

Habba Khatoon: The Unparalleled Queen of Lyricism

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Abstract

The present paper is an attempt to study Habba Khatoon against the backdrop of poetry written before her and establish her as a historic figure in Kashmiri literature. Kashmiri literature had to wait for four hundred years after Lal Ded before a bright star like Habba Khatoon shone in the firmament of Kashmiri literature. Further attempt is made to show that how did she uplift the lyrical folk poetry to higher imaginative and creative heights and popularized the Vatsun form of expression and became its unparalleled queen. Study has been made to show how in sharp contrast with her predecessors she passionately revels in this mundane world with all its colours and contours. Effort has been made to bring out the various shades of light and darkness, celebration and lamentation in her poetry making it a mere remembrance of bygone things of the past on the one side and an elegy or a mournful cry in distress on the other. This paper also seeks out to establish her as a messiah of Kashmiri music which was on the edge of death due to lack of patronage before her attention.

Discussion

The category of poetic expression which dominated the whole of Kashmiri poetry for the last eight to ten hundred years is the category whose basic quality is lyrical. This category gives vent to personal pleasures and displeasures. Habba Khatoon is considered to be the first Kashmiri songstress who uplifted this category from the level of folk poetry and imparted to it the peculiar tone and individuality of expression paving the way of its creative sublimity and as such played a historic role during the 16th Century AD. Her parents perhaps called her by the name of „zoon“ or „habba“ who subsequently became famous as Habba Khatoon— a personality surrounded by myth like but significant tales. The oldest mention of Habba Khatoon and the distinctive qualities of her poetry is found in a few Persian verses of a Kashmiri Persian poet, Abdul Wahaab Shayak, who lived some two and a half century after

