosodic gamut from Persian which replaced the old less sophisticated vratati and matric system. The metres borrowed by Kashmiri are nine each with several muzahif or the deviated foot. These are:

01. Bahri Ramal: Standard foot: fadilatun or epitritus secundus  
- u - -:
02. Bahri Muzari: standard foot: mafadilun and faditatu or  
epitritus epitrius to secundus - u - - -
03. Bahri Hazaj: Standard foot: mafadilun, four times repetition  
of epitritus primus (u - - -) Several of its muzahif are  
commonly used by Kashmiris it is the most popular nature  
in Kashmiri;
04. Bahri Mujtas: Standard foot: mustafdilin or epitritus tertius  
( - - u - ) Rarely awed in its standard form. It changes into  
mafadilun, faditatu, mofadilun faditatu, etc.



05. Bahri Khafif: Standard feet : faditaton, mustafdilon, faditation i.e. combination of epitritus secandus and epitritus tertius.
06. Bahri Muqtazab: Standard fee: mafdulat, mustafdilon, mafdult, mustafdilun (combination of epitritus quartus and epitritus tertius i.e. - - -u + - - u + - - - u + - - u -
07. Bahri Mutaqarik: Standart feet : fadutan, faditon, fadutan fadutan repetitun of Bachius i.e., u - - + u - - + u - - + u - -
08. Bahri Rajaz: Standard feet: mustafdilan, mustafdilon, mustadilun, mustafdilun (Repetition of epitritus tertius, but used in its muzahif form: mufidilun, mufadilum, mufdilum, mufadilum a succession of choriambus and diambus i.e. - uu - + u - u - + - uu = + u - u -
09. Bahri Kamil: Standard feet: matafadilun, three times or four times. Its commonly used muzahit is a combination of Paeon tertius, spondaeus and diambus, twice i.e. /uu - u/+/- -/+/ u - u -/

It is interesting to note that Kashmiri poets failed to handle the Rubai meters, to the beginning with mafdutun and mafdutu. There have been only a few clumsy attempts to write in some of the twenty four metres peculiar to the Rubai which are in fact the muzalig forms of Bahri Hazaj, like mafdutun, mufadilun, fadal.

To conclude, Persian metres are now thoroughly assimilated into Kashmiri poetry and modern Kashmiri poets, particularly the ghazal writers are constantly experimenting in using the uncommon mazahif of the above maters. The prosody has, however, to reconcile with the phonological character of the language.