

**POST-ISLAMIC PERIOD IN KASHMIR**  
**THE ANSWER FOR MANY RHETORICAL QUESTIONS.**

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**Abstract.**

Islam in Kashmir is such a concept on which bulky volumes has been written and in those volumes every nook and crook has been answered. But in the present case no doubt we are also dealing with Islam and its ideology but furthermore there are certain questions that we are raised in this research paper. It needs tomes of scholarly works. Islam and its ideology in Kashmir became dominant through the peaceful preaching by the Muslim Sufis who not only brought Islamic religion but also proved to be helpful in answering number of questions that remains in the minds of the people for a long time. After getting their answers a new innovative revolution brought up in social, economic, political, cultural and literary spheres too. The aim of the paper is to briefly review the advent of islam, various theories regarding spreading of islam and the various factors that are responsible in accepting the new faith which eventually answered so many unsolved rhetoric questions of public in general.

**Key words: - Islam, Bulky volumes, Ideology, Peaceful preaching, Innovative revolution, Rhetoric questions.**

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## Introduction.

On the advent of Islam Kashmir presented a different belief system and traditions, its values and ideals, dismal socio economic picture etc<sup>i</sup>. Extreme social anarchy political instability heavy doses of taxation levied on the people by oppressive rulers were the order of the day<sup>ii</sup>.

Before the advent of Islam and as mentioned in the Rajtarangini the population of Kashmir was not entirely Brahmin. The sects which were mentioned are Nishads, Kashas, Darads, Bhautas, Bhikshas, Damaras, Tantrins etc. In the words of S.S. Toshkhani the society or the conditions before the advent of Islam was worse because there lived a number of ethnic groups. He further opines that early Kashmiri society was divided into four castes but in actual fact the caste system was never rigid in Kashmir<sup>iii</sup>.

The Saraswat Brahmins as mentioned in the legendry sources like Nilmatpuran and Rajtarangini; they are regarded as the highly respected and more dominant social group in Kashmir<sup>iv</sup>. Brahmins later on where they replace the earliest form of Naga worship. Brahmins at that very time popularly known as Kashmiri Pandit are considered to be the purist specimen of the ancient Aryan settlers in the valley<sup>v</sup>. The Kashmiri pandits so called Brahmins are divided into 133 exogamous Gotras. Each member of which claims to be a descendent of a Rishi whose name the Gotra bears.

From the very earliest times when *Suraj Bansi* dynasty set foot into Kashmir in order to tried their luck and this process continues with changing dynasties and rulers and the changing lifestyles. Sir Francis Young husband quotes in his words about the political instability and the mess up of their kiths and kins before kashmir came into contact of islam as, “We may accept then, as authentic that the normal state of kashmir for many centuries, except in the intervals when a strong, firm ruler came to the front, was state of perpetual intrigues and assassinations, of struggle with brothers, cousins, uncles, before a chief even came to the throne of fights for power with minsters. With the military, with the nobles when he was on it, of constant fear of poisoning and assassination of wearying, petty internecine wars of general discomfort, uncertainty and unrest.” In the words of Sir Walter Lawrence about the conditions of the valley when it came into contact with Islam the conditions was worse. He quotes, “kashmir in the reign of Simha

Deva (1305 A.D.), was a country of drunkards, gamblers and where women were no better than they should be.”<sup>vi</sup>

In a nutshell manner if we sum up the conditions and the type of society briefly we can say that they were open minded, liberal and humane. Culturally advanced, intellectually alert and aesthetically conscious<sup>vii</sup>. They on the other side have different belief system and modes of worship and the indiscriminate social and cultural ties deeply struck the society from the very grass root level and people in bulk stunned into a deep sorrow and being shackled into many hegemonic chains and they want such societal and cultural setup in which they would feel respectable in every aspect of the society and everyone knows that Islam in the very beginning of its birth in Arabian peninsula wants to eliminate all these hegemonic rules that bifurcate the society on the basis of caste, creed, colour, Sex, region etc.

#### Advent of Islam.

Kashmir being famous for its splendid natural beauty also scores a credit of having provided a fertile ground for the promotion of spiritual beauty of soul and mind pragmatically through the unimpaired reception of the age-long Sufi thought that entered the valley simultaneously alongside Islam. The other strong reason was owing to the salubrious climate of Kashmir, with its gorgeous forests and quite high mountains, has been throughout ages selected by God seeking men for solitude, contemplation and self-abnegation<sup>viii</sup>. An impartial but systematic study of emergence of Islam in Kashmir could not be materialized without the study of historical development of Sufism in the valley rightly called as “*Resh/Pir Waer*” meaning “abode of *Rishis* or Saints”. Since the time valley of Kashmir received the eternal message of Islam, it has witnessed influx of highly learned Sufi saints particularly from Central Asia and Persia, who had left an indelible influence on the social organization of the evolving Muslim community of Kashmir. Islam like Christianity is essentially a missionary religion and every Muslim missionary carries with him the message of Islam to the people of the land into which he penetrates. Reflecting upon the missionary attitude of Islam and thereby its spread in The Preaching of Islam, T.W. Arnold writes: “The spread of Islam over so vast a portion of the globe is due to various causes, social, political and religious: but among these, one of this stupendous results, has been the unremitting labours of Muslim missionaries, who, with the

Prophet himself as their great ensample, have spent themselves for the conversion of unbelievers”<sup>ix</sup>.

When prophet Muhammad ﷺ delivered his last message or last sermon or Khutba on the ninth of Dhul Hijjah 12<sup>th</sup> and the last month of the Islamic year), 10 years after Hijrah (migration from Makah to medina) in the Uranah valley of mount Arafat. In his last golden words Prophet Muhammad ﷺ says as I quote, “o people no prophet or apostle will come after me and no new faith will be born. Therefore o people understand the words which I convey to you. I leave behind me two things the Quran and my example, the Sunnah and if you follow these you will never go astray. And in the concluding lines he says as I quote, “all those who listen to me shall pass on my words to others and those to others again and may the last ones understand my words better than those who listen to me directly. Be my witness **O Allah**, that I have conveyed your message to your people.”<sup>x</sup> It’s because of this responsibility that Prophet Muhammad ﷺ put on the shoulders of his Ummah they went far and wide to spread the message of Islam. Muslims after the sermon moved quickly with a religious fervour to various parts of the world and brought a large number of people to the fold of Islam. The Muslims have had to use force also on certain occasions but as far as the Kashmir is concerned no force was used to convert non Muslims to Islam. Rather influx of saints, scholars and adventures continued who by their piety and scholarship attracted the people of Islam<sup>xi</sup>.

Islam made its way into Kashmir says Stein not by forcible conquest but by gradual conversion for which the influx of foreign adventures both from the south and central Asia had prepared the ground. The adoption of Islam by the great mass of population, which became an accomplished fact during the latter half of the fourteen century, but which probably began towards the close of the Hindu rule, neither affected the independence of the country nor, at first materially changed its political and cultural conditions<sup>xii</sup>. Sir Thomas Arnold opines that the definite historical fact which might help us in clearly accounting for the existence of such an extra ordinary overwhelming majority of Musalmans among the population of Kashmir, are somewhat scanty. But whatever evidence is available leads us to attribute it on the whole to a long continued missionary movement inaugurated and carried out mainly by *faqirs*, *Darvaishes* and *Ulema* among whom were Ismalian preachers from Almut<sup>xiii</sup>.

Before Islam the valley of Kashmir was although a land of idolatry, the valley has had saints who worshiped the one Supreme Being rising above the rituals followed by even the righteous among the masses and these seekers of truth have been known as mystics. When the message of Islam knocked the doors of Kashmiris there has been no dearth of such mystics in this divine land that's why Kashmiri people has so readily got absorbed into the mainstream of Islam, the parallel of which can only found in the Arabian Peninsula in the 1<sup>st</sup> century of the Islamic calendar.<sup>xiv</sup>

It all started with the steady political decline from the defeat of Lakshmanadeva at the hands of Turushka a Turkish Muslim named Kajiya in 1168 A.D. is proved to be a turning point in the history of Kashmir<sup>xv</sup>. Lakshmanadeva's defeat encouraged a large number of Muslim saints to come to the valley. Their simple and pious personality attracted people in bulk and got Islamised. In AD 1320 a tartar warlord Dulucha invaded Kashmir, the Hindu king Suhadeva fled the valley, but Dulucha did not stay long soon afterwards power was seized by Tibetan fugitive Rinchana<sup>xvi</sup>. Sultan Sadr ud din (Ratanju, Ranjpoi, Ratanchan, Ranju Shah or Rinchen) first Muslim ruler of Kashmir a contemporary of Edward III of England, was originally a Tibetan<sup>xvii</sup>. The king Rinchen firstly wanted to become a Shaivite but was not allowed by the chief Brahman Daveswami. Many scholars opined that Rinchana was in a state of confusion and he decided to accept the religion of the person whom he would see first next morning. It was basically the prayers of Rinchen shah, in order to answer his prayers Bulbul shah miraculously visited the Vale of Kashmir in 1341 A.D. around 725 A.H. Known as such because of his appearance as a Bulbul (Kashmiri nightingale) a beautiful bird. In the next morning he adopted the religion by the hands of Bulbul shah along with his followers and his family members. Scholars are of the opinion that this was the historic decision of Rinchana (Sultan Sadr ud Din ) changed the course of history and Kashmir for the first time was included in the map of the Muslim world. The original name of Bulbul Shah is said to have been Syed Abdur Rehman, though some believe is to be Syed Sharf ud din, while others call him Sharf ud din Syed Abdur Rehman Turkistani<sup>xviii</sup>. It is obvious that he was from Turkistan and was a disciple of Sheikh Shihab ud din Suharwardi and other sources opine that he was a disciple of Shah Niamatulah Wali. It continues till another very great mystic saint appeared namely Syed Taju ud din, cousin of shah Hamdan. He settled at the village of Shihab ud din Pora with a population of 60 thousand and most of them got Islamised. After Syed Taju ud din many others also visited the Kashmir for the same purpose and people in

bulk embraced Islam but the greater contribution and about whom many scholars termed him as the real profounder of Islam in Kashmir were none other than Mir Syed Ali Hamdani (RA). Propagation of Islam by these mystics has not been in the shape of the normal method of conversion from one religion to another, but by spiritual experiences of sharing each other's knowledge in the field and by acceptance of the superiority of one mystic by the other<sup>xix</sup>.

Shah Hamdan was a Persian Sufi of the Kubrawi order, a poet and a prominent Muslim scholar, born on Monday in 1314 ad at Hamdan in Persia. He became hafiz e Quran in his early boyhood, he also studies theology and acquired knowledge and learnt Tasawuf under the tuition of Syed Ala ud din. He journeying for more than twenty one years and thus came into contact with several Sufis and Ulemas. After the completion of his travels he returned to his native place. He was forced to leave Kashmir by the Timur. He had already sent two of his followers in order to take stock of the situation. He was accompanied with seven hundred Syeds who entered the valley in the reign of sultan Shihab u din in 1372<sup>xx</sup>. In Kashmir he started to preach Islam in an organised manner. The first thing Mir Syed Ali Hamdani did was to admonish Sultan Qutub ud din for having married two uterine sisters against the Islamic law and for dressing himself after the fashion of the Hindus. The sultan quickly divorce done of his wife and abandoned the Hindu costume to wear Muslim dress. Hamdani then set upon his proselytizing activities to fulfil Allah's command to him. He is said to have converted as many as 37000 Hindus to Islam. He and his followers built Masjids in every nook and corner of the valley. Shah e Hamdan did not stay in the valley permanently but visited the valley on various occasions. Besides conversion Shah-e-Hamdani played a pivotal role in introducing various handicrafts in Kashmir which later on shaped the culture of Kashmir. He was a multi dimensional personality. He was a reformer. He brought several reforms in Kashmir like getting rid of black magic and sati. Mir Syed Ali Hamdani is still respected with great reverence. After Mir Syed Ali Hamdani many other prominent Sufis and his prominent followers also take the lead in making Kashmir fully Islamised. Like Hamdani's son Mir Muhammad Hamdani, Mir Syed Haider, Sayyid Jamal ud din, Syed Kamal-i-Sani, Sayyid Jamal ud din Alai, Sayid Rukn ud din, Sayid Muhammad and Sayyid Azizullah.

### Various Theories About the Spreading of Islam in Kashmir.

Islam is known as one of the fastest expanding religions in history. Only contained in Arabia in 632, its conquests led to its expansions to Persia and Egypt by 656 and to Africa, Spain and other parts of Persia by 750 AH. Many methods were used in order to convert or spread the message of Islam to such an extensive empire. Here we made an attempt to highlight various theories in order to highlight various notions about the spreading of Islam. The first and the oldest explanation of the spread of Islam widely called the sword theory is a simplistic notion that Islam was spread by sword. It also suggests that non Muslims changed their religion simply because they were forced to when conquered. This theory dates from the time of the crusades and it reached its zenith in the nineteenth century. But this view point was changed mainly by the writings of western scholars. They came up with new theories about conversion to Islam in the medieval period. They suggested the factors such as convenience, improved social, economic or professional status, and relief from the Jizya, a poll tax and the enjoyment of greater mobility in trade were the incentives for conversion. Thus conversion was reduced to social phenomenon. Another theory was put forwarded by many scholars emphasizes the interaction of immigrant Muslims with the native peoples. Another theory sees Islam as a socially liberating force. It emphasizes that Islam liberated the lower classes of society. This theory is especially accepted as an explanation for the conversion in India given its Hindu caste system. According to this theory after receiving Islam's message of social equality preached especially by Sufis the oppressed caste converted to Islam<sup>xxi</sup>.

Islam as a socially liberating force is especially accepted as an explanation for the conversion in India as well as in Kashmir and no doubt the other theories also have an impetus because in later period in Kashmir also force was also used to make people Islamised, like the example of Sikandar popularly known as (Butt Shikan) (Idol Breaker) but mostly it was their spiritualistic and simplistic personality of early Sufis that attracted the people of Kashmir in bulk to the fold of Islam. The role that was played by the Sufis and their disciples forced people to get converted in to Islam. As for as many sources are concerned the conditions of Kashmir was very worse at the time when it came into contact with Islam like they were hit by famines, the social scenario was also worse enough and the political unrest as mentioned above in the words of Sir Walter Lawrence was a state of chaos, arson and agony. Owing to this disturbing situation Bulbul Shah

came with his majestic and spiritual personality, impressed the people with the preaching and persuasion. It's the time when the fortunes of Kashmir were in the melting pot. But the towering personality of Sufis who were very well known of the situations of Kashmir preached the doctrine of Islam and bulk of population was ready to leave their religion and their practices for ever.

### **Factors Responsible For Accepting The New Faith And How It Changed The Life Style Of People.**

Kashmir as everybody knows the fact that before it came into contact with Islam has its own religion, culture, social norms and the ways of living. The concept of people converting under mere 'spiritual influence' of Islam is highly debatable. It's the land that prided itself for having the high form of philosophical thought namely Kashmir Shaivism (being a Shiva & Buddhist 'seat of learning') though the philosophical outlook did make the people rather impractical & highly vulnerable to attack from outside forces. But when Kashmir came into contact of Islam in the 14<sup>th</sup> century with its ideology and beliefs, its theology and dogmas, its laws and codes of conduct, its lore and legends, everything that the Kashmiri society stood for earlier was upturned. Its entire social, spiritual and cultural fabric was shattered by the cataclysmic events that followed<sup>xxii</sup>. But instead of towering features and approaches of Islam the pre Islamic Kashmiri society was open minded, liberal and humane. Culturally advanced, intellectually alert and aesthetically conscious. Then R.K Parmu is of the opinion that why we the Hindus lost out to Islam. He further opines that the Hindu society was too soft and liberal in many respects.<sup>xxiii</sup> He put forward another reason as, that they embraced Islam because of the threat that was posed by the Muslim rulers and furthermore in order to make their own identity they embraced Islam especially the lower class of Hindu society they feel more privileged in Islam instead of their religions.

The Kashmiri Brahmins excelled as scholars & philosophers, but finally they had bent their knees in front of the towering personality of Sufis. The sudden emergence of an alien faith and converts all of its adherents into the fold of Islam almost the 70% of its population. This phenomenal work as Mirza Arif Beigh writes, that the Propagation of Islam by these mystics has not been in the shape of the normal method of conversion from one religion to another, but by



spiritual experiences of sharing each other's knowledge in the field and by acceptance of the superiority of one mystic by the other<sup>xxiv</sup>. No doubt there are other factors which are responsible for the mass conversion of the people in Kashmir as Sir Herbert discusses the motives assigned in various cases of conversion in Islam and suggests first as, "Genuine religious conviction of the purity and simplicity of Islam, derived from the study of the Muhammadan scriptures or from the preaching of the Maulvis who go round the villages. Secondly the conversion of the high castes, Hindus, Brahmins, Rajputs, Kayastas and the like is commonly ascribed to this cause. Thirdly, the growing desire on the part of the lower Hindu caste to improve their social positions leads individuals among them to embrace a creed which seems to offer them a fair chance in life. Fourthly, the proverb "love laughs at caste" accounts for a large number of conversions. Fifthly, Causes connected to taboos on food and drink and with various caste misdemeanours have also to be taken into account. Hindus in sickness or distress are tended by Muhammadans and take food and water from their hands; the case ex communities them and they so in the ranks of a more merciful faith".

The advent of Islam during 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century surely but slowly changed the social and cultural structure of Kashmir. The Musalmans of the valley says Lawrence may have retained for some time after their conversion to Islam, some of the Hindus customs of endogamy within the caste and exogamy outside the Gotra, but there is no trace of these customs now and the different tribal names or Krams are names and nothing more.<sup>xxv</sup> Now it is possible for a Dar to marry a girl of the Ganai Kram and vice versa. But however there is a sort of caste system prevalent, inasmuch as the members of one profession prefer to marry their sons and daughters among the followers of a similar profession. The Sheikhs, Sayyids and Mullas are still considered to be Krams of respectability among Muslims. According to late Sir Herbert Risley Islam is a force of volcanic sort, a burning and integrating force which under favourable conditions may even make a nation". These simple principles of Islam appealed to the persons of different ethnic origins and cultural backgrounds. Thus Islam was embraced by agriculturists, artisans, boat men, gardeners and other groups performing menial jobs, but also by such a powerful politically dominant group in ancient society such as Damaras, Lavanyas and Tantrins, whose names still survive in the modern families among Kashmiri Muslims such as Dars, Loans and Tantarays<sup>xxvi</sup>.

The various religious dogmas create a fuss in the minds of the lower and downtrodden society and with insurgence of Islam so the caste system got perished off. The Islam condemned the caste system of the Hindus which tempted the low caste Hindus to accept Islam so as to be free from the clutches of Brahmans. It is said that their social position or family status did not improve much after their entry into the Islamic fold. But they could at least get the satisfaction of calling themselves members of Islamic community, and thus could get a sigh of relief from the bondage of Brahmans. It seems probable that caste system among the Hindus must have prompted the low castes and the weaker sections of Kashmiri society to break off their religious ties with a caste ridden social structure. Brahmanic rituals and customs contributed a great deal to the loosening of religious and social ties with their society. The Sufis promote a fresh understanding of Islamic teachings in a different milieu.

The most significant social change that took place was the gradual development of Islam as the focus of social identity among the common folk. Though it was more by rituals, images and cultural symbols than by a new mind set which the great Muslim preachers wanted to create by winning people to Islam<sup>xxvii</sup>. Islam melts and fuses together a whole series of tribes and reduces their internal structure to one uniform pattern in which no survivals of pre existing usages can be detected. The separate strata disappear their characteristic fossils are crushed out of recognition and a solid mass of law and tradition occupies their place<sup>xxviii</sup>. Here it's an admitted fact no doubt Hinduism and other pre Islamic religions lost their importance and prestige in the minds and lives of the people who were converted into the fold of Islam also brought an important and most drastic change as far as the cultural aspect was concerned. The pre existing and the new Islamic culture fuses together and give birth to a new culture which is the intermixture of Hinduism, Brahmanism and Islam. Today in present day world Kashmir is famous for that composite culture which is betterly known as "*Kashmiriyat*".

### Conclusion.

Kashmir symbolized not only a "Paradise on earth", but also a celebrated space of "multiculturalism". Its people were accordingly imbued with symbiotic traditions embodying innumerable values and customs. Kashmir remained the hot seat for various ethnic groups, cultural diversities and linguistic combination and the second more important thing is that the

land of Kashmir in its pre Islamic period has the pride itself for having the high form of philosophical thought in terms of Brahmanical, Hinduism and Buddhist. Furthermore they have the rich religious doctrines in the shape of Vedas, Purans and all that. Here the more important question that erupt in to my mind that instead of such veracity and rich philosophical thought then why they lost out to Islam. Why such a huge bulk of population accept the new faith posthumously. Why they left behind their all rich philosophies and their societal and cultural setups.

After analysing the above mentioned facts we came to a certain conclusion that no doubt they were culturally advanced, intellectually alert and aesthetically conscious but there are many weak points on which Islam knocks and won the hearts of millions of people. The societal differences, the cultural backdrops, many religious dogmas, many hegemonic practices and the indiscriminate behaviour forced the people to accept Islam and found their answers to their prayers. The bulk of populations want such a system in which they found themselves free of the above mentioned differences and wants such a system in which there is brotherhood, unity, oneness, and equality and discriminate free society.

Islam with its unique ideology and principles, the towering spiritual temper of Sufis and the sense of respect they spread outstandingly won the hearts of millions of people. Islam works as a beacon to bind the society on equality, brotherhood and oneness. It mould the behaviour and lifestyle of the people with their ideology and principles. Isla reduces their various dogmas and societal differences and unite them to such a pattern in which no pre existing usages and customs can be detected.

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