

## “Shah-i-Hamdani” A multi-dimensional personality

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### Introduction:

After Iran fell to Muslim Army in 7<sup>th</sup> century, the whole of Iran within short span of time came under Islamic rule and people all across Iran embraced Islam. The Iranians, being one of the greatest civilizations on earth excelled in all Islamic sciences and in turn produced a galaxy of great scholars, scientists, saints, Sufis, jurists, philosophers, historians, reformers and social scientists. Among them, Amir Kabir Syed Ali Hamdani is ranked alongside Rumi, Gazali, Razi, Firdousi, Al-Biruni, Avicenna and so on and so forth. Born on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> Rajab 714 A.H (1314).<sup>1</sup> In a historical place Hamdan. His father, SyedShahab-ud-din is also said to have been a Hakim (important official) in Hamdan.<sup>2</sup> However, some scholars are of opinion that Shahab-ud-din was very near to throne but was not among the rulers himself.<sup>3</sup> After he was formally taught by the great Ullama of his time.

He received his early education from his maternal uncle Syed Alaud-din a great aalim and saint of his time. Hamdani quoted as;

“مرا خالی بود که ویرابه لقب سید علاء الدین گفتندی

او از اولیاء الله بود به حسن تربیت او مرا در صغر قرآن محفوظ گشت”<sup>4</sup>

The learned saint extensively travelled not only in the length and breadth of the country, but in neighbouring central Asia countries “propagate Islamic values and mystic traditions. Hamdani himself comments about his travels in these words;

“سه بار از مشرق تا مغرب سفر کردم بسی عجائب

دیدم در طلاب باوفاق که در اطراف

دنیا و بحرو بر دیده شد و هر بار که شهری ولایتی

باشند ارشاد نمایم زیرا که در اقامت این نو

دیدم رسم و عادت اهل آن موضوع طریق دیگر

استفاضه، وفاضه میسر نگردد”<sup>5</sup>

The first name among the prominent preachers of Islam in Kashmir was Sharfud-din Abdul Rehman Bulbul Shah belonged to Suharver order of Sufis.<sup>6</sup>

He is said to have entered in Kashmir during the reign of Suhadeva (1301-1320). The former appears to have deeply impressed the people of Kashmir by personal examples, his method of preaching and pervasion at a time when the fortune of the ruling

dynasty were in the melting pots and people were passing through a period of political instability, heavy taxation and crushing burden of feudalism. Above all he was responsible for initiating the new ruler Richane to Islam, after conversion to Islam. He got the Muslim name Sadrud-din (1320-23). After Bulbul Shah the mission was carried by the arrival of Mir Syed Ali Hamdani. The most important journey of Hamdani, however, was his visit to Kashmir. According to the legend Hamdani is said to have travelled three times all over the world. Some earlier sources are unanimous In opinion that he came to Kashmir only once. There is no agreement among the earlier and modern historians regarding the number of visits of Hamdani to Kashmir. According to two latter authorities Mohd-ud-din Fooq 7 and Syed Ashraf Zaffar <sup>8</sup>, Hamdani visit Kashmir three times in 774, 781 and 785 A.H. None of them mentioned the activities of Hamdanis first two visits. Modern scholars like Mohi-ud-din <sup>9</sup> and Mohib-ul-Hassan... <sup>10</sup> agree with them both relying on Miskin. In Saying that “Ali Hamdani came to Kashmir only once although earlier historians agree but they disagree among themselves regarding the date of his arrival there. Hamdani’s visits are considered greatest events in the history of Kashmir, which totally metamorphosed the socio-religious, political and economic fabric of Kashmir. Shah-i-Hamdan extensively travelled not only in the length and breadth of the country but in neighbouring central Asian countries propagating Islamic values and mystic tradition. The Amir also visited Kashmir in 774 A.H with not less than 700 great Sayyids, Ulemas and scholars of different sciences during the reign of Sultan Shahab-ud-din (1369-1379). This is considered to be the greatest event in the history of Kashmir. He died in 786 A.H in Kunar and was buried in Khatlan (modern day Tajkistan) <sup>11</sup>

The purpose of his visit was to know the etiquettes, customs and manners of the people. He came to Kashmir with a mission for propagation of Islam that was the need of hour. He himself affirms that he was continuously inspired by the high above “to guide the people” the author of Risala Masturat, an authority on Syed Ali Hamdani Says that he was directly guided by prophet Mohammad (PBUH) for his Kashmir visit. He writes;

“امیر کبیر میر سید علی ہمدانی روبہ قبلہ نشستہ بودند کہ

حضرت رسول اکرم ﷺ حاضر شدند و گفتند یا ولدی در کشمیر

رو و مردم آنجا مسلمان کن اگر چه بعضی بشرف وسلم اسلام

مشرف اند اما بدتر از کافر”<sup>12</sup>

He was a spectacular traveler of his time...and during his visits he spent most of the time in the expansion of Islam in the different parts of the world. Many saints came to Kashmir for the expansion of Islam, but the only one who lit the torch of monotheism in reality was none other than Amir Kabir Mir Syed Ali Hamdani.

Mir Syed Ali Hamdani R.A was a prolific and crudit  scholar. He penned down several works incorporate number of subjects including mysticism spirituality, governance, traditions, ethics and morality. A number of his scholarly works written both Persian and Arabic exceeds to one hundred and fifty though a good number of them got extinct. The history records his busy schedule but still he managed to shortest span of time to document his advices, decisions and judgment for the kings, nobles, courtiers, religious and other scholars and common people. Although caught up in the tight, busy and hectic schedule, he proved to be the greatest of writer as well <sup>14</sup> The writings of Hmadani are preserved in manuscripts form in various libraries of India, Britian and Iran. The British Museum and Indian office library in England, Raza Rampur Library in India, Kitab-KhanaMilat of Tehran in Iran and Oriental Research Department, Srinagar Kashmir have preserved the valuable documents of Hamdani R.A. Mir Syed Ali Hamdani R.A also established the first manuscript library of Islamic books at Srinagar in Kashmir. The library contained his personal collection also. A number of calligraphists worked under the supervision of the chief librarian Syed Mohammad Qazim. Mir Mohammad Toeyeb Kamli claims that he had seen many treatise of Hamdani R.A among them are Muqamat-i-Sufiya, Kifiyat, Kifiyat-i-Khawab and Munajat <sup>15</sup> Among all the works Zakhiratul-Malookis considered to be the magnum opus of Shah-i-Hamdan R.A. It has been translated into Urdu under the tittles like Minhaj-us-Saluk and Zakhira Sadat and was also translated into Latin by Earnest Fredrich Carel, Rosen Muller in 1825 and into French by D.Solven in 1829. Infact it is clear that Zakhiratul-Malookis especially written for the guidance of Muslim rulers and their subordinates. Hamadan’s Zakhiratul-Malook was a favourite book with the scholars during pre-Mughal period. In India.

The period in which Mir Syed Ali Hamdani R.A penned down these works was a period of Turmoil and anarchy as the whole Persia was devised by the Mongal invasions. Therefore, the works has a tremendous literary significance for the style of Hamadan unique trying to make the man understand the fact that this world is temporary and therefore one must be pious and perform good deeds. His choice of works and constructions, similes and metaphors are token from the spiritual and religious saureas like Quran and saying of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) and revered saints of mystics. Thus Amir Kabir Mir Syed Ali Hamdani R.A was a prolific writer, erudite scholar and devoted Muslim, who spent his whole life for preaching and reforming the Muslim Ummah. He migrated from his home land only for the sacred cause of preaching Islam. He was undoubtedly the great benefactor of humanity in general and for Kashmir in particular.

He was multidimensional personality and brought substantial reforms in the lives of ordinary Kashmir, getting rid of practices like Sati and black magic. He made Islamic teaching known to the people of Kashmir, improved their belief, made efforts for building of their character and laid down a full proof system for propagation of Islam. His impact

on all sections of Kashmir society was particularly due to integrity of his personal life. He himself made his living by cap making and encouraged others to do the same.<sup>16</sup>

Moreover, Mohd Yousuf Teng, Professor Mohibul Hassan, Hakeem Ghulam Mohammad Makhmoon and other important researcher unanimously regarded Shah-i-Hamdan R.A and his mission as a great advent of emergence of arts and crafts in Kashmir valley. However, though history bears testimony to the fact that ZainulAbdin (Budshah) and Mirza Haider were two important rulers of Kashmir who promoted various arts and crafts in the valley but in different context. The introduction of arts and crafts can be attributed to Amir Kabir Mir Syed Ali Hamdani R.A as he opened the gate of interaction between Kashmir and Iran and Kashmir in a manner which has no precedent. Thus the economy of the valley became better by these arts and crafts flourished by Amir Kabir R.A. When he came to Kashmir, he brought along with him hundreds of disciples who were painters, calligraphers, shawl makers etc.<sup>17</sup> Before the introduction of these arts, Kashmir's industrial sector was much poor so that even loom was not indigenously found in the valley. According to Mohibul Hassan it was introduced by the Persian crafts men.<sup>18</sup>

Allama Iqbal R.A admits that because of Shah-i-Hamdan R.A, the wonderful arts and crafts turned Kashmir into Mini-Iran and brought about a revolution in making the people prosperous. The skills and crafts brought to Kashmir gave rise to an industry which is world famous even now as the name of Kashmiri Shawl. Shah-i-Hamdan R.A was quite aware about the benefits of the trade, commerce and other means of earning livelihood, so he introduced the pattern prevailing in the central Asia. Mir Syed Ali Hamdani's keen interest inspired the sultan Qutub-ud-din to introduce the modes of life benefitting the Muslim courts and brought ample material prosperity to the region.<sup>19</sup> Mohibul Hassan in his book "Kashmir under Sultan's Hands: it is also stated that the shawl industry was founded by Syed Ali Hamdani R.A in 1378, because the shawl industry did not exist before the 13<sup>th</sup> century. There is no reference either in Kalhan's Rajtarngni or any other source and it was developed under the patronage of the Sultans with the help of weavers who came from Persia and Turkistan. These immigrants not only introduced new patterns but also a new technique in the twiltapestry technique which has a parallel in Persia and Central Asia, but nowhere in India and Pakistan. However, under Zainul Aabideen, Kashmir had become famous for its shawl when the Mughals conquered the valley. The Shawl industry was in well-developed state."

The several vocations he introduced in the valley have provided a livelihood to the artisans of Kashmir for times. In this connection the poet of East Allama Iqbal says;

دست او معمارِ تقدیر امم	سید السادات سالارِ عجم
ذکرہ فکراز دودمان او گرفت	تاغزالی درسِ الله گرفت

میر و درویش و سلاطین رامشیر	مُرشد آن کشور مینونظیر
داد علم و صنعت و تہذیب و دین	خطہ را آن شاہ دریا آستین
باہنر های غریب و دلپزیر	آ فرید آن مرد ایران صغیر
خیز و تیرش را بدل جائی بدہ. <sup>20</sup>	یک نگاہ او کشا ید صد گرہ

Among all nations and races who have come in contact with Kashmir, none of them has everlasting influence the culture and civilization of valley as that of the Iranians. Kashmir had developed its contact with Persia long back the political domination of the valley by Muslims which is clear from the archaeological and literary evidences.<sup>21</sup> The cultural influence of Persia is also markedly visible in dress and diet. The present dress of the majority of the people of Kashmir like Pheran, Qemize, Shalwar, Sadri, Choga and Qiba etc. The modern Kashmiri Wazwan, which constitutes such delicious dishes like Yakhni, Rista, Kababa, Tabkhmaz, Plav, Harisa, Abgoosh, Nan and pottery like Samavar, Sarposh, Bushqab, Kashuq so on and so forth. One of the important reasons of cultural and lingual exchange between Persia and Kashmir was the progress of Islam in the valley which was intimately associated with the missionary activities of Sufis from Persia. These Sufis in particular and other in general played an important role in bringing about an Iranian orientation of Kashmir culture and language.<sup>22</sup> In fact the increased cultural contact between Central Asia and Kashmir during the medieval period were largely result of the missionary activities of Sufis, Saints from Persia and Central Asia like Syed Ali Hamdani R.A, Bulbul Shah, Mir Shams-ud-din Araki R.A and others.

Thus it is quite explicit and transparent from the forgone description about the saintly and virtuous activities and works of Amir Kabir Mir Syed Ali Hamdani R.A, that he played a decisive and determined role in recasting and shaping the culture and society of Kashmir into a more refined and pure pattern. His message rid and relieved the people of Kashmir from the vulgar social and cultural elements and patterns and inculcated in Kashmir society setup. The life infusing and immortalizing virtue and values which even today is easily disernable in the socio-cultural canvas of Kahsmiri life. His influence continues to be felt mare them years after his death. Also, given the all-pervasive social evils of present day society. The dire need of an hour is to revisit first and then take recovers his teachings and message. So that menace would be addressed dealt and done away with.

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