
**FROM THE LANGUAGE OF THE GODS TO THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE:
SANSKRIT, KASHMIRI VERNACULARISATION, AND LITERARY IDENTITY.**

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Abstract

This paper explores the rich literary and cultural heritage of Kashmir, tracing its evolution from Sanskrit to Persian and Kashmiri traditions. Lal Ded, a 14th-century poet, profoundly influenced the Kashmiri language, spirituality, and artistic expression through her *vatsun* verses. The romantic saga of Yousuf Shah Chak and Habba Khatoon in 16th-century Kashmir exemplifies how poetry served as both a medium of personal expression and a form of political resistance, thereby preserving Kashmiri cultural identity. The region's composite culture is further illuminated by its multilingual traditions, which encompass Sanskrit, Persian, and Kashmiri. The historical development of Kashmir's religious, political, and cultural landscape is also examined, including the influence of Sufism, the role of shrines, and the contemporary challenges facing the Kashmiri language and culture.

Keywords: Kashmiri poetry, Sanskrit cosmopolis, Persian influence, Literary identity, Cultural convergence

Introduction

The literary and linguistic landscape of South Asia is characterised by remarkable diversity, complexity, and historical depth. This region encompasses multiple language families, including Indo-Aryan, Dravidian, Tibeto-Burman, and Munda, representing a range of social, religious, and cultural distinctions (Kachru et al., 2008). The subcontinent's linguistic heritage is marked by extensive traditions of study, teaching, and cultural investment in languages and literatures

(Freeman, 1998; Pollock, 2005). South Asian languages demonstrate a long history of mutual contact, convergence, and diffusion, leading to shared literary and sociolinguistic histories that transcend modern political boundaries (Kachru, 2008). This linguistic diversity has caused both challenges and creative conflicts, fostering the region's cultural growth and renewal (Kachru, 2008). Studying South Asian languages and literatures requires interdisciplinary methods, combining textual analysis with theoretical frameworks to understand their complex roles in shaping societies and cultures (Freeman, 1998; Pollock, 2005). Sheldon Pollock's notion of the "Sanskrit cosmopolis" refers to a vast cultural sphere spanning South and Southeast Asia between roughly 300 and 1300 CE, in which Sanskrit served as the language of authority and elite communication (Bronkhorst, 2011; Pollock, 2006). During this period, Sanskrit shifted from being primarily a ritual medium to becoming a key vehicle for literary creation and political discourse, dominating inscriptions and courtly expression (Pollock, 2006). Its dissemination was not as a common lingua franca, but as a symbolic tool of political power and cultural prestige (Bronkhorst, 2011; Shulman, 2007). Pollock's research highlights the intricate relationship between cultural production and political authority, while also tracing Sanskrit's gradual displacement by emerging regional vernaculars (Shulman, 2007; Gould, 2008). This exploration of premodern cultural and political dynamics offers a valuable framework for critiquing contemporary governance and engaging with postcolonial theory (Gould, 2008).

South Asia's literary culture is shaped by a vibrant interplay between classical and vernacular traditions, a dynamic visible in Kashmir's distinctive literary landscape (Pollock, 2005). Kashmir played a pivotal role in sustaining Sanskrit traditions while simultaneously innovating new literary forms, exemplified by Kalhaṇa's 12th-century Sanskrit chronicle *Rājataranginī*, which blurs the divide between the cosmopolitan and the vernacular (Kaul, 2013). The 14th century saw a turn towards vernacularization with the mystical *vatsun* verses of Lal Ded, which left a lasting imprint on Kashmiri culture, language, and spirituality (Farooq & Premchand, 2023). This trajectory was furthered by Nund Rishi (1378-1440), whose Kashmiri mystical poetry embodied a "vernacular apocalypse," challenging prevailing religious and political structures (Bazaz, 2021). Together, these developments illustrate the continual negotiation between the classical and the everyday, the universal and the local, in the evolution of South Asian literary traditions.

The literary heritage of South Asia—particularly that of Kashmir—embodies a nuanced interplay between cosmopolitan and vernacular traditions. Pollock (2005) underscores the region’s distinctive blend of antiquity, continuity, and multicultural complexity. As a cultural crossroads, Kashmir finds a powerful expression in Kalhaṇa’s 12th-century Sanskrit chronicle *Rājataranginī*, which, as Kaul (2013) observes, transcends the simple cosmopolitan–vernacular divide by demonstrating how a regional setting can be rendered through a cosmopolitan language. This text reflects the creative adaptation of intertextual traditions within Sanskrit literary culture. Bhat (2018) adds to this view by noting Kashmir’s vibrant historical traditions, which encompass a multilingual spectrum from Sanskrit to Persian and Kashmiri. Taken together, these perspectives reveal the region’s continuous negotiation between the traditional and the colloquial, the global and the local, highlighting the dynamic and layered nature of South Asia’s literary landscape.

Literature review

Author(s)	Work	Year	Contribution	Relevance to Present Study
Vigne, Godfrey T.	<i>Travels in Kashmir, Ladak, Iskardo</i>	1842	Early 19th-century travel narrative documenting customs, songs, and oral storytelling practices in Kashmir.	Useful for identifying pre-colonial oral literary traditions.
Drew, Frederic	<i>The Jammu and Kashmir Territories: A Geographical Account</i>	1875	Early colonial geographical and ethnographic survey with notes on social customs, settlement patterns, and oral traditions.	Provides pre-Lawrence baseline data on cultural geography and oral narratives.
Lawrence, Walter R.	<i>The Valley of Kashmir</i>	1895	Detailed ethnographic and cultural account of	Provides socio-historical context for

			Kashmir during late Dogra rule, including folk traditions and language observations.	literary culture and linguistic environment in colonial Kashmir.
Stein, M. Aurel	<i>Kalhana's Rajatarangini (Critical Edition & Notes)</i>	1900	Scholarly edition and commentary on the Sanskrit chronicle, with historical annotations.	Early authoritative work on Kashmir's Sanskrit historiography.
Elmslie, William J.	<i>Thirty-five Years in the Valley of Kashmir</i>	1901	Missionary account containing observations on Kashmiri society, oral traditions, and education.	Contains rare outsider perspectives on Kashmiri folk culture and linguistic use in daily life.
Neve, Ernest F.	<i>Beyond the Pir Panjal: Life and Missionary Enterprise in Kashmir</i>	1912	Documents cultural practices, folklore, and vernacular language use in early 20th-century Kashmir.	Supplements ethnographic record with first-hand narrative accounts.
Census of India	<i>Census of India 1911: Jammu & Kashmir State Report</i>	1912	Official demographic and linguistic data on Kashmir under the Dogra regime.	Provides quantitative background for linguistic distribution and literacy in early modern Kashmir.
Grierson, George A.	<i>Linguistic Survey of India, Vol. VIII</i>	1919	Comprehensive documentation of Kashmiri phonology, grammar, and vocabulary.	Foundational linguistic data for diachronic study of Kashmiri literature.
Gonda, Jan	<i>Sanskrit in Indonesia</i>	1952	Examines spread of Sanskrit and its role in	Supports theories of Sanskrit's

			Southeast Asian cultural-political systems.	cosmopolitan prestige beyond India.
Bazaz, Prem Nath	<i>The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir: Cultural & Political</i>	1954	Historical account tracing Kashmir's cultural politics from the late 19th century onward.	Links political change with transformations in literary and linguistic expression.
Kachru, Braj B.	<i>Kashmiri Literature</i>	1981	Overview of Kashmiri literary history, genres, and linguistic features.	Essential for understanding Kashmiri literary traditions and Persian/Urdu influence.
Das, Sisir Kumar	<i>A History of Indian Literature, Vol. 1 & 2</i>	1982/ 1985	Comprehensive mapping of Indian literary history from Sanskrit to modern vernaculars.	Traces the decline of Sanskrit and rise of regional languages like Kashmiri.
Alam, Muzaffar	<i>The Languages of Political Islam: India 1200–1800</i>	2004	Studies Persian as a political and cultural language in South Asia.	Illuminates Persian's role in reshaping Kashmir's literary landscape.
Thapar, Romila	<i>Cultural Pasts: Essays in Early Indian History</i>	2006	Reinterprets early Indian historiography, focusing on Sanskrit's cultural authority.	Frames Sanskrit as a vehicle for elite discourse and ideological control.
Pollock, Sheldon	<i>The Language of the Gods in the World of Men</i>	2006	Introduces the "Sanskrit Cosmopolis"	Central to analysing Sanskrit–Kashmiri language dynamics.

			and vernacularization theory.	
Sharma, Sunil	<i>Persian Poetry at the Indian Frontier</i>	2009	Examines Persian literary culture in frontier regions like Kashmir.	Highlights cultural hybridity in Kashmiri poetry.
Kaul, Shonaleeka	<i>Imagining the Urban: Sanskrit and the City in Early India</i>	2010	Analyses urban imagery in Sanskrit literature.	Adds thematic depth to Sanskrit's narrative world.
Bilgrami, Akeel (ed.)	<i>Beyond the Secular: The Foundations of Religious Belief</i>	2014	Explores links between language, belief, and identity.	Connects religious thought with literary expression in Kashmir.
Orsini, Francesca (ed.)	<i>Before the Divide: Hindi and Urdu Literary Culture</i>	2015	Analyses shared literary culture before Hindi–Urdu separation.	Offers parallels for Persian–Sanskrit–Kashmiri literary interactions.
Zutshi, Chitrlekha	<i>Languages of Belonging: Islam, Regional Identity, and the Making of Kashmir</i>	2017	Examines language, identity, and politics in Kashmir.	Links language shifts with socio-political transformations.

Narrative Synthesis

The study of Kashmiri literary and linguistic history is underpinned by a rich body of archival and scholarly work spanning nearly two centuries. The earliest travel narratives, such as Vigne's *Travels in Kashmir, Ladak, Iskardo* (1842), provide a rare glimpse into pre-colonial oral traditions, including songs, storytelling practices, and local customs that shaped Kashmir's literary culture before sustained colonial engagement. These observations are complemented by Drew's *The Jammu and Kashmir Territories* (1875), which offers a systematic geographical and ethnographic

survey, establishing a baseline for understanding cultural geography and oral narratives in the late 19th century.

By the close of the 19th century, Lawrence's *The Valley of Kashmir* (1895) delivered a landmark ethnographic account of Kashmiri society under the Dogra regime, documenting folk traditions, agricultural life, and linguistic practices with remarkable detail. This was followed in the early 20th century by Stein's critical edition of *Kalhana's Rajatarangini* (1900), which provided an authoritative scholarly framework for interpreting Kashmir's Sanskrit historiography, and by Elmslie's *Thirty-five Years in the Valley of Kashmir* (1901), which preserved missionary observations on education, oral culture, and vernacular usage. Neve's *Beyond the Pir Panjal* (1912) added further ethnographic insight, while the *Census of India 1911* (1912) offered demographic and linguistic data, grounding qualitative observations in quantitative evidence.

The foundational linguistic structure of Kashmiri was documented in Grierson's *Linguistic Survey of India, Vol. VIII* (1919), which remains an indispensable source for phonology, grammar, and vocabulary in diachronic studies. Ranjit S. Pandit's English translation of *Rajatarangini* (1935) opened Sanskrit historiography to a wider scholarly audience, ensuring its continued relevance in modern literary and historical research.

Post-independence scholarship brought new comparative and theoretical dimensions. Gonda's *Sanskrit in Indonesia* (1952) expanded the view of Sanskrit beyond the subcontinent, highlighting its cosmopolitan prestige and offering frameworks applicable to Kashmir's Sanskrit heritage. Bazaz's *The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir* (1954) linked political change with cultural and linguistic transformations. The late 20th century saw works like Kachru's *Kashmiri Literature* (1981) and Das's *A History of Indian Literature* (1982/1985) contextualise Kashmiri literary development within broader South Asian linguistic shifts, notably the decline of Sanskrit and the rise of vernaculars under Persian and Urdu influence.

In the 21st century, scholarship has increasingly emphasised the interplay of political, cultural, and linguistic forces. Alam's *The Languages of Political Islam* (2004) traced Persian's political authority in South Asia, including its transformative impact on Kashmiri literary forms. Thapar's *Cultural Pasts* (2006) and Pollock's *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men* (2006)

reframed Sanskrit's historical authority, with Pollock's vernacularization theory offering a key interpretive model for Kashmir's transition to regional languages. Sharma's *Persian Poetry at the Indian Frontier* (2009) examined literary hybridity, while Kaul's *Imagining the Urban* (2010) contributed thematic depth to understanding Sanskrit's narrative worlds.

More recent contributions, such as Bilgrami's *Beyond the Secular* (2014) and Orsini's *Before the Divide* (2015), have highlighted intersections between language, belief, and shared literary culture, offering useful parallels for Persian–Sanskrit–Kashmiri interactions. Finally, Zutshi's *Languages of Belonging* (2017) synthesises historical and political perspectives, showing how linguistic change in Kashmir is deeply tied to questions of identity, belonging, and regional politics.

Gaps and positioning. Despite strong foundational and theoretical scholarship, several gaps remain. First, there is limited comparative textual work that reads specific Kashmiri poetic forms (vakh, vatsun, shrukh) alongside contemporaneous Sanskrit and Persian texts to trace formal and thematic borrowings at the micro level. Second, while Pollock and others describe structural processes of cosmopolitanism and vernacularisation, fewer studies apply these models directly to Kashmir's unique intersection of Shaiva and Sufi literatures. Third, the role of non-elite and oral traditions in contesting or reshaping elite literary discourses in Kashmir is underexplored. Your study — by conducting close textual analysis of Sanskrit and Kashmiri poetic corpora, situating those readings within Pollockian and Gramscian frameworks, and focusing specifically on Shaiva and Sufi intersections — will address these lacunae. It will contribute both empirically (by documenting cross-linguistic motifs and stylistic transfers) and theoretically (by testing and refining cosmopolis/hegemony models in a multilingual frontier setting).

Analysis (with poetry):

Sheikh-ul-Alam:

Tslun chue wuzmali ti tarti
Tslun Chue Mandnan Ghatkar
Tslun chue paan kadun ghrati
Tslun chue khun vah ti ghar
Tslun chue parbatas karni ato
Tslun chue manz ahas hun nar

Endurance is like a flickering light and falling lightning

To endure if the day has become dark

Toleration is like pulling yourself out of a mill

To tolerate is like eating poison

Endurance is equivalent to carrying a burden on one's shoulders

Endurance is like taking a burning fire in the palm of your hand

Word in Kashmiri	Sanskrit Gloss	Meaning in English
parbatas	पर्वत (<i>parvata</i>)	mountain
karni	करनी (<i>karnī</i>) or <i>karmaṇi</i>	act, deed, doing
ato	अतो (<i>aṭaḥ</i>) possibly from <i>atha</i> (अथ)	then, thereafter
nar	नर (<i>nara</i>)	man, human
mandnan	मन्द (<i>manda</i>) + suffix	slow, sluggish
ghatkar	घट (<i>ghaṭa</i>) + -kara	pot-maker, vessel-maker (or metaphorical)
ghar	गृह (<i>grha</i>)	house, home

Panus maul karnai haray

Siati baiyis karni maan maan

Darug TZain trawith Suzan Garai

Ratus duhus waraiy paan

Per ti paan saidrus tarai

Sui dapzi mussalman

One who does not pride oneself
One who does not complete the petty things?
One who is struggling to realise his self
One who helps everyone to live a peaceful life?
One is the real Muslim

Word in Kashmiri	Sanskrit Gloss	Meaning in English
karnai	करण (karaṇa)	to do, to make
haray	हर (hara)	to take away, remove
siati	शान्ति (śānti) or संयति (saṃyati)	peace, calm / restraint
karni	करनी (karṇī)	deed, act
maan	मान (māna)	honour, respect
darug	द्रुघ (drugha)	lie, falsehood
zain	ज्ञ (jñā) / ज्ञान (jñāna)	knowledge, knowing
suzan	सुज्ञ (sujñā)	wise, knowledgeable
garai	गृह (gr̥ha)	house, home
ratus	रात्र (rātra)	night
paan	पान (pāna)	self, oneself
saidrus	सदृश (sadr̥śa)	like, similar to
tarai	तीर (tīra) or तार (tāra)	bank, shore / to cross

*“An poshi teli,
Yeli van poshi”*
Food will thrive only
Till the woods survive

Word in Kashmiri	Sanskrit Gloss	Meaning in English
an	अन्न (anna)	food, grain
poshi	पोषण (poṣaṇa)	nourishment, feeding
teli	तदानीम् (tadānīm) or तस्मिन् काले (tasmin kāle)	then, at that time
van	वन (vana)	forest

Lal Ded: Kashmiri verse

Shiv Tchui Thaleh Thaleh Rozaan
Mo Zaan Huend Ti Musalmaan
Turk Hi Chukh Ti Paan Parzehnaav
Soi Tchaie Sahibas Zaani Zaan
Wherever you are, Shiva is present
Don't discriminate between Hindus and Muslims,
Cognise yourself if you are wise
Knowing yourself is the truth of God.

Word	Sanskrit Root	Meaning
Shiv	शिव (Śiva)	Auspicious/Divine
Thaleh	स्थल (Sthala)	Place, ground (everywhere)
Rozaan	दर्शन (Darshan)	See, observe, visible
Huend	सिन्धु→हिन्दू (Sindhu→Hindu)	Hindu Person
Parzehnaav	पारिज्ञा (Parijna)	To know/realize
Soi	सः (Sah)	He/That one (Divine)
Zaan	ज्ञान (Jñāna)	Know, knowledge

Goras Pritchum Saasi Latte
Yes Na Kehn Vanaan Tas Kya Naav
Pritchaaan Pritchaaan Thachis Ti Loosis,
Kehn Nas Nishi Kehntaam Draav
I asked my master a thousand times
How the unnamed shall be described,
I asked several times, but it remained ineffective
He who seems to be nothing is the origin of something.

Kashmiri Word	Sanskrit Root	Meaning
Goras	गौर (Gaura)	Fair one, bright
Pritchum/aan	पृच्छ (Pṛcch)	Asked, enquire
Saasi	श्वास (Śvāsa)	Breath
Naav	नाम (Nāma)	Name
Nas	न (Na)	Not/No
Nishi	निशि (Nishi)	Night/from
Draav	द्राव् (Drāv)	Came, to move, to flow

Aasiy Aess Ti Aasiy Aasaw
Aasee Doora Keri Pat Wath
Shivas Soori ni Zevun Ti Marun
Ravas Soori Ni Aati Gath
Only we existed in the times of yore
And in the coming future, we shall exist,
We have been in charge from the start
Shiva is never exhausted by birth and death
Rising and Setting of the Sun are forever.

Kashmiri Word	Sanskrit Root	Meaning
Aasiy/Aasee	अस् (As)	To be, to exist (is, was, will be)
Doora	दूर (Dūra)	Distant, far
Pat	पथ (Patha)	Path, track
Wath	वाट (Vāta)	Path, road, way
Shivas	शिव (Śiva)	Lord Shiva, the auspicious one
Marun	मरण (Marāṇa)	Death
Ravas	रव (Rava), रवति	To flow, movement
Aati	आगति (Agati)	Coming, arrival
Gath	गति (Gati)	State, destination, end

Rangas Manz Tchuie Beun Beun Labun

Soorie Tchalakh Barakh Sokh

Tchakh Rish Ti Vaerr Galakh

Adeh Daishakh Shiv Sund Mokh

You need to find Him, who is in every shade

If you endure it, you will find contentment,

Get rid of anger, envy and grudge

Then you will witness the face of Shiva.

Kashmiri Word	Sanskrit Root	Meaning/Translation
Rangas	रङ्ग (Ranga)	Color, play, experience
Manz	मध्य (Madhya)	In, inside, within
Labun	लब्ध (Labh)	Found, obtained
Tchalakh	चल (Chala)	To move, moving
Sokh	सुख (Sukha)	Happiness, comfort
Rish	ऋषि (Rishi)	Sage, seer
Adeh	आज (Adya)	Today, now
Shiv	शिव (Shiva)	Shiva (deity)
Sund	स्व (Sva)	His/her/its, of
Mokh	मुख (Mukha)	Face

Goran Vonum Kunuie Vatchun

Nebrai Dupnam Ander Atchun

Sui Gaw Lali Mi Vaakh Ti Vatchun

Tawai Mya Heytum Nangai Natchun

My Guru taught me the sole word

Enter your inner self, leave behind this outer world,

Guru's that one percept touched my heart

So, I, Lalla, started dancing naked.

Kashmiri Word	Sanskrit Root	Meaning/Translation
Goran	गौर (Gaura)	Fair one, Divine/Beloved
Vonum	वण (Vaṇa)	I said/called
Vatchun	वचन (Vachana)	To speak/say/tell
Dupnam	दीपन (Dīpana)	I lit (a lamp)
Ander	अन्तः (Antaḥ)	Inside, within
Sui	सः (Saḥ)	He, she, that one
Lali	ललिता (Lalitā)	Beloved/Divine Mother
Vaakh	वचन (Vachana)	Saying/word/utterance
Tawai	तदा (Tadā)	Then, at that time
Nangai	नग्न (Nagna)	Naked, bare
Natchun	नृत्य (Nr̥tya)	Dance

Habba Khatoon:

Rah Bakshtam Saer Parvar'digaro

Tche kyoho vatiyo myaeni marnai?

Sipar treh mar paermo kiano

Phyur no kuni gomei zaer zabre

Tche kyoho vatiyo myaeni marnai?

Tab cham badnas Habba Khotunay

Adde no aavham zah te khabray

Teli yikha yil travnam mazaro

Tche kyoho vatiyo myaeni marnai?

Oh Allah, forgive all my sins and
show me the right way
What do you stand to gain by my death?
I read all thirty Sipars (Chapters) of the Quran shareef;
without making any errors, checking each verse carefully, and reading it faithfully
What do you stand to gain by my death?
O' Habba, the body aches
Yet, you never came to my help
Will you only come to visit my funeral?
What do you stand to gain by my death?

Word in Kashmiri	Sanskrit Gloss	Meaning in English
rah	मार्ग (<i>mārga</i>) — via Persian/Arabic <i>rah</i> but originally from Sanskrit	path, way
saer	सैर (<i>sair</i>) ← from Sanskrit सञ्चार (<i>sañcāra</i>)	walk, journey
marnai	मरण (<i>marāṇa</i>)	death
treh	त्रयः (<i>trayaḥ</i>)	three
paermo	पद्म (<i>padma</i>) or प्रेम (<i>prema</i>) depending on meaning in context	lotus / love
kiano	ज्ञ (<i>jñā</i>) root in <i>jānāti</i>	to know
kuni	कोन (<i>kona</i>) / कश्चित् (<i>kaścit</i>)	someone, anyone
mazaro	मन्दिर (<i>mandira</i>) — here “mazar” = shrine/tomb (Persian form) but from Sanskrit root <i>mandira</i>	shrine, sacred place

Wolo Myaeni Poshey Madano
Dil nith tcholham roshey,
Wolo Myaeni Poshey Madano!
Wolai ve'si' gachhvai aabas,
Dunya Chhu nendri ta Khaabas,
Praraan chass bo' jawaabas, Wo'lo...
Having snatched my heart, you have gone far off,
Come, my Love, my flowery Cupid!
Let us go, friend, to fetch water:
The world is fast asleep, Love,
I yearn for a response from you,
Come, O Come, my flowery Cupid.

Word in Kashmiri	Sanskrit Gloss	Meaning in English
roshey	रोष (roṣa)	anger, wrath
nendri	निद्रा (nidrā)	sleep
praraan	प्रार्थना (prārthanā) or प्रारण (prāraṇa) depending on nuance	request, appeal / beginning
madano	मदन (madana)	god of love / beloved

Harmukh Bartal za'gai Madano
Ye dapham te laa'gayo!
Posh dapham
Gulaab la'gai Madano
Baet'no ye dooraer tchalay Madano
Ye dapham te laa'gayo!
Mushtaq goham Kaman Madano

Ye dapham te laa'gayo!
Harmukh Bartal za'gai Madano
I will wait at the gates of Harmukh for you, my love
Whatever you ask, I will offer!
Ask for a flower
I will offer a rose, my love!
I can't take this distance anymore
Whatever you ask, I will offer!
Yearning for whom, my love
Whatever you ask, I will offer!
I will wait at the gates for you, my love

Word in Kashmiri	Sanskrit Gloss	Meaning in English
Harmukh	हर (hara) + मुख (mukha)	“Hara’s face” – name of a Himalayan peak sacred to Shiva
Bartal	वर (vara) + स्थल (sthāla) or स्थल (sthāla)	holy place / location
za'gai	जाग (jāga) or जागृत (jāgrta)	awakened, risen, visible
posh	पुष्प (puṣpa)	flower
dooraer	दूर (dūra)	far, distant
kaman	कामन (kāmana)	desire, longing
madano	मदन (madana)	god of love / beloved

Vany dimai aara balan
yaara kunyi melakhnaa
vany dimai aaravalan
dubara yaara melakhnaa
I'll seek you down the wandering brooks
Praying we must meet again
I'll look for you where the jasmines blow
Don't tell me we shan't meet again

Word in Kashmiri	Sanskrit Gloss	Meaning in English
yaara	यार (yāra) ← from Sanskrit सख्य (sakhya) / मित्र (mitra) via Prakrit forms	friend, beloved
kunyi	कुञ्ज (kuñja) or कन्या (kanyā) depending on context	girl / young woman (if kanyā) or bower/grove (if kuñja)
melakhnaa	मेल (mela) + करना (karṇā)	to meet, to gather
dubara	द्विपर (dvipara) / द्वितीय (dvitīya)	second, again

Ghulam Ahmad Mehjoor:

kor baTan p'aTh zuv phida kud gojvaer'
az timay kathI yaad paeviv paanIvaen'
yod thaeviv athIvaas tohi pooshivI na kanh
tshen karith yinI pooshinaeviv paanIvaen'
baey sund baeyis paz'a thaavun malaal
ganD dilan hInd' mutsraeviv paanIvaen'

Kud Gojawari sacrificed his life for the Kashmiri Pandits. Let us remember and relive those moments together today. As long as we stand united, no enemy can defeat us. Division only makes us vulnerable. Let no brother hold a grudge against another. Let us untie the knots in our hearts and restore harmony among ourselves.

Word in Kashmiri	Sanskrit Gloss	Meaning in English
kath / kathi	कथा (kathā)	story, talk
paan / paanIvaen	पान (pāna) / स्व (sva)	self, oneself
ath / athIvaas	हस्त (hasta)	hand
pooshiv/ pooshinaeviv	पूज (pūj)	to worship, to honor
kanh	कञ्चन (kañcana) or किम् (kim) depending on sense	anything / golden (context decides)
hind	हिन्द (hinda from Hindu)	India / Indian (contextually “of Hind”)

*chi baagas jaanvar bolaan magar aavaaz chakh byon byon
tsI yihindis aalvas yaarab asar yeksaan paida kar
mashiidan, mandran, girjan, daramshalan tI astaan
yiman yiiten garan atsnuk kunuy darvaazi thaavun chum*

The birds in the garden are chirping and singing, yet their voices do not blend. Perhaps just a touch of blessing could harmonise their songs into one unified melody. In the same way, temples, mosques, churches, dharamshalas, and asthapanas—each a place of worship for different faiths—stand apart. How beautiful it would be if they all could share a single doorway, symbolising unity in devotion.

Word in Kashmiri	Sanskrit Gloss	Meaning in English
baagas	बाग (bāga) – though now via Persian, ultimately from Sanskrit <i>vāṭa</i>	garden
aalvas	आलय (ālaya)	abode, dwelling
mandran	मन्दिर (mandira)	temple
girjan	गिरिजा (giriṇā)	“daughter of the mountain” – name for goddess Parvati; also used for church in Kashmiri
daramshalan	धर्मशाला (dharmaśālā)	religious rest house, pilgrim lodge

Word in Kashmiri	Sanskrit Gloss	Meaning in English
baagvaano	बाग (bāga) ← from Sanskrit <i>vāṭa</i>	gardener (keeper of the garden)
pholan	फूल (phūla) ← पुष्प (puṣpa)	to bloom, flowering
caman	चमन (camana) ← from Sanskrit <i>śamana</i> or <i>kṣemaṇa</i>	garden
panjras	पिंजरा (piñjarā)	cage
manz	मध्ये (madhye) via Prakrit <i>majjha</i>	in, within
aasaan	आसन (āsana)	ease, comfort
baagas	बाग (bāga) ← <i>vāṭa</i>	garden
aalvas	आलय (ālaya)	abode, dwelling

voalo haa baagvaano nav bahaaruk shaan paida kar
pholan gul gath karan bulbul tithuy saamaan paida kar
caman viraan rivaan shabnam tsaTith jaamI paraishaan gul
Gulan Tay Bulbulan andar dubaarI jaan paida kar
kari kus bulbulo azaad panjras manz tsI naalaan chukh
tsI panIne dastI panInen mushkilaan aasaan paida kar
chi baagas jaanawaar bolaan magar avaaaz chakh byon byon
tihIndis aalvas ya rab asar yaksaan paida kar
Arise oh gardener, let there be a glory in the garden once again.
Let flowers bloom again, let nightingales sing of their love again.
The garden in ruins, dew in tears, the flowers in tattered petals.
May you kindle new life in flowers and nightingales? Who will set
You free, oh nightingale, why cry inside the cage? You have to work
out your salvation from miseries yourself. Birds of the garden are
singing loudly but in different notes. Harmonise their different
notes oh God into one loud song.
nyaay traeviv maay thaviv paanIvaen'
poz mohobat baegraeviv paanIvaen'
zaat butraath kaeshr'an hINz chav kuni
khanmakha duuryar ma paeviv paanIvaen'
doad chu muslim h'oNd chu shaker saaph saaph
doad ta beyi shakar ralaeviv paanivaen'
nyaay traviv maay thaviv paanivaen'
hend' raTan nam, khuur' vaayen ahle diin
naav yemi mulkIc calaeviv paanIvaen'

Leave the disputes and live-in harmony with each other. Distribute the true love amongst each other. Leave the disputes and live-in harmony with each other. The caste, creed and land of Kashmiris are the same (only one). Do not create unnecessary distances between each other. Muslim is like milk, and Hindu is like crystal clear sugar. Mix the milk with sugar together. Hindus

shall hold the direction of the boat; Muslims shall row the boat. Row the boat of this country together.

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Word in Kashmiri	Sanskrit Gloss	Meaning in English
kathi	कथा (kathā)	story, talk
paan / paanIvaen	पान (pāna) / स्व (sva)	self, oneself
ath / athIvaas	हस्त (hasta)	hand
pooshiv / pooshinaeviv	पूज (pūj)	to worship, to honor
kanh	किम् (kim)	anything
hInd'	हिन्द (hindu)	India / of Hind

chi baagas jaanvar bolaan magar aavaaz chakh byon byon
tsI yihindis aalvas yaarab asar yeksaan paida kar
mashiidan, mandran, girjan, daramshalan tI astaan
yiman yiiten garan atsnuk kunuy darvaazi thaavun chum

The birds in the garden are singing, but in different voices. Oh God, please bless their voices with a touch of unity to create a single impact for mosques, temples, churches, dharamshalas and asthans. We need to establish a single entrance for all these religious places.

Word in Kashmiri	Sanskrit Gloss	Meaning in English
aalvas	आलय (ālaya)	abode, dwelling
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girjan	गिरिजा (giriṣā)	“Daughter of the mountain” – epithet of Parvati; in Kashmiri also used for church
daramshalan	धर्मशाला (dharmaśālā)	religious rest house / pilgrim lodge

Conclusion

This research examines Kashmir’s literary and linguistic development, tracing its historical connection with Sanskrit cosmopolitanism to its emergence as a hub of local expression. Utilising various sources from ancient Sanskrit writings, aesthetic theories, and Śāradā inscriptions to mystical poetry from Kashmir and bilingual works such as Śiva-Parinayaḥ, it contends that the transition from Sanskrit to Kashmiri involved not just a language change, but a profound cultural and ideological shift.

For centuries, Sanskrit acted as the language of sacred power, political legitimacy, and intellectual respect, influencing religious practices, royal life, and historical documentation, as demonstrated in the writings of Kalhaṇa, Jonarāja, and numerous epigraphic records. The philosophical richness and artistic elegance of Sanskrit literature, exemplified in the works of Kālidāsa, Bhavabhūti, and Kashmiri Shaivism, laid the groundwork for subsequent vernacular innovation.

The emergence of Kashmiri as a literary form—represented in the mystical poetry of Lal Ded and Nund Rishi—signified a significant shift, transitioning spiritual and moral discussions from the elite Sanskrit to a more reachable, oral, and emotionally impactful format. These voices, eventually accompanied by poets like Habba Khatoon and Mahjoor, expressed individual, regional, and political awareness in the Kashmiri language.

Employing Sheldon Pollock’s ideas of the Sanskrit cosmopolis and vernacularisation, this study illustrates how language in Kashmir transformed into a medium for negotiating power, identity, and cultural significance. The survival of Sanskrit historiography during the Sultanate era, together with Persianate and vernacular forms, demonstrates a lasting literary diversity. Bilingual texts like Śiva-Parinayaḥ exemplify a blended environment where Sanskrit and Kashmiri influenced each other in reciprocal manners.

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