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Ved Rahi's *Lal Ded*: The Tale of the Hermit Poetess

Ved Rahi's *Lal Ded* is originally written in Dogri language; Suman K. Sharma has translated it into English and it has been translated into Kashmiri, Pahari, Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu, Marathi and Gujarati. It has been awarded the 'Best Book' prize by the Government of Jammu & Kashmir in 2012. Ved Rahi's *Lal Ded* was published in 2007; his magnum opus has got several firsts to its credit for a narrative in the Dogri language. Ved Rahi's *Lal Ded* is the first full-fledged Dogri novel on a fabled Kashmiri personality whose poetry and spirituality had a great impact on Kashmir's patron saint Sheikh Noor-ud-Din Wali alias Nund Rishi whom she breastfed; Lal Ded actually influenced the Kashmiris' way of life as no other saint did. *Lal Ded* is the first Dogri novel translated into ten languages with the Hindi version currently running in the fourth edition and the original in Rahi's native language in the second and the first Dogri novel whose three translations so far have won the much-acclaimed Sahitya Akademi award for translations, Urdu by the author himself, Sindhi by Sarita Sharma and Kashmiri by Rattan Lal Shant. It has been published by the highly prestigious Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan founded by freedom-fighter, writer and educationist K.M. Munshi, eight decades ago with the avowed objective of promoting ethical and spiritual values. According to renowned Hindi critic Namwar, "Lal Ded is the best novel among all the novels which have been written on the lives of saints. It is very relevant even today".

Deshbandhu Nutan is a renewed Dogri novelist, he has observed, “Many books can be written on the philosophy of *Lal Ded*’s poetry, but in this novel Ved Rahi aptly condensed it in a very interesting and grasping style”. Well-known Kashmiri writer Arjun Dev Majboor has said, “Ved Rahi has made Lal Ded alive again after seven hundred years. We can see the Kashmir of that time in this novel.”

Ved Rahi’s *Lal Ded* is narrating the tale of the hermit poetess. The people of Kashmir have kept those songs close to their bosom as they do the Kangri that innovative fire-pot which keeps them warm even in the harshest cold winds. 700 years ago, too, the valley of Kashmir was passing through the same spell of torment and turmoil as it is today. At that time, the social norms, culture and geopolitics of the region was in rapid flux. In the name of novelty, the old values were being given up for the faith of the aggressive foreigners. Such were the circumstances in which was born Kashmir’s primal poetess, Lal Ded. Centuries have passed, but the songs that she sang in her inborn anguish, assimilating the valley’s intense agony are still being heard in the murmur of chilly winds passing through its woods.

The strength of Rahi’s work is that he makes *Lal Ded* simple to understand. He travels with Lal Ded through her spiritual trip and takes the readers along. It is the dream of every writer in Jammu and Kashmir, in particular, to touch Lal Ded in some way. Jayalal Koul and Nandlal Laib have done it. Vedpal Deep has translated her sayings into the Dogri. Rehman Rahi, Mohammad Yusuf Taing, Shafi Shauq, Baljinath Pandit, B.D. Shastri, Motilal Saqi, Brij Premi, Ratanlal Shant, Rasul Pampore, Arjun Dev Majboor, Kashinath Dar and Vimla Raina are among those who have striven to grasp the meaning of her sayings. Many foreign writers too have made handsome contribution.

Lal Ded would eventually meet in the polarisation that has taken place between the Muslim and Kashmiri Pandit communities in the valley after 1988.

That they should have drifted apart is tragic. It is an ironical as well because both of them have the same origin bound together later by the towering figures of Lal Ded and Sheikh Nur-ud-Din. One notices a war of words on religious lines has already begun over the origin and contribution of Lal Ded which may well distort her wholesome contribution. If allowed to persist it will be an onerous task for any student of history in future to sift the wheat from the chaff about one of the loftiest characters of the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

Ved Rahi's *Lal Ded* begins with description of land scope, Siddhmol is a saint, and he entered the forest. There was dark; there is no space for him to rest. He came out of the jungle at the other end, he saw the river bend. The boatman bode him *namaskar* hold him and seated the pious man on the boat. The boatman narrates the contemporary society, "People here have suffered much. Dwellings have been looted and plundered, farms and fields rendered barren. On the top of it, we have to pay fines. The raja has let loose anarchy. It is fine time; the Raja has let loose anarchy. It is time he was toppled. Maharaj" (Rahi 2). The boatman's appeal to pierce, Siddhamol replied, "Don't worry. Everything will turn out well" (Rahi 2). The boatman stood with folded hands as he went his way with a heart heavier than before. Siddhmol reached Pandrethan village and meets Yandrabat's house.

*Lal Ded* depicts the immoralizing of the ruler of Kashmir. Siddhmol and Yandrabat have been discussed the ruler, and people were fed up with the King. Anarchy and tyranny has prevailed everywhere. Siddhmol said, "It's the cowardice of our rulers that has brought us such calamities. No one can now save our culture, our way of life" (Rahi 7). Ruler has increased more tax; people were not happy and there was a political crisis. Siddhamol talked about Lad Ded with Panditani and Yandrabat. She is a daughter of Yandrabat; she is not an ordinary girl. She is different girl; she is like a drop of water and she has fallen into the pearl-shell. When Siddhmol interpreted the Geeta before her, she asked many questions

Siddhamol did not find Lal Ded at the temple, but he heard Lal Ded's voice calling him, "Gurudev! Gurudev" (Rahi13). He saw Lal Ded running toward him from behind a walnut tree.

*Lal Ded* depicts divine power of Lal Ded. Most of Indian has that power. When Gurudev was searching her, he talked about great philosophy. She asked about books, he replied that he didn't have time. Lal Ded expresses her experience, "I saw all of a sudden was flowing stream. I was amazed where had the stream come from? At first, I did not believe my eyes. I rubbed them and looked at the sight again. The stream had a bridge too for crossing over. Thinking of going across the river, I advanced towards it. And before my eyes the entire sky the whole of earth. Jungles and all the trees had melted down and carried away in its flow" (Rahi 14). Siddhmol was looking at her unblinkingly. He perceived that there was a divine glow on her face. She was narrating many things. Siddhmol stroked her head affectionately and said, "There's nothing wrong with you, my daughter. The visions you see augur well. Don't be upset" (Rahi 15). Lal Ded was feeling that the word has been set up to deceive her. Everything seems to have been made to mislead her. Siddhmol could understand everything, that she has a divine power. Siddhmol talked about the god and the concept of Shiva. Lord Basavanna was a great socio-cultural reformer, in his vachana's he talked about the god; he is residing in our heart. Siddhmol convinced to Lal Ded that, "Daughter, Lord Shiva is putting you in an ordeal. He enters a person's heart only pain'. 'Is this pain a sign of Shiva?'

It's'

'But the pain is in my heart

Why doesn't He appear before me?'"

'He is to be perceived through experience: One day you will certainly see Him'" (Rahi 16). Lal Ded shared many ideas about the world and other things. Siddhmol

realized her divine power, affectionately, she requests him to stay there but he has to go to Kashi. So, he was not willing to stay there, he advised her, “My daughter, when you find yourself lost; peep into yourself. Shiva Shambu who resides in you will show you the way out. Now let me go” (Rahi 18). Siddhmol hugged her and left the place. Lal Ded grows well; her way of thinking is entirely different. She spends more time with the nature. Shali is her good friend, she said to her mother, “Look, the crazy girl sits over there on the landing” (Rahi 20). She was always spending her time near the river, she lowered her feet into the water, and she was munching the apple and said, “One day I shall certainly go across the river” (Rahi 21). Lal Ded was not interested in the worldly life; there was a marriage proposal from Padampur. She rejects the marriage, when her father asked, she replied, “Tell Father, I won’t marry”. “If you don’t marry, what else will you do? Keep wandering as you are?” (Rahi 22). Lal Ded’s father was worrying of her because she is not interested in the worldly life; he feels that, “No one will understand you. I shudder to think what is going to happen to you there” (Rahi 24). Her father was also helpless.

*Lal Ded* depicts the Indian traditional marriages. Lal Dad’s marriage was fixed with Damodar but she was not willing to marry him. Her parents were forced her to marry then she agreed to marry. When she was getting mud bath her friend Shali said, “Lal, this is your last bath as a virgin” (Rahi 25), but she replied, “Soul always remains virgin” “We don’t understand you” (Rahi 25). She got married and reached her Mother-in-law’s house, Padampur’s important people women greeted her, the dancing teams were performing in gay abandon. But Lal did not look other side but she was thinking that, “In her mind echoed Guru Siddhmol’s words, “Always peep into yourself, one day Shiva will certainly appear before you” (Rahi 26). Everyone liked her, her long parrot nose, her cheeks were rosy and her eyes deep blue. When women have gone, her Mother-in-law served her a meal. Her

husband Damodar's face was looking like a wood cutter. She talked about Geeta, Damodar could not understand it. Her beauty attracted him; he grabbed her hand and said, "Come here" (Rahi 30). Lal Ded tried to get her hand free, he overpowered her completely. She screamed, her Mother-in-law came out and asked him:

'What happened, Mother?'

'She is a girl of easy virtue'.

'Are you talking Lal'

'Yes.'

'What has she done?'

'She keeps secrets,'

'What secret has she kept? It is hardly four days that she came to this House" (Rahi 31). Everyday, she woke up at night and gone out. Lal Ded was not an ordinary girl; she has not taken interest in the worldly life. Damodar was not happy, he burst out in anger, "You were asleep inside the house and you also went out to take a walk. How can that be?" "I don't know whether I was sleeping inside. But I go out every night" (Rahi 34). Mother and son were stunned, she shares her experience. She met Siddhamol guruji in the Jungle that night, when she talked this entire thing, but both were stunned.

Indian society always believed in the existence of evil spirit, devil and ghost. When Lal Ded revealed about her experience in the last night, her Mother-in-law said to her son, "Things are not turning out well for us. There is an evil support among us" (Rahi 35). Damodar was engulfed in anxiety and could not speak anything. In that evening Damodar's father brought home a mark, he carries some books which Guru Siddhamol had given to him to hand over to Lal. Damodar and his mother kept looking at each other, they were growing more fearful. Pandit Balbhadra said, "It is a mere coincidence that at night she has a dream of Siddhmol

talking of books and his disciple actually delivers them to her in the morning” (Rahi 35-36). Lal Ded’s Mother-in-law was unhappy she requests Pandit, “Throw this witch out of the house; she will bring doom on all of us” (Rahi 36). Damodar appeases his mother, “I will lie awake all through the night to keep an eye on her” (Rahi 36). Both were frightened inwardly. In the night, Lal was perusing Guruji’s text in the light of the lamp, it was burning brightly, Damodar entered, she did not notice his presence and he lay down and covered himself with the quilt. She was reading Abhinava Gupta’s *Tantralok*, *Shiva Strotaanjali* and *Bharat Manjari*.

*Lal Ded* depicts the mystery of Lad Ded. Lal Ded is like Akka Mahadevi. Akka Mahadevi was a great saint in Karnataka during the 12<sup>th</sup> century at Kalyana. There was an Anubhavamantapa; all saints were gathered and discussed socio-cultural and religious issues. Lal Ded was very similar to Akkamahadevi. In the Anubhawamantapa, Basavanna, Dasimayya and Allamaprabhu were great saints. Lal Ded speaks about the god and religion. She would close her eyes and intoned, “Shiva Shiva” to herself. She has discovered a cave for herself and she would intone the name of Shiva and she would run inside the cave. She was always praying to a god Shiva, she felt that she is just around her but she could not see Him. Mother-in-law would not leave Lal in peace; she was busy every moment. When she was hungry, she intoned Shiva’s name. Her Mother-in-law forced to eat meat but she rejects to eat meat. She defends that god exists in tingle and He resides in human soul.

*Lal Ded* depicts the significance of Padampur village, and change of ruler of the Jammu and Kashmir. The villagers were blessed so generously with saffron that the residents did not have to go for any other jobs. But they are busy with minor occupation such as bee keepings. The honey produced and sold to *Raja* and *Maharajas*. But, now Muslim Sultans in the place of Rajas, but even they were equally fond of the honey of Padampur. Many households had installed looms on

which they were wore patta blankets, druggists blacksmith. All housewives were engaged in spinning and weaving. It also depicts the miracles and the forecast of Lal Ded. Pandit Balbhadra was a priest, who officiated of rituals; he was a learned man and had Yajamans of the neighbrouing villages. His son Damodar disliked the profession. He had found of an excuse for wandering out of the village. He purchased various items made by the village woman and sold them at premium in big town and cities. Damodar started his trip, he carried more quantity of merchandise and he hired a small boat, on his departure his mother cautioned him “Be careful. You are carrying lots of materials” (Rahi 43). Lal Ded stood at the doorstep of her bed chambers, Damodar responds in his carefree manner, “This is not the first time I am going. Don’t worry. I will be home day after tomorrow” (Rahi 44). He went out of the home. Many days have elapsed but there is no news about him. Damodar did not turn up even after ten days; his father Pandit Balbhadra departed to search his son but there was no news about the father and the son. Lal Ded’s mother-in-law did not take a drop of water. Women in the neighborhood brought two platters of food; she did not even as much as touch the platters. Lal Ded’s Mother-in-law cursed her, “May you be utterly destroyed, you *Dayan*, you witch. It is because of you that this home has come to ruin” (Rahi 44). She started quarrel with Lal Ded, she rushed at Lal and began to hit her. Lal Ded bore with the beating wordlessly, the neighbors caught hold of her hands and separated Lal Ded from her. She sat at bed the chamber; she wants cry but could not cry. She has an inward eye; she saw that Damodar and his father were arrived at the bank and both the men alighted from the boat. Lal Ded rushed from her bed chamber there were more women sitting with her Mother-in-law. She roared in an excited tone, “Both of them have returned from the city. Having alighted from the boat they have set for home” (Rahi 47). Lal Ded’s Mother-in-law and other women looked at her in amazement. Her illusion was not illusion but it is true, she already

had received a good thrashing. People would say that, “She was mad”. She was feeling guilty and returned to her bed-chamber. In that instant, a boy came running to the house and said, “Damodar bhaiya and Panditji are coming” (Rahi 47). Everyone was dumb, stroked and they ran out of the house.

*Lal Ded* depicts political crises in Jammu and Kashmir. Ali Sher’s army has attacked on Damodar; he would not understand when to fly. Where the army fired, he escaped but one person was wounded. Damodar poured a few drops of water into his month. The wounded man opened his eyes; he is nothing but Jayananda, his childhood friend. Damodar luckily escaped from the clutches of Ali Sher’s army. Damodar landed on land; he was brought home on a horse. Many people of the Padampur had assembled at the outside his house to greet him. Rumours began to spread like water on the boil coming out of the pot. Lal Ded was getting more demand and everyone treat her like a god. When she went to fetch water, women caught hold of her arm and brought her inside the house, she asked, “It has been seven years since my son went away. I have not any word from him. Tell me please where is he? Is he well? When will he return?” (Rahi 57). She could not reply, she said, “No, no I know nothing” (Rahi 58). She picked up her pitches and rushed to her house. Other women scolded her, she was driven to tears. She filled her pitcher and returned from there silently. Jayananda was a childhood friend of Damodar; he died in the army attack. Jayanandan’s mother came and asked about her son. She could not tell anything Jayanandan’s mother said, “You have been misled by gossips in the village. Lal has no such power. I just don’t believe she can see unseen” (Rahi 64). Lal Ded’s mother-in-law has decided send Lal Ded to her family.

*Lal Ded* narrates a mystery and miracle. One day, Lal Ded was carrying water on her head without any container to hold it. She did not react even when the pot was broken into pieces. She walked slowly towards the Kitchen and brought

the water down from her head and placed it in the crook of her arm. Then, she began to pour it into the brass vessels. Damodar and his parents rushed to the spot and saw a small puddle formed there. Pandit Balbhadra left for Pandrethas and narrates everything to her father and requests her father, “please take your daughter back to your house” (Rahi 69). Pandit returned home and gave Lal Ded her father’s message.

Ved Rahi’s *Lal Ded* depicts Lal Ded’s spiritual life. She left the wordly life and started spiritual life. She was greatly insulted by her Mother-in-law and she was waiting for the night to escape without notice. She was alone and wanted to leave quietly to some place far from her in-law’s home and the parent’s home. Her Gurudev had said, “Shiva was within herself” and she was intoning ‘Shiva, Shiva’. She reached the river bank in the dim light but she did not halt there. She approached the boat; the boatman was getting ready to go across the river, He asked:

‘Daughter, where have you come from?’

“I don’t now.’

‘Where are you going?’

‘I don’t know’ (Rahi 71-72). The boatman couldn’t understand, he thought that she was mad. The boat landed and people began to board it, without any fuss. Lal Ded alighted and took the path leading to the forest. Next day, Yandraba father of Lal Ded met Balbhadra and asked about his daughter he replied, “Lal had left the home at midnight”. Damodar had gone out to look for her, but couldn’t trace her. They do not know where she has gone” (Rahi 74). Lal Ded’s parents have decided to search and they were prepared to go across the river. Siddhmol came to Padampur and met Pandit Balbhandra; he revealed everything about Lal Ded, Siddhmol said, “Lal was not a soul to be entangled in the mesh of family life. A wild flower does not blossom in a flower pot” (Rahi 78). Yandraba and his wife reached Nagnath

Temple of Avantipura. They were exhausted, Lal Ded's mother was breathing heavily. They met a Sadhu; he folded hands and asked sadhu, he revealed everything about Lal Ded. A Sadhu narrates that, "She did have a broad forehead, a nose like a parrot's beak, and her eyes, well, her eyes were shut" (Rahi 84). They reached a ghat; they have to across the river. They met the boatmen and asked: 'When did it happen?'

'May be some six to seven days back'.

'Did she have a broad forehead?'

'Yes, sir',

'Was her nose long, like a parrot's beak?'

'Yes, sir. And her eyes were deep blue' (Rahi 89). The boat landed, Yandrabat tried to pay some of amount but he rejects it. Lal Ded's parents wandered in the jungle, but still couldn't find any trace of Lal Ded. There was a thick cluster of trees ahead; an unknown person was walking behind the thickest. The light was dim, he moved further ahead and on close scrutiny, he recognized that it was only his daughter. He called out "Lal Ded, are you there?" (Rahi 93). She looked at Yandrabat and come running to him with a cry of father and she hugged him tightly. When they met her, they blamed them. Lal's mother-in-law but Lal replied, "No, Mother, no. Nobody is to be blamed. It was I who lacked the qualities they designed to find in me" (Rahi 93). Lal Ded was not worried for wordly life. She reveals the great philosophy but her father said, "Dacoits, things and thieves abound in this place", she replied, "I am not afraid of any outside dacoit; I fear only the one who is within me. I have secured him tightly lest he should steal away my capital" (Rahi 95). Lal Ded depicts a great philosophy; she talked about internal cleanness, she said, "Did you see how the dirt was expelled from the cloth? I too will come out clean likewise" (Rahi 97). Lal Ded's father and mother

were so deep in their misery, they could not understand anything. Her parents taking leave from her and Lal returned to her place.

*Lal Ded* depicts the significance of poem the *Vakhs*. It is easy form of poetry; Lal Ded's *vakhs* are famous in the Dogri language. Lal Ded closed her eyes, words escaped from her mouth spontaneously, "From where I have come? Which way I have to go from here? Who will show me the straight and true path? When? How far I can trust my breath? Taken over by such thoughts, she broke into a song. Her words vibrated into music:

*"Whence have I come  
And whither shall I go, I don't know;  
Show me the straight path, someone,*

*This fickle breath I trust no more"* (Rahi 98). Her Gurudev Siddhmol also composed *Vakhs*, he advised her to compose *vakhs* in Kashmiri language and she has carried out Guruji's instruction. Lal Ded speaks about the strength of Shiva and Shakti. She wanted to see the confluence of Shiva and Shakti. She was striving for the Lord; she had not reached the proper stage to reach to him. She had read that the entire universe is submerged in Shiva. She was concentrating on her devotion to Shiva. The boatman and his wife came and meet Lal Ded, they brought some food. She rejects and said, "I don't take anything except wild fruit. But since you have brought me food, I will eat it" (Rahi 104). They were about to leave, and the boatman prayed to her with folded hands, "Bless in that we may have a son" (Rahi 104). Lal Ded blessed, "Abide by Shiva. What He wills shall do" (Rahi104). Both of them paid their obeisance to Lal Ded and left.

*Lal Ded* depicts the significance of Lal Dad's *vakhs* and the significance of Lal Ded's blessing. A big fair was being held in Avantipur, during the festival of Shivaratri. People were dedicated to the Lord Shiva. The boatmen began to sing a melodious song:

*When have I come*

*And whither shall I go, I don't know;*

*Show me the straight path, someone,*

*This fickle breath I trust no more* (Rahi 105). Passengers liked his song the tune was melodious. They all wanted to sing along with the boatman, the boatman narrates the blessing of Lal Ded; a son was born to him by blessing of Lal Ded. They heard voice of Lal Ded:

*Too tired is she of the unending quest*

*Having made all the attempts to her best*

*Seeing the shut door; her long grown more*

*A resolute Lal sits in hope evermore* (Rahi 106). They stood outside; they heard many times. Lal Ded's words reached every house in all the directions. The boatman never tired of telling again, who cared to listen that he had got a son with blessing of Lal Ded. Number of men and women visit her and get blessing. A woman accompanied her husband requests her, "Mother, Lord Shiva manifestly resides in you. Have mercy on us. Bless our child" (Rahi 110). Lal Ded intoning Shiva, Shiva, she prays to Shiva. People believed that Lal Ded was the goddess. Many women meet her and get blessing, Sulbha met her. She said to her, "Most of the people who talk about you say your blessings can set right things that have gone wrong" (Rahi114). Lal Ded was feeling pity for her, she does not want to give to false assurance to him, "Shiva Shankar won't let you have gone to ruins" (Rahi 115). Sulbha had got blessing, she wiped off her tears and she began to smile. Sulbha said, "Bhagwan Shiva Nath has sent you here for Me. You come to my house. I will wash your feet, serve you food" (Rahi 115). Lal Ded put her hands again and said with courtesy, "My sister, ever since I left my own home, I have never gone to anyone else" (Rahi 115). Sulbha and her companion picked up their bundles of grass again and set out for their homes.

*Lal Ded* depicts the importance of the *vakh*. Lal Ded wrote volumes of *vakhs*, she was very popular. Sehdev and Gonard had been looking for her more than seven days wandering from place to place to search for her. Everyone knows Lal and her *vakhs*. Very few were actually seen her, there are numbers of story about her. Many people talked about her, “She is a hermit, A true hermit she is a Shiva devotee. She sings *vakh* and showers blessings on the people” (Rahi 108). They crossed the stream and entered into the forest. The sound of Lal Ded’s singing fell into their ears. They paused in the middle of the hilly track. As they moved ahead, they smelt notes of Lal Ded’s songs rose in volume. They smelt the fragrance of flowers, they walked a little further and they reached a spot where some twenty-five people were sitting in the open space. Suchdev and Gonand sat, Lal Ded was singing:

*You are the blue, the earth you,  
The daylight, the dark and air you  
You the offering, you the blossom,  
The fruit, water and sandalwood you  
You the whole, the total, the sum,*

*Is there anything left to offer you?* (Rahi 120). Lal Ded closed her eyes, there are many audiences, at the end of the *vakh*, Lal Ded started another *vakh*:

*How can you dance so free of mind?  
Fool, under your feet lies a void deep  
Your cash and kind you’ll leave behind*

*How can you eat with such delight!* (Rahi 120). Her voice was a flame of exquisite notes, it was like sunrays descending upon the earth from behind clouds and lighting it up with joy. Lal Ded stopped singing abruptly but they still had their eyes closed. Gonand send “Devi”, celestial being, heaving *vakh* from your mouth was an exquisite experience, “We had heard your *vakh* in the school where we

studied. But coming from your mouth we felt that your words carry infinite meaning” (Rahi 122). Gonand brought the message from Lal Ded’s Gurudev. Her Guruji had recited some of her *vakh* to disciples. Her vakhs would keep alive the soul of Kashmir for centuries together.

*Lal Ded* depicts the Hindu Rajas have been succeed by the Muslim rulers and the Hindu culture and civilization is on the decline Suchdev said, “Hindu Raja might be at fault themselves. But it is for us to save our culture” (Rahi 124). Lal intoned quietly:

*A wooden bow and arrow of straw*

*The palace mason a little raw*

*Open the loot are shoos and marts*

*Hard is the pilgrimage, all hope I have lost* (Rahi 124). They could not understand the *vakh*’s meaning, the whole pilgrimages were talking about the *vakha*. Lal Del kept quiet far a long time and said:

*He only rules who has a sword in his hand*

*Merits he heaven for his charity, austerities,*

*Following the guru leads to absolution*

*On one’s karma depends sins or virtue* (Rahi 124). The single meaning of the *vakha* is that Kashmiris are suffering because of their karma. Lal Ded sat on the big stone and began to utter slowly:

*Loose my bundles knot has fallen*

*How shall I keep my sweets from falling?*

*My back bent like a bow*

*How will I carry the load?*

*I failed to recognize my master true*

*And lost all my heart was attached to*

*Like a herd lost without its shepherd*

*How will I know where to go?* (Rahi 126). She left the place and she disappeared.

*Lal Ded* depicts the visionary power and worldly life. Lal Ded had a third eye; she could understand that her mother was not feeling well; she has decided to meet her. She walked through night and reached the village, she was half naked, her mother recognized her, When Lal Ded put her hand on her head, and she opened her eyes and talked, “I knew you will come. I had prayed to Shiva with folded hands. I told Him I won’t go to His abode unless I meet you” (Rahi 131). Her mother died; villagers bothered the body of Lal’s mother. She was meditating, suddenly she opened her eyes, and some words come out of her mouth:

*What a five, seven, ten, eleven?*

*They have emptied my cooking pot;*

*Only if they had held the rope together*

*Where could have our cow got?”* (Rahi134). Lal Ded’s voice around so much pain that it burst their hearts, they did the funeral and she is waiting for the arrival of her Gurudev Siddhmol. There was a telephonic message to her; she received a message from her Gurudev Siddhmol. Guru Siddhmol arrived at Yandrabhat’s door. When Lal and Siddhmol were discussing things, Lal expresses her philosophy, “There is no stranger in this world. Shiva is present in every one of us” (Rahi 139). After a long discussion, he blessed her and requests her to compose *vakhs* for social and moral point of view. Gurudev wrote a *vakh*:

*There is no glow like sunlight*

*And no place holier than the Ganga*

*Stronger no bond is than a brother’s*

*And no joy keener than having an amiable wife* (Rahi 143). Lal Ded departed, her Guruji watched her and she was crossing the street.

*Lal Ded* depicts that the miracle of Lal Ded. There was a drought; people had not seen such a drought. The poor and the deprived had nothing to eat. Cattle were driven out of the home. Babies did not have breast milk; boys were searching far a green leaf in the jungle. The elderly people met Lal Ded, now she is old and she had been not eaten anything since several days. The old man with his folded hands requested her, “Mother Laleshwari, we bid you *namaskar*. We knew *Shivaji Maharaj* listens to your prayers. Have pity on us. Tell him to send us showers. Bring in rain. If we have erred, tell Him to forgive us. Withdraw his curse upon us. Our children are dying of starvation. Our fields have been destroyed. The cattle have died” (Rahi 147). She opened her eyes and she knows about the draught, she replied “What prayer of mine will Shiva listen to? I have been hungry for many days”. Another old man said piteously, “Devi who will bow to Shiva if He does not listen to you?” (Rahi 147). She started to walk; people also walked behind her. She saw the field, dust flew all around. She sat upon a stone and looked at the sky. Some words came out of her mouth instantly, “Shiva Shambu what are you upto? Hurting these poor people, you too will come to grief. Give all their pain to me. I won’t complain. Forgive them” (Rahi 148-149). The news spreads in all the directions, she started meditation. There were some changes in the sky, every one followed her. Chandra Damodar is a royal; he asked the mob, “Why have so many people gathered here?”

‘Maharaj, we all have come to see Lal.’

‘Lal, ‘who?’”

‘She is a devotee of Shiva. She has prayed to Shiva for rain to get rid of the curse of drought upon us’ (Rahi149). Chandra Damodar looked at Lal; she was looking like a mad. Lal Ded’s word hurt him; he was so angry he took sword but did not kill her. She talked about drought; no one has got even a single grain from Sultan’s stores. Lal Ded speaks in philosophical way; she is eating man’s flesh. The old

man asked “Mother, don’t tell such a big lie, ‘I am not’ telling a lie. My age is reducing by the moment. I am telling into myself every time. Don’t you think I am a human being? That means I am feeding myself” (Rahi155). Days have passed, people lose the confidence in themselves, and they had nothing else to do. They were watching each other die of starvation, they felt it was better to go where anyone wanted to take them, Prince Shivashamak and Chandra Damodar trotted. They had set off from the palace with the first drops of the rain. They think that Lal Ded was a true sage, who with her prayers had ended. He was anxious to get her blessing. He came and get blessing from Lal Ded. He took the proffered water into his own cupped hands and drank it. Lal declared, “You are going to be king soon. Take care of your subject when you are” (Rahi 163). There was a heavy rain before anyone could notice; she had escaped from the place. She wandered for many days; she found a cave at last. When she was in the cave, she heard baby’s cry. She saw a man and woman were standing outside the cave. A woman held the baby to her shoulder. She understood that it was a Muslim family but nothing significance to her. She was worried about the child; she had no milk. There was a heavy rain. Lal Ded said, “Your child is quiet now” (Rahi 165). The child got sleep. The child went quiet in Lal’s arms, she drew it to her breast and she wanted to carry the child. Infant began to reach out keenly for her bosoms with its tiny hands. Lal Ded brought it closer to her body. The infant started to suckle at her breast. The infant began to suck at its mother, in the dream Lal Ded was feeding her child and telling her, “You don’t have to worry. Your son will come to no harm. He is very lucky and will grow up to be a renowned rishi. Name him Nuruddin” (Rahi 167). She blessed him.

*Lad Ded* depicts sexual exploitation of women in the name of religion. Lal Ded has started her journey towards southwards. It is a beautiful place; it is a place of abundance of water, lakes and green field. At a short distance, she saw three

temples, she met a Devadasi, she said, “The deities will be mighty pleased if you dance” (Rahi 170). She narrates her tragic story. Her name is Jayamala, she took her home. Lal Ded finds many books and she started meditation. Sugandha is her daughter she bowed to her and went to a dark room. Lal Ded could understand the problem of Sugandha. She asked Sugandha, she was crying and narrates painful and sorrowful experience, “He is not a priest, but a beast.’ He has devoured me bit by bit. Like an elephant in rut he squeezes and squashes me the whole night in drunken stupor. He is obsessed with lust. He does not see I too a human being. He sucks my blood, breaks my bones and thrashes me. He is a wolf, a wolf in human form’. He is a cannibal he will eat me up, save me, Mother save me from him” (Rahi 176). Jayamala was helpless and unhappy, she expresses. “Have you seen hermit, the way we live? How easy and comfortable it is to live in a detached and carefree like you and how difficult to live in the worldly ties like us! We drink this poison, the Neelkantha that we are, like Shiva, who drunk poison for others” (Rahi 176). Lal Ded heard everything she came out of the room in silence. She went to cave and spent few times. She came out of the cave and walked towards Hermukh Mountain. She went very close to mountain, she saw a samadi, and it is a samadi of Hazrat Bulbulshah. She began to walk in the direction of Hermukh Mountain. She reached to mountain she looked at the sky, the dark clouds had come very close and were about to pour down. She heard a soft voice in her ears, “I am Shiva; Lal Ded opened your eyes. Look at me. I am Shiva” (Rahi 187). She could not open her eyes; she shut tight her eyes and said, “I am not going to fall into your trap. Enough is enough. I will not be bound in these ties all over again’ (Rahi 188). The Harmukh Peak shook to its core. It was a frightening movement. In the next, Lad Ded disappeared. A spark of lighting was seen travelling for into distance.

#### Work Cited

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