

Classic Poetry Series

# Sheikh Noor-ud-din Wali - poems -

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# Sheikh Noor-ud-din Wali(1377 – 1440)

Sheikh Noor-ud-din, also known as Nund Rishi, was a famous Kashmiri saint who belonged to the Rishi order. He was born in 1377 CE, corresponding to 779 Hijri and he died at the age of 63 years in the year of 1440 CE or 842 Hijri. In various circles, is also called Alamdar-e-Kashmir and Sheikh-ul-Alam and is the patron saint of Kashmiris, highly revered by both Muslims and Hindus.

## <b>Biography</b>

Shaikh Nur-ud-din (RA) was born in a village called Qaimoh (old name Katimusha) [District 'KULGAM'], (which is 60 km South east of Srinagar, in 779 A.H. = 1377 A.C, on the day of the Eid al-Adha. His father's name was Shaikh Salar-ud-din his mother Sadra, was called Sadra Moji or Sadra Deddi. In Kashmir, Moji means 'mother' and Deddi denotes 'elderly.' Both the parents were well known for their piety. It was a period when Kashmir was ruled by the sultans Qutub-ud-Din, Sikandar, Ali Shah, and parents became Muslims through the great Islamic saint Hazrat Mir Syed Simnania (R.A),whose shrine is located in Kulgam town.

When Nur-ud-din (RA) grew up, his stepbrothers began to trouble him. They were rogues, while he was saintly. Once or twice he accompanied them to find work but felt that he could not be happy with them. He was then apprenticed to a couple of traders, one after the other. There, too, he felt disgusted with the ways of the world, and, deciding upon renunciation, retired to caves for meditation at the age of thirty. It is said that he lived for twelve years in the wilderness. Hence, perhaps, kaimuh is given the derivation of kai-wan (or ban, a forest) in rustic belief. The actual cave of contemplation is shown in kaimuh and is about 10 feet deep. In his last days, the saint sustained life on one cup of milk daily. Finally, he reduced himself to water alone, and died at the age of 63, in the reign of sultan Zain-ul-Abidin, in 842 A. H. = 1438 A.C. Shams-ul-Arifin or 'the sun of the pious' is the chronogram which gives the date of his death. The Sultan accompanied his bier to the grave. The burial prayers were led by a great divine or 'Alim of the age, Makhdum Baba Usman Uchchap Ganai. The tomb of Shaikh Nur-ud-din at Charari Sharief, a small town perched on a dry bare hill, 20 miles south west of Srinagar, is visited by thousands of people to the present day.

During his lifetime, he witnessed a gradual cultural and religious transformation of the people of the valley, from Hinduism to Islam. Various historical events helped to shape his mind in such a manner that he produced some works of philosophy, in his own manner of verses and poetry.

Sheikh ul-Alam was deeply affected by such events and this is apparent in a majority of his verses.

The biggest event that occurred in the Sheikh's childhood was the coming of another Muslim preacher, Amir Kabir Mir Syed Hamadani, to Kashmir. Shah Hamadan, as he was popularly called, came to Kashmir in September 1372 CE, 1379 CE and the third time in the year 1383 CE.

Shaikh Nur-ud-din- appears to have married Zai Ded from Dadasara, Tral, Pulwama( her father Akber-u-Din(RA) and two brothers "Kamal-u-din" (RA) and "Jamal-u-din"RA) are buried at Dadasara Tral, people of the area visited their shrine for "Dua" to fulfil their needs) and had two sons and one daughter. On the death of the children, Zai Ded also renounced the world, and became a hermit. She was buried at Kaimuh on her death. The simplicity and purity of Shaikh Nur-ud-din's life have deeply impressed the Kashmiri who entertains the highest veneration for the saint. In fact, the Afghan governor, Ata Muhammad Khan, gave, as it were, expression to public sentiment when coins were struck by him in the name of Shaikh Nur-ud-din in 1223-25 A.H. (1808-10 CE). No other saint perhaps in human history has ever had coins struck in his honour.

### <b>Works</b>

Sheikh-ul-Alam is supposed to have loved Kashmir and its people very intensely and was a revolutionary himself.

Sheikh Nur al-Din Wali is one of the most prominent scholars and Du'ah of Kashmir. He used his poetry as tool to spread the true knowledge of Islam. His poetry is commonly known as Shrukhs. Tawhid, Risala, Ma'ad, human lust etc. are main subjects of his poetry. He vehemently criticizes the so called Mullas and other pseudo-scholars of Islam.

He was a man of innate foresight and intuitive knowledge. One of his most famous and oft quoted couplets is (Kashmiri:"Ann poshi teli yeli wann poshi") meaning 'Food will last as long as forests last'[3] Lal Ded the famous Shaivite poetess of Kashmir was his contemporary. She had a great impact on his spiritual growth. He has in one of his poems prayed to God to grant him the same level of spiritual achievement as God had bestowed on Lal Ded.

His teachings were not to the liking of the Sayyids who had recently come from central Asia and wanted the sultan to implement a radical version of Islam. For

this the sultans had him arrested and imprisoned for two years. Later the popular sultan Budshah (son of Sultan Sikandar Butshikan) who was of a secularist bent of mind had him rehabilitated.

His sayings are preserved in the Nur-nama, commonly available in Kashmir. The Nur-nama also gives the life of the saint. It was written by Baba Nasib-ud-din Ghazi in Persian about two centuries after the death of Shaikh Nur-ud-din.

Anecdotes of the life of this 'chief of the Rishis' are on the lips of the people throughout the valley.

University of Kashmir is having a great honour to have Shaikh-ul-Alam Chair in his name.

### <b>Famous Sayings</b>

The saint's attack on hypocrisy is interesting says he:

"By bowing down, thou shalt not become a Rishi; the poulder in the rice- mill did not ever raise up its head."

"By entering a cave, God cannot be attained: the mongoose and the rat seldom come out of their holes".

"By bathing, the mind will not be cleansed: The fish and the otter never ascend the bank."

"If God was just pleased by fasting, the indigent rarely cook food in pots."

Once, on his way to a garden, accompanied by a disciple, he stopped and would not move. On his disciple requesting him to proceed, he made the following reply: "Every minute that I spend there, will be deducted from my stay in heaven". On another occasion, when invited to a feast, Nur-ud-din went in ragged dress, earlier than the appointed time. The servants, not recognizing him, would not permit him to enter, and he had to go back to take his food at home. When all had sat for the sumptuous dinner, the Shaikh was specially sent for. He came, this time in a flowing chugha (cloak) and was given the seat of honour. But the Shaikh instead of partaking of the food stretched forth his sleeves and put them on to the plates. The people were astonished at the sight and asked him the reason. He replied: "The feast was not really for Nur-ud-Din but for the long sleeves!"

## <b>Shrine</b>

The shrine of Sheikh-ul-Alam, in addition to the structure itself, contained its attached Khanqahs, inns for the pilgrims and other physical features, the vendors of various prayer merchandise, food stalls etc. All combined to make it a place of pilgrimage for Kashmiris of all communities. The shrine contained 600 years old handmade Persian and Kashmir carpets, ancient objects and scrolls, some antique copies of the Quran, extremely precious cut-glass chandeliers etc., all which were reduced to smoke and ashes during a firefight between the Indian army and militants. Both sides blame the other for the fire. Now the shrine has been rebuilt although the adjoining Khanqah is still under construction.

# A Blonde I, Dressed And Combed

A blonde I, dressed and combed,  
Became a queen of beauty:  
Bewitched my youth was by flowers.  
Frozen as snows on mountains  
I was and  
Blown off by WULAR wind; (biggest lake in Kashmir)  
Divested by robbers, I was  
In dazzling bewilderment:  
Ruffled my half-cooked rice became  
By bran and husk  
While a poor man's day  
Passed for a year.

Sheikh Noor-ud-din Wali

# Aradana

- a) That Lana of Padmanpora  
Gulp by gulp who nectar drank,  
And saw Shiva face to face everywhere  
Grant me that boon, O Deva!
- b) The speaking damsels of Loka—Bhawan  
And the dumb socio—human ones,  
Took flight with birds;  
Grant me that boon, O Deva !
- c) Janak Reshi of Dandakvan.  
Living on herbs, wild fruit, was  
A perfect Bhakta, a pearl among devotees !  
Grant me that boon, O. Deva.
- d) That Miran Reshi of Reshivan,  
Who fed a thousand people  
And created an averse free atmosphere:  
Grant me that boon, O Deva:
- e) A shepherd followed rams.  
That very moment  
He was beckoned off  
And flew to the Heaven  
At Harmukh:  
Grant me that boon, O Deva:
- f) You blessed the sadhu at Ishabar,  
He recognised you and served you.  
Blessed you, also Rugzal?`  
The pashmina—seller:  
Grant me that boon, O Deva I
- g) That wise, hunch-backed, Kubza.
- h) You blessed Sadhwani, the vapbodh,  
He drank the milk of intimacy I  
In full,  
You blessed Shethi Srikantha,

The sidha;  
Grant me that boom, O Deva !

i) In time should I act for my future;  
Maybe, it may bear fruit ;  
Meekly'ld I exhort Him;  
Maybe, He may bless Nund too !  
Grant me that boon, O Deva !

Sheikh Noor-ud-din Wali



# Avariciously, I Filled My Belly

Avariciously, I filled my belly  
---draped the devilish frame  
Of my long cage !  
Robbed off was, I even  
Of the ever-withering leaf:  
Sinned I and earned  
The vice !

Sheikh Noor-ud-din Wali

# Bathe Out Of Sight

Bathe out of sight,  
Meditate in secluded isolation,  
Be regular in action don't forget,  
But-- out of sight;  
Should you forget, you'll regret !

Sheikh Noor-ud-din Wali

# Bear With: As You Sow, So Shall You Reap

(a) Bear with the calls from the compound, friend.

Respond to your inner voice:

As you sow here, so shall you reap there.

Sow and reap, sow and reap.

(b) 'Occupy the grave' does the blonde;

Nought's mine:

Sow and provide for food here.

If only,

For fear of harm to the heart:

Sow and reap, sow and reap.

(c) Theists and atheists will be questioned;

Contemplate on the Prophet and the Lord,

Smash the spear and the Gurza; (Lethal weapon of Hanuman)

Sow and reap, sow and reap.

(d) When the case reaches the divine court.

There,

From whom can we hide our untruth?

Beware! none but you, yourself'd have to

Bear the consequences of your deeds:

Sow and reap, sow and reap.

(e) Virtue and vice'd they weigh there, brother.

Think ahead, of life there

Lest your gains turn into losses,

Sow and reap, sow and reap!

Sheikh Noor-ud-din Wali

# Death's A Lion

Death's a lion.

How can you escape him?

From a flock of sheep

It 'II pick you up like a lamb.

Sheikh Noor-ud-din Wali

# Does Wrath Become A Muslim?

a) Does wrath behave a Muslim?

Should you display anger, you'll

Jeopardise your purpose.

Wrath'll prove to be a robber

Of your treasures !

Does wrath become a Muslim ?

b) What happened to him who

Was deposed from his heavenly, throne ?

Numbness overtook that Muslim and.

He fell a victim to the devil: and

Hid in a boat man's .....

Does wrath become a Muslim ?

c) Should you peep into the

Veiled harem of strangers,

It'd be like showing

A red rag to the bull,

Causing hue and cry, din and noise !

Does anger become a Muslim?

(d) Study daily, the Quran,

The lighthouse that'll

Scare away the devil in you:

Does wrath become a Muslim?

(e)The Lord'll Himself accompany

The guest;

Give something in His love and,

Remember, what you give to others

Will remain in store for you:

Does anger become a Muslim?

(f) In a far off field,

They 'll leave you buried and,

Rot'll your flesh, and organs too,

Underground and

You, Yourself will have to be

Answerable for your own deeds,

Does wrath become a Muslim?

Sheikh Noor-ud-din Wali

# Fear, Attachment And Violent Thought

Fear, attachment and violent thought,  
I shunned,  
For a whole life-time,  
I followed  
But one path, and then,  
Bathed in the waters of contemplation,  
I walked to a sojourn  
In blissful seclusion!

Sheikh Noor-ud-din Wali

# Feed The Hungry, If You Can

Feed the Hungry, if you can,  
Ask not the caste of the naked:  
Gain a thousand times  
The virtue,  
Nor would you ever lose it,  
Dear brother, Nunda !

Sheikh Noor-ud-din Wali



# He Who Sits In Vigil

He who sits in vigil  
At His door,  
To him, He 'II offer  
His own sherbet (Medicine):  
His devotees are different but,  
Only with one prayer;  
He, whom He blesses,  
Will prosper!

Sheikh Noor-ud-din Wali

# He, Who Ploughs The Field, Reaps The Crop

(a) Be conscientious in doing your duty, man,  
Plough the field, to harvest the crop  
In autumn and. provide for  
Your comforts in the cold month of magh:  
He, who sows the seed, reaps the crop !

(b) Blind is the spring, keep't in view,  
Be quick to collect the material of  
Seed, and store's at home:  
Don't you lag behind, for  
The spring is elusive, man;  
He, who sows the seed, reaps the crop !

(c) Lend no ear to falsehood now,  
Winter lies ahead, and freezing cold  
Daughters and daughters-in-law, children  
And grand-children regard him, who  
Ploughs the field and reaps the crop:  
He, who sows the seed, reaps the crop !

(d) Deluding is the hunger;  
Yoke it to the plough,  
Scare't the whip of fasting;  
Thus wouldn't it hinder the polughshare:  
He, who sows the seed, reaps the crop !

(e) Keep the kit trim and your ploughshare;  
Attend to your ablutions, it's dawn,  
The usual time for prayers.  
Shun listlessness, caste and pray:  
He, who sows the seed, reaps the crop !

(f) Full of weeds is your field,  
Enter with determination and deweed it  
Bend you must in blazing heat  
To deweed your field:  
He, who sows the seed, reaps the crop !

(g) Devote your time to Islamic work:

Shun lassitude, Kalima's the lighthouse of  
Your knowledge at home:  
Duly attend to daily 'Nimaz' pilgrimage and  
Graceful alms-giving: For,  
He, who sows the seed, reaps the crop !

(h) Many times, the seed is the ear of crops:  
Many times more though latent, is CORDIALITY.  
Still more beneficial is contemplation of God:  
He, who sows the seed, reaps the crop !

(i) Beware of the watchman:  
Day by day, He counts the stockpiles:  
Truly fear the Landlord;  
He, who sows the seed, reaps the crop:

(j) The king of fate, pounces on the crop:  
Rise with confidence and show.....  
The attainments of your endeavour:  
And when, the king's gone,  
Contemplate on' What He said '  
He, who sows the seed reaps the crop !

(k) Estimates of every field, they'll make and,  
Name every kind of fruit.....  
Collecting all, they'll seal the stores:  
He, who sows the seed, reaps the crop !

(l) They'll force him divide bagfuls of crops  
And make him, sort out grain by grain.  
Reaping, collecting, separating, winnowing,  
They'll induce him to weigh the harvest;  
He, who sows the seed, reaps the crop

(m) With the display of a sword,  
To begin with, they'll warn him against  
Irresponsible sloth, listlessness, and  
Ask him to be careful in future:  
God forbid, maybe, they'll get him lashed too:  
He, who sows the seed, reaps the crop !

(n) Slowly, imperceptibly, life has waned,

O you, unmindful fellow, haven't you  
Realised the truth by now?  
Look, how you have robbed your own self:  
He, who ploughs the field, reaps the crop !

(o) Don't you be too fond of glamorous mansions  
Elegant ZOONA DUB (well decorated verandah)  
For,  
None but you have to account for your deeds:  
What use's preaching to the unwise?  
He, who sows the seed, reaps the crop !

(p) You careless man, realise yourself  
You 'll reap here, what you've sown there,  
They'll weigh all sins and virtues:  
He, who ploughs the field, reaps the crop !

(q) Take the mukkadam (headman) to plead your case  
Before the king of kings:  
Nund Reshi knows well the Landlord:  
He, who sows the seed, collects the fruit !

Sheikh Noor-ud-din Wali

# He, Who Was Here, Is Also There

He, who was here, is also there;  
He's in possession of house everywhere  
He's the Pedestrian, and He the Ruath, (old type of vehicle)  
He's all in all; invincible and obscure!

Sheikh Noor-ud-din Wali

## He's Beside Me

He's beside me and  
I'm beside Him,  
Blissful I feel with Him,  
In vain, I went a—seeking Him  
In strange lands, for  
My Friend Himself graced me  
in my own House!

Sheikh Noor-ud-din Wali

## Mere Chanting Of 'shiva, Shiva '

Mere chanting of 'Shiva, Shiva '  
Won't awaken Shiva.  
Ghee you'd consume in  
Kangri fire  
Feed on ghee and  
Be strong or  
Give it to other,  
Should you not need it.

Sheikh Noor-ud-din Wali

# My Darling, Why Should You Poach On Fish

My darling, why should you poach on fish

My darling understand this truth

Those, who devour the living

To nourish their own lives

Would feed on the poison of sin !

Sheikh Noor-ud-din Wali



## O Self, Lend Ear To

O self, lend ear to  
The gossip that's going on;  
This's the knell of  
The warrants of death !  
A day before like a lamb  
They'll take you to the butchers,;  
With a tuft of grass, they'll  
Lure you on to the grave !

Sheikh Noor-ud-din Wali

# Shiva's There, Spread With

Shiva 's there, spread with  
A fine net:  
That's Death and  
That's Pilgrimage !  
Should you not die while living,  
How else can you, when dead ?  
Recognise self from yourself  
By contemplation.

Sheikh Noor-ud-din Wali

# Should You Have A Friend

Should you have a friend,  
Sacrifice yourself for him.  
From time to time, a friend  
Is a breezy dawn !  
Earth, earthly be, free from  
Birth-Re-birth;  
What need remains for  
Protective defence ?  
Or  
What need remains  
To fear fate?

Sheikh Noor-ud-din Wali

# Should You Not Shun Inner Anger

Should you not shun inner anger,  
How can you, your external wrath ?  
Unless you cleanse you inner mind  
You'll lead an ostriched life !

Sheikh Noor-ud-din Wali

# Straight I Came And

Straight I came and,  
Straight I'd go,  
What harm can the crooked do  
To a straight man ?  
I fully recognized and  
Merged with Him there  
What can the recognized do  
To the recogniser ?

Sheikh Noor-ud-din Wali

# What Catch Will A Crow

What catch will a crow, show  
To the lion of the jungle ?  
How can dhup (incense) surpass wine,  
In fragrance?  
What light can a candle  
Show to the moon?  
What a salvation will Shiva give  
To a---

Sheikh Noor-ud-din Wali

# What Have I Gained After Birth?

(a) With full settlement, I had come  
On business to the world;  
Lured on the way I was  
In the market place:  
Behold how I bore with  
The master mind:  
What have I gained after I was born ?

(b) Why did I overhear my friend  
At HIS house?  
Who'll keep that laughing Joker  
In good humour ?  
Virtuous is my mind but  
Plenty of sins have I gathered:  
What have I gained after birth ?

(c) Spangled has the thread of  
My necklace of pearls:  
Consumed by fire  
Have been all my gains  
Reduced to dust or consigned to flames  
Has been all my wealth:  
What have I gained after birth?

(d) My living body fell here in chaos,  
Good it is to sacrifice it for the times:  
Wouldn't it honour the Lord?  
What have I gained in life ?

(e) Originally crooked Couldn't reach the source  
How I tried to uphold the dignity of  
My home:  
Keep in fear of HIM, O thee rider and pedestrian:  
What have I gained in life

(f) Peddlers are on the move  
From city to city:  
Isn't it time for you  
To burn in the fire of hell?

Kneeling low, Nund Reshi prays and  
Exhorts the Lord in all humility:  
What have I gained in Life ?

Sheikh Noor-ud-din Wali



## Within The Cluster Of Rills Was Lost

Within the cluster of rills was lost,  
A sparkling spring;  
A saint was lost amongst  
A gang of thieves;  
Amidst a family of duds was lost,  
A learned Pandit Guru;  
A gorgeous swan was lost,  
Amidst a flock of crows !

Sheikh Noor-ud-din Wali

# Yee Alone, O Deva, Are The Need

Yee alone, O Deva, are the need  
Of the hour,  
To set the earth a-right in beauty ?  
Yee alone, the shadow of skeletons:  
Yee alone awaken  
Without the tolling of bells;  
What's virtue and what vice ?

Sheikh Noor-ud-din Wali

# You Gave Sugar To Sugarcane

You gave sugar to sugarcane,  
And honey to the honey bee  
You gave grapes to  
The winding vine:  
You gave the deer stag  
The forest green:  
Such are your godly gifts!

Sheikh Noor-ud-din Wali

# You've To Bear Lightning And Thunder

You've to bear lightning and thunder,  
Tornados and storms at mid-day;  
You've to bear with lifting mountain weights,  
You've to bear with your palm aflame,  
You've to pass through a rolling mill,  
You've to tolerate eating poison and fire!

Sheikh Noor-ud-din Wali