

# The Role of Multimedia in Popularizing Lal Ded's Mysticism Among Youth

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## Abstract

Lal Ded, or Lalleshwari, was a mystic poetess from Kashmir, her poetry and spiritual legacy has been revived and made famous among contemporary youth via multimedia platforms. In order to make Lal Ded's mysticism understandable and acceptable to newer generations, this research article looks at how several multimedia channels, such as print (newspaper, magazine), electronic (TV, radio), and digital medium, have been necessary. Various videos, textual materials, and documentaries that delve into Lal Ded's life, poetry, and spiritual teachings may be found on various multimedia platforms. Based on secondary data, this study takes qualitative approach including Content analysis and case study. This methodology offers a thorough examination of the ways in which multimedia platforms impact young people's knowledge and interest in Lal Ded's mysticism.

The results of this study demonstrate that multimedia platforms, which make Lal Ded's teachings approachable, interesting, and pertinent to modern audiences, have been crucial in helping to popularize her mysticism among youth. These platforms adapt her timeless thoughts to contemporary digital contexts, so they not only preserve her legacy but also guarantee its continued relevance. Future initiatives have to keep utilizing multimedia advancements to expand the audience and significance of Lal Ded's poetry and spiritual legacy.

**Keywords:** Multimedia, mysticism, Vakhs, cultural preservation

## Background of Lal Ded:

Lal Ded was born into a Kashmiri Pandit family in Pandrethan, which at the moment makes up the central region of Kashmir, between 1320 and 1355. As a child, she received education at home from her family priest Siddha Srikanth, who also initiated her into Shaivite Sampradaya observing her deep spiritual inclinations.

At the young age of twelve, she was married off. She was given the name Padmavati in her in-law's home at the time in accordance with local norms, but she eventually went by numerous monikers, including Lalla Arifa, Lalla Yogishwari, Lalla Yogini, Laleshwari, and just Lalla. But the most well-known and identifiable name for her is Lal Ded.

There are rumors that her mother-in-law mistreated her, starved her for days on end, and gave the impression that she was feeding her daughter-in-law well by concealing a large stone under a mound of rice on her plate. Lal Ded's husband's passivity and cowardice in not standing up for her also hurt her very much (M.H. Zaffar, 2016).

Lal Ded spent her time at Lord Shiva's temple and she pursued yoga under her guru Sidh Srikanth. When she turned around 26, Lalla renounced her marriage and material life to become a mystic. It was

her unprecedented courage to renounce a conventional life that made her rebel against the tradition and yet, a significant contributor to the Kashmiri culture. Having given up all her possessions, she would wander around naked or in rags, chanting her verses. In fact, her words were merely mantras or chants that were aimed at praising God. It was her power to impact others that her listeners formed her sayings into chants and mantras. Before her Vakhs came to be published, they have been orally passed down from generation to generation in Kashmir (Yong kian, 2018).

She used the first person in her vakhs and also used her names quite frequently. Like, 'I, Lalli' or 'I, Lal' were commonly used by her. Lal Ded often used her poetry as a peaceful means of engagement with both Shaivism and Sufism.

Her poetry has been translated widely, including English translations by Jane Hirshfield in *Women in Praise of the Sacred: 43 Centuries of Spiritual Poetry by Women* (1994), Coleman Barks in *Naked Song: Lalla* (1992), and K.C.I.E. Sir George Grierson in *Lalla-Vakyanis or The Wise Sayings of Lal-Ded, A Mystic Poetess of Ancient Kashmir* (1920). Lalleshwari was known to be Kashmir's rebel poetess for she challenged the ideas of caste system, social and religious discrimination and rejected conventional society (Poetry foundation, 2024).

### **Objectives:**

The specific objectives would be:

- To examine how multimedia platforms are utilized to disseminate Lal Ded's
- To study the impact of Lal Ded's mysticism among youth
- To study the challenges and opportunities of multimedia platforms

### **Methodology:**

A research methodology refers to the systematic, theoretical analysis of the methods applied to a field of study. In this study researcher can employ content analysis approach. Data collection would be done through textual analysis and digitization. In digitization process data would be gathering through available texts and videos on various multimedia platforms such as social media including face book, twitter (now X), instagram , Blogs and websites, video platforms such as YouTube. The methodology employed in this study provided a robust framework for investigating how multimedia facilitates the dissemination and reception of Lal Ded's mysticism among contemporary youth. This study will contribute an in depth insights to scholarly understanding and practical applications in educational and cultural contexts.

### **Role of Multimedia in Reviving Lal Ded among People:**

In the digital age, multimedia platforms such as social media, video streaming sites, podcasts, and interactive websites play a pivotal role in disseminating cultural heritage to global audiences. For Lal Ded's legacy, multimedia serves as dynamic medium through which her teachings can reach and resonate with today's youth who are increasingly engaged with digital content.

### **Cultural preservation:**

Lal Ded is a revered figure in Kashmiri cultural and spiritual literature. Her verses convey deep philosophical and mystical insights. Traditionally transmitted orally, her works faced risk of obscurity in the modern era. However, the advent of multimedia has revitalized interest in her teachings. In the

contemporary times the hybridization of culture takes place through multimedia. The modern people adopt Lal Ded works in the form of fusion of music, contemporary dance performances, and theater productions, blend of traditional and contemporary elements to resonate with young people. They are often recited and sung, reflecting her lasting impact on Kashmiri identity. Her teachings and poetry represent a bridge between Hindu and Muslim spiritual traditions in Kashmir. She is revered by both communities and is seen as a symbol of the region's syncretic culture. In the present scenario multimedia maintain their authenticity of her teachings and adapting by youth and people according to the modern taste.

### **Print Media:**

The print media plays a very important role in preservation of culture and Lad Ded's Vakhs. Print media remains foundation in preserving and propagating the culture. There are number of books published on the Lal Ded life and her 'Vakhs'. The first book published on the Lal Ded was "Lalla Vakyani & The Wise Sayings of Lal Ded: Mystic Poetess of Ancient Kashmir Reprint Edition" written by Sir George Grierson. This book was first published by Royal Asiatic Society of London in 1920 translated version. It gained publicity all over the world. Now it is available on digital platform in the form of e-book and also available on the online shopping sites such as Flipkart, Amazon etc. and reach to the diverse audience. Some other books are; "Lal Ded of Kashmir Saint Poetess: A catalogue of Lal Vakhs" written by Sham Misri Sarla Gurtoo Misri. In this 315 vakhs are present. This book is also present in audio form on Kindle interactive edition which helps the younger generation to easily read and understand it. Otherwise it has been much tougher and time consuming. Another book is, "Lal Ded- story of the Mystic Lalleshwari" by Tulika Singh (2023), this is a kid's story book, where the author tells about life story of Lal Ded, spiritual teachings and also teaches children the language of love. There are many more books such as "Looking within life Lessons from Lal Ded" by Shonaleeka Kaul, "Lal" by Shafi Shauq, "I, Lalla: The Poems of Lal Ded" translated by Ranjit Hoskote (2011) and "Lal Ded (A Kashmiri Saint Poet of Fourteenth Century) by Jayalal Kaul and so on. These books preserved the Lal Ded sayings for the future generations.

Newspaper, magazine, cultural publications and blogs have introduced Lal Ded to wider audiences, often featuring her poetry alongside modern interpretations and cultural significance often highlighting her relevance in contemporary socio-political contexts. It also played an essential role in raising public awareness about Lal Ded, making her work accessible to non-academic audiences. The enduring value of print media lies in its ability to provide comprehensive and contextualized interpretations of Lal Ded's work ensuring that her cultural and spiritual legacy is preserved for future generations.

### **Digital Media and Lal Ded Mysticism:**

A vast array of platforms and technologies, including websites, blogs, streaming services, digital magazines, and—most importantly—social networking platforms, are included in the category of digital media. These enable the production, sharing, and consumption of material in digital formats.

Social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and others have a plethora of pages and channels devoted to the poetry and philosophy of Lal Ded, where individuals share her Vakhs with modern interpretations. Social media platforms have broken down barriers of language and location, increasing accessibility to Lal Ded's works. Youth are more effectively engaged by visual and audio media than by traditional texts. Young enthusiasts can share their perceptions and insights in community-building areas

such as digital forums and social media groups. For instance, the pages for “Lal Ded Mysticism,” “@KashmirHeritage,” and “Kaeshur Soz” frequently offer her poetry and translations while also cultivating a community of followers who interact by leaving comments and sharing. A YouTube channel called “Rupantaran” shares the parables and teachings of well-known saints and suffis from throughout the globe.

Additionally, the biography of Lal Ded and life lessons are told through storytelling on this channel. Through Lal Ded vakhs, these pages are reaching out to individuals to promote the language and culture of Kashmir. Using calligraphy, artwork, and photos, Lal Ded's work can be presented more artistically on social media platforms, appealing to a younger audience. Moreover, webinars on the “life and philosophy of Lal Ded” are held on Facebook and YouTube to further educate the younger generation. Participants from all over the world can exchange knowledge and engage in conversation during these webinars.

Television has become a crucial vehicle for preserving and promoting her sayings. A wide audience can now access Lal Ded's life and teachings. Thanks to television networks' for the production of dramas and films about her. A series about Lal Ded's life that Doordarshan Kashmir telecast had an impact on women and younger viewers. A young female director named Meeta Vasist produced a theater production called “Lal Ded” in Kashmiri, Hindi, and English languages. She included secular poetry in the movie that spoke to the concerns and lives of all Kashmiri citizens. The incorporation of modern theater into the documentary feature narrative serves to show the legend of Lal Ded's effect, especially on younger viewers, and to bridge the gaps in the story's enormous scope. Future generations will be able to witness and benefit from Lal Ded's legacy.

### **Lal Ded vakhs in Academics curriculum:**

Structured learning about the philosophy and mysticism of Lal Ded is possible through online courses, webinars, and e-books. Her teachings can be more easily accessed using these materials, which can be customized for various age groups and learning styles. In addition, Lal Ded was incorporated into the curriculum as a chapter in the eighth-grade Urdu, seventh-grade English, and eighth-grade Kashmiri subjects. It was also introduced to the graduation-level English literary curriculum. The young people learn the essential facts about Lal Ded's life, philosophy, and many religious and spiritual viewpoints that uplift and encourage them.

Lal Ded's mysticism can break beyond conventional barriers with the help of these multimedia platforms, connecting with a younger generation that is eager to learn about spiritual and philosophical understanding in modern formats.

### **Impact of Lal Ded's Sayings on Youth Life:**

Lal Ded's poetic sayings, or Vakhs, are her most significant contribution in youth life. These vakhs are written in Kashmiri language under the themes of mysticism, spirituality, and the human experience. Her poetry reflects influences from both Shavisim and Sufism. While rooted in the Shavia tradition of Kashmir, her work also shows the synergetic blending with Sufi thought, emphasizing love, unity, and the transcendent nature of God. It emphasizes the importance of inner purity, devotion, and the unity of the individual soul with the divine.

Her poetry encourages deep self-examination and the pursuit of inner growth. She teaches that true wisdom and peace come from understanding oneself and one's place in the universe. The emphasis on

mindfulness and living in the present moment is a recurrent theme, advocating for a life lived with awareness and purpose. Lal Ded's vakhs highlight the importance of compassion, love, and empathy towards others, which are essential qualities for ethical living. Her critique of hypocrisy and falsehood underscores the value of integrity and honesty in one's actions and words. Lal Ded advocates for detachment from material possessions and worldly desires, promoting a simple and contented way of life. The focus on spiritual simplicity encourages living a life free from the complications of ego and pride.

Lal Ded's poetry provides ethical guidance. Her life and teachings serve as a role model for ethical behavior, inspiring the youth to lead lives of moral rectitude. It emphasizes on introspection and self-awareness helps young people develop emotional intelligence, understanding their own emotions and those of others. The lessons of compassion and empathy in her poetry encourage young people to build meaningful and respectful relationships with others.

### **Challenges and opportunities:**

Multimedia platforms offer opportunities as well as challenges in the current environment. While utilizing these technologies can improve interaction and help to preserve her legacy, it also necessitates careful thought out in terms of content quality, accessibility, and authenticity.

### **Various opportunities that multimedia platforms offer revolve around:**

- **Broader Reach:** Multimedia platforms can significantly expand the audience for Lal Ded's mysticism such as on Youtube, Facebook, Instagram and other social media platforms. Young people globally can access her teachings through the internet and social media platforms, increasing awareness and appreciation of her work.
- **Engagement:** Interactive and visually rich multimedia content can engage young audience more effectively than traditional text based approaches. Gamification, virtual reality experiences, and interactive storytelling can make learning about Lal Ded's mysticism more appealing.
- **Cultural preservation:** Multimedia can help to preserve and promote Kashmiri culture and Lal Ded's legacy, ensuring that her teachings are not lost. Digital archives and projects can safeguard her work for posterity.
- **Educational Enhancement:** Incorporating multimedia in educational curricula can provide diverse learning materials. Schools and universities can use videos, podcasts and interactive content to teach students about Lal Ded in more dynamic and memorable ways.

### **Multimedia platforms however, pose several challenges including ...**

- **Authenticity and Accuracy:** Ensuring that multimedia content accurately represents Lal Ded's teachings and life is crucial. Misinformation or oversimplification can misrepresent her mysticism, leading to misconceptions.
- **Commercialization:** There is a risk that commercial interests might overshadow the educational and spiritual value of Lal Ded's teachings. Content creators might prioritize profit over authenticity, diluting the essence of her mysticism.
- **Digital divide:** Not all young people have equal access to digital resources. Socioeconomic disparities can limit the reach of multimedia content, leaving some youth unable **to avail** the benefit from these educational opportunities.

- **Content quality:** The quality of multimedia content can vary greatly. The fast paced nature of digital media can lead to superficial engagement. Young people might consume **bite sized** content without delving deeply into Lal Ded's profound mysticism. Poorly produced content can fail to engage or accurately convey Lal Ded's teachings, potentially turning young audience away.

### Conclusion:

The integration of multimedia into the dissemination of Lal Ded's mysticism presents a powerful opportunity to engage the youth with her profound teachings. By leveraging various digital platforms, high quality production, and interactive content, her timeless wisdom can be made accessible and appealing to a broader audience.

However, it is essential to navigate this path with care, ensuring authenticity, maintaining cultural sensitivity and promoting inclusivity. Addressing challenges such as digital divide, content quality, and meaningful engagement will be crucial in this endeavor.

By thoughtfully implementing strategies to harness multimedia's potential, can ensure that Lal Ded's teachings resonate deeply with a new generation, fostering a greater appreciation and understanding of her enduring legacy. This approach not only bridges the gap between traditional and modernity but also secures the transmission of her timeless wisdom to future generations.

### Recommendations:

- **Ensure Authenticity and Accuracy:**

Collaboration with experts and scholars on teachings and Lal Ded's life is essential to ensure that content is accurate and authentic.

Implement rigorous fact checking protocols for all multimedia content to prevent the spread of misinformation.

- **Promote Accessibility:**

Content creators produce content in multiple languages, including regional languages to reach a broader audience. Offer free or low cost access to resources and media platforms to bridge the digital divide.

- **Monitor and evaluate impact:**

Monitor trends in digital content consumption to stay relevant and adapt strategies accordingly.

Implement feedback mechanisms to gather input from users and continually improve content. Conduct studies to assess the impact of multimedia on youth engagements with Lal Ded's using findings to refine strategies.

- **Promote Real life Engagements:**

Organize cultural tours to significant locations related to Lal Ded's life, offering contextual learning experiences. Host workshops and retreat focus on her teachings, incorporating meditations, poetry readings and discussions.

By implementing these suggestions into practice, multimedia may be a potent weapon for promoting Lal Ded's mysticism among young people and ensuring that her teachings are preserved and appreciated in the modern era.

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