



## KASHMIRI SUFISM, ISLAM AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO COMPOSITE CULTURE

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### ABSTRACT:

*Kashmir a vastly Muslim-majority area with deep cultural ties with Central Asian Muslim cultures, is connected to Iranian culture too as Persian was the official and literary language of the state for quite some time. On the outer side Kashmir had a Buddhist and Hindu past. Before the arrival of Muslims in Kashmir, it had a vibrant Hindu cultural ethos that had witnessed brief interregnum of Buddhism. But the chord of continuity was ultimately struck by its taking recourse to Shaivite philosophy, which became a special cultural identity of Kashmir. But once Islam became the political power of the land, things underwent a gradual change. Since Islam had crossed many lands before coming to Kashmir, it had amassed great cultural wealth. It came with a sense of being a deep and fit to the times culture. The fact of political power being at the back of it made it the dominant culture of the day. However, Muslim rulers of the initial years did not allow any sharp conflict to arise between the old Hindu culture and the new Muslim culture. All the acrimony that was witnessed was purely political in nature; otherwise, the two cultures had learned to co-exist. With the passage of time, culture became a tool to secure political objectives. Combined with the missionary efforts of Sufi Saints, political Islam became more active and in the process the old Hindu cultural ethos and the emerging Muslim socio-political themes came into sharp confrontation.*

### INTRODUCTION:

Islam did not come to Kashmir as a revolt against or as a destroyer of established tradition, but as a preserver, consolidator and perpetuator of the tradition. The fact that Islam is rooted in the Kashmiri tradition and the Kashmiri tradition is permeated with the Islamic tradition has enabled Kashmiri Muslims, who constitute 95 per cent of the population of the Kashmir Valley, to reconcile cosmopolitan Islamic affiliations with territorial

patriotism. Islam did not cause abysmal destruction to ancient Kashmiri culture but guided the course of its development in such a manner that it eventually emerged out of the narrow waters of Brahmanism into the broad sea of Islamic humanism. The onset of the 14<sup>th</sup> century was marked by a great historical upheaval in Kashmir which had the potential of restructuring the society along new lines under the influence of Islam.

Conquered tribesmen, travelling merchants and wondering Sufis brought Islam to people outside the Middle East. The diffusion of Islam and the conversion of new peoples brought Islamic societies into being in inner Asia, Southern Asia, India and other regions. The religious way of life and identity borne by the *Ulema* and Sufis again became articulated in parochial associations such as lineage, tribal, village and urban communities and states. It was through the Sufis that Islam reached Kashmir much before 1320 A.D., When king Vajraditya ruled the valley of Kashmir (725-732 A.D.), who, though cruel and sensuous, threw open his kingdom to welcome Islamic ideas and practices which benefited the Mlechhas (a term used for the Muslims) and appear to have been introduced by Hameem, and Abu Dilf Misri Bin Mihlal Al-Yandui, the foremost Muslim visitors to the country. King Harsha (1089-1101 A.D.), a poet and a lover of music and fine arts and various sciences, went a step further. Though tremendously influenced by the Islamic culture and Muslim etiquette, he introduced elaborate Muslim fashions in dress and ornaments and recruited Mlechhas in his army. The influence of this cultural diffusion was so profound that the Kashmiri society readily received the Muslim traditions and blended them with their own, inspiring writers, especially Kshemandra to make full use of words such as Dabir, Sultan, Shah, etc. in their writings. By the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century the Sufis, in collaboration with the Muslim traders of Central Asia, had already established a colony in Kashmir where they cultivated Sufi virtues of social equality which seized the heart of the socially unequal and culturally impoverished Kashmiris.<sup>1</sup>

Sufi tradition is an important manifestation of Kashmiri identity. Sufis spread message of Islam in Kashmir, which later on shaped the identity of people in Kashmir, using the native idioms. Hazrat Mir Syed Ali Hamadani R.A played an active role in spreading the message of Islam in Kashmir and is popularly known as the maker of Kashmiri identity. Syed Ali Hamadani was not traditional religious preacher who confined himself to the pulpit. He was a great scholar, a great reformer and a revolutionary. He had his hand on the pulse of the situation as it obtained in Kashmir during that period. He was a great missionary and it was because of his zeal that people in hordes embraced Islam and almost entire society got changed. His teachings go a long way in promoting humanism and creating a just society. The conversion of the people to Islam was furthered by the presence of Shah Hamadan is undoubted. His followers established hermitage all over the country which served as centers for the propagation of their religion and by their influence furthered the acceptance of the faith of the Prophet of Arabia.<sup>2</sup>

Deeply imbued with the Sufism of the age and country from which they emigrated, the Syed's and their followers stimulated the tendency to mysticism for which Buddhism and Vedantism had already paved the way. These Syed's naturally influenced the more pronounced mystics of Kashmir, who as the well-known Rishis or Babas or hermits, considerably furthered the spread of Islam by their extreme piety and utter self-abnegation. Saints and Rishis like Sheikh Noor-ud-Din, Baba Paim-ud-Din Reshi, Baba Bam-ud-Din, Sheikh Hamza Makhdoomi, Syed Ahmad Kirmani and Baba Zain-ud-Din, by their example and precept, smoothed the path of Islam in its slow, steady and systematic conversion of the whole Kashmir valley. Noor-ud-Din Noorani is regarded as the national saint of Kashmir. He is popularly known as Sheikh-ul-Alam, Alamdar-i-Kashmir. His pervasive mystical poetry was one of the finest and systematic expositions of the Tauhidic weltanschauung at the level of regional manifestation. One of the remarkable contribution of Noor-ud-Din Noorani's role as a Sufi reformer is that in spite of being an apostle of Hindu-Muslim unity, he did not fail to visualize the rise of Islam being swamped by the ancient religion of Kashmiris and took special care to urge them to mould their personal life in accordance with the Shariah. In fact Noor-ud-Din Noorani's poetry served as a spiritual guide to the personal ethics of the Shariah of Kashmiris. Its rejection of renunciation in the characteristic style of a Sufi reformer was aimed at imparting dynamism to his order which was closest to the tradition going back to the sober Junaid-i-Baghdadi and the later exponent of the Wahdal-ul-Shuhud, Ala Al-Dawal Simnani.

#### **RISHISM AND CONSTRUCTION OF KASHMIRI MUSLIM IDENTITY:**

Islam arrived in Kashmir like spring morning breeze soothing and refreshing. It not only healed old wounds but breathed a new life in everything that had wilted away. It gave Kashmir a new super-culture that recognized no nationality or sub-nationality and enriched Kashmiri language. In fact Islam metamorphosed Kashmiri society and the comity of nations gave Kashmir an identity of its own. This identity is projected as sub-nationalism or Kashmiriyat. While as some project it as syncretism of Sufism and Shaivism. The Muslim Sufis and divines like Shah Mir, Syed Abdul Rehman Sharaf-ud-Din also known as Bulbul Shah spread in the valley of Kashmir the message of peace as preached by Islam. Sheikh Noor ud-Din Noorani founded the order of Rishis which strengthened the roots of tolerance and secularism. The conversion of thousands of Kashmiris through arguments, persuasion and by impeccable rectitude fostered the forces of secularism, and tolerance, bringing about in the process a synthesis of cultures and religions. The Rishi movement was not confined to change of faith of people only but it turned to be all embracing movement bringing within its fold every aspect of life. It also bred local missionaries. The indigenous Rishi Movement drew its name from a local word Reshi used for pious. Sheikh-ul-Alam Sheikh Noor-ud-Din Wali who had accepted Islam at the hands of Syed Hussain Simnani and adopted the name of Sheikh Salar, was the founder of the Rishi movement. During the fifteenth and eighteenth

centuries, Islam became the religion of the great majority of rural Kashmir through Rishis. The message of love and tolerance came to be recognized as another major icon of Kashmiri identity.<sup>2</sup>

Rishi tradition is an important manifestation of Kashmiri identity. The Rishis spread the message of Islam in Kashmir by using the native idioms. Sheikh Noor-ud-Din Noorani popularly known as Nund Rishi is the first important saint of the Reshi order followed by other Rishis like Baba Bam Din Reshi, Sheikh Zain-ul-Din Rishi, Baba Lateef-ud-Din Reshi, Baba Nasar-u-Din Rishi, Baba Qaim-ud-Din Rishi and Baba Payam-ud-Din Rishi. Hundreds of saints received training under Nund Rishi and were known as Rishis. The teachings of Sheikh Noor-ud-Din rendered in poetry are known as Shrukhs. It was through these quadrants that he very successfully explained the teachings of Islam to illiterate folks. In a subtle way he communicated the teachings of Quran and Sunnah through his poetry. In the spirit of Islam and true to Kashmir personality humanism is the predominant current in the Rishi tradition. As an ardent Rishi, Nund Reshi stressed that a true Rishi must actively intervene in the world, taking the side of the poor and the oppressed and crusading for social justice, based on the recognition of the equality of all human beings in the eyes of the one god. Under Nund Reshi and his deputies (Khulafa), Rishism emerged as a powerful social movement, bitterly critiquing the oppression of the Brahmins and of the Ulama attached to the royal court. Nund Rishi's poetic compositions, replete and motifs based on the everyday life of the toiling people, his denunciation of meaningless ritualism and his scathing attack of social elites attracted larger number of Kashmiris, mainly from among the lower castes, into the Muslim fold. However, for these converts Islam did not appear as a radically new or alien religion and this facilitated the conversion process. The genius of the missionary approach of the Muslim Rishis laid in their successful effort to acculturate their message in a form that ordinary Kashmiris could understand.

Rishism made unprecedented gains in its founder's quest for union of faiths in Kashmir. The Rishis enjoyed a distinguished position in the traditional Kashmiri society. The individual conversions and certain cases of group conversions accelerated the process of Islamic acculturation of the commoners. The popular belief of the commoners in the Rishis spiritual powers or efficacy in holiness should not be misconstrued as an important factor in their gradual conversion to Islam. Conversion to Islam, by the Rishis, meant a relative advance in the social status of people. The Rishis were able to promote a fresh understanding of Islamic teachings in a different cultural milieu. The sentiments of respect and admiration for Islam and faith in its ultimately destiny are reflected in a number of eulogistic verses. Islamic acculturation of the commoners meant a transition from a traditionally defined caste-ridden society to the Islamic community or Muslim Ummah. Having undergone a process of Islamic acculturation, the converts saw their identity in terms of the new religious community of which they had become members. It led to the development of a Kashmiri Muslim society in the medieval period in which social

identity was defined in Islamic terms as opposed to caste. Thus the most significant social change that took place during this period was the gradual development of Islam as the focus of social identity among the people. It was through a variety of didactic songs of Sheikh Noor ud-Din Noorani that the people gradually adapted themselves to the Islamic society.<sup>3</sup>

The relative change in the status of the converts in the social identification is further testified to by the performances of the folk dancers on the eve of the anniversaries of the Rishis. Their performances had a symbolic significance for assessing the role of Rishis in drawing the peasants and farmers to their fold. This in turn affected the course of Islamic religious development in Kashmir. The impact of the Rishi movement was that through the performance given by Bhands, Dambalis, Islam was brought to the masses in a meaningful way. Though at that time, the only education for the illiterate folk was that which was transmitted orally, there arose groups of acrobats and singers who assumed the role of teachers that is why the festive occasions at the shrines of the Rishi Saints are days of rejoicing and thanks giving. The convert population looked up to them as their role models as well as the custodians of their tombs and of their communal identity. Significantly the people, out of reverence for their Saints, looked to these custodians as surrogatepriests. However, the various dimensions and implications of the process of Islamization came to the fore in the form of the reform process started by Ahli-Hadith towards the end of the 19th century. For them the converts needed to be converted afresh in view of their adherence to and devotional focus on the shrines. The widespread network of mosques in Kashmir valley with its emphasis on Tauhidic Universalism by Ahli Hadith and the added emphasis upon preserving the unique character of the shrines as symbols of Kashmiri Muslim identity are efforts at perfecting the process of conversion in the region.<sup>4</sup>

The Rishi movement in Kashmir is regarded as a typical example of the prodigious survival of past practices and their bearing on the Muslims. The social purpose of Rishi movement was to promote the harmony between the people, irrespective of creed, colour, and religion, though the stress in what was common in philosophy and common to the achievement of inner space as well as to challenge the priests whose professional aim was the preservation of the power of their class through the promotion of conflict. Even as these great idealists changed their world for the better, they had the wisdom to reject only elements of the past, not to destroy it completely. It was a perfect harmony which set the imagination of the people aflame. The message of harmony, as spread by the Rishis from time to time, created a reservoir of humanism which became the ideological fountainhead of the modern Kashmiri mind, gave a unique quality to the Kashmiri identity. In Kashmir austere Islamic rituals were freely converted by the Rishis into rich & colorful practices derived from the local devotional customs and practices. The Rishis influenced the lifestyle of Kashmiri Muslims. The synthesis of Arabic and Persian cultures produced a new order of Rishis or Rishi culture which is described by Abul Fazl in Ain-i- Akbar as, "The most

respected people of Kashmir are the Rishi who, although they do not suffer themselves to be fettered by traditions are doubtless true believers of god and were tolerant to other faiths.”<sup>5</sup> There were 2000 Rishis in Kashmir which clearly explains that how Islam was able to convert the Pandits (Hindus). The Rishis also made a significant impact on art and literature.

### **SHRINES (KHANQAHAS, ASTHANS) AS BASIS OF KASHMIRIYAT OR KASHMIRI MUSLIM IDENTITY**

Having acquired the character of pilgrimage centers (Ziyarats) for the commoners after the Rishis death, Khanqahas became focal points of Islam in the Kashmir valley not merely centers of spirituality, religion fervor, ascetic exercises and Sufi training but agencies for the diffusion of Islamic teaching among the rural population. Consequently, it was through the Ziyarats of the Rishis that Islam gained a firm footing in the valley of Kashmir. The Islam that had come to stay was clearly shown by the network of Mosques and Madrasas which sprang up everywhere round the tombs of the Rishis in due course. Mir Syed Ali Hamadani established the first khanqah or cloister of mystics in Kashmir and it was called Khanqah-i-Mohalla or the chief cloister. The Khanqah was a convent for the Rishis. The Ziyarats and mosques were institutions contributed by the Sufis that were peculiarly Islamic and through these institutions the conversion to Islam was secured through a peaceful and orderly evolution. While the tombs of the Rishis are cultural symbols of Islam in Kashmir, the Mosques adjacent to their premises are true symbols of a universal faith.

Ziyarats or shines, many of which remain to present day, attesting in their traditions their founders asterisk and virtues and forming local schools of holy men or priests whose influence was beneficial to the people as promulgating the principles of humanity and moral virtues. The shrines associated with acts of piety and self-denials are pleasant places of meeting at fair-time and the natural beauty of their position and surroundings afford additional attraction. Khanqahas or Ziyarats played a legendary role in the religious, social and economic life of Kashmir valley. In fact, it forms the basis for assertion of Kashmiriyat, an interpretation of Kashmiri cultural identity that emphasizes the harmonious blending of religious cultures and absence of conflict. The close association of Kashmiri Islam with shrines has rendered it syncretistic. It is believed that shrine worship was an accepted and integral part of the Kashmiri Islam. Shrines were and are central component of Kashmiri society in general and Kashmiri Islam in particular.

The shrines emerged as symbols and sites for the evolving ideological and political definitions of Kashmiri Islam and by extension the Kashmiri Muslim community. Kashmiri people visited the shrines for health, procreation, longevity and relief from floods, famine or disease. Furthermore, shrines provided a venue for Muslims to come

together during prayers and preaching and on more festive occasions such as periodic fairs at shrines to celebrate the birth and death, anniversaries of the saints entombed therein. Such occasions were key sites for rural-urban political and economic change.<sup>6</sup> Thus the Ziyarats and Khanqahs became the centres of superstition and charlatanism. They began to be worshiped by the credulous masses who came there as pilgrims to beseech the aid of the saint. The saint worship still plays an important part in the life of a Kashmiri, who is being constantly exploited by the Pirs and their disciples.

### **KASHMIRIYAT-GIFT OF RISHI-SUFI ORDER & REGIONAL IDENTITY OF KASHMIR**

Kashmiri Islam is renewed for its broadmindedness, its deep commitment to tolerance of all streams of thought. It is known to be firmly anchored in the Indian soil. Kashmiriyat is the elective & syncretic nature of the spiritual belief of Kashmiri Muslims. It is the impact of Sufi and Rishi vision of Islam that have helped him synthesize the message of Prophet Mohammad with the earliest prophets of Islam that constitute the core beliefs of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. The most important influence on the Kashmiri Muslims in terms of their Kashmiriyat is that of the Rishi order of Sufis. While the Sufi orders like Kabravi, Naqasbandhi and Qadri, arrived in Kashmir from Persian, Central Asia and Central and North-India, the Reshi order evolved in the Kashmir valley itself in the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The Kashmir valley was already permeated with the tradition of Hindu asceticism and Buddhist renunciation. The Rishis consistently preached complete harmony among different religions, peace and understanding among their followers. This was not always easy. One of the foremost Rishis Sheikh Noor-ud-Din Noorani, also known as Nund Rishi, faced restrictions during the reign of Suha Bhatt who had started persecuting non-Muslims in this new found Islamic zeal after conversion to the new faith. Aware of the tensions created between Hindus and Muslims during the reign of Sultan Sikandar, Sheikh Noor-ud-Din wrote, "we belong to the same parents. Then why this difference? Let Hindus and Muslims together worship god alone. We came to this world like partners. We should have shared our joys and sorrows together."<sup>7</sup>

The Rishi cult of Islam goes a long way in synthesizing different cultural ways of life. According to B.N. Parin, "Lal Ded and Nund Reshi have come down to us, over the centuries as apostle of true knowledge. They had a message to give and could not, perhaps, help as an inspired compulsion. They touch the deepest core of human sensibility. It is for nothing that we recite the Vakhs of Lal Ded and Shrukhs of the Sheikh with gusto and feeling, the meaning comes home, mixes with the blood and becomes part and parcel of our being. A cultural rejuvenation takes place."<sup>8</sup> Thus, Kashmiriyat is the principle of harmony, a principle that is essence of the pluralistic culture of Jammu and Kashmir. Kashmiriyat is thus the amalgam of the religio-cultural distinctive identities of both the Muslim and Hindu communities in addition to other minor communities.

Kashmiriyat is the ethno-national, social consciousness and cultural values of Kashmiri people. Kashmiriyat is characterized by religious and cultural harmony, patriotism and pride for the Himalayan homeland of Kashmir. Kashmiriyat consists of inevitable elements of secularism and nationalism without these constituent elements the concept of Kashmiriyat cannot be conceived. It is believed to have developed during the rule of Muslim governor, Zain-ul-Abidin and Mughal Emperor Akbar both of whom gave equal importance and patronage to different communities of Kashmir. Kashmiriyat is constructive of Socio-religious harmony and brotherhood. It has been influenced by the great religious traditions of Shaivism, Buddhism, Sikhism and Islam carrying a long standing conviction that each and every religion will lead to the same divine goal. The work in Kashmiri art, language, culture and literature strongly expound and emphasize Kashmiriyat as a way of life.

Kashmiriyat should not be understood within the framework of not only the rich and unique culture of Kashmir but also unique social and political experiences of the people. Kashmiriyat is a sense of belonging to the past and is Janus-faced, one face looking to the future, the other to the past. In the remote past Burzuhama Excavators brought to life existence of highest civilization in Kashmir making highly civilized country of that period. According to Akhter Mohi-ud-Din, “May be it is the bone and blood of the very ancient Dravid Civilization which has survived as the ethnic culture core and around which the present edifice has been built in collaboration with the Aryans, the Ionian Greeks, the Konan Brahmans, the Gypsies and the central Asians.”<sup>9</sup> Kashyap Bandhu, a prominent poet, understood Kashmiriyat as establishing a strong affinity with the land of his birth and reveals it as:

Bulbul Na Yeh Nasiyat Ahabab Bool Jayein  
Ganga Ke Badle Mere Jhelum Mein Phool Hein.<sup>10</sup>

[He wished if he died outside the valley of Kashmir, his ashes should be carried back to the valley for immersion in the Jhelum, instead of the Gangas].

Kashmiriyat refers to Kashmiri cultural identity cutting across the religious divide and defined by the elements of the love of their motherland (Kasheer) and common language (Koshur). Besides similar customs and practices of Kashmiris. Similar culinary and sectorial styles, shared folk fore and folk music had in the past contributed to an ineffable sense of mutual recognition and togetherness that was both physical and cultural. Kashmiriyat is also a philosophical and cultural substance of the Kashmiri identity, underlies the humanist and eclectic basis of society in one hand and the liberal and non-dogmatic attitude of the people on other. It is a synthesis of the historical process of the seminal values of the religious traditions of Shaivism, Buddhism, Sikhism and Islam that has



imparted a synthetic character of the people of Kashmir. It is believed that the air of Rishivar (valley of Saints) is such that the prayers of Rishis, Saints, Fakirs and all others blessed with spiritual powers are always answered. While Hindus would swear by Kahnai Sunz Path and Makhdoom Sabani Dri, referring to Muslim Dargahs Dastagir Sahab and Sheikh Hamza Makhdoomi respectively, their Muslim counterparts would never fail to visit Hindu friends and neighbors on Heyret (Shivratri) to receive soaked walnuts. Hindu sisters would tie on Muslim brothers on Rakshabandan and visit them on Eid to eat Sevaiyan (Sweet dish) from the same plate. Ghulam Ahmad Mahjoor expressed his views about this unique culture of Kashmiriyat as:

Masjidan, Mandiran, Girjan, DharmshalanteAstanan  
YeimanSarnaiGaranAstanuk Kunai DarvazaThavan Chum.<sup>11</sup>

[Mosques, temples, churches, hospices and holy places;  
To enter these many houses I will build but one doorway].

Kashmiriyat is constitutive of universalism, humanism and spirit of brotherhood. It is believed to be an expression of solidarity, resilience and patriotism. It is also believed to embody an ethos of harmony and a determination of survival by the people and their heritage. Sheikh Abdullah, a strong advocate of Kashmiriyat, believed that Kashmiriyat is rooted in culture and language. Hindu-Muslim Sikh itehad (unity) forms his perception of Kashmiriyat, where he could call a Hindu his brother and Kashmir as Mouj-Kasheer (Mother Kashmir). This message has been explained by Lal Ded in one of her Vaakh as:

Shiv ChuyThaliThalirpzan  
Mo zaan Hind teMusalmaan.  
Truk ay chuk pan panunparzanav  
Soy chausihbas sot zaniy zan.<sup>12</sup>

[Shiva lives everywhere do not divide Hindu from Muslim; use your sense to recognize yourself. That is the true way to find God].

The message of harmony as propounded by the great visionaries like Lalitaditya, Zain-ul-Abidin, Lal Ded and Sheikh Noor-ud-Din Noorani created a reservoir of humanism, which became the ideological fountain-head of the modern Kashmiri mind, gave a unique quality to the Kashmiri identity. The mutual respect and tolerance is the common characteristic of the Kashmiri people and is reflected in their way of life. There is a close knit of social and cultural life of the Kashmiris, both Hindus and Muslims sages. This is evident by the fact that the Hindus and

Muslims call Lal Ded as Lalleshwari, Lalmoj or Mother Lalla and Sheikh Noor-ud-Din, the patron saint of Kashmir as Nund Reshi, Sahaja Nunda, Alamdar-i-Kashmir and Sheikh-ul-Alam who is also the founder of Reshi order in Kashmir. Both Hindus and Muslims used to hold almost all saints and shrines in high esteem. The Muslim boatmen used to carry pilgrims to the shrines of Goddess Rajna at Tulmulla and would abstain from non-vegetarian dishes etc. Hindus passing by the shrine of Dastagir Sahab in Khanyar Srinagar and other shrines would bow reverentially near the gate of the shrine. This secular tradition impressed upon the devotees the fundamental unity of all religions and the importance of living gazed moral lives free from hate and narrow ritualism. Ghulam Ahmad Mahjoor, a strong votary of Hindu-Muslim unity, believed in the Shrines, high principles of brotherhood, tolerance and communal amity and cordiality, expressed his views about Kashmiri cultural identity (Kashmiriyat) as:

Hindus will keep the helm and Muslims ply the oars.

Let the two together row ashore the boat of the land.<sup>13</sup>

#### **INFLUENCE OF ISLAM ON KASHMIRI IDENTITY:**

The influence of Islam began to be felt in Kashmir from about the middle of the 8th century, long before the establishment of Muslim rule in Kashmir. But with the foundation of the Sultanate and the influx of a large number of Persians and Turks, Hindu society began to be affected by greater and more profound changes. As the wind destroys the trees and the locusts the shali crop, so did the Yavanas destroy the usages of Kahshmira and that the kingdom of Kahshmira was polluted by the evil practices of the Mlechhas. Srivara complained of the abolition of old practices and their substitution by new ones. Many of the misfortunes of the people of Kashmir were due to the changes in manners and customs. Despite these denunciations and protests, Hindu society could not be prevented from assimilating foreign ideas and practices. Because of these influences, the Hindus began to adopt Muslim manners and dress and some of them even began to take beef. The caste rules also began to weaken due to the effect of Islamic impact. In course of time, with the exception of the Brahmin caste, all the castes disappeared from Hindu society.<sup>15</sup>

Islam brought about great changes in Kashmir but it itself underwent a transformation in the course of time. This was because, although the people of Kashmir changed their religion, they did not make a complete break with the past, but carried with them many of their old beliefs and practices to the new faith. Thus while they celebrated the Muslim festivals of Idul Fitr and Idul Zuha, they did not cease to participate in the Hindu festivals of Caitra, Vithtarwh and Sripancama. They also continued to regard the Hindu places of worship as scared. Similarly they

maintained the old superstitions that seeing of a comet, hearing of the barking of dogs, hooting of owls during the day and crossing of the path by a serpent all forbade disaster. Under the impact of Islam the rigors of the caste system were reduced. The converts were reluctant to give up their customs, their caste rules regarding marriage and sometimes even their private functions.<sup>16</sup>

## CONCLUSION:

From the foregoing pages, it is clear that the adoption of Islam as a new faith led to the cultural syndrome in Kashmir. It intermingled the Buddhism, Shaivism, Sikhism and Islam and what emerged was the philosophy of Kashmiriyat. Rishism and Sufism became the marks of identity in Kashmir. Islam, in the shape of Sufism and Rishism metamorphosed Kashmiri society and in the comity of nations gave Kashmir an identity of its own. Kashmiriyat, as the discussion reveals, is the amalgam of the religio-cultural distinctive identities of both the Muslim and Hindu communities in addition to other communities. Islam did not break away from the past but retained some old practices. Lal Ded, Nund Rishi or Noor-ud-Din Noorani spread the message of love, through their poetry and became gospels of mutual love and respect among the people of Kashmir. Sufism influenced the Kashmiris so strongly that still majority of the people in Kashmir use to call themselves as Sufi Muslims/Sufis. Sufism thus became a password of identity in Kashmir.

The identity of Kashmiri people is having both cognitive as well as abstract basis. In cognitive terms, this distinct identity gets reflected in all those societal and cultural factors that make Kashmiris a distinct nation, their race, language, customs and traditions. In abstract terms, it has been historically reflected in the common philosophical underpinnings governing the vital aspects of Kashmiri life. Popularly termed as Kashmiriyat this philosophical and cultural substance of the Kashmiri identity underlies the humanist and eclectic bases of society on the one hand and the liberal and non-dogmatic attitude of people towards religion on the other. Kashmiriyat as it has evolved historically has incorporated the seminal values of the great religious traditions of Buddhism, Shaivism, Sikhism and Islam that influenced the social and cultural life of the Kashmiri people at different stages. As a result a synthetic character is easily discernable in the philosophical orientation of the Kashmiri people. Continuity of philosophical orientations not only made way for a relatively liberal social order. In fact Islamic consciousness in its Sufi form has been the preserver, consolidator and perpetual of Kashmiri identity. Islamic identity of the people does not transcend the Kashmiri identity.

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