

## Lexico-Semantic Analysis of Shaikh-ul-Aalam's<sup>(RA)</sup> Poetry

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### Abstract

Whenever we read poetry or any literature from different ages, we notice that language changes with time, noticeable in Kashmiri literature from different times. Since considering the poetry of *Shaikh-ul-Aalam*<sup>(RA)</sup>, the specimen of 14th-century Kashmiri literature, the Language of Shruks is perceived to be varied but still closer to our contemporary language, yet it demands an intense research study. The present work explores the lexical change, a Linguistic-based approach to the analysis of literature, specifically, poetry in Kashmiri language with special reference to kalam-e- *Shaikh-ul-Aalam*<sup>(RA)</sup> popularly known as *Shruks*. Lexical and semantic change technically describes a change in a word's usage or meaning and a generational advancement in people's preferences for particular words or phrases. Language changes most commonly occur through lexical changes, which are much more evident than other kinds of language change. Lexical change takes place at various levels hence diverse kinds of linguistic change the Kashmiri lexicon has undergone through the ages have been explored in this paper. Linguists claim that the lexicon is the most volatile part of language and most likely to undergo change due to superstate influence in a language contact situation.

**Keywords:** Shaikh-ul-Aalam, Poetry and Shruks, Language change, Lexical change, Lexicon.

### The Objective of the Study

The purpose of the study is to provide a reference tool for examining the lexical change in the Kashmiri language with the help of the analytical study of the lexicon of the Shruks. This study aims to explore the linguistic change that has taken place in the Kashmiri language in the last 7 centuries. The Study will acquaint readers with historical, cultural, and linguistic aspects of *Shaikh-ul-Aalam's*<sup>(RA)</sup> work and the richness of his language use. This Lexical change investigation will be especially valuable to translators and, more importantly, the young generations to read and interpret the Shruks unequivocally.

## Research Methodology

This study applies the methods and insights of linguistics to the description and interpretation of Shaikh ul Aalam's poetic diction using discourse-analytical parameters. Literature as a discourse is constructed with language, and for this reason a linguistic study is necessary. Suitable analytical techniques will be applied to examine lexical change in the selected data. Certainly, the implementation of qualitative methods, such as discourse analysis will provide deeper insights into specific instances of lexical change. The comparative method, that is comparison of data from different periods to identify changes like changes in patterns, semantic drift, or lexical borrowing from other languages, will be implied in this study to determine such changes in the Kashmiri lexicon. Moreover, various causes of linguistic change such as sociolinguistic, historical, or cultural factors that may have influenced the observed lexical changes would also be contemplated.

## Introduction

### A Brief Biography of Poet

Hazrat Shaikh -ul- Aalam Shaikh Nooruddin Noorani <sup>(RA)</sup>, dearly known as Nund Reshi, is the most admired saint and poet of the valley of Kashmir. He is also represented as Alamdar-e-Kashmir. He is a revered and highly respected spiritual leader or scholar with profound knowledge, wisdom, and spiritual insight. Shaikh ul Aalam <sup>(RA)</sup> is regarded as a spiritual guide or a teacher who helps individuals on their path toward spiritual enlightenment and closeness to God. He was believed to have attained a high level of spiritual realization and was regarded as a source of inspiration and guidance for his followers. It is widely considered that he was one of the most potent personalities of the 13th century. In terms of narrative, style, and thinking, his poetry (Shruks) is exceptional. Shruks speak of international brotherhood, love, and compassion, primarily rooted in the Qur'an and Hadith.

As far as Nund Reshi's life, he was born in Qaimoh in Kulgam district, Jammu and Kashmir. An important characteristic of his work as a socio-religious reformer is his commitment to the principles of religious tolerance and human rights. Throughout his poetry, he emphasizes the importance of social reform and human dignity as the basis for his teachings. An ardent reformer of social and religious affairs, he condemns violence and extremism. In his teachings, he speaks about the elimination of grudges and lusts of the world by purifying the

heart and soul. He usually speaks of attaining Allah's pleasure (Saifullah). He is regarded as one of the greatest social and religious reformers of all time due to his powerful and innovative ideology.

Shaikh Noor-Ud-Din Noorani <sup>(RA)</sup>, besides being a prominent saint of Kashmir, was also an accomplished poet who employed intricate poetic techniques in his works, known as Shruks. The Shruks of Shaikh-ul-Aalam <sup>(RA)</sup> are deeply embedded in the phonological, semantic, and lexical framework of the 14th-century Kashmiri language, necessitating thorough linguistic analysis on multiple levels. One of the most remarkable features of his poetry is its ability to continuously evolve in meaning as one reads it. Given the adaptability of Shaikh's character, it is understandable that his poetry has been interpreted differently across various eras. This timeless relevance contributes to his lasting influence.

### **His Poetry (Shruks)**

Poetry is a very unique literary form in literature because of the poetic language it inherits and the adept use of diction. Shaikh-ul-Aalam <sup>(RA)</sup> is a universal poet whose poetry is for every individual of all eras. He is the first to introduce the Kashmiri language so proficiently as a literary language and has affected sculpting the Kashmiri society and language. His poems gained widespread recognition, even among the uninitiated. Every word that Shaikh ul Aalam uses to convey his message, as well as all of his poetry, is satiated with philanthropic feelings. Every single word of his message is filled with the sentiments of philanthropy and his poetry is complete with such. His poetry enchanted nearly all of the people of his and later generations and are mesmerized by its beauty and depth.

Moreover, Shaikh-ul-Aalam's poetry is a vernacular literature, that is composed in a local language of the 14th-century era. He used this language to spread his message to the common people and skilfully made use of it to maximize the effect, to create clear moods and images, and to make his discourse and poems more vivid, powerful, and easy to understand.

It is common for every literary language to use metaphors, allusions, symbols, and similes, and Shaikh ul Aalam uses these symbols and metaphors from the local Kashmiri language that too in a very proficient way – and these symbols have sufficed him in accomplishing the aim of his poetry which is its spirit and work of great virtue. His fecund use of diction in his literary language has undertaken to develop a new sense of perception in the

masses of the valley. The reader becomes enamoured with him through his poetry. He is recognized as the greatest Kashmiri poet of the 14th century.

Shaikh's verses reflect the emotions and desires of readers of all ages, and the poet does not disappoint them, because he has quoted thousands of such spectacular verses:

آدنہ یہ کرکھ تہ اد نہ تگی

آدنہ کرکھ تہ لگی سستی

یم پھلی وکھ چھتی یازگی

تم آخرتس لونگھ کتی

کیہہ ییلہ چھتی دیہہ ییلہ پیگی

نندی تہ ٹٹھی لگہ نئے پانس سستی

What you can do young, you can't do later;

What you do in youth, will surely stay.

The seeds you sow, white or brown;

In Hereafter, Its fruit you'll surely reap,

When your hair turns grey and frame weak;

Your deeds will follow; virtuous or cheap

### Language Change -Lexical Change Analysis

Language change is the study of change in language and analyses the various forces that can bring about change in different domains of a language. Language change, also known as linguistic change, is the phenomenon where some linguistic traits change through time. It is a slow but ongoing process.

We have come to know different types of change in terms of the different components of language (phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics). However, there is at least one aspect

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**Language in India** [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com) ISSN 1930-2940 Vol. 24:9 September 2024

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that transcends these many language elements and unites these alterations. All of them have the potential to have a significant impact on the various and diverse components that collectively make up a language's lexicon. The frequent sound changes results in a very fundamental, rudimentary sort of lexical change. The pronunciation of lexical items containing a particular sound will change when that sound or class of sounds changes.

For instance, when the Latin word for 'father', *pater* [pater], became French *père* [pɛr] as the result of regular vowel changes and the regular loss of intervocalic, the lexical item for 'father' changed. (Language History, Language Change, and Language Relationship Hans Henrich Hock and Brian D. Joseph)

Lexical change is, both the use and addition of new vocabulary to the lexicon, as well as the demise of lexical items with the passage of time. However, it has implications for the description of historical processes of semantic change (especially if viewed from an onomasiological perspective), and also for the loss of lexical items, to consider how new lexical items are created through processes of derivational morphology and borrowings from other languages. Changes in phonology and morphology involve dealing with limited numbers of basic units (phonemes, inflectional, and derivational morphemes) at any given time. Phonemes and morphemes are lost or added when phonological and morphological changes occur. Semantic change, on the other hand, involves an infinite number of elements (words) and semantic properties (meanings). A word's acquisition of a new meaning does not necessarily result in the (instant) loss of its prior meaning(s).

Lexical change can also result from analogical change. Analogical change, also known as analogical levelling or analogical reformation, is a type of language change that occurs when speakers modify a word or a grammatical form to make it more consistent with similar words or forms in the language. This process involves applying a pattern or analogy from one word or form to another, resulting in a regularized or simplified system.

For instance, the levelling of the sibilant: [r] alternation in OE *ceosan* [c̥eozan] : *ceas* [c̥eas] : *curon* : (ge)-*coren* in favor of -s- [z], ultimately yielding Mod. Engl. *choose* : *chose* : *chosen* may be said to have produced a change in the phonological forms of this lexical item. (Language History, Language Change, and Language Relationship Hans Henrich Hock and Brian D. Joseph)

*Old English*

*Modern English*

pres.	<i>ceosan</i>	<i>Chose</i>
past sg.	<i>ceas</i>	<i>Chose</i>
past pl.	<i>curon</i>	<i>Chose</i>
past ppl.	<i>Coren</i>	<i>Chosen</i>

As far as the lexical study is concerned it is vital to examine how authors have employed language to convey meaning(s) in their works of literature. The present study examines the diction of Shaikh ul Aalam's poetry, focusing on lexical change categories such as lexical loss, lexical shift, taboo, semantic shift, semantic narrowing, pejoration, amelioration, and bleaching as linguistic patterns for encoding the language change in Kashmiri lexicon through centuries. The method involves classifying the textual features, indicating how the terms are used and the textual distinctiveness marking usages or language habits that stand out within the text (Leech and Short, 1985:47)

Each generation takes a language and makes it their own, pushing it in new directions. Language change occurs across all levels of language, including sounds, words, and grammar. At the end of the old English period in the 1100s, British speakers dropped a lot of suffixes, changing the language's grammar. In Historical linguistics, a general term referring to change within a language over a period of time is seen as a universal and unstoppable process. The phenomenon was first systematically investigated by comparative philologists at the end of the eighteenth century, and in the twentieth century by historical linguists and sociolinguists.

Language change is a two-step process involving the generation of variations (innovations) and the propagation of a variant through a speech community. Speaker acts form utterances which replicate structures heard before, and structures combine in new ways form novel utterances as the variability of language use is exponential. (Baxter, G. J., Blythe, R. A., Croft, W. and McKane, A. J. 2009)

### **. Factors of Language Change**

Writes Brian (2003:118), "Language change takes place due to various factors like psychological factors, physiological factors, systemic factors, and social factors."

Besides the above-mentioned causes of language change, there are several other factors like economy and language contact situation which also play due role in the process of language change. Furthermore, Lexical change can be categorized into three factors: social factors,

demographic factors, and institutional support factors, according to the Giles et al. (1977) Model of Language Shift and Language Vitality.

Language change takes place at different levels like phonetic, phonological, lexical, morphological, syntactic, and semantic, over a period of time. However, since a close look at all these levels would not be possible in this study, attention will only be given to the lexical and semantic level of language change. Lexical change can be divided into three categories: loss of lexical items, change of meaning, and creation of new lexical items. The result of this process is the addition of new words to the lexicon that need to be standardized and recognized as formal. There are various levels or concepts based on which these lexical and semantic changes are analyzed.

Analyzing the lexicon of *Shaikh-ul-Aalam* <sup>(RA)</sup>, the following are given some of the classifications of lexical and semantic changes in the Kashmiri lexicon that have taken place through centuries.

### **Lexical Loss**

It is a process in which a word loses its form over a period of time. e.g.; the word ‘thee’ was used in old English but now it is not used anymore.

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Lexical Item used in Shaikh-Ul-Alam's Poetry	Etymology	Meaning	Word in Current Usage
<i>Agin</i>	Sanskrit	fire	<i>Naar</i>
<i>Ahankaar</i>	Sanskrit	Pride	<i>Gumand</i>
<i>Gyan</i>	Sanskrit	Knowledge	<i>Alim</i>

### Lexical Shift

Lexical shift refers to a change in the use of a word or a generational shift in preference for one word over another e.g., the word 'wife' was derived from a Germanic term "wibam" used for all women but now is used only for wife.

Lexical Item Used in Shaikh-Ul-Alam's Poetry	Etymology	Meaning	Lexical Shift (Word in Current Usage)
<i>Mas</i>	Sanskrit	wine	<i>Sharaab</i>
<i>Peethir</i>	kashmiri	Acting	<i>Drama</i>

### Taboo



It is the restricted use of words due to social constraints e.g. calling a person by the name of an animal such as ‘cow’, or ‘bitch’.

<b>Lexical Item used in Shaikh-Ul-Alam’s Poetry</b>	<b>Etymology</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
<i>Doomb</i>	Sanskrit	Lower caste community
<i>Kolai</i>	Kashmiri	Wife
<i>Tcharul</i>	Kashmiri	Night watchman

### Semantic Shift

It refers to any change in the meanings of a word over time. e.g; the word ‘guy’ was used to address the boys but its meaning has changed now it is used for both boys and girls.

<b>Lexical Item used in Shaikh-Ul-Alam’s Poetry</b>	<b>Etymology</b>	<b>Meaning</b>	<b>Semantic shift (meaning in current usage)</b>
<i>Dah</i>	Kashmiri	Fire	Ten
<i>Khar</i>	Persian	Wood-House	Donkey
<i>Khaar</i>	Kashmiri		Blacksmith

		The cylindrical container over the grinding mill	
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### Semantic Narrowing

In semantic narrowing, words' meaning becomes more specific over time. It's also called specification. e.g. meat used to refer to all foods but now just refers to animal flesh.

Lexical Item used in Shaikh- Ul-Alam's Poetry	Etymology	Meaning	Semantic Narrowing (meaning in Current usage)
<i>Ann</i>	Sanskrit	Food	To Bring
<i>Daed</i>	Kashmiri	Respect for women	Elderly women
<i>Din</i>	Kashmiri	wealth	To Give

### Pejoration

The process by which the meaning of a word becomes negative over a period of time. e.g. 'silly' used to mean "blissfully happy" but now has changed its meaning to "stupid".

<b>Lexical Item used in Shaikh- Ul-Alam's Poetry</b>	<b>Etymology</b>	<b>Meaning</b>	<b>Pejoration (meaning in current usage)</b>
<i>Shaikh</i>	Arabic	Religious Scholar	Cobbler, Sweeper
<i>Taph</i>	Sanskrit	Yogic practices	Fever

### **Amelioration**

It is the opposite of pejoration, where the meaning of a word becomes positive over a period of time. e.g.; 'Nice' used to mean "foolish and absurd" whereas now it means "kind and caring".

<b>Lexical Item used in Shaikh- Ul-Alam's Poetry</b>	<b>Etymology</b>	<b>Meaning</b>	<b>Amelioration (meaning in current usage)</b>
<i>Gul</i>	Persian	Noise	Flower

### **Bleaching**

It is such a kind of semantic change where a words' original meaning is reduced over time eg, 'horrible' and 'terrible' used to mean full of joy but now it's not used for any wonder anymore.

<b>Lexical Item used in Shaikh- Ul-Alam's Poetry</b>	<b>Etymology</b>	<b>Meaning</b>	<b>Bleaching (meaning in Current usage)</b>
<i>Koel</i>	Sanskrit	Family	Stream
<i>Maar</i>	Persian	Snake	Hit/Beat
<i>Wan</i>	Kashmiri	Forest	To Speak

Carter and McCarthy (1988: 19) state: "The vocabulary of a language is in constant flux; old items drop out, new terms come in, and as the new replace and augment the old, so the internal relations of the whole set alter."

From the above lexical analysis, it is evident that lexical change has figured Kashmiri lexicon in a new certified form. It has been demonstrated that language contact naturally leads to language change through borrowing or lexical engineering. The above lexicon of Shaikh-ul-Aalam's poetry shows us that for the past 700 years Kashmiri language, like other languages, experienced contact with other languages, like English, Urdu, Arabic, Hindi, etc followed by the process of borrowing, relexicalization, and semantic shift.

## **Conclusion**

Lexical change is a very gradual process although it takes decades and sometimes centuries to happen That is why it is not possible to show when this change has taken place. In the last 7 centuries, various languages like Persian, English, Hindi, and Urdu have been introduced in the valley through foreign invaders, central Asian *Saadats*, mass media, education, social-communicative sites, trade, etc, and have had a great impact on Kashmiri lexicon. It is assumed that youth play a vital role in adapting the words from foreign languages

claiming an identity for themselves they are ‘modern’ as opposed to the older people and the rest of the community who are viewed as ‘primitive.’

According to Cook (1977: 171) each generation of teenagers...proclaims its uniqueness through its vocabulary.’

The younger generation increasingly uses English, Hindi, and Urdu words in place of native Kashmiri words and believes that those who insist on speaking pure Kashmiri are primitive and unexposed to the modern world.

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