

Socio-Political Condition in the Era of Shaikh –Ul Aalam (R.A)

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Abstract:

Shaikh-ul Aalam^(R.A) is a remarkable Kashmiri saint who belonged to the Rishi order was born at a period of great social and religious crisis in Kashmir i.e. 1377 C.E in Kaimoh village. He was one of those eminent personalities who had a special concern with reforming society. He revolted against the political and social uncertainty which was prevalent in his era. For this purpose he used his poetry as a tool to spread the true knowledge of islam, that is message of love, simplicity, tolerance, harmony, fraternity between all human beings irrespective of religion, colour, race which ultimately led to a struggle against social injustice and discrimination prevailing during his time. Shaikh-ul Aalam^(R.A) condemns caste system and highlights in his poetry that Adam is the progenitor of human race and differentiating people on the basis of caste and colour is superficial. He clearly emphasized in his poetry that anyone who believes in caste system is not true follower of God. Shaikh-ul Aalam^(R.A) played a significant role by emphasizing the exploitative machinations of caste-conscious Brahmans. The main desire of Shaikh-ul Aalam^(R.A) was to transmit the real message of social reformation and its social dynamic which stood for classless and casteless society free of exploitation and religious discord.

Keywords: Society, social, justice, caste, Islam.

Introduction:

Shaikh Noor ud Din^(R.A) is commonly known as Shaikh-ul Aalam, Nund Rishi, Alamdari-e-kashmir, taj-ul Awliya whom kashmiri pundits call shazanand was not only a great saint but a great kashmiri too for he established the personality and identity of the kashmiri people at a most critical period of the valleys history. His greatness lies in the fact that he is revered by Kashmiri, irrespective of religious convictions. To Muslims he is shaikh-ul Aalam^(R.A) and to Hindus shazanand. But to all of us he is the standard-bearer of all the best in kashmiri, s composite culture and tradition of love, compassion, brotherhood and humanity. Shaikh-ul Aalam^(R.A) travelled through distant areas of Kashmir valley and met saints, scholars and common people his poetry in the form of *Shruks* bears a distinct impact upon Kashmiri society. Nund Rishi, s message was not confined to one race or one class, but addressed to mankind as a whole. His teachings on the development of Kashmiri society and culture were indelible. The indigenous order of Kashmir sufis, *Silsillah-i- Rishiyyan*, founded by him, emerged as a potent spiritual and social movement that engulfed the valley of Kashmir during the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries. He was highly influenced by the Islamic doctrines and this was the basic motto of the leading mission of converting the people of Kashmir to Islam. the basic fundamentals of Islam, the very concept of God and the man's place in the world, devotion purity of soul and clarity of human actions and social commitment were the chief features that categorized the religion of Islam. In Shaikh-ul Aalam, s^(R.A) personality bore a variegated out-look that helped the socio-religious preacher to think and rethink on the paradigms that could together work out the two pathway programme; one that leads to the Gods premises. Of all the attributes we associate with Shaikh-ul Aalam^(R.A), perhaps his humanistic philosophy dramatically stands to be the trunk of his philosophy that provides support to his doctrine of contemplation. Shaikh-ul Aalam^(R.A) tried his best to mend society for betterment. Like other Sufis, Shaikh-ul Aalam^(R.A) used regional language for spreading his message to common people. Although Shaikh-ul Aalam^(R.A) is confined to Kashmir only, his message is universal.

Methodology:

To complete the research study, incentive came from the study of the Shaikh-ul Aalam ^(R.A). The “observation Method “was applied successfully for this research work. By using this method, the research goes through different literary articles, critical compositions, books and to find interrelated study material. In order to be acknowledge in allied topics different critical books composed by Farooq Fayaz, Ishaq Khan, M.Amin Pundit etc. Remaining supportive for the part of the study on poet’s literary life.

Findings:

The main objective of this study remaining to find out how Shaikh-ul Aalam ^(R.A) mends and revolutionized society, through his message poetry. This work will observe the expression of Islamic philosophy and ideas of Shaikh-ul Aalam ^(R.A) in reconstructing society through poetic forms.

Socio-political conditions of that Era:

Kashmir From the ancient times remains the centre of not only Culture and Civilization but also for Knowledge and Literature. The valley of Kashmir has not only given the shelter to foreign Sufi saints but also gave birth to great and eminent Sufi’s and scholars. Among these personalities one of the most prominent personality is Shaikh-ul Aalam ^(R.A) by turning the pages of history we see the different views regarding the birth and passing away of Shaikh-ul Aalam ^(R.A) .However, commonly accepted opinion is that he was born in 779H (1377A.D) and passed away in 842H (1440). Shaikh-ul Aalam ^(R.A) is also called by different names like Shaikh Nuruddin Rishi, Alamdar-i-kashmir, Nund Rishi etc.He is remarkable Kashmiri Sufi saint who belonged to Rishi order. He was one of those multifaced personalities of the medieval time who had special concern with reforming society and social justice. The period of sixty three years of his life was of great change in so far as political, social, economical and religious conditions of Kashmir. In order to understand the political and social conditions which prevailed during Shaikh-ul Aalam’s time, one has to make a study of those which were prior to him. For this purpose one has to turn the pages of wonderful Kashmir history. Which starts from 1301-1320 A.D and onwards this was the period of when king Suhadeva ruled over Kashmir. He was kind and generous hearted person and allowed many taught people to come and settle here in Kashmir. Among these outsiders were Ranchana and Shah Mir, who played a crucial role in shaping the political, social and religious history of Kashmir. Meanwhile in 1320 A.D the invasion of the Tatars, the kingdom of Kashmir got disintegrated by Dulcha or Zulju or zulqadr khan. With reference of Abdul Qaiyoom Rafiqi he says:

“The sources are not unanimous about the origin of Zulju. According To Jonaraja he was a commander of the army of The great king Karmmasena.it is not possible to identify the “King Karmmasena”.Elsewhere, however, jonaraja calls zulju “The king of the melechchhas ”.¹

But the historians of Kashmir assert that zulju was a Mongol from Turkistan. This view seems to be correct. Zulju entered the valley through Baramulla along with thousands of soliders.king Suhadeva instead of facing the enemy, fled to Kishtawar leaving his household. Shah Mir who already joined his army during his time only stood at his past and tried his best to save the kingdom; Zulju plundered and enslaved people, burnt down buildings and destroyed crops after a stay of eight months he left the valley through the Banihal pass, where he perished along with his prisoners in heavy snowstorm. Ranchana took advantage of anarchy that prevailed in the valley,

and finally assumed the government and proclaimed himself as the king of Kashmir and later on accepted Islam through syed Sharafuddin Bulbul shah^(R.A) and keep the name of Sultan Sadruddin and in this way ended the Hindu rule in Kashmir. In the words of Prof. Mohammad Ishaq Khan:

“The conversion of Rinchana Should not be treated as an isolated Case; nor was it merely a matter of political expediency in medieval Times it was the personal decision of the chiefs that usually determined The collective action of groups or clans. It can be safely inferred that a Accompanied him from ladkh to Kashmir must also have embraced Islam. After their chiefs assumption of political power and his Subsequent Conversion.”²

After Sadruddin's (Rinchana) death in 1323 A.D, Islam does not seem to have official patronage owing to internecine political conflicts in Kashmir. In 1339 Shah Mir ascended the throne and defeated the wife of Sadruddin Kota Rani at Andarkote. After Shah Mir shahb-u-din ascended the throne and he was succeeded by his younger brother Hindal who adopted the title of Qutub-ud-din (1373-89) and every one among them tried to restore the law and order in Kashmir than devoting themselves to the religious affairs of a small number of their Muslim subjects living peacefully in Hindu, Buddhist surroundings. The reign of Qutub u din marked the birth of Shaikh-ul-Aalam^(R.A). The Sultan died when the Shaikh-ul-Aalam^(R.A) was only twelve years old that means Shaikh-ul-Aalam^(R.A) childhood was spent during the reign of Sultan Qutub-u-din. Till that time Islam had made a considerable progress in the valley and Shaikh was very well aware about the Islamic tenets. The era of Shaikh-ul-Aalam^(R.A) was socio political confusion. Morally the society was in the throes of degradation. The society that the Shaikh-ul-Aalam^(R.A) represents was divided into two classes, neo converts and old Hindu society. The first one was of new passionate Muslims and another was traditional Hindus both competed in outdoing one another in erecting either Mosques or temples. The Shaikh-ul-Aalam^(R.A) being sensitive was interested to maintain a social harmony. That is the reason he composed:

*Two children from the same parents,
The Muslims and the Hindus.
Why this gulf of hatred between the two:
Be pleased with thy servant's oh my God.*

As we know that in fourteenth century there was feudalism and caste system prevalent in Kashmir. Bahamans considered himself superior than other castes but Shaikh-ul-Aalam^(R.A) highly criticised the social caste system as well as economical caste system. Shaikh-ul-Aalam^(R.A) emerged as a people's voice to fight against these manmade barriers and through-out his career championed the cause of downtrodden and under-privileged. He also spread the message of non-violence even he refused to kill any plant or animal. During his spiritual journey he gradually left eating delicious food instead he ate bitter vegetables-kasnee and handh. That is the reason he revolted against the political culture and system that he experienced during the reign of Sikandar Shah and Ali Shah. According to Manzoor Fazili:

“His poetry in its undertone is a protest against the politics Of confusion, suppression and oppression of the common man.”³

Shaikh-ul-Aalam^(R.A) unlike Hindus did not ignore society altogether the Hindus, while seeking union with God, placed themselves outside the historical process, which results upon social cooperation and mutual understanding between men. Even after their return from periods of withdrawal and contemplation the Hindu mystics remained highly individualistic in their

approach to religion. And while leading secluded lives they seldom felt the need to direct or guide the society of which they were a part. Nuruddin on the other hand made his intuitive faculty serve contemporary society by the argument of word and deed. In his Poetry there is an element of a dynamic inner worldly asceticism seeking to achieve mastery not only over his individual self but also over the world around him:

*O, supreme God, thou art to be held in highest esteem.
Since it was in seeking thou that it was freed from the delusion of self.
Be kind enough to make me a powerful instrument of thy innate devotion;
I do gratefully remember how kind thou art.*

He was a social reformer and his message was not confined to one race or class but addressed the whole mankind. Shaikh-ul Aalam ^(R.A) was also against the division of society on the basis of socio religious status, instead he advocated total surrender before Allah and be compassionate to all his creatures. He clearly defines social justice as the most balanced synthesis of human freedom, brotherhood and equality which embodies the divine attributes of benevolence, providence and justice. In the words of Dr. Farooq Fayaz:

*“Shaikh Nuruddins tour across the valley was not to demonstrate his
Mystical Excellence but it had a deep socio-ethical connotation. Along
Side, the job of disseminating true message of Islam based on human dignity,
religious universalism and the unity of God. Shaikh Nuruddin by his noble deeds
Sought to paint true colour of its social dynamics.”⁴*

Shaikh-ul Aalam ^(R.A) urged the people to walk on the set paradigm of religion that would in turn help them change their outlook to be called as true religious followers. Shaikh-ul Aalam ^(R.A) was of the view that one, whose actions are human, is a Muslim in a true sense and mere caste won't guarantee heaven to a person. He says:

*One who harps proudly upon one's caste?
Is bereft of reason and wisdom
Here the good alone can claim noble descent;
In the Hereafter, caste will be extinct.*

In his poetry Shaikh-ul Aalam always called upon the people to follow the path of peace and harmony. He strongly pleaded for tolerance, fellow-feeling, love and affection among all sections of the society. He has left hardly any issue relating to the development of humankind. Thus the main desire of Shaikh-ul-Aalam ^(R.A) was to transmit the real message of social reformation and its social dynamics which stood for classless and casteless society free of exploitation and religious discord.

Conclusion:

Shaikh-ul Aalam ^(R.A) a multi dimensional personality, his poetry touches almost every aspect of human life. He has greatly succeeded in portraying a positive message of life with a strong practical approach for progress and development of mankind. His verses became the best vehicle for inculcating in the common masses the true spirit of Islam: submission, dependence on Allah, obedience, contemplation and a fulfillment of the duties of fellowships. Shaikh-ul Aalam ^(R.A) truly revolutionized the spirit and soul of Kashmir. This revolution itself carved out a culture of forbearance, tolerance, adherence to the truth, belief in monotheism, equal love for men of Allah,

and sympathy with one another. In this way Shaikh-ul Aalam ^(R.A) played a central role within the frame work of a cognitive, moral and social order.

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