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SUFISM AND ITS IMPACT ON THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC & CULTURAL CONDITIONS OF JAMMU & KASHMIR

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Abstract:

The study of the history of Kashmir in itself is of great interest as the region has with unique geographical features. The present work is an effort to explore the impact of Sufism on the various aspects of the Jammu and Kashmir during the 16th-18th centuries which covers the entire Mughal and some of the Afghan period. Sufism changed the destiny of Kashmiris in case of their faith. It is a debatable issue but due to some unavoidable circumstances in Kashmir, the various literature of the Sufis or related to them, either remained hidden in the supervision of some of the *Pirs*, or could not be properly utilized for further exploration of Sufism and its impact on the different walks of life of the people of Jammu & Kashmir. Yet I visited to the various *ziarats*, shrines and tombs of different Sufis and Rishis of Jammu & Kashmir and to the religious places *khanqahs*, *dargahs* and *Masajids* of the Valley, to gather material for the present study.

INTRODUCTION:

Sufism is the esoteric and spiritual dimension of Islam representing the inward aspects of the world's greatest religion. The bases and beginning of tasawwuf (Sufism) is iman (faith) which had six important beliefs and principles, viz the existence and the Unity of God, the angles, the Prophets, the day of resurrection and lastly the good and evil, the God's predestination. The Islamic tasawwuf finds its roots with the life and personality of the Prophet of Islam Hazrat Muhammad (SAW), who is the role model for all those mystics, spiritualists, Sufis, Darwishs, faqirs, Rishis and Pirs who had dedicated their lives for gaining the knowledge of haqiqat and tariqat, in the light of Qur'an and Sunnah to achieve this real goal of Islam. Sufism is not something different or a new religion from Islam. In fact the mystic spirituality also depends on the five basic and fundamental pillars of Islam i.e., the *kalama (shahdat)*, (*salat*) to prayer, the *saum* (fasting during Ramadan), the (*zakat*) obligatory contribution towards poor and finally the performance of pilgrimage (hajj) if the person could effort the expenses. The Sufis had played a key role for the propagation and progress of Islam by performing various mystical exercises, contemplation, renunciation and self denial. Thus the large Sufi centers of the world Syria, Egypt, Central Asia, Iran, Khurasan, South Asia did certainly played a vital role in the social and economic developments of these regions. Kashmir also could not remain away from the effect, influence and touch of the great Sufis in the first half of the 14th century Kashmir is well known to the world from the very earliest times, because of its geographical features, culture, civilization and its people. It's boundaries besides touching to India and Pakistan, also touches to the other countries of the world like China Tibet, Afghanistan etc. The state of Jammu and Kashmir is no doubt is the most beautiful region in the South Asian countries and is also gifted by the Almighty Allah with various natural resources. It for this reason that right from the ancient times the Valley of Kashmir due to its natural beauty, civilization, culture, unique history and its people not only known to the world, but also played a key role in drawing attention of the large number of people including the Sufis, Rishis, Sayyids, Ulama, poets, learnedmen and travellers. The Mughal Emperor Jahangir had praised the beauty of Kashmir in the below Persian couplet:

Agar firdaus bar rue zamin ast

Hami ast o-hami ast o-hami ast

(If there is a paradise on earth it is here, it is here, it is here).

Dr. Sir Mohammad Iqbal said this verse in Urdu about Kashmir:

*Werse mai ham ko aayi hai Adam ki jaidad
Jo hai watan hamara wo jannat-i-nazeer hai*

Pandit Burj Narayan Chakbast has beautifully narrated the following couplet about Kashmir:

*Zarra zarra hai mare Kashmir ka mehman nauwaz
Rah mai pathar ke tukdoo ne diya pani mujhey.*

The state of Jammu and Kashmir especially the valley of Kashmir is generally known as “*pirvaer*” that is the land of *pirs*, as right from the ancient times Kashmir was inhabited by the Hindu *Rishis* and *munnis*, and they had nothing to do with the Islamic mysticism or *tasawwuf*. However, the establishment of Islam in Kashmir in the 14th century was due the efforts of the first Turkistani Sufi Sayyid Abdur Rahman alias Bulbul Shah.

Early penetration of Sufis in Jammu & Kashmir up to the 16th Century A.D.

The Muslims entered India in three different stages. In the first and early stage they came to India through southern sea coasts during the life time of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) with the purpose of trade and also as Muslim missionaries. Secondly their penetration to India is through *Umayyad* conquests and reached up to the Rohné, the Syr Darya and the Indus and, finally they entered India as Central Asian Turks.

Actually, it is believed that the Muslims who entered earlier between 7th-9th century A.D., on the southern coromound or coast of India were permitted by the Hindu Raja to propagate Islam and even Raja Cheraman Proumal converted to Islam which indicates great tolerance exhibition by the Hindu Rajas. These foreign Muslims even made matrimonial alliances with the local women in southern sea coast of India. The various communities of these Muslims like Labbes, the Maphillas (Moplabs) and Nawaits were inhabited in this region. The offspring's of these communities even today are surviving in south India. The Sufis penetration into the Indian soil took place even before the Muslim conquests of India and the Muslim traders have already paved way for these saints. These Sufis initially propagated the real picture of Islam individually, and through their well organized different Sufis-tic orders, and in this way the credit of conversion to a large number of Non-Muslims into Islam in India goes to these Sufi saints. “Moplabs of the south coast were converted to Islam by the disciples of Malik b. Dinar (d.744), Dudwalas and Pinjaras of Gujarat by al Hallaj (d.921), Labbes of Trichinopoly by Nithar Shah (d.1039), Memons of Cutch by Yusuf al din Sindi, the Daudpotas of Sind and Baluchistan by the Qaramite missionaries of Sind, the Bohras of Gujarat by Ismaili missionaries like Nur Satgar. The tomb of Imam Nasir-ud-din at Jullundur bears the year of his death as 945 C.E. Similarly a tomb of another Sufi named at Khadar reported to be existed in Dacca. Al-Khadar died in 951 C.E., In 975 C.E. Abu Ishaq of Gazrun appointed Saifuddin Gazruni (962-1007), a young boy of seventeenth years as his *khalifa* and asked him to go to India for the spread of his own creed. He came to Ismaili Kingdom of Multan and settled at Uch. He remained there till his death in 1007 C.E.”

Organization and Position of the main Sufi Orders in Jammu & Kashmir during the 16th-18th Century A.D.

Kashmir is the place where a number of Sufis found it suitable for the Sufi mission right from the 14th century onwards. However, the period of the 16th century is a very crucial period when different Sufis of various major silsilas including the unique local Rishi order, (not found anywhere in Indian subcontinent) were actively working in the Valley. Before the arrival of new Sufi orders from the 16th century, there were some Sufi orders already existing which had penetrated into Kashmir during the different periods of time. Therefore, following were the some reputed Sufi orders and Sufis who served the people by their simplicity and spiritual greatness. Qadiri order. Shaikh Abdul-Qadir Jilani also called as the *Ghausu'l-A'zam* (A.H. 471-561/ A.D. 1078-1165) (greatest among the saints) of Baghdad was the founder of the Qadiri order. Besides a remarkable Sufi, he was also a great scholar and an excellent writer. Hence the doctrines and practices of Qadiri order are explained in the works of the Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani. Rafiqi is of the view that Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani's writings reflect him as a “sober preacher”, and his confidence speaks of his balanced life based on self help, quest for the right path. He stressed his followers that: “he should keep the commandments of Allah, he should abstain from the forbidden things, and he should be pleased with the decrees of providence.”

Shaikh Kangi Rishi.

In his young age he was having the ascetic and divine interest, and entered in the Rihshi movement though he was an Owasi. Later on he became the *murid* of Hazrat Baba Dawud Khaki. Kangi Rishi had a cow for the purpose of milk but his *khadams* planed to sell the cow so that they may purchase salt but the cow at his hermitage requested her master, the Kangi Rishi and due this request Shaikh prohibited the servants to sell this cow. And in this way he gave up taking salt, up to last stage of his life, and also never ate the flesh of animals. One day a roasted fish was brought to him as a gift and he was requested much more so that he ate this fish. Then he said that to clear the doubt of the salt wash it with water. As the roasted fish was put in the water she became alive and she run away in the water. Many other facts about him are said. He died in 1007 A.H. /1598-99 A.D and is buried in the pargana Bankil at the village Wani-Gam.2

Khwand Mullah Kamal.

He was the brother of Maulana Jamal. A great religious preceptor, ascetic, and God fearing man, he was a contemporary of Mughal emperor Akbar and was a Naqashbandiyyah saint. He was the disciple of Hazrat Abdul Sahid Naqashbandi Ahrari who was among the descendants of Hazrat Ubaidullah Ahrar.² Maulana Kamaud-Din Bin Musa in A.H 971/ AD 1563-1564 left Kashmir for Lahore. Maulana Kamal Kashmiri had perfect knowledge of logic and philosophy, and was a great scholar. Hazrat Mujaddad Alfi Sani Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi also met Mullah Kamal in Lahore, and received knowledge from him. Maulana Kamal passed away from this world in A.H 1017/ A.D 1599 and is buried there in Lahore.

Khwaja Haidar Natinoo.

He was the son of Khwaja Firoz, who was among the disciples of Khwaja Abdul Sahid Naqashbandi. At the age of seven he started to perform meditation and to follow the *Sunnah* of the Prophet (PBUH). In the initial stage he acquired knowledge and the principles of Naqashbandiyyah order from Baba Nasib-ud-Din Ghazi. Later on he became the *murid* of Hazrat Khwaja Maulana Johar. And lastly he got benefited from Shaikh Abdul Haq Muhadis Dehlavi in Qadiri order and reached to the utmost stages of knowledge and progress.⁴ He refused the *mansab* of Qazi, offered to him by the rulers of the state. And left the city and returned only when the *mansab* of Qazi had been granted to some other person. He passed away from this world in A.H 1057/A.D 1649.⁵ He was buried at Gujwara in Srinagar in the *astan* (mausoleum) of his ancestors.

Mullah Husain Haji Ganai.

He lived in the adjacent area of Jama Masjid of Srinagar, and was a teacher in the Naqashbandi *khanqah* of Malik Jalalud-Din Thakur. Khwaja Haidar acquired knowledge from Mullah Husain. Hence in the Naqashbandiyyah silsila he was the disciple of Khwaja Hasan Qari who in turn was the *khalifa* of Ahrari saints, Hazrat Makhdum. But he never met to Khwaja Abdul Shahid in case of Naqashbandi order. Mullah Husain Ganai was a great *Alim* on '*Farid-i-Asar*' of the period, many students got benefited from him and in 1643 A.D he breathed his last and was buried in the *madrassa* of Malik Jalal-ud-Din Thakur at Srinagar.

Impact of Sufism on the Socio-Cultural Conditions (of the people) of Jammu & Kashmir during the period under review:

The picturesque Valley of Kashmir is famous for its cultural activities, civilization and communal harmony for centuries. So for as the socio-cultural conditions of the Valley are concerned, it should be noted that with the arrival of Sufism into the Valley and with the penetration of Sufis who preached Islam peacefully in Kashmir, there started a remarkable change in the social and religious life of the people of Kashmir. From here the contacts of the local people become closer to the foreign Muslims. It was because of the Sufis efforts that the local converted people adopted many of their manners, customs, dress, diet, etc. but they could not give-up all of their old practices, beliefs and traditions, with the result a new social order emerged, combined the old ideas with the new ones. The cultural relations with Persia and Turkistan and the coming of people from such countries had directly affected social transformation. Finally the people created a society of mix traditions of the old ideas, and the new faith called Indo-Islamic Culture.

1 With the spread of Islam in Kashmir all the aspects of art, architecture and literature was influenced by the respected Sufis, theologians, artists and learned-men who came from outside to Kashmir.

2 As a result there established a composite culture which gradually changed the social order with the passage of time and hence introduced Islamic culture in Kashmir later on. In the ancient Kashmir, Hindu society was cast oriented divided into Brahmans, *Kashtriyas*, *Vaisyas* and the *Sudras*.

3 Mohibbul Hassan states that, "These divisions were not as rigid as in India. It was, for example, not uncommon for the rulers to take *Domba* girls (prostitutes) as their wives and make them their chief queens" furthermore there in the Valley a low born can also rise to the highest position in the State. Besides it, as usual it was the Brahman class which had enjoyed a high status.

However, the Sufis always tried their best, in unifying economic disparities caused by the *Varna* system prevailed in the society. With the passage of time in medieval Kashmir, the Hindu society was divided into two groups, the Persian speaking Hindus were called Karkun and the Sanskrit speaking Hindus were called Pundits. Walter Lawrence is of the opinion that, "It would be interesting to trace the origin of the Kram names, although by intermarriage the Krams have ceased to have any individuality or distinction and to acquire whether the various *Krams* sprang from a Brahman, Khattri or Vaisya origin." Hence the Musalmans of the Pandit, Kol, But, Aitu, Rishi, Mantu and Ganai are the descendants of the Brahmans who were converted to Islam during the 14th century. And among the Khattri Krams were the Magres, Tantres, Daras, Dangars, Rainas, Rathors, Thakurs and Naiks. However Lawrence further elaborates it, that Lone is having its origin from Vaisya and about Damras he relates them to the Sudras origin that is lowest among the four Hindu castes.⁴ Further the Brahmans who did not give-up their caste, hence with the passage of time they got divided into two sub-castes that are the Karkuns and the Bhasyabhatts. Here the Karkuns preferred the study of Persian and hence got the appointments in the government jobs. As far as Sufis, *Pirs* or *murshids* in Kashmir are concerned they influenced all the three aspects of social, religious and cultural life in the Valley.⁶ Mir Sayyid Ali Hamdani came to Kashmir during the reign of Qutb-ud-Din held the opinion that, "the Muslims should limit their desires according to the dictates of religion but they should not annihilate them like the Hindu *Sadhus* or Muslim *Faqirs*. Sayyid Ali greatly stressed on doing Justice, social justice is the central idea of his political philosophy." The *Pirs*, *murshids*, or Sufis abode was called *khanqah*. They laid such an impact on the ruling class that, these *khanqahs* of such pious people were mostly erected by the royal family members and the nobles. So *khanqah* was the place where a Sufi, *Pir* or *murshid* resided along with their families and the principal disciples, learned men or *khalifas*. On the death of a *Pir* he was succeeded by one among his main disciples having high intellectual and spiritual qualities. However, sometimes succession is also based on hereditary principles. The successor was generally called *khalifa*. The Sultan also participated in a Yagana ceremony once so as to avert a famine. The important thing is that in this ceremony the Brahmans got gifts from the Sultan. So for Sultan Qutub-ud-Din is

concerned, he married with two real sisters because he was ignorant about the proper knowledge of *Shriah*. Therefore, the Sultans did not propagate or promote religious synthesis. Initially they were not able to distinguish between right and wrong according to the Islamic point of view i.e., *Shariah*. In the 15th century during the reign of the Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin the society was categorized on the basis of racial, religious and socio-economic factors, and this comprises the indigenous and foreign origin and they ranged from urban and landed aristocrat groups even peasantry or tribal classes. During the 16th century when Kashmir was ruled by the Chaks, the Ulama had much influence on the government activities.

CONCLUSION

The Valley of Kashmir Paradise has always been an attraction not only for the rulers but for the Sufis, merchants', academicians, artisans and other sections of the society since time is mentioned. A study on the Kashmiri society its people and economy looks very interesting and the role played by the Darwishes, Sufis and Walis in special. Their impact on the socio-economic trends of Kashmir has been well assessed in the present study on the basis of contemporary and modern reliable sources. In the first chapter of the study we come to the conclusion that the geopolitical conditions of Jammu & Kashmir favored the Sufis-saints and Pirs for their mission, and it was through them that Islam was introduced in that region. As from the geographical point of view Kashmir was such a spot whose boundaries touched to various such countries where Sufism was swiftly flourishing in the 14th century. Thus it became easy for the Sufis to enter Kashmir from the adjoining routes and passes. Before the penetration of Islam in Kashmir which undoubtedly was the home of Buddhism and Hinduism. But during the last days of the Hindu Rajas and Chieftains rule i.e. in the first half of the 14th century, the political and social conditions led the common masses in trouble and miserable position. In this way it paved the way for the establishment and propagation of Islam in Kashmir. Besides it, we also found that it was the Sufi saint's simplicity, Sufistic thought, piousness and miraculous powers and spiritual practices, which attracted people to embraced Islam. However, with the passage of time, the 16th century was the most significant period from the political point of view. Mir Shams-ud-Din Iraqi arrived in the closing years of the 15th century and by the beginning of the 16th century got Chak rulers converted into the Shia faith. Again it was the Sufi movement who raised their voice against the exploitation of the Sunni *mashaikh*, Sufis, Ulama and Darwishes at the hands of some of the Chak rulers. With the result some of the prominent Kashmiri Sufis viz, Shaikh Yaqub Sarfi, Baba Dawud Khaki with the blessings of Shaikh Hamza Makhdum invited the Mughal Emperor Akbar who conquered and annexed Kashmir in 1586. However, it was under the Mughal rule that the Sufis saints, Pirs and Rishis again were held in high esteem, both in the society and in the eyes of ruling elite. In the second chapter an attempt has been made to prove it in the light of various verses of the *Holy Qur'an* and *Hadith* that *Tasawwuf* has its origin in Islam, as Sufis have always considered Prophet of Islam, *Ahle-bait* and the companions of the Prophet (SAW) i.e., *Sahabas* as the role models for their spiritual quest activities of lives. The various Sufi orders viz, the Kubravi, Suhrawardi, Naqashbandi, Qadiri, Nur Bakshi and Rishi penetrated in the Kashmir Valley. Simultaneously the role of Rishi order can't be underestimated as they made the task of Sufis further easy for the propagation of their fold as well. However, a few Sufis and Sayyids (particularly Baihaqi Sayyids) in the Sultanate period enjoyed positions in the state politics. In Kashmir too Sufis contribution in comparison to Ulama is more significant with regard to socio-cultural conditions of the people. In order to analyze the role of Sufi orders in the third chapter we notice that with the penetration of Sufis in Kashmir in the 14th century, a wind of change in almost every sphere of life such as regarding faith, culture and social conditions took place. The first Sufi who entered Kashmir from the Turkistan was Sayyid Abdur Rahman Bulbul Shah, who converted the Buddhist ruler Rinchan Shah to Islam, and gave him the Muslim name Sadru-ud-Din, who becomes the first Muslim Sultan of Kashmir. It should also be noted that, propagation of Islam in Kashmir as in other parts of country too was, through the peaceful way. In the fourth chapter details have been supplied about the penetration and establishment of many Sufi orders viz, Qadiri, Nur-Bakshi, Rishi, Suhrawardi, Naqashbandi, Chishti and Qubravi through their giant popular Shaikhs. The different conditions of these orders, has also been examined.

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