

### **Kashmir: The land of Reshis and Sufis**

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#### **Introduction:**

Kashmir is surrounded by Immumerable Mountains extending to vast distance .It has its long and lofty mountain ranges who have embraced waves of many external civilizations, culture and languages. There is such a lyric charm about it with its softness, its gentleness and its dream like quality. The valley of Kashmir is a blessed valley because of its indescribable beauty, its lakes ,rivers ,its people and its mountains .The author of Nilmatapurana writes that in prehistoric times it was a lake which replete with clean water. The lake was filed by rain and melting snow and all exit routes of water were closed .At that time mother of Sati or Parvati, who is the strength of god Mahadev, dwelt on the mountains of Harmukh. The name of the lake was known as her name Sati Sar. According to Nilmatpurana KASHYAP RESHI was the First Patron saint of Kashmir, who got the lake SATISAR drained off. According to Tareikh I Hassan;  
‘‘One day the son of Brahma, named Kaship Rishi who used to roam freely around the world, reached the areas near Sati Sar lake, and being highly delighted by the natural beauty of mountains and pasture in the ecstasy he said:

*Oh what a wondrous beautiful place is this!  
A replica of paradise on the surface of the earth.*

When he did not come across any human being in the terrain, he was amazed. He then heard about the devastation caused by the tyrant giant Jal Dev. Kashap Rishi was moved to hear this tale of Woe. He made a place of worship at Navbandan near Kausarnag, named Harapora, and kept worshipping almighty for a thousand years and beseeched, Almighty to defeat Ja Dev”.1  
Kashmir is also known as paradise on earth. It has been called from time immemorial as the RISHI WYER, SHARDA PETHA the land of learning .It has its own culture and literature .In order to study the historical background of Kashmir we have to see some of the historic books like Nilmatpurana ,Rajtarangni ,zan-I Rajtarangni ,Aayan-i- Akbar etc.

Kashmir has rightly been called as Reshi Wyer from ancient times. Nagas who lived first in Kashmir has its own Saints known as PIOUS. The first Reshi of Kashmir,Kashp Reshi is said to have performance penances as a result of which the valley of Kashmir came into origin.

“BRANADASVA (SAID) THE VENERABLE GOD SAID TO VASUKI WHO WAS AGITATED WITH FEAR , O POSSESSED OF UNPARALLED STRENGTH, YOU ALONG WITH THE PIOUS NAGAS MAY DWELL IN THE PIOUS NAGAS MAY DWELL IN THE COUNTRY OF SATI, IN THE SKY LIKE OF SATI”2

Kashmir has been the cradle of communal amity, and Hindu-Muslim Unity. This valley of flowers gave birth to several civilizations and the different religions like Buddahism, Hinduism and Islam. Buddahism made a tremendous impact on the culture and civilizations of Kashmir, and gave rise to Kashmiri’s own brand of religious philosophy. Shaivism was the main religion of

Kashmir. It originated in last decades of the 8<sup>th</sup> century and beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D. The Saints of this religion are VasuGupta, Somananda ,UtpalDev, Abhinavgupta, Batakalata, SwamiRamji and JaiRath etc. Hindu Saints were followers of Vedant, Shivism, Upanishads, Purans, Gita, Ramayan etc.

The culture and the heritage were born on the moral teachings of the great Saints, Reshis and Sufis .Hinduism was the main religion of the people of Kashmir till the 14<sup>th</sup> century,when Islam was brought to Kashmir. All Saints of the Kashmir believed in Universal religion and belief in One God and brotherhood of a man. They were above Caste, Creed and Colour. Both Hindu revered Muslims Saints and Shrines and Muslims respected Hindu Saints and Shrines.

Islam came to Kashmir in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Kashmir became the homeland of Sufism which contributed to the native Kashmir philosophy. This brought forth a rich heritage of humanism and universal brotherhood. When they came to Kashmir, the culture of valley at that time has already its own tradition of mysticism based on the Nagas, Bhuddists and Hindu Philosphy. At that time in the fourteenth century Kashmir society was undergoing a period of transition by the influence of Sufis. The spread of Islam in Kashmir was an outcome of the efforts of the Sufi Saints from Persia and Central Asia. The first eminent Sufi Saint, to entered Kashmir was Syed Sharaf-ud-Din popularly known as Bulbul Shah. He came from Turkistan during the time of Sahadeva along with a group of disciples.

“ Saiyid Sharaf’ d-Din was the first to introduce Suhrawardi order into Kashmir.He was originally from Turkistan,but as directed by his preceptor,he embarked upon a long journey and travelling through Central Asia and Persia he arrived in Kashmir during the reign of Suhadeva”.<sup>3</sup>

Syed Sharaf-ud-Din Bulbul Shah have arrived Kashmir on the beginning of the fourteenth century of the Christian era. His life is mostly shrouded in mystery. During this period Zulju invades Kashmir. Zulju’s invasion proved a turning point in the history of Kashmir. A Ladakh prince Rinchan rose to power in Kashmir and then Kashmir was under the hands of Rinchan’s.

“The most important event of his reign was his conversion to Islam, which is variously recorded. According to Jonaraja, Rinchana wanted to become a Hindu, but the Brahman Devaswami refused to initiate him into Hinduism on the grounds that he was a “Bhotta” (Tibetan Buddhist).”<sup>4</sup>

Rinchana changed his religion and accepted Islam on the hands of Bulbul Shah. Bulbul Shah a Sheikh of Suhrawadi order changed his name as Sadr-u-Din. Prof. Mohuddin Sahib writes in his article;

“This historic decision of Rinchana changed the course of history and Kashmir for the first time was included in the map of the Muslim world. The king’s example was followed by his subjects as ancient and medieval history is full of instances when people invariably followed the footsteps of the rulers who had undergone a religious conversion. Syria, Iran and Iraq become Muslim states when its rulers drew their subjects after them.”<sup>5</sup>

Then Sadr-u-Din being a first Muslim ruler of Kashmir .He built a first mosque I Kashmir known as Khanqah Bulbul Shah and also established a langar known as Bulbul langar. Prof. Shafi Shoak writes;

“The religion of faith was not propagated in Kashmir up to 725AH. It was at the behest of Hazrat Sharaf ud din alias Bulbul shah that that Renchan Shah embraced along with a large group. On the insinuation of his preceptor, he constructed a strong Khanqah on the bank of Bahat River a large amount of money was spent on its construction. Thus this Khanqah is the first Khanqah that was constructed in Kashmir. He assigned the income of many villages for the expenditure of the servants of the Khanqah. This pantry existing up to the time of Chak Kings; thus the mohallah is called bulbul lankar.”<sup>6</sup>

After that another Sufi saints swarmed into the valley to activate the process of Islamization. The Saint come to be held in high esteem on account of their living, kind, compassionate and loving nature and commitment to serve the suffering people irrespective of their caste, creed and status.

After the Renchan’s period many a hundreds of mosques were built in every part of Kashmir. Some of famous mosques are; Masjid Renchan Shah, Khanqahi Mu’alla, Khanqahi Wala, Khanqahi Aala, Khanqahi Kubrawi, Masjid Jamia Ali, Mullshah Masque, Khanqahi Faizababd, Khanqahi Sayed Barkhurdar, Khanqahi Syed Muhammad Madni, Nay Masjid, Khanqahi Baba Ismail, Khanqahi Malik jala thakur, Khanqahi Shamsi, Khanqahi Drwagjan, Khanqahi Chisti, Jamia Baramullah, Khanqahi Sopore, Jamia Sopore, Khanqahi Makhdoomi, Jamia Shopian, Khanqahi Shaikh-Noor-u-Din etc.

In the year 1384 A.D the celebrated Sufi master Sayyid Ali Hamdani arrived in Kashmir at the head of a well-organized mission constituting his 700 followers most of whom were highly evolved spiritualists in their own right. Hamdani developed a carefully thought out strategy for the true islamization of Kashmir. He directed to his followers to spread out to every nook and corner of the valley and convert the masses through a practical demonstration .The teachings of Sufis and Saints are in line with the basic principles of our holy scriptures. They turned the region into land of Islamization, land of peace and founded a society based on Justice and Equality. They molded the people and guided them also spiritual paths and peace of mind.

While the Sufis from Central Asia and Persia played significant role in the spread of Islamic teachings in Kashmir. The authentic islamization of the Kashmir is in fact took place only after the emergence of the indigenous Sufi movement known as Reshi movement. We will agree for that no Sufi of Central Asian influenced and shaped the formation of Islamic culture in valley as profoundly as did Shaikh Noor-ud-Din (Nund Reshi). The role of Noor-u-din has proved the cultural meditations of Islam in Kashmir in essentially Hindu- Buddist environment. Shaikh-ul-Aalam influence penetrates to the springs of life and all its manifestations including Culture and Literature.

Shaikh-ul-Aalam influenced the people of Kashmir by his speeches and actions. He made an impact on the cultural and social life of Kashmir. G.N.Gowhar writes in his article;

”Near about a dozen of eminent personalities can be deemed to have contributed during past three thousand years in the evolution of what we call Kashmiri culture. However a number of personalities like Amir Kabir, Lal ishwari and Sheikh Nooruddin provided direction to the cultural is a distinct stage at the same process. Here I will confine to the contribution made in the revolution and evolution by Sheikh Nooruddin.”<sup>7</sup>

Shaikh-ul-Aalam works hard on individuals lives to develop spirituality and moral values. He changes the life of common peoples on the basis of religion. He converted the mind of common peoples as materialistic world to Spirituality world..He was the precursor of the mystic poets of Kashmir.

Muslim Saints of Kashmir were followers of Sufism and mysticism,which is abstract relation between man and his creator, God. The Sufis Saints and Reshis message was universalism of Islam, human values, peace, love, sacrifice, humanity, dignity, justice and equality. They lived a transparent life of Sacrifice. Some of important Sufi Saints of Kashmir are Bulbul Shah, Mir Syed Ali Hamdani, Mir Mohammad Hamdani, Shaikh-ul-Aalam Sheikh Noor-ud-Din, its four followers and Sultan-i-Aarifeen Sheikh Hamza Makhdoom etc. Both they truly the preaches of universal brotherhood.

### **References**

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4. Prof.Abdul Qaiyum Rafiqi, Sufism in Kashmir, 2015,p.66
5. Heritage of Kashmir, p.84
6. Prof. Shafi Shoak, Translated Tareikh I Hassan, vol. 1, p.291
7. G.N.Gowher, Cultural Heritage of Kashmir,DSW,p.73