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AIPS Junior Fellowship Application

**Title of Proposed Research Project:**

Asceticism, Gender, and the State: Saints of the Kashmiri Sultanate

**Abstract:**

This project examines the relationship between religion and the state in early modern Kashmir through the study of three prominent saints: Lal Ded, Nund Rishi, and 'Ali Hamadani. I argue that gendered ascetic practices of these three saints and state power were formed in relation to each other during the Kashmiri Sultanate (1320-1586), producing both the idioms of state power and the status of exceptional sanctity for these saints. Lal Ded, a naked, wandering Shaiva woman and poet, Nund Rishi, the local founder of the Rishi Order of Sufis, and 'Ali Hamadani, a visiting Sufi scholar who advised early Kashmiri Sultans, have been claimed by a variety of both Hindu and Muslim groups and political regimes towards divergent ends. Using a variety of literary, historical, hagiographical, and courtly documents, this research will analyze the religious and political concerns of the early modern world in which these figures were first embedded.