

ADVENT OF ISLAM AND ROLE OF SHAHMIR IN FOUNDATION OF
MUSLIM RULE IN KASHMIR

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Abstract

Kashmir, a territory renowned for its Muslim majority, is seeing an increase in its Muslim population by more than 97% within the Valley. Although the entire state of Jammu and Kashmir was a rigid Hindu community for 3100 years with religiously race-discriminative divisions until the arrival of Baba Bulbul Shah and Shah-e-Hamdan in Kashmir. As from Hameem Bin Sameh to Bulbul Shah, Muslims were present but undominant, after the embracing Islam of Renchan Shah., Islam became the official religion of the state. Islamization was strengthened by Shahmir, purified, and modified by Shah-e-Hamdan. This paper explores facts about how Islam brought equality, justice, social harmony, ethical values, unity, brotherhood, friendship, and equality through the struggles of the Sufi saints and Muslim scholars. It unveiled the close knits with Central Asia that had consequences in the fields of art and craft, carpet viewing, wood and stone carvings, as well as many with skills. Kashmiris gained fame in the fields of art and craft and in Persian literature and soon emerged as “Iran-e-Sagheer.”

Key words: Islam, Kashmir, Kota Rani, Art and Craft, Skills, Zulchu, Dulcha, Kasghar, Shah-e-Hamdan, Bulbul Shah, Shahmir, Sulatines

Introduction

Two regions in South Asia are incredibly famous due to massive diversion of religion by emerging the Muslim majority in a noticeably fleeting period, deviated from Hinduism and Buddhism are respectively Kashmir and Maldives. The main cause of such massive was the embracing Islam by the ruler of the States. The region of Kashmir soon turned into the Muslims State in a short time noticeably less than half century which impacted currently valley hold 97.16% Muslim population during 2014.¹ The arrival of Abdur Rehman Bulbul Shah and Syed Ali Shah Hamdani turned the whole scenario and particularly on the preaching of Shah-e-Hamdan massive population embraced Islam.² On the lingual basis, the Muslim reside in Valley of Kashmir having mother tongue “Kashmiri” refer themselves as “Koushar”.³

Muslims in Kashmir During Umayyads & Abbasids

The advent of Islam in Kashmir is a bit different from Maldives because the Islam arrived in Kashmir during the Muhammad bin Qasim attacks on Debal (Sind) when the nephew of Raja Dahar fled away from Sindh and refugeed in Taxila the western Part of the Kingdom of Kashmir with the assistance of an Arab merchant Hamed bin Sameh.⁴ So, Hameem was the first person who was transcriptive evidenced as a first Muslim in Kashmir who also constructed a mosque in the region of Taxila. The invasion of Muslims was so strong, in reaction of their advancement towards north, even there was not any threat so far but for the neutralize the threats on

his borders, Maharaja Kashmir Chandriapida sought the military assistance from China which was rule by Thang dynasty against Muslim Lashkar, if it attacked on them, however no help came forth.⁵

According to Sen, during the era of 8th century, the Kingdom of Kashmir was under horrible threats of Arabs who made several attempts to occupy Kashmir during 711-13 A.D but Muhammad Bin Qasim was recalled by Umayyads Caliph Muhammad Bin Hasham.⁶ Hasen also claimed that during 724-43 A.D the Arabs again marched under the command of one of most energetic and ambitious governor Junaid who was defeated by Maktapida (Laltaditya).⁷ In fact, Before and after Hameem, the pages of history are silent about the presence of Muslims in the State of Jammu and Kashmir. The discussion of Sen and Hasen could not be supported with the proof from the pages of history however, it is true that the Maharaja of Kashmir sought assistance from China against Arab Lashkar. The history of Muslim invaders showed that if they attempted to invade any region, they could not withdraw from their struggles until they conquered that particular region as evidenced in Constantinople case. The trade routes between Central Asia, Khotan, Bukhara, Kabul and Subcontinental States assisted the Muslims advent into the region of Kashmir and a fair Muslim quantity remained present in the Kingdom of Kashmir.

In Abbasids era, last attempt was made under the command of the Governor of Sindh Hisham bin Amr al-Taghlibi during 754-775 A.D and they succeeded to occupy some part of the Kingdom of Kashmir in the southern slopes of Himalayas but could not reached to Valley of Kashmir.⁸ Now, the Muslims merchants were moving all around the subcontinent from northern Himalayas to the borders of Myanmar. The honesty, truth and fair dealing of the Muslims merchants highly appreciated by the local communities and they also impressed by the justice, equality and non-discriminative Muslim sociology besides of Hindutva classes as division of human being be claiming the superior classes and inferior classes. The population inside Kashmir as well as inside most of the parts of Indian subcontinent was further impressed by the messages of Muslim Sufi Saints who spread the message of love, brotherhood, equality, peace and social justice. These preaching turned as rebellion movements against the Brahman domination and subjugation of lower and lowest Hindu classes. As they felt security, protection, respect and equal justice, they embraced Islam in massive numbers.

Ghaznavids Attacks on Kashmir

On the other hand, the attack on Kashmir remained continue in Ghaznavids era under the supervision of Sultan Mehmood Ghaznavi when Sultan was on the campaign in Waihand (near Peshawar) in 1002 A.D and defeated Raja Jaipal and his son Anandpal successively. Annand Pal's son Trilochanpala. whose influence was only limited to the Salt Ranges sough assistance from Kashmiri ruler against Ghanavi by appealing Samgram Raja. Samgram Raja helped Trilochanpala with a huge army but the Ghaznavi Lashkar crushed these joint forces and the Trilochanpala was badly defeated. After conquering Salt Range, Sultan Mehmood Ghaznavi advanced to the Kashmir region to encounter the alliance of Trilochanpala but Sultan failed to find the fair seasoned route to the Kashmir. Ghaznavi chose the route of Tosha Maidan pass which was resisted by the Kashmiri forces as well as by the heavy snow. Ghaznavi only limited to Lowerkot Fort and left back to Ghazni due to bad weather conditions.⁹ After these attacks, the region of Kashmir remained safe the external invaders from plains due to two main reasons; first they could not the aware of fighting in the hilly terrains and secondly the extreme weather conditions in Kashmir assured the safety to the Kashmiri people.

Dynamics of 14th Century

During the last Hindu rule "Loahara Dynasty" (1002-1320 A.D), the Muslim preachers and merchants were entered in Kashmir for the preaching of Islam. The most famous name can be explored from the history books was "Abdur Rehman Bulbul

Shah” who most probably arrived in Kashmir during the last decades of thirteenth century. In the second decade of fourteenth century, a Tibetan Prince Renchan Shah was also present in the Valley of Kashmir. Most interestingly, the presence of another Muslim leader “Shamir” whose family was migrated from Swat was also present in the Valley of Kashmir. During 1320 A.D when Suhadeva, the last ruler of Lohara Dynasty, provided the space for the new ruler.

Bazaz provided detailed arguments about the advent of Muslim and establishment of Muslims rule in Kashmir. He shed the comprehensive light upon the behaviour of Hindu rulers in thirteenth and fourteenth century as well as the circumstances in which Kashmiris were suffering economically, politically and socially miserable. Bazaz draws the picture which shows that the last Hindu rulers were captured in mutual power wars and unaware from the people poverty and hardships. But on the other hand, there are still misreading and confusion produced by many Muslim or Hindu authors and historians about the foundation of Kashmir as a Muslim State and establishment of Sulatine Dynasty in Kashmir in 1339 A.D. From Avanti Varman’s death to Ghaznavid attacks, records of Rajatarangni showed the bestiality, viciousness of the low born misruled adventures. The mischiefs, conspiracies and intrigues resulted in quarrels, murders, killings and occupation on the rule. So, before the advent of Muslims the situation in the Valley was expressed in historic sordid records of short tenures of rule, homicides, suicides, extortions, blackmailing, plots, machinations, intrigues, suppression, persecutions and rebellions.¹⁰

Why Kashmiris Welcome Muslims?

Sir Francis Younghusband also sketched the miseries of Kashmiris that they were living in the state of perpetual intrigue and assassinations, where conspiracies, plots and killings were quite common amongst real and stepbrothers, cousins, uncles and even though among mother and sons too. A chief snatched the throne, the war of power started between ministers, military commands and officers even with the nobles when they were on it, of wearying, petty internecine wars, of general discomfort, uncertainty and unrest.¹¹ In entire era, Harsha (1089-1101 A.D) considered one of the best ruler who could be categorized as justice like and also characterized by prudence and munificence towards men of learning. It is also described by some historians that Harsha had Muslim Captains in his army.¹² In entire 13th century, the clouds of bad governance, peaceless and worst economic remained hovering over Kingdom of Kashmir due to unqualified and greedy rulers like Rajadeva. Famine, floods and epidemics captured maximum of population and people stood up for revolt under the leadership of Uchhala and Sussala the nephews of the King.¹³

Bazaz drew the sketch of 1300 A.D when Sahadeva ascended the throne of Kashmir, it was looked that the drunkards, gamblers and profligate women ruled the region of Kashmir.¹⁴ He was also proved himself idle and weak administrator who could not made grip to control the entire situation. In his reign three major personalities arrived in Srinagar. Historians claim that Abdur Rehman Bulbul Shah was present in Kashmir during his rule. Secondly a Buddhist Prince fled from western Tibet named as Renchan Shah who was sone of Vakatnya who was killed in rebellion. Renchan was granted asylum true to his culture and tradition with a jagir and treated with full respect magnanimous and hospitality. Thirdly, a Muslim migrated from Swat or Dardistan came to Sahadeva who also generously granted a jagir. Besides of these three figures, another more influential person also counted in the books of history who was destined to play a significant role, a Buddhist prince who was defeated by his brother, Lankar Chak, he also welcomed by Sahadeva. All these immigrants took close eye on the entire situation and read all the possibilities and opportunities in which Shahmir was a shrewd politician and farsighted statesperson.

Zulchu in Action and First Muslim Ruler in Kashmir

About 1319, the Valley of Kashmir came under the invasion of Tartar adventurers who arrived from the northern region led by Zulchu which was named by

Hindu writers as Zulqadar Khan and Bazaz named his Dulcha. Zulqadar and Dulcha are both baseless claims as these events studied comparatively. The person who attacked the Valley in 1319 A.D was Zulchu who spread terror, made horrible situation in valley, plundering the people, looting and set on fire many areas of Srinagar. He also took the people and made them slaves during his stay in Srinagar. The government of Kashmir neither stooped Zulchu nor resisted but Sahadeva showed cowardice and desertion and fled to Kishtwar and buried in the pages of history.¹⁵ After his fled from battlefield the pages of history and disappeared him. At that crucial time, when Zulch and other robbers were buried in snowstorm on the northern region and in the valley Renchan Shah stood to encourage the people and brought back them to their lives, although the Prime Minister of Sahadeva Rama Chandra also struggled to maintain law and order but all in vain. In the situation of uncertainty and chaos, Rama Chandra was assassinated and Renchan Shah took the throne in 1320 and married with wife of Sahadeva “Kota Rani” and appointed Shahmir his Prime Minister with the assistance of some landlords, feudal, courts officials and army chiefs. In those circumstance the people of Kashmir dreamed a strong, brave, capable ruler who got realization in one person of the fugitive Buddhist which declared by Jona Raja as “a lion among men.”¹⁶

Here another conspiracy was created by the Hindu orthodox writers about the conversion of Renchan Shah from Buddhism to Islam. Even a moderate brain Hindu like Bazaz could not swallow his embracing Islam. In his book “the History of Struggle of Freedom in Kashmir,” he drew another sketch as “after his accession to the throne Renchan wanted to become a Shaivite (Hindu) but was refused admittance into the fold by orthodox Brahmins. In his desperate hunt for a new faith, he met a Muslim Saint called Bulbul Shah who had recently arrived from Turkistan. The persuasive teaching of the saint profoundly influenced Renchan and so he embraced Islam.”¹⁷ This entire narration is baseless due to three main reasons: first of all, the circumstances in the valley were very crucial and peaceless after the loot of Renchan Shah. In that particular time, no one can stop Renchan Shah from accepting any other religion. Secondly, he was considered a very brave and strong person who was proposed to be responsible for the murder of Ram Chandra, no one can force or refuse a King to adopt any religion of faith. If he intends to Hindutva, they surely accepted him as Buddhism was turning into close knits with Hinduism after the death of Kanishka. Third reason was the social impact which was created by the Muslims on the basis of equality and brotherhood without any discrimination. So, the lower and lowest Hindu classes accept this with sole of hearts and wanted such a revolutionary dynamism in governance system and new king who would be other than Hindu. In all the historical evidence, there is no single evidence which shows the sorrow, protest or resistance about the Renchan Shah conversion of faith and religion.

It would be most probable that Renchan Shah wanted to change his faith and he analyzed all the religions one by one which were present in Valley of Kashmir. Due to close relations with Shahmir, he must be impressed by Muslim’s code of life, which is pious, peaceful, perfect and heavenly supreme. Foaq discussed that matter, one day when Renchan Shah was on walk, he saw Abdur Rehman Bulbul Shah was praying on the bank of river Jhelum. He was impressed by recitation of Holy Quran and asked him to bring him in the Islamic circle. Renchan Shah impressed by Sufi saint Sharfuddin Abdur Rehman who was known as Bulbul Shah and accepted the reality and truthfulness of Islam and embraced it by converting from Renchan Shah to “Sultan Sadruddin accepted Islam with well faith and soon constructed a mosque on that particular land which was known as “Bulbul Lankar” in Srinagar.¹⁸ The word Bulbul is used for the bird (nightingale) whose voice was very sweet and beautiful particularly in spring season which attracted everyone towards it. Bulbul Shah would be used for sweet and beautiful sound of Sufi Saint Abdur Rehman, whose sound of recitation of Quran Majeed attracted the people of Kashmir from barbarism and ignorance to the light of Islam. After couple of years, Sadruddin died and leaving behind a widow Kota

Rani and a son “Haider.”

Kota Rani and Last Hindu Ruler

The Hindutva forces which hidden in caves during the Zulchu attacks could not digest the supervision and governance of strange and newly arrived religion. Here Kota Rani once used by Hindu elites and she refused to proclaim the Haider as successor of Sadruddin but she announced Udyan deva, the brother of Sahadeva as new ruler of Kashmir who also fled away to Gandhara region for refuge. In entire period, Shahmir was still in his position and did not object what going around. Udyan deva’s rule prolonged about 15 years, which is good duration in those circumstances while Sultan Sadruddin already did the rehabilitation work. He had good support from Kota Rani and other orthodox Hindu officials. In result, this tenure also counted in misrule, lack of wisdom, luxuries enjoyments, inability and mismanagement. Kota Rani and king made all the administrative powers and decisions was cornered to so called and by his conduct cowardice and mismanagement exhausted all potentials and hopes of Hinduism. The people were still unhappy even though the command was in the hands of Kota Rani and Udyan deva having no authority on the administrative issues but acted like a nominal monarch. In the kingdom of Kashmir had not get any improvement in social, political, economic and peace but it became so appalling and chaotic by the mismanagement., bad ruling values by a lot of wicked monarchs one after another and the territory might by shone like luminous patriot as well as misfortune dogged its footsteps.¹⁹

Dulcha’s Attack and Elimination of Hindu Dynasties

The Hindutva was becoming hopeless and desperateness prevailed all around and the hope of its revival was going to die very rapidly. As the people of Kashmir just took a sigh of relief and just started to normalize the situation and rebuilt infrastructure, another devil arose from the northern east who was narrated as “Urwan” by urdil, “Achala” by Jonaraja and “Dalcha” be most of the historians.²⁰ On that crucial time, Udyan Deva followed the ethic of his brother “Sahadeva” and fled away from the Valley but Kota Rani remained affirmed, constant and resisted and the other one was Shahmir, who fight bravely against these muggers and defeated them as he took a patriotic contribution against Dulcha’s loot. Kota Rani, once again desired to reinstall Udyan Deva on the throne but her desire abolished with the death of Udyan Deva in 1338-39. Instead of declaring nominee from her sons: Haider Ali from Sadruddin or Bola Rattan from Udyan Deva, Kota Rani once again ascended on throne by herself. Kota Rani was frightened much by Shahmir who had excellent relations with all the feudal lords, army chiefs and other officials, although, he was seventy-six years old and had spent more the twenty-six years in the Srinagar.

Founder of First Muslim Dynasty in Kashmir

It is also stated that he sent a proposal for marriage to Kota Rani and she accepted it and in the passage of a few months, she passed away from this world. Bazaz appreciated her with these words “she accepted the proposal of Shahmir to marry him but eventually over-powered by grief and disappointment, the sensitive, self-respecting and patriotic queen committed suicide”.²¹ After the death of Kota Rani, the last hurdle from the Hindu rigidus throne greed and long dynasty came to an end and laid the foundation of Muslim Rule in the Kingdom of Kashmir from 1339 under the first kingship of Shahmir who chose the title of “Sultan” instead of Raja.²² All the non-Muslim authors including Hindu, Englishmen and others agreed upon this fact that the Muslim did not entered in Kashmir as invader, raider or conquerors or plunders, hence, the noticeable reality shows that Muslim rule was established with the assistance of Hindu lords and officials. The work of Shahmir during both northern attacks of Zulchu and Dulcha, mid era of rehabilitation and infrastructure building and post Dulcha attacks could not show any intrigue and conspiracy by him to obtain the throne but it is fact that he had done very hard work slowly, steadily, sacrificing and patiently and succeeded in ascending rung after rung of the ladder of success and popularity with sole

acceptance by the entire community of Srinagar. By his character, he abolished the Hindu monopoly and made the wide space in the hearts of Kashmiris to accept the Muslim as ruler who proved by his conduct, it was really amazing choice of them.

Shahmir laid down the foundation not only an Islamic Kingdom in Kashmir but it was the foundation of peace, education, Knowledge, fertility and prosperity. The advent of Islam in Kashmir not caused Muslim rule in Kashmir but the rule proved as a heavenly blessing which not only brought revolutions socially and politically but also produced fertility, intellectuality and spirituality in the dead-like bodies of Kashmiris. The establishment of Muslim rule was based upon humanity, equality, social justice and people welfare, so there was no hurdle in its foundation and Shahmir was insisted to ascend the throne. The reality also declared by the Wesley Haig as "he praised the Shahmir as he wisely and beneficially acquired the power when Hindu Rajas were busy in atrocious tyrants whose avowed policy had been to leave their subjects nothing beyond a bare subsistence. He ruled on more ethics, principles, social justice and public welfare."²³ Without any bloodshed, the conduct of Shahmir not only appreciated in the length and breadth of entire kingdom but also emerged a pleasant change as Islam spread on the supersonic pace. The Muslims were further guided and educated by the lovingly, impressively, peaceful preachings and lucid persuasions of Mir Syed Ali Hamdani who visited Kashmir three time from 1372 to 1386 A.D. and migrated from Hamdan: a rural area of Persia (Iran). Sir M.A. Stein, who translated Rajatarangni in English language that the Islam made its way in Kashmir not by bloodshed and forcible conquer but it was spread by the gradual conversion for which the influx of foreign adventurers, both from south and northern south regions of Central Asia and the grounds were prepared by their preachings.²⁴

Shahmir Legacy

Shahmir had chosen the title of Sultan Shamsuddin on ascending the rule but her live could not prolonged further and died in 1342 A.D at the age of eighty years and succeeded by his two sons Sultan Jamshed and Sultan Alauddin, respectively. Sultan Alauddin was very famous due to two prominent accidents in his ruling era: first of arrival of Shah Hamdan first time in Kashmir and second one is the presence of Lalla Arifa in Kashmir.²⁵ This kingdom was extended and strengthened by the Sultan Shahabuddin, who was one of most prominent and intelligent rulers of Kashmir and invited Shah Hamdan in Kashmir to visit the Valley from the preaching and teaching of Islam. By accepting his invitation, Shah Hamdan came in Kashmir with more than seven hundred sadaats who done multidisciplinary and multidimensional jobs in Kashmir as first of all, the preaching of Islam and secondly they all were skillful and well aware of art and craft, wood and stone carving, namda and carpet viewing, shawl and cutlery makers and master of many other skills. They taught and trained the Kashmiris with advanced skills and crafts and Kashmir adorned with the lasting glory.²⁶

Shahmir was bestowed with supreme and intellectual legacy who was known in the books of history as "Sulatine or Sulateen or Sultans" under Shahmir dynasty in Kashmir. The ascendance of their rule was beginning after the advent of Shah Hamdan in Sultan Alauddin era which further developed in Sultan Shahabuddin rule when Shah Hamdan invited by him and he stayed in Kashmir more than three years. In those 15 to 20 years, the demographical map of the region was turned into majority of Muslim and the Kashmiris were abode with skills of art and craft. Sultan Sikandar, who was successor of Shahabuddin introduced new reforms on the advice on Shah Hamdan's teachings. The Golden age of Kashmir was on peak during the Sultan Sikandar and his particularly his successor Sultan Zainul Abidin Bud Shah. Bud Shah was counted as bright star in the fields of knowledge, prosperity, justice, administration, diplomatic relations, establishment of the centers of libraries and translations, social reforms, development and worldwide fame.²⁷

Conclusion

Shamir was the name of a great character, bravery and wisdom, who spent more than thirty years in Kashmir and remained patriot and honest to Srinagar. In Sahadeva reign, who was attached to the king's court and soon counted among the intelligent officials and feudal lords. He never gave up during Zulchu attacks on Srinagar who came for looting and robbery and burn out the entire infrastructure of Srinagar after looting. He encouraged Sultan Sadruddin to rebuild Srinagar and worked hard for rehabilitation of the government as well as of the people of the region of Srinagar when the king was absconded away in cowardice manner. After the death of Sultan Sadruddin, when Kota Rani asked Udyan Deva, who was also flown away to Gandhara during Zulchu attacks, he did not mind and continue his work as Prime Minister as he did during Sadruddin era. Even in Dulcha attacks during 1338-39, he once against took the command of forces and resisted the robbers but once again Hindu King adopted the tradition of his elder brother and escaped towards Kishtwar as well. When the situation came under control, Udyan Deva, once again invited by Kota Rani who died after few months. Shahmir again remained constant, honest and loyal to the Kings. Even though he also helped the Kota Rani in 1339 but Kota Rani could not control the situation and darbari officials, army chiefs and feudal lords were all against him and she soon invited Shahmir to take the throne of Kashmir. The era of twenty years from 1319-1339 A.D provided multiple chances for Shahmir to occupy the throne but he did not show any greed or wrong intention which could be interpreted as mischief or conspiracy to the kings. Even Hindu extremists also confess that Shahmir remained firms, honest, loyal and faithful to kings but some of them point out the death of Kota Rani as narrating it as a murder or suicide?

Shahmir was a true Muslim who founded the Islamic basis in Kashmir and due to his faithfulness and hard work of Sufi saints like Sharfuddin Abdur Rehman Bulbul shah and Shah Hamdan provided this region an everlasting Islamic glory. With the passage of nine hundred years, Kashmir is a still dominant region with Muslim majority. In the typical social dynamics, rigid religious approaches and extremist cultural values Kashmir is heaven place for all the religious people and presented as the notable example of pluralistic society where the people belong to different religions living together peacefully with social harmony and cohesion but following their own religions and faiths and struggling for their own interests.



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