

FOUNDATION OF THE SULTANATE

During the eighth century Kashmir was several times subjected to the attacks of the Arabs. Two centuries later, Mahmud of Ghazni twice led his armies for its conquest. But although both the Arab and Turkish invasions ended in failure, it will be useful to take a brief notice of them, for it is to these that Kashmir owed its earliest contact with political Islam.

2.1 The Arab Invasions:

The conquest of Kabul and Turkistan by Qutaiba b. Muslim during the caliphate of Walid brought the Arabs to the borders of the kingdom of Kashmir. But within six years from the death of Qutaiba much of his work was undone¹. However, under the Caliph Hisham (724-43), Nasr b. Sayyar, the first Arab governor of Transoxiana, not only reconquered most of the territories overrun earlier by Qutaiba, but even reached as far as Kashghar². Under the early 'Abbasids these conquests were further extended and consolidated. In 751 the Arabs gained a victory over the Chinese and compelled them to abandon Gilgit as well as their other possessions in the extreme west³. The kingdom of Kabul over which the hold of the Umayyads had been precarious was reduced while Ma'mun ar-Rashid was governor of Khurasan, and its ruler accepted Islam⁴. Later, when Ma'mun became Caliph (813-33), he entered into relations with the rulers of Tibet and its neighbours⁵. The news of these Arab advances must have been a source of anxiety to the kings of Kashmir, although there is no evidence to suggest that the Arabs ever contemplated the invasion of the valley from the north, either from Kabul or Kashgar. The real threat to the valley came from the Arabs who had established themselves in Sindh.

Muhammad Qasim occupied Sindh and the lower Punjab between the years 711 and 713. He then marched from Multan and carried his arms to the borders of the kingdom of Kashmir.⁶ Threatened by the Arabs advance, Raja Chandrapida of Kashmir sent an envoy to the Chinese emperor asking for help against the Arabs⁷. However, no aid was received; but fortunately Muhammad b. Qasim was recalled by the Caliph Suleiman to Damascus, and so the Arab danger was for the time being removed. In the reign of the caliph Hisham (724-43) the Arabs of Sindh under their energetic and ambitious governor Junaid again threatened Kashmir. But Lalitaditya (724-60), who was the ruler of Kashmir at this time, defeated him and overran his kingdom⁸. His victory was, however, not decisive for the Arabs aggression did not cease. That is why the Kashmiri ruler, pressed by them from the south and by the Turkish and the Tibetans from the north, had to invoke the help of the Chinese emperor and to place himself under his protection⁹. But although he did not receive and aid, he was able to stem the tide of Arab advance by his own efforts¹⁰.

When Hisham b. Amr at- Taghlibi was appointed governor of Sindh by the Caliph Mansur, (754-75), he also attempted an invasion of the valley, and reached as far as the southern slopes of the Himalayas, which were subject to Kashmir. He, however, failed to enter the valley, and occupy it as has been claimed by the Arab historians¹¹. This was the last attempt of the Arabs to invade Kashmir: and when again a Muslim invasion of the valley took place it was undertaken not by an Arab chief but by a Turkish Sultan.

Mahmud of Ghazni's Invasions:

In 1002 Mahmud of Ghazni routed the forces of Jaipal, Raja of Waihand, who, affected by the humiliation of defeat, burnt himself to death. Jaipal's son and successor Anandpal also suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of Mahmud (1009), and died after a few years. Anandpal's son Trilocanpal, whose power was now confined only to the salt range, appealed to Samgramaraja (1103-28), the king of Kashmir, for help against Mahmud. Samgramaraja sent a large army under his commander-in-chief Tunga. Mahmud met the forces of Trilocanpal, supported by the Kashmir contingent, in one of the valleys which leads towards Kashmir from the neighbourhood of Jhelum¹². Tunga, having won a victory over a reconnaissance party of the sultan, began to think too lightly of the invader. The result was that when Mahmud personally advanced to attack the enemy. Tunga, in spite of the advice of Trilocanpal to take shelter behind a rock, advanced to face him. But Mahmud put him to flight. Trilocanpal tried to retrieve the situation, but he too was defeated. (1014)¹³.

Provoked by Samgramaraja conduct, Mahmud decided to invade Kashmir and punish him. He marched to Jhelum and then, proceeding along the valley to the river Tohi, tried to enter Kashmir by the Tosha maidan pass. But his further progress was checked by the strong fort of Loharkot which guarded the pass¹⁴. Mahmud besieged the fort for a month, but without any success; and owing to heavy snowfall, which cut off his communications, he was compelled to raise the siege. While retreating he lost his way. Many of his troops perished, and he himself escaped with difficulty. This was the first serious reverse in India¹⁵.

In September October, 1021, Mahmud again set out from Ghazni to invade Kashmir in order to retrieve his prestige. He followed the same route as before, but once again the fort of Loharkot stopped his advance. He followed the same advance. He besieged it for a month, but failed to reduce it. Meanwhile as severe winter had set in, he was compelled to withdraw. After these two failures Mahmud abandoned the idea of invading Kashmir again¹⁶.

When two centuries later the storm of Turkish invasion again burst on the plains of Hindustan, it did not affect Kashmir, for Shihabu'd-Din Ghuri, and him the Turkish Sultans of Delhi, remained pre-occupied with the extension and consolidation of their territories in Hindustan. Even when, by the end of the thirteenth century, they had succeeded in subduing the whole of Northern India, they did not undertake the hazardous adventure of invading Kashmir, but directed their arms to the conquests of the Deccan and South quarter of the fourteenth century Muslim rule came to be established in the valley. It was not the result of foreign invasion but was due to internal conditions obtaining there.

2.2 Decline of Hindu Rule:

Signs of internal decay to manifest themselves with the establishment of the Lohara dynasty in 1003. Henceforth the Hindu rule in Kashmir started on its downward course until it met its overthrow in about 1320 under Suhadeva. The kings who, during this period, occupied the throne were for the most part weak and worthless, and allowed themselves to be dominated by low favourites and corrupt ministers. The people were subjected to the hated corvee, and to all kinds of oppressive taxes in addition

to the illegal exactions of the officials. The Damaras or feudal chiefs grew powerful, defined royal authority, and by their constant revolts plunged the country into confusion. Life and property were not safe, agriculture declined, and there were periods when trade came to a standstill. Socially and morally too the court and the country had sunk to the depths of degradations¹⁷.

Samgramaraja (1003-28), the first ruler of the Lohara dynasty, neglected the administration and allowed his greedy officers and vile favourites to plunder the people¹⁸. On his death his son, Hairaja ascended the throne, but he died after a reign of twenty-two days. Ananta (1028-63), Samgramaraja's younger son, then became king. His expensive habits involved him in heavy debt, so that he had to pawn even the royal diadem and throne to a foreign trade¹⁹. Luckily, however at this time queen, Suryamati, intervened and took charge of the affairs. She paid off the debts from her own savings, and secured the services of able ministers who governed the country well²⁰. But during the reign of Kalasa (1063-89) the valley was once again plunged into chaos. He neglected public business and lived in the society of immoral and vicious courtiers who completely dominated him²¹. He became so depraved as to violate his own daughter²².

The next ruler Harsa (1089-1101) was in many ways a remarkable man. He was handsome, courageous and of a powerful frame²³. He loved music, and patronized art and learning. In the beginning he ruled wisely and made his subjects happy²⁴, but later his characters degenerated under the influence of his evil counselors,²⁵ and he became cruel, licentious and perverse. His sensualities led him to commit acts of incest²⁶. His foreign

campaigns were nowhere successful²⁷. Inside the Valley the pretended and feudal chiefs were a constant source of trouble; and although he suppressed them with revolting cruelties, they again raised their heads.²⁸. His reckless expenditure on troops and costly pleasures involved him in financial difficulties. To meet the crisis he began looting the wealth of the temples²⁹ and exploiting his subjects by imposing upon them new and oppressive taxes. He even went to the extent of taxing the night soil³⁰. The result of his misgovernment and tyranny was that the nobles rose against him, and put him to a miserable death.

2.3 OUTSIDERS VERSUS OUTSIDERS:

Among the foreigners who came and settled in the valley of Kashmir were some practical men. They found, because of the turn of events, a place in the history of Kashmir. The first among them was Mallachandra, a scion of the Chandrabansi Rajput family of Nagarkote (Kangra). After his defeat at the hands of his cousins, he sought refuge with the king of Kashmir. Jayasimha (d. 1154 A.D.) received him in his court,³¹ and later appointed him as his commander-in-chief (Rana). He died in 1176 A.D, and was followed by a chain of descendents who served the successive kings: Kakechandra, (d. 1229 A.D), Bladchandra (d.1252 A.D)³². Samgramachandra (executed by Raja Suhadeva) who had grown powerful enough as the Lord of Lahara to harass the king³³. And after him Ramchandra (killed in 1320 A.D.). Who was the minister of Suhadeva³⁴.

During Suhadeva, reign (1301-1320 A.D) three more historical figures entered the valley to attract the attention of the king. The first among them was Rinchana (Lha-chen-Rgyalbu-Rinchan) who came to Kashmir

around 1320 A.D. he was a fugitive prince from Ladakh. According to Jonaraja, he was the son of a Vakatanya (Bhotta) king, who was killed, deceitfully, along with his relatives and friends by his enemies – the Kalmanya Bhottas (Bhuteas). Rinchana escaped the massacre by a mere chance. He joined Vyala Tukka and others and managed the killing of his father's enemies. Thereafter he came to Kashmir along with his friends and comrades³⁵. The Vakatanya king (father of Rinchana) has been identified as Lha-Chan-Dngos-Grub who ruled Ladakh between 1290 and 1320 A.D, revived Buddhism, and lost his life in an armed conflict between Ladakhis and Baltis³⁶. Jonaraja writes that “this Bhotta (Rinchana) obtained wealth plentiful as water, from the Bhottas, by selling the people of Kashmir, and reared himself like a cloud, and covered all sides”³⁷. He does not elaborate. Rinchana was given refuge by Ramachandra at Gagangir in Lar parganah of Kashmir, and he lived there for some time. Here we may add a passage from

A.H.Francke:

“(Lha-chen-Ngorub-grub) (dngos grub) about 1300-1325, Jopal's son. During the reign of this king the usage of novices going to central Tibet was first introduced). This arrangement was not only the death-blow to the Bon-religious of Ladakh, which had probably lingered on down to that time; it meant also the end of the ancient forms of Indian Buddhism, which had their principal seats in the grand monasteries erected by the Kashmir emigrants.....

(Lha-chen-Gyalbo rinchen about 1325-1350, the son of Lha Chen ngorub). That is all that we learn about him from the Ladakhi chronicles, and it is strange that no more is said of him, because for three generations before him the accounts have been a little fuller and grow in fullness after him. It also remarkable that he is called Gyalbo, prince. The epithet Lha-

chen, great god, is the common title of all west Tibetan kings. An explanation is found in the Chronicles of Kashmir.....

(Lha Chen sherrab, about 1350-1375, the son of Gyalbu Rinchen. He built the hamlet. Sengee sgang on the top of the hangtsemo rock, at Sabu, six miles south east of Leh.....”⁽³⁸⁾)

Another player who also rose to be a ruler of Kashmir was Shah Mir. Jonaraja makes him a later descendent by a mythical person brought up in Roma country,³⁹ whose son, Partha, on account of differences with his family migrated to a distance place called Gahvarapura in the Panchagahvara country.⁴⁰ The place, it seems, was closer to the borders of Kashmir where Suhadeva is said to have established his authority. Suhadeva’s son is said to have built the town of Garbharapura which appears close to Gahvarapura, phonetically.⁴¹ Kuru Shaha, Parth’s descendent, conquered whole of the North and of the West, and built a temple named Dhanus. His son Tahirala’s was graced with three eyes, and he knew all shastras. “Twice or thrice Tahirala’s heard a voice from the sky telling him to accept the sovereignty of Kashmira, and to give it to his very wise son, Shahamira”.⁴² At another place Jonaraja transplants the third eye to Tahirala’s (not Tahirala’s father Kuru Shah. In the year 1235 Saka (1313 A.D) Shamera slowly came into Kashmira. He came with his relatives and the king of Kashmira greatly favored him by giving him salary.⁴³

Persian chroniclers assign him to a place called Swad Gir in Kuner Province of Afghanistan. Muhammad ‘Azam writes that (as per community legend) Qaur Shah, the grandfather of Shah Mir, announced once that it was revealed to him that the latter would rise in life to become the king of

Kashmir. Relying upon this prognostication, Shah Mir came to Kashmir along with his family and stayed at Baramulla till the king gave him village Dvarababar (Dvarbidi) as a Jagir.⁴⁴ According to Mirza Hyder Dughlat, he came to Kashmir disguised as a Qalander.⁴⁵ This statement may be closer to the truth.

Lankar Chak, or one of his descendents, was the third important intruder. According to Baharistan-i-Shahi, Lankar Chak, came from Darwurd (or Darud) to Kashmir along with his family and settled in village Trehgam (Kupwara District) during the reign of Suhadeva.⁴⁶ Kalhana mentions one Alamkara (or Alamkara Chakra) in the 8th Taranga of Rajatarangni.⁴⁷ In fact several slokas of this Taranga deal with his activities. It is said that during the reign of Vijaysimha (1128-1149), Alamkara Chakra, and other Damaras developed marital relationships with the counselors or Dards (slokas 2483). Alamkara seems to have been rather close to the king (Sloka 2671); and he was also incharge of the king's outer court, when "this dauntless man in many an assault of superhuman type killed the antagonists" (sloka 2557). His wife is labeled as 'faithless' (slokas 2571-72); and his complicity in allowing Bhoja the enemy of the king, to slip in to the Dard country is also mentioned (slokas 2575-77). It is quite likely that Alamkara Chakra was a Dard (and a Muslim too) whom Muslim chroniclers rechristen "Lankar Chak" and also make a contemporary of king Suhadeva. His progeny could, however, have colonized Trehgam as a later stage. Perhaps these Chroniclers were not able to place him correctly in the historical time- frame because of a language-barrier. They had no access to the original text of Rajatarangni written in Sarda or Sanskrit. Again Lankar

Chak could also have been a descendent of Alamkara Cakra with a Dard-Muslim background.

Hiuen Tsiang makes a mention of Sakla in Cheh-ka country between Pipo-She (Bibas) River in the east and Indus on the west. Sakala has been identified as Sialkote or Shankote (in Jhang district of Panjab, Pakistan).⁴⁸ Some kind of a relationship between ‘Chaks’ and ‘Cheh-Ka’, is a matter of Conjecture. “Chak” (Tsak of Kashmiri) means a “thief” in Shina Language of Gilgit⁴⁹ and Kalam Kohistani.

The man who was responsible for changing the destiny of the people of Kashmir was, however, a man of a totally different class. Saiyyid Sharaf al-Din ‘Abd al-Rahman, an ascetic popularly known as Baba Bulbul Shah, belonged to the Suhrawardiyyeh* order of Sufis. A disciple of Shah Ni’mat Allah Wali Farsi, he was born and brought up in Turkestan, where Mongols had made his life irksome. He is said to have walked all the way to Kashmir along with a thousand followers. He was richly paid for his tribulations during the arduous foot work along high mountain passes’. Curiously enough, Jonaraja is silent about him. Baba Bulbul Qalander passed away during his stay in Kashmir in 1327 A.D. he was interred at Bubul Langar in down-town, Srinagar⁵⁰.

The political situation on that led to the dramatic turn of events in the history of Kashmir was, however, precipitated by yet another foreigner; a vandal, who tried to leave his foot, prints on the sands of time. He was “Dalacha, commander of the army of the great king Karmasena (who) came to Kashmira, as comes a lion in the cave of the deer”⁵¹. Dalacha (or Zulju) was a Mongol, who came to be known as Zulqadr Khan among Kashmiris⁵².

According to Pushp, Drukchen used to be a (military) office among Mongols and it got distorted to Dul Hochi in Chinese and Dalacha in Sanskrit. Pushp also writes that Dalacha was a commander of Kara Shehr whom Jonaraja calls Karmasena⁵³.

THE VORTEX OF EVENTS:-

Dalacha, the Mongol marauder, entered the valley along Baramulla route in 1320 A.D. with a bang. He is said to have brought with him sixty thousand mounted soldiers⁵⁴, which is, no doubt, an oriental hyperbole. Suhadeva tried to buy his goodwill by paying him a ransom, and, therefore, imposed a tax on all people⁵⁵. However, the plunderer would not but harass “the country and the people of Kashmira became like insects in fire”⁵⁶. Jonaraja says that Rinchana also laid a siege on the city at the same, which statement need not be based on facts. The strength of Dalacha’s cavalry people of the valley seems nearly certain. Dalacha is said to have despoiled temples also. And when he left the valley, in view of the impending winter, the appalling condition of the populace has so graphically been portrayed by *Jonaraja*.

“Those people of Kashmir who had escaped capture, issued out of their strongholds, as mice out of their holes. When the violence neither caused by the Rakhshasa nor fathers his son, ceased, the son found not his father, nor did brothers meet their brothers. Kashmira became almost like a region before the creation, a vast field with few men, without food, full of grass”⁵⁷.

Anand Kaul imagines that he “converted people forcibly to Islam”⁵⁸. Fifty thousand people (not Brahmans, as Kilam would have us believe)⁵⁹ are

said to have been taken as captives. The invader was not, of course, expected to have an idea about the caste- hierarchy of Kashmir. He would not discriminate between Brahmans and non-Brahmans. While moving out of the valley along Devsar Pass after an eight- month holocaust, the beastly Dalacha was overwhelmed by a snow blizzard at a place called Bata Gajan (Brahman's Death Oven) along with his cavalry and captives; and, it is said, not a soul was left alive⁶⁰. The figures recorded may not, however, have been that high. The captives had to be provided food also.

The wretched king, Suhadeva, who instead of offering resistance to the fiery invader fled to Kishtawar, did not muster courage to return to the valley even after Dalacha's fatal misadventure. The absence of an authority created a political vacuum in the beleaguered country. Ramchandra, a minister of the fugitive Suhadeva tried to make the most of the opportunity by capturing power, although he too had remained in hiding in his fort at Gagangir during Dalacha's depredations.

Rinchana, stationed at Kangam, watched the developments keenly. Having barely escaped the clutches of his enemies, and fearful of returning to his mother land, he chose to find himself a new home in Kashmir. Though he appears to have had an eye on the seat of power, his cunning made him lie low for some time. He had made up his mind to dislodge Ramchandra who was trying to wield authority and who as rootless as Rinchana himself.

Jonaraja writes:

"Rinchana stationed on the mountain..... intended to pounce on the city like a royal hawk on a piece of meat bur Ramchandra, the moon of his dynasty, opposed him at every step"⁶¹.

Towards the end of the year, Rinchana played a ruse. He organized a band of his camp followers who were adept in martial arts and sent them to the fort of Ramchandra in the guise of traders of fabrics. The practice was continued for some time until the fateful day, when they entered the fort. Hiding their arms; and a coup d'état was the result. "And when Bhatta people thus entered Lahara, Rinchana caused their weapons to drink the honey-like blood of Ramchandra"⁶².

After enthroning himself, Rinchana exhibited the qualities of an astute usurper. In the first place he succeeded in mollifying and winning over the family of his slain adversary Ramachandra. His son, Ramachandra, was given the traditional family assignment of the commander-in-chief⁶³. Rinchana's marriage with Kota Rani (Baharistan uses the name "Koteh-ren" for her)⁶⁴, a sister of the new chief commander, was an act of extreme caution. It was an insurance against any act of treason on the part of Rawanchandra.

It appears that Rinchana exhibited crude methods of justice, if ever he made use of it. When Timmi, a brother of his Bhatta confederate Tukka, was accused by a maid of having drunk her milk by force and Timmi denied such an allegation; the king, in order to ascertain the facts, caused Timmi's stomach to be opened, "and from severe stomach milk issued in a stream"⁶⁵. The story may be a fiction based on his actions. He was cruel too. When Tukka made an unsuccessful attempt on his life to avenge the judicial murder of his brother on a flimsy ground, the "angry king ripped open by sword the wombs of his enemy's wives in the fort, who were with the child"⁶⁶. But who knows how truthful Jonaraja was in recording these

incidents. Of course, one thing is certain: fugitive Suhadeva's brother, Udyanadeva, had masterminded the conspiracy to kill Rinchana⁶⁷.

2.4 THE CONVERT KING (1320-1323 A.D.):

Having achieved what he wanted, Rinchana addressed himself to the religious side of his life. Jonaraja gives the impression that he was inclined to join the Hindu fold and embrace Saivism obviously to compensate for his rootlessness, but his request was turned down by the chief priest who could not brook such an insult to the caste-oriented religion of his forebears. He records in his chronicle:

“The king asked Shri Devaswami to initiate him in the mantras of Siva, but as a Bhatta, Devaswami feared that the king was unworthy of such initiation and did not favour him”⁶⁸.

If this view is accepted, one might well ask as to how were the Buddhists of Kashmir (obviously belonging to all the four caste-components of Chaturvaranya) admitted or readmitted to Hindu fold, earlier. Perhaps what made Rinchana's conversion controversial creed but his Mongoloid lineage. It is a historical fact that Buddhism in Kashmir was absorbed into Hinduism to such a degree as to led to the conversion of Buddha himself, centuries after his death, into a Hindu god: the ninth avtara of Visnu. The personality of Buddha was, in effect, submerged in the Hindu Patheon, as in depicted in Devsar Frame (Srinagar Museum).⁶⁹ *Monier Williams* says:

“The Vaishnavites and the Saivites managed to get into the sacred fold of Buddhism and cleverly sabotaged its lofty ideals from within”⁷⁰.

Another point that deserves to be noted is that as a king Rinchana would have liked to be called a Kshitrya. His conjugal relationship with Kota

Rani, the daughter of a Chandrabansi Rajput, would have facilitated it. What on earth compelled him to become a Brahman? It is therefore, more likely that Jonaraja's love of his ancestral creed compels him to tell his brethren-in-faith that their forbears had preferred to cast a spell of doom upon themselves rather than admit an outsider to the pious caste of the 'twice-born'.

Muslim writers have, on the other hand, tried to emphasize that search for the truest religious was inborn and natural to the mind Rinchana. He, it is vouched, would attend the discourses of the doctors of religion and spend nights like an insomniac in order to realize the Right Path for spending the rest of his life. His nocturnal wails bore fruit when during one such supplication he heard a voice announce: "Your prayer is granted. Watch out early in the morning." When he opened the window the next morning he was surprised to find a dervish offering his morning salat at some distance. He called ascetic; enquired about his name, his religion and his beliefs; and embraced Islam without a second thought. He was then rechristened "Sadr-al-Din". The ascetic who converted him was none other than the Turkestani Bulbul Shah⁷¹. The author of *Baharistan-i-Shahi* writes:

"At this time only a handful of people in Kashmir had embraced Islam. Most of the people were either infidels or dissemblers..... for 'God helps those help themselves', he (Rinchana) found the Right Path. He decided firmly that he would embrace the religion of the first person he should meet in the street after coming out of his house the next morning.

"Next morning he came out of his house. The rays of the sun of divine guidance. Brining every object from darkness to light, liberated him from the darkness of ignorance and disbelief: for all of a sudden in the

neighbourhood of his mansion, he saw a dervish offering namaz with full devotion. He walked towards him. Dervish finished his prayer, and Rinchan held him by his hand, and brought him to his house. Then he called for an interpreter who knew their language. He asked the dervish his name and then about his religion and the sect he belonged to. The dervish told him that his name was Bulbul Qalander, that his religion was Islam and that his community was that of Muslims. He disclosed to him that he was a member of the sect (sic) of Shah Ni'mat Allah Wali. His (Rinchan's) heart had previously been blackened by the beliefs of a false community. Now he subjects himself to the teachings of the religion of Mustafa (the Blessed Prophet) and embraced Islamic religion with sincerity and conviction. He got a Khanqa built for Baba Bulbul Qalander in the neighbourhood of his own palace. The grave of Baba Bulbul is also to be found there. Rinchan also built a mosque for Friday prayers and five daily prayers. He offered the Friday prayers regularly, besides joining the mass for all the five prescribed times of praying after the Muslim fashion. The mosque built under his instructions caught fire, but a smaller mosque made of solid stone was erected in its place (later on)"⁷².

There is enough historical evidence in support of the view that Rinchana was the first Muslim king of Kashmir. As for his earnest desire to adopt the truest of the faiths and his piety, one can hardly agree with the Muslim writers of the past. Rinchana's stratagem for overpowering Ramchandra by patently foul methods; his ripping open of the bellies of the pregnant women of his-ally-turned-foe and the latter's associates; and his queer sense of justice in case of Timmi are enough to reveal his natural bent of mind (even if Jonaraja's tendency to exaggerate is kept in mind).

It has also to be recalled that Rinchana found barely three years to rule. Consolidation of the state power must have been his prime concern.

Religion, obviously, could not but take a backseat in his scheme of things. The hardy Muslim missionary must have made quite a bit of an effort in order to attract the attention of the newly- invested king. He must have found it a God- sent opportunity to convert a rootless king to the Muslim creed; for which the supplications of the dervish, his racial characteristics and the exemplary life style of his entourage of scholars, savants and Gnostics of merit must share honours. Fellow Muslims lay Shah Mir and Lankar Chak, who must have already been known to the king Rinchana, must also have contributed their bit because of their access to the new ruler. Moreover, Rinchana must not have been an ardent Buddhist because only his father had worked for Buddhism against the ancestral Bon religion. He was, therefore, in need of a tag. Of course, the choice lay with him.

Rinchana's conversion had in fact many aspects to it. Kilam writes that the "wanted to establish a uniform faith in the country with himself at it head".⁷³ This view is not only too simplistic but also self-contradictory. The fact remains that Rinchana being himself an outsider, must have felt that his interests could best be served by those who were themselves outsiders. And Jonaraja records that "the king was pleased with Shahemera who was not implicated in treason".⁷⁴ Rinchana's mongoloid features would at once differentiate him from the Hindu masses, and this was bound to be a perpetual impediment in the way of his absorption into a caste-ridden society. Islam, on the other hand, is an all encompassing religion, where race and language have never been a serious consideration except (sometimes) in matrimonial matters. If Bulbul Shah was a Turkestani with a somewhat flat face, it must have further prompted Rinchana to adopt his creed. At least some of the many followers of this dervish must have been Turks,

Mongoloids and the like. Above all, the Kashmir kings had since the time of Harsa begun to employ Turk soldiers in their armies. The bond of a common religion between the King and the leading warriors would help him, he must have thought, in holding in check those Brahmanical elements that were capable of masterminding his ouster.

The question arises, why at all did the thought of renouncing his ancestral Buddhist faith cross his mind? It is, indeed, difficult to answer this question perhaps once out of Ladakh, he discovered that more vibrant and more appealing creeds were possible. And with no one to deter him from taking such a step, he chose to adopt a newer, perhaps better, way of life.

Rinchana's conversion initiated a chain reaction. A change of faith at this stage could prove immensely useful to the social climber and the ambitious. Those who wanted to remain closer to the nucleus of power must have found in it a golden opportunity. Evidently, Rawanchandra lost no time in following the suit, thus starting a chain of the Muslim luminaries of Kashmir in his clan. It has been recorded by Persian chronicles that as many as ten thousand people were converted to Islam by Bulbul Shah.⁷⁵ The figure could be an exaggeration. Also, all the converts, it must be accepted, could not have been influenced by the economics of conversation. Some conversions could have taken place before Rinchana's decision to accept Islam as his faith.

Rinchana erected a monument to perpetuate the memory of his mentor and benefactor in the form of Khanqah-i-Bulbul Shah, a hospice on the right bank of the Jhelum in downtown Srinagar. This area was known as Sri Rinchanapura in later years. A large building called Budhagira was built

there. Malchimar, a residential locality, is also adjacent to it. The locale of the Khanqah is now known as Bulbul Lankar a distortion of Bulbul Lankar (or Bulbul's Kitchen). Masjid-i-Rinchana was also built nearby. It was once consumed in fire, and a smaller version of it was then built at the place.⁷⁶

Rinchana had faced an uprising of the "irreligious" Lavanyas,⁷⁷ and when Tukka and other attacked him, he received a wound in the head, which never healed. His condition began to deteriorate and he breathed his last on November 25, 1323 A.D. after a rule of about three years⁷⁸. He was laid to rest in the courtyard of Khanqah-i-Bulbul Shah⁷⁹. Survived by a son named Haidara (Hyder) who was not destined to inherit the royal throne, Rinchana left no mark on his history of Kashmir except his introduction of Islam in the royal court. And how far reaching consequences it had for the people of Kashmir!

THE WIDOW QUEEN LOSES:

The dying Rinchana placed his wife, Kota and son, Haidara in the hands of his trusted lieutenant, Shah Mir. A political vacuum was witnessed by the country for a second time in a space of three years. Shah Mir was not strong enough to rule himself- partly because of his denomination- and no other strong contender to the throne was visible either. Kota was, therefore, allowed to head the government and a new husband was also imported for her. He was none other than Udyanadeva- a brother of the fugitive Suhadeva⁸⁰- who had escaped to Gandhara, earlier, and who was involved in a conspiracy against her first husband, Rinchana⁸¹. Two facts are noteworthy here. First, Kota Rani was a Rajput woman, and sati was an established tradition among the Kshitrya. Remarriage of a Rajput widow

would obviously have been a revolting act for the Hindu masses. Now, if it is conceded that Kota Rani had embraced Islam, her remarriage with a person much devoted to Hinduism⁸² would not have been liked by Shah Mir who, as per tradition, was a Muslim. Second, Jonaraja indicates that though the Lavanyas could not oppose Shah Mir because he was the chief of his tribe (obviously Muslims), yet he did not have the necessary strength to rule himself⁸³.

The only conclusion that can be drawn is that though Kota Rani, a lady answerable to none, reneged from Islam with the death of Rinchana's are Muslim son continued to remain in the custody of the Muslim shah Mir, who would not part with the three year-old child. The heir-apparent was a trump card for Shah Mir and he made shrewd moves to let the husband of the queen know that he was a mere figure head, and the ruler was biding his time⁸⁴.

Years passed like that. The queen braved the invasion of another adventurer called Achalla, and captured him with her cunning and guile while her protégé-husband ran away to Bhatta country⁸⁵. She also bore the incompetent Udyanadeva a son, who, because of her fear of Shah Mir, was given under the care of her Brahman minister, Bhatta Bhikshana⁸⁶. Mir began to chafe at this move of the queen⁸⁷. Udyanadeva tried to assuage the feelings of Shah Mir by granting lordship of Kramarajya (Kamraz) and other areas to his sons, 'Ali Sher' (Ala al-din) and Jamshid⁸⁸. Udyanadeva died a natural death in 1338 A.D⁸⁹. His death was kept a secret for four days, till Kota Rani consolidated her position as a queen, rudderless though. She

began to rely only on the capabilities of Bhatta Bhikshana, to the exclusion of the intruder; Shah Mir⁹⁰. That was her undoing perhaps:

Shah Mir is said to have feigned illness. Bhatta Bhikshana and Avtara were sent by the queen to enquire about his health. Their guards were denied entry into the residence of shah Mir by latter's men; and they were then slain inside it⁹¹. Deprived of her crutches, the queen was now a mere shadow of her earlier self. One day, an occasion came for her to leave the capital for a while. Shah Mir lost no time in occupying it⁹². The artful and yet fascinating shah Mir offered her to be his queen. The avaricious lady agreed. A day later he threw her into prison along with her sons⁹³. This happened barely one year or less after the death of Udyanadeva. A queen of three kings was destined to spend her last days in adversity.

In the words of *Kilam*: “*At this time began the real struggle between militant Islam and tolerant but static Hinduism of the day*⁹⁴. *Everybody can draw their own conclusions.*”

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- ¹ Gibb, *The Arab Conquests in Central Asia*, Chap. iii, 29-55.
 - ² Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, p. 210.
 - ³ Stein, *Ancient Khotan*, pp. 11-2.
 - ⁴ Balazuri, *Futuhu'l-Buldan*, p. 393; Reinaud, *Memorie sur Pinde*, pp. 182,196.
 - ⁵ *Ibid*, 197.
 - ⁶ Elliot, I, 436 *Chach-nama*, 192.
 - ⁷ Majumdar, *the Classical Age*, 134, 174.
 - ⁸ *Ibid*.
 - ⁹ *Ibid*; Reinaud, *Memorie sur plnde*, 90.
 - ¹⁰ Majumdar, *the classical age* 173-4.
 - ¹¹ Balazuri, *Futuhu'l-Buldan*, p. 431; Mas'udi, *Muruju- Zahab*, (Trans. De Meynard),
 - ¹² It is a town situated on the west bank of the river Jehlam, 100 miles to the north-west of Lahore.
 - ¹³ Nazim, *Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna*, 92-3; Stein I, BK. Vii, Nos. 47-62 and n.
 - ¹⁴ Loharakotta or Lohkot or the Castle of Lohara lay in the valley now called Loharin belonging to the territory of Punch.
 - ¹⁵ Nazim, *Mahmud of Ghazna*, pp. 104-5.
 - ¹⁶ *Ibid*. 105.
 - ¹⁷ In BK. Vii and viii Kalhana numerous instances of the deterioration of morals in the valley.
 - ¹⁸ Stein, I, BK, vii Nos, 107-19
 - ¹⁹ *Ibid*, No. 195.
 - ²⁰ *Ibid*, Nos, 197 sqq.
 - ²¹ *Ibid*, Nos. 285 sqq.
 - ²² *Ibid*. No 278.
 - ²³ *Ibid*, Nos 874-8.
 - ²⁴ *Ibid*, Nos. 932-56.
 - ²⁵ *Ibid*, No. 960.
 - ²⁶ *Ibid*, Nos. 1147-8.
 - ²⁷ *Ibid*, Nos. 1152 sqq.
 - ²⁸ *Ibid*, Nos. 1037 sqq.
 - ²⁹ *Ibid*, Nos. 1089-95;115 sqq.
 - ³⁰ *Ibid*, Nos. 1107.
 - ³¹ *Ibid*, p. 14.
 - ³² Khoihami, *Hasan Tarikh-i-Kashmir* (tr. S.D.Ahmad) Vol. II, pp. 212, 221.
 - ³³ *Ibid*. p. 223.
 - ³⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 226-27, 233.
 - ³⁵ Dutt, J.C. op. cit. p. 15.
 - ³⁶ Mohi-ud-din (Prof.), *Islam in Kashmir in Studies of Kashmir Council of research* Vol, I, p. 41.
 - ³⁷ Dutt, J.C. op. cit. 17.
 - ³⁸ Francke, A.H. *A History of Western Tibet*, 1995 reprint, pp. 67-72.
 - ³⁹ Dutt. J.C. op. cit XIX.
 - ⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. XIX.
 - ⁴¹ *Ibid*, p. 15.
 - ⁴² *Ibid*, p. XX.
 - ⁴³ *Ibid*, p. 23.
 - ⁴⁴ Azam Muhammad *Waqat-i-Kashmir* (tr. Yazdani) p. 60
 - ⁴⁵ Ross E. Dennison *A history of the Moghuls of central Asia* (*Tarikh-i-Rashidi*) p. 432.
 - ⁴⁶ *Baharistan Shahi* (G.M.Bhat, 'Urdu Translation') pp. 6-7.
 - ⁴⁷ *Rajatarangini* Book VIII: *Saloka* 2483.
 - ⁴⁸ Watters, Thomas. *On Yuan Chwang's travels in india* (1973) p. 286.
 - ⁴⁹ Baart, J.L.G. *The Sounds and tones of Kalam Kohistani*. P. 124.
 - ⁵⁰ Azam Muhammad, op. cit. p. 67.

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- ⁵¹ Dutt, J.C. op. cit. p. 16.
⁵² Azam Muhammad op. cit. p. 61.
⁵³ Pushp. P.N, in *Son Adab* (1985), p. 19.
⁵⁴ Dutt, J.C. op. cit p. 16.
⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p. 16.
⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p. 17.
⁵⁷ *Ibid* p. 17.
⁵⁸ Kaul, Anand Kashmir Pandit p. 44.
⁵⁹ Kilam Jia Lal A history of Kashmir Pandits p. 31; Kaul A. op. cit. p. 44
⁶⁰ Kaul, A. op. cit. p. 44.
⁶¹ Dutt, J.C. op. cit. p. 18.
⁶² *Ibid*, p. 18.
⁶³ *Ibid*, p. 18.
⁶⁴ Baharistan-i-Shahi G.M. Bhat (Urdu transl.) p. 9.
⁶⁵ Dutt, J.C. op. cit. p. 19.
⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p. 22.
⁶⁷ *Ibid*. p. 21.
⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p. 20.
⁶⁹ Mohi-ud-din, op. cit p. 42; Ghai, V.K. Nilamatapurana Vol. II vv. 684-89.
⁷⁰ Williams. *Monier Buddhism* 1964, p. 170.
⁷¹ Azam Muhammad, op. cit p. 65.
⁷² Bahiristan-i-Shahi (Pandita. K.N. English Translation) p. 21-22.
⁷³ Kilam J.L. op. cit p. 32.
⁷⁴ Dutt, J.C. op. cit p. 23.
⁷⁵ Ikram, S.M. Aab-i-Kauhar p. 376 Sufi G.M.D. Kashir Vol. I. p. 83.
⁷⁶ Azam. Muhammad Azam op. cit. p. 66.
⁷⁷ Dutt, J.C op. cit. p. 27.
⁷⁸ *Ibid*. p. 23.
⁷⁹ *Ibid*. p. 24.
⁸⁰ Dutt, J.C. op. cit p. 21.
⁸¹ *Ibid* .p 24.
⁸² *Ibid*. p. 24.
⁸³ *Ibid*. p. 26.
⁸⁴ *Ibid*. p. 25.
⁸⁵ *Ibid*. p. 29.
⁸⁶ *Ibid*. p. 28.
⁸⁷ *Ibid*. p. 24.
⁸⁸ *Ibid*. p. 28.
⁸⁹ *Ibid*. p. 28.
⁹⁰ *Ibid*. p. 29.
⁹¹ *Ibid*. p. 29.
⁹² *Ibid*, p. 31.
⁹³ *Ibid*. p. 32; Baharistan (tr. Bhat) p. 12; Azam. M. op. cit p. 57.
⁹⁴ Kilam, J.L. op. cit. p. 34.