



Shia- Sunni Interaction In Kashmir During The Mughal Period

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In Kashmir, the majority of Muslims are Sunni. Whereas Shias account for between 20% and 25% of the Muslim population, who mostly reside in north and central Kashmir. They refer to themselves as "Koshur" in their mother language.

As, it was a tradition that the state patronage by way of *Madad-i- Maash*, grants and stipends etc, was extended to the *sufis* saints, scholars, theologians and others ever since the establishment of Muslim rule in Kashmir. It attracted many people of significance, piety and intellect from outside Kashmir.ⁱ Mir Shamas-ud Din Iraqi came to Kashmir in A.D1481 as an envoy of Timurid Sultan Husain Mirza of Herat (Afghanistan 1469-506) to the court of Sultan Hasan Shah (1472- 84).ⁱⁱ He was a votary of the *Nurbakshi* belief and he introduced it in the valley. There are many contradictory reports about Shamas al- Din Iraqi and his mission. According to Mohammad al-Din Fauq, "Iraqi was a Shia."ⁱⁱⁱ

Baba Ali Najar and Baba Ismail Kubravi, became his first disciples of Shamas-ud Din Iraqi.^{iv} He remained in Kashmir for eight years but the exigencies of his office did not permit him to propagate his missionary ideas freely. However, he returns to his native land. After that again he came back to Kashmir with the job of a missionary to propagate the *Nurbakshia*' ideology. It was during the period of civil war among the sons of Sultan Zainu'l-'Abidin which had seriously affected the administration and the nobles were freely indulged to create chaos and confusion in the sultanate. With this Iraqi gained further source of strength by including Kazi Chak and Gazi Chak (the chak clan), they laid claims to the throne.^{vi} However, the initial success of Iraqi was marred by the rise of Sayyid Muhammad Baihaqi [wazir/prime minister of Muhammad Shah (2nd term 1493-1505. He was just 16 yrs old).] the *de facto* ruler, did not endorse the philosophy of Iraqi, compelled him to retire Askardu in Ladakh where he successfully established his *maslak* by converting a large number of Buddhists to Islam.^{vii}

In 1540, Mirza Haider Dughlat conquered Kashmir and he allowed to Nazuk Shah Chak to rule over the land as a titular Sultan. In order to consolidate his position he devised a method to divide the Kashmiris (Sunni and Shi'a Muslims). He prescribed the propagation of the new creed and brought back Daniyal, son of Shamas-din from Askardo. On this cause, Mirza Haider Dughlat put down the Shiites (Chak strongholds) with a heavy hand. The Khanqah of Iraqi at Zadibal was burnt and the feelings of the two sections of the society were thereby alienated.^{viii} However, according to Shia sources, the followers of Shams al Iraqi had secured the remains secretly and got it buried at Chadoora, which exists there at present in the shape of a spacious shrine.^{ix} Many other Shia preachers like Shaikh Sangli Rishi of Paraspur, a follower of Baba Ali Najar and a close associate of Shaikh Daniyal *Sufi* Davood, a disciple of Baba Ali and Mullah Haji Kateeb were put to sword.^x

Meanwhile, In 1551 Mirza Haider Dughlat was killed in an encounter. After his death, Chak rule was established in Kashmir which lasted upto 1586 when Kashmir became a part of the Mughal Empire. The Chaks adopted aggressive attitude towards the Sunni ulema, who were opposed to the continuance of their rule. During the Chak rule the Sunni-Shia rift reached its climax; the Chak Sultans attempted to take revenge of the wrongs committed by the Central Asian invader Mirza Haider.^{xi} The Sunni ulema's became the soft target of oppression; for instance, Qazi Habib was injured by an ordinary soldier Yusuf Ainder.^{xii}

It was in this decade of brutal suppression the Sunnis were completely alienated; the Shah Miri nobility was replaced by the powerful Chak clans and their allies (the Maliks) controlled the resources. These developments prompted the Sunnis to appeal someone powerful to intervene and to redress their grievances, and the choice was none other than Akbar who was eagerly waiting to encash this opportunity, hence to secure the frontiers forever.^{xiii} And in 1584-85, a delegation of the Sunnis of Kashmir approached Akbar who immediately mobilized an army under Shah Rukh Mirza and Raja Baghwant Dass and sent an expedition to Kashmir which resulted in snatching power from the Chaks.^{xiv}

The establishment of the Mughal rule subsided the sectarian tension for some time but mutual dislike was still there. The Shi'a Muslims were either massacred or driven away towards the hills.^{xv} The antagonism did not die down even when the people lost their independence or when their common enemy was ruling by dividing them and targeting them jointly.

The Sunnis, who faced the heat during the reign of Chaks, now did not want to miss an opportunity to accuse the Shia's of blasphemies and profanities. The Maliks of Chadoora were staunch supporters of the Chaks. Malik Haider and his brother served Yousuf Shah Chak even in Hindustan during his exile.^{xvi} In the course, the Maliks of Chadoora's regained their foothold in Kashmir by granted him Zamindari rights and given the title of *Raisul-Mulk* and *Chughtai* in 1618.^{xvii} They rebuilt the Khanqah of Zadibal and Hasanabad. Their influence was increasing day by day and this development caused anxiety among the other sections, even *subadars*.^{xviii} Ahmad Beg and Dilawar Khan (*subadars*) tried to poison the ears of Jahangir in order to diminish their mage.^{xix}

Jamia Masjid was consumed in fire during the reign of Jahangir in A.D 1622, when a part of Srinagar was devastated by fire; Malik Haider and Malik Naji-the Shi'as were accused of having engineered the plan of burning of the said Mosque. Emperor Jahangir then ordered Haider Malik to rebuild the Mosque from his own purse.^{xx}

The two communities were apprehensive of each other and history of Kashmir even in later times is plagued with such sectarian clashes, even the tussle increased during the times of the later Mughals- Inayatullah Khan, Abdullah Khan and Bharkat Khan.^{xxi} Even Abul Barkat Khan Struck shias hard for inciting violence,^{xxii} these two sects remained cordial till the rulers remained strong and neutral.

According to Jahangir that shias were mostly solidiers and sunnis were merchanats.^{xxiii}

Thus, the sectarian feelings induced by Mirza Haider Dughat kept the two sections divided throughout the Mughal period. It further intensified during the Afghan period. This mental and communal feeling never allowed them to unite and face the common foe jointly. The ultimate result was the loss of independence.

However, after the annexation of Mughals, the imperial policy was never aimed at the division of the masses. As a matter of fact strict steps were taken to put down such riots and quarrels. The authorities were never prepared to tolerate any movement which posed threat to the internal peace and security of the Empire; even high influential persons were not forgiven.

To conclude, it becomes clear from the above discussion that Khawaja Khwand Mahmud was exiled from Kashmir inspite of his popularity in the valley as well as his influence at the imperial court. Apart from this, khwand Mahmud was the preceptor of Jahan Ara Begum and close associate, but the orders were not reversed.

Similarly Aurangzeb did not forgive Saif Khan and Ibrahim Khan (*subadars*) on account of their partiality towards one section. The Mughal or imperial policy was only to maintain law and order in the valley at any cost.

- ⁱ Abdul Majid Matto, *Kashmir under the Mughals*, Golden Horde, Srinagar, 1988, p. 149.
- ⁱⁱ Mohibbul Hasan, *Kashmir under the Sultans*, Ali Mohammad and Sons, Srinagar, 1959, p. 112-114.
- ⁱⁱⁱ *Tarikh-i- Rashidi*, Eng tr., p. 232.
- ^{iv} Mohibbul Hasan, p. 112-114
- ^v *Ibid*, p. 287; When Kaji Chak became the wazir of Muhammad Shah (4th time)in 1517 he supported strongly to Iraqi in disseminating his creed.
- ^{vi} Abdul Qaiyum Rafiqi, *History of Kashmir (Tarikh-i-Kashmir)* of Sayyid Ali, Gulshan Books, Srinagar, 2011, p. 217.
- ^{vii} Mirza Haider Daughlat, *Tarikh-i- Rashidi*, edited & tr., by N. Elias and Edward Denison Ross, “*A History of the Mughals of Central Asia*”, Patna, 1973, p. 435-436.
- ^{viii} Ghulam Hasan Khoyhami, *Taraikh-i Hassan*, Urd. tr. 3 Vols, Vol. I, Eng. tr. Shafi Shauq, JK Academy of Art, Culture and Languages, Srinagar, 2016, Vol. II, Urd, tr. Sharif Hussain Qasimi, Ali Muhammad, and Sons, Srinagar, 2012, Vol. III, Urd. tr. Pirzada Abdul Khaliq Tahiri under title *Tazkira Auliyae Kashmir*, Srinagar, 2012, vol., I, p. 253.
- ^{ix} Aga Syed Bakir Mosvi, *Akhtar-Darakhshan*, Badgam Kashmir, 1971, pp. 16-18.
- ^x Rafiqi, p. 219; Mohibbul Hasan, p. 137;
- ^{xi} *Ibid*.
- ^{xii} *Tarikh-i-Hasan*, vol., II, p. 274-77
- ^{xiii} Bamzai
- ^{xiv} Matto, p. 150
- ^{xv} *Ibid*.
- ^{xvi} *Baharistan-i Shahi*, f. 212a; *Tarikh-i- Kashmir*, ff.214-16.21.
- ^{xvii} *Ibid*.
- ^{xviii} Matto, p. 150.
- ^{xix} Matto, p. 150.
- ^{xx} *Tarikh-i- Hasan*, Vol., I, p. 480
- ^{xxi} *Tarikh-i Shi'an-i-Kashmir*, p. 147-156.
- ^{xxii} *Ibid*, p. 156.
- ^{xxiii} Nuruddin Muhammad Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri*, ed. Sayyid Ahmad, Gazipur and Aligarh, 1863-64; Eng. tr. Alexander Rogers and edited by Henry Beveridge, 2 Vols (Bound in one) Delhi, Reprinted in LPP, 1989, 1999, 2006, p. 282.