CHAPTER - I

COMPOSITION OF KASHMIR MUSLIM POPULATION
COMPOSITION OF KASHMIRI - MUSLIM POPULATION

On the top of the Indian subcontinent between 32°17' to 36°58' North latitude and 73°26' to 80°30' East longitude, the territory is known as the Jammu and Kashmir State. The state is bound on the north by the Pamirs, (the roof of the world) and China Turkistan from which it is completely segregated by the eastern off-shoots of the Hindu Kas and Kara-Karam mountains. The eastern and the western boundaries of the state boundaries of the state are made up by the Chinese Tibet and Pakistan while on the south it is bounded by the plains of the Indian subcontinent. As it is the meeting point of certain powers of the world, that is, the Soviet Russia, China, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, the state occupies a unique position in the political geography of India.

The state of Jammu and Kashmir as it exists today was founded by Maharaja Gulab Singh, the founder of Dogra rule in the state. After the British annexed the Punjab to its territory, Raja Gulab Singh, who had his greedy

eyes fixed on the valley of Kashmir, long before the 
treaty of Amritsar, got the valley of Kashmir from the 
East India company through a sale deed known in the history 
of Jammu and Kashmir State as the treaty of Amritsar for 
a petty sum of seventyfive lakh rupees. Remarking on the 
deed, Iqbal says:

Each hill, each garden, each field, 
Each farmer too they sold, 
A Nation for a price so cheap.

According to Article I of the treaty of Amritsar 
the British Government transferred and made over for ever 
in independent position to Maharaja Gulab Singh "all the 
hilly or mountainous country with its dependencies 
situated to the east ward to the River indus and west 
ward to the River Ravi including Chenab am excluding 
Lahul being part of the territories ceded to the British 
Government of Lahore state according to the provision 
of Article IV of the treaty of Lahore dated of March,1846". 2

According to this Article the Kashmir valley was, thus, 
transferred to Gulab Singh who assumed the title of the 
Maharaja of the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

The treaty of Amritsar was no better than a chawatar of serfdom for the helpless and unfortunate people of Kashmir. The treaty was, in fact, a sale-deed. It was a slur on the fair face of a Nation - The British - which is known for its civilization and contribution to the human race and taught its subjugated colonies the philosophy of liberalism, human values and a fair sense of justice. But when the same nation sold Kashmir along with its two million people to a "Bigot" it was estimated that the inhabitants were "at twenty-five shillings a head" the most extensive transaction in the slave trade of modern times.¹

Commenting on the treaty of Amritsar Mrs. Ansley records:—

"History shows us in the case of our queen Mary and also in that of Philip of Spain with regard to the Netherlands, that no rule is so cruel as that of bigot over people of a faith differing from his own".²

An eminent historian of Kashmir and freedom fighter says:—

"It was altogether a sordid, shameful affair devoid of all sense, fairness, justice and equality, two million

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3. Allice Marchioness Reading letters addressed to members of her family in England including from Kashmir (India Office Library, MSSEURE, 316).
of people in the valley and Gilgit were sold like sheep and cattle to an alien adventurer and the whole transaction was made behind his back.\(^5\)

The Dogras ruled the state from 1846 to 1947. During this long period of one hundred years, the state saw four ruling princes. The last ruler was Maharaja Hari Singh who ruled from 1925 to 1947.

The Muslim community of Kashmir is one of the oldest extant Muslim communities in the Indian subcontinent. Long before the "Muslim rule" was established in Kashmir in 1320, Muslims had entered the valley as traders and soldiers of fortune. Pandit Kalhana's reference to the Turukshahs (Turks),\(^6\) and Marco-Polo's evidence regarding the employment of the "Saracens"\(^7\) as butchers by the Hindus, speak of the Muslim settlements in Kashmir. But it must be emphasised that the Muslim rule established in Kashmir not as a result of foreign invasion but of the internal chaos that finally led to the decline of the Hindu rule.


\(^6\) Kalhana's *Raj-Taragini* (Stein's tr.) Delhi, 1961.

It is pertinent to note that on the eve of the beginning of Sultanate era, the Kashmir society had two main religious groups viz., the Buddhists and the Hindus. At that time, Buddhism was at the verge of decline right from 631-33. The time, the Chinese traveller Huen Tsiang visited the valley. It is reported that it were the Buddhists, who first embraced Islam at the hands of Sayyed Sharajuddin, a great Muslim saint. Very little is known about his missionary activities. However, he is the person, who is said to have converted Rinchana to Islam. Rinchana came to Kashmir along with his followers due to the unfavourable circumstances in Ladakh following his father's death. It were the political instability and economic backwardness of the valley caused by Zulju's invasion of Kashmir in 1320, and the ravages caused by the Mongol invaders for about eight months, that afforded


9. He was prominent among the early Muslim immigrants from Central Asia to Kashmir. He was a Sufi of the Suhrwardi order. He was a disciple of Shah Ni-Matullah Parsi. He is reported to have come to Kashmir in the reign the king Suhadeva from Turkistan, Baharistani Shahi, F.146, Aba Rafi uddin Baba Daud Mishtaki, Asrar al-Abrar, P.45.

10. Rinchana was the son of a Ladakhi chief, Lhachen - denyog-grub (Lhachen Ngos-grub), who ruled Ladakh from 1290-1320. Francke, Antiquities of Indian Tibet, II, P.98.
Rinchana an opportunity to occupy the throne of Kashmir. His conversion to Islam is regarded as a landmark in the history of Kashmir. Like other Buddhists of medieval period Rinchana was fond of taking part in religious discussions. He used to spend sleepless nights in the quest for truth, and hold religious discussion with Devaswami a Brahman priest, who lived in the city of Srinagar. Rinchana was digusted with the spiritual pretentions and castism and thus rejected Saivism. In the meanwhile, he met Saraj-uddin who explained the Rinchana the truth and simplicity of the faith of Islam. It is reported that Rinchana was


12. As late as Husain Shah's reign (1563-70) we hear of the discussions between the Sultan and the Buddhist priests living in his kingdom. Haidar Malik, Tarikh-i-Kashmir, F. 159b.


14. Rinchana did not accept 'Saivism' in view of the abuses which had crept into it because of corrupt practices of Brahmans. The Hindus and the Buddhist priests did not satisfy his spiritual quest, he finally decided to accept the faith of the first person, whom he would see the next morning. And on seeing Sayyed Saraj-uddin offering prayers near his place the next morning, the king after entering into a dialogue with the Sufi, became a Muslim.

15. Baharistan-i-Shahi, F. 146; Baba Nasib, Majmu'a dar Ansab Mashaikhi Kashmir, F. 106.
impressed by the personality of this Sufi saint, who embodied both human and divine love and thus he accepted Islam under the influence of this sufi saint, (Sayyed Saraj-uddin). There is little doubt that Rinchana accepted Islam at the hands of Saraj-uddin. Not only are the persian sources unanimous in regard to his association with the Sufi, but the subsequent facts of his conversion also testify to his spiritual affiliation with him. The very name Sadruddin (the leader of religion) given by the Sufi to the convert explains that the saint wanted to make him conscious about his duties as the first ruler of Kashmir. It may be stated here, that in Medieval times it was personal decision of the chiefs that usually determined the collective action of the groups, hence a considerable number of Buddhist followers of Rinchana who accompanied from Ladakh to Kashmir also embraced Islam after their chief assumed political power and his subsequent conversion to Islam. Rinchana was able to rule for a brief period of three years from 1320-1323 A.D. with the support of these new converts.

16. The patent fact about the Rinchana's conversion bears an elaborate testimony to the historic rule of the first Suwarwardi Sufi, during the formative phase of Islam in Kashmir.

17. Haider Malik, Tarikh-i-Kashmir, FF. 120-103).

18. Rawan Chandra, his brother-in-law, for instance, accepted Islam immediately after the Rinchana's conversion.

19. Kashmiri's still continue to follow certain ancient traditions of the Buddhist religion bears testimony
On the other hand, the Hindus were divided into a number of socially interdependent groups. This helped the Islamic missionaries particularly during 14th and 15th centuries to attract a good majority of different ethnic and cultural types towards Islam, which advocates a simple religious teaching, social pattern and attitude to human life. These simple principles of Islam appealed to the persons of different ethnic origins and cultural backgrounds. Thus Islam was embraced by agriculturists, artisans, boatmen, 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 Tantray. It is note-worthy that among the Kashmiri Muslims different types of family names are commonly used. One of the most widely prevalent of such names is "Bat" which without any doubt, is same as "Bhatta" and obviously bears and elaborate testimony to the fact of conversion. There are some more examples of this kind of surname such as Pandit, Koul (Sanskrit Kaula, originally to the fact, that a good number of them are descendents of Buddhist converts.


21. Ibid.
the name of a Brahman sect) Naik and Ryosh (Sanskrit Rishi, saintly learned men). The Shaiks who constitute an overwhelming majority of Kashmiri Muslims are generally considered to be from converts.

It is important to note that Kashmir was an independent kingdom between 1320-1586 A.D. During this period there was a steady stream of Muslim migration from Central Asia and Persia. Besides, the Sayyids who flocked to the valley in large numbers, there were Persian speaking immigrants, whose descendants formed an important element of Islamic society in Kashmir in the Mughal period in Kashmir (1586-1757). The dominant groups such as chaks, Magras, Rainas, Dars and Bats were dispossessed as military and administrative groups. A hierarchy of Mughal officers now began to man high posts in administration. The descendents of the Mughals may now be found among Mirzas, Begs, Mirs, Buchhas, etc. Similarly, during the Afghan rule in Kashmir 1757-1819, there

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22. Shaikh, an Arabic word, literally, means an old man or man of authority, "the term seems to be widely used in south Asia to designate Muslims descended from Hindu converts." T.N. Madan, The Muslim Communities of South Asia, Delhi, P. 109.

23. Walter Lawrence, The Valley of Kashmir, London, 1895, P. 306. There is however, all likelihood of some of the Shaikhs particularly in urban centres of Kashmir, to have descended from immigrants.
settled in the valley certain men of Afghan tribes. In the second half of the 19th century certain Muslim families from different parts of Northern India poured in Kashmir and settled here permanently. By the end of 16th century a large number of people had already accepted Islam. However, a sizable number of Brahmans was not converted to Islam. This group whose members are now-a-days popularly known as pandits has throughout the medieval period and modern periods of Kashmir history struggled to maintain its distinct identity.

From above it is obvious that the Kashmiri Muslims were not a homogeneous group but a conglomerate community, which has grown slowly as a result of inter-marriages and conversions. This has of course led to the formation of various exclusive sub-groups within the community defined in terms of geographical, racial and even caste origin. But in reality the Muslim society of Kashmir has not totally lost the homogeneity, nor has it become differentiated. The total amalgamation of the foreign settlements that has taken place during the last hundred

25. Ibid, P.129.
years or so has given an enduring unity both culturally and linguistically to Kashmiri Muslims.

It may be stated here, that the spread of Islam in the valley of Kashmir is considerably different from cultural and historical point of view. There are ample proofs which depict that the Sufis from Central Asia and Persia also played a role to the conversion of Islam in valley. But the fact remains that the "mass conversion" of Kashmir can't be attributed to their miraculous work. Though their activities led to certain individual and group conversions, but this process of conversion took a long time to nurture. In this regard the role played by Shaikh Noor-ud-Din in converting the Kashmir into the Islamic fold is appriciable. He is said to have attempted the reconciliation of Hindu-Muslim practices and actually paved the way for the gradual assimilation of commoners to the Islamic identity. He 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 atleast

26. The role attributed to Bulbul Shah, Sayyid Saraj-udin, Sayyid Ali Hamadani, Sayyid Mohammad Hamadani and a band of his followers is very well known to the students of Kashmir history.

27. M.I.Khan, Kashmir's Transition to Islam.
get the satisfaction of calling themselves members of Islamic community, and thus could get a sight of relief from the bondage of Brahmans. Shaikh Noor-ud-Din is credited with the fact that the prominent Hindu ascetics alongwith their followers came under the fold of Islam. It seems probable that caste system among the Hindu 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. The lower caste Hindus were attracted to Islam as a result of dialogue between the Hindu ascetics and Shaikh Noor-u-Din. In this connection the mention may be made that Bhum Sadhu, Tuli Raina, Ladi Raina and Hindu ascetics who entered the fold of Islam alongwith their followers. Reportedly twelve hundred Hindus under the leadership of Tuli Raina accepted Islam due to the efforts of Shaikh Noor-u-Din.

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28. Islam preaches equality of men and has no caste distinctions. This sentiment is specially reflected in the Rishinama of Char in which a conscious attempt was made to present Islam as an equalitarian religion vis-a-vis the religious ethnocentrism of the Brahmanic faith.

29. In a dialogue attributed to Noor-ud-Din and Bhum Sadhu, the Muslim saint emerged as an embodiment of human virtue, piety and compassion.

From the above it becomes clear that Shaikh played a commendable role in the propagation of Islam and enjoyed a distinguished position in the traditional Kashmiri society. He made Islam comprehensible to the Kashmiris through precept and example, which can not be over emphasised. His criticism of caste - system and Brahmanic rituals and customs contributed a great deal to the loosening of religious and social ties with their society. He was able to promote a fresh understanding of Islamic teachings in a different milieu. It would not be wrong to assume that traditional Kashmiri society was transformed from a traditionally defined, caste-ridden society to the community of prophet Mohammad (SAW). It may be stated here that after undergoing a process of Islamic acculturation, the converts saw their identity in terms of new religious community, of which they had become members consciously or unconsciously. The most significant social change that took place was the gradual development of Islam as the focus of social identity among the common folk. For the understanding of Islamic teachings the use of Kashmiri language as a religious vehicle was fostered and Islam was opened up to the common people who were not educated in classical Arabic and Persian languages and Islam was brought to the common people in a meaningful way.

31. Ibid., P.194.
32. Ibid., P.196.
It may be mentioned here that the Muslims of Kashmir who constituted 93% of the total population during 19th century, remained backward due to the oppression under the Afghans, Sikhs and Dogras. The avuncial Sikh rulers (1819-1946) succeeded the Afghans in Kashmir. The Sikhs are said to have closed the Jamia Masjid of Srinagar to public prayers and in addition several mosques including the Pather Masjid were declared to be the property of state. The heavy taxation policy was introduced and almost all sections of Muslim population including butchers, bakers, boatman, scavengers and even prostitutes were heavily taxed. Cow slaughter was declared as an offence punishable by death. The Sikh governors posted in Kashmir unleashed a reign of terror. The practice of forced labour (Begar) was


34. Major Leeche’s report (NAI).

35. Ibid, P.758, Pir Hasan Shah.

36. M.I.Khan, "Some aspects of Corvée in Kashmir", Research Bi-anual, Vol.I, No.II, Published by the Directorate of Research, Srinagar, 1976, PP.58-71. If one Muslim was killed by a Sikh, the compensation allowed to his family was two rupees and four rupees if a Hindu. Thus a Sikh Soldier was given a free hand to kill the local Muslims.
continued, even an ordinary soldier could command the Muslims to do any work for him. Thus the Kashmiri Muslims were forced to do unpaid labour for their Sikh masters.\(^37\) The system of Ijaradars to extort money from the peasants was a common practice. All these exactions resulted in the impoverishment of the Muslims, and the revenue remitted to Lahore increased from sixty-two lakhs of rupees at the beginning of the Sikh rule and to ten lakhs at the end.\(^38\) Begging became common, natural calamities further added to the miseries of the already famished people. Many villages became depopulated as a result of migration.\(^39\) Another important consequence of the Sikh rule was that the Ulema, fuzala and other respectable families of the Muslims were deprived of land-grants (Jagir) and of the hereditary allowance they had held from the time of Mughal rulers.\(^40\) The defeat of Sikhs in the first Anglo-Sikh war in 1846 at the hands of the British marked the end of the Sikh rule in Kashmir. As

\(^{37}\) Ibid.


already stated that by the treaty of Amritsar, concluded on March 16th, 1846, Kashmir was sold by the British imperialists to Raja Gulab Singh, the Dogra ruler of Jammu, for a sum of 75 lakhs of rupees. It was a deep-seated change that Muslim society of the valley underwent after this sale of Kashmir. The contours of change, however, were clear. A pattern of new economic relations emerged when the new rulers declared themselves to be the absolute owners or lords of the land. 41 Although the recognition of Dogra rulers ownership in land formed the basis of new government policy throughout the period extending from 1846 to 1887 or so; the Dogra administration worked directly to create a class of landed gentry, comprising mainly the Kashmiri Pandits and the Dogra Rajputs. Most of the Pandit officials of the new regime were from urban background and there was a tendency among them to become owners of the land. 42 It was immediately, after the death of Maharaja Gulab Singh, that the land got transferred from cultivators to the official class of the Dogra rule. 43 This official class

42. Lawrence to Nisbet, letter No.13, 1891/NAI.
of the Dogra administration squeezed and plundered the Muslim peasants. While writing about the officials, Tyndale Bisco, says that "the officials had bullied and squeezed the Mohammadan peasants for years past, and their large houses in the city with all their wealth, were standing witness to their looting powers, for the salary they received from the state was quite insignificant."\(^{44}\)

It will be in place to mention here that, the above mentioned state of affairs could not continue. Its break-down got started, when the valley was linked with outside influences, which was made possible with the opening of Jhelum valley cart road. The means of communication in Kashmir, prior to the establishment of British residency were primitive.\(^{45}\) Lawrence in his famous book "The Valley of Kashmir" says that "there were roads along which ponies and bullocks can pass in fair weather, but roads as understood in other countries do not exist."\(^{46}\) There were no wheel traffic roads; Even

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45. The river Jhelum was the main artery of commerce in Kashmir. The bulk of international commerce was carried along this natural highway but there was one great limitation on river traffic that during winter Jhelum being low was less navigable.

46. As quoted by Tyndale Bisco in his Kashmir in Sunlight and Shade, PP.64-65; Beyond the Pir Panjal, P.240.
till 1900, there was no road with the name. This type of backward and poor state of communication and transport with India hindered the development of valley in almost every field of life. It is noteworthy, that the British residency gave prominence to opening up main lines of communication with the rest of India. It was during the reign of Maharaja Ranbir Singh that the great work started in 1880 and was completed in 1890. The rail head at Rawalpindi was connected with Srinagar through the Jhelum valley cart road.

Thus in late 1890's Kashmir was like a medieval country. The old institutions of valley flourished and the ancient crafts were still the basis of its economy. And its imports and exports from city to rural areas and from rural areas to the city were carried by coolies on their backs. However, Kashmir could not remain a medieval city for even. It was two decades after 1890, that the valley saw break down of its isolation. Due to the impact of outside forces great social and cultural changes began to take place. It was opening of Jhelum valley road that helped to diminish the isolation of Kashmir from outside influences. Thus the customs and habits

47. This state of affairs was the result of a complete lack of any constructive policy as regards the development of communication, on the part of Maharaja and his successors.
of generation began to change slowly and steadily. \(^{48}\)

It is noteworthy, that the opening of Jhelum valley road was a key factor that helped Kashmir to develop and change and thus is regarded as a landmark in the history of Kashmir. As a consequence, the isolation of Kashmiri Muslims from their brethren in India began to decline. With the result their contact with outside Muslims, prominent members among them started Muslim Educational Movement in Kashmir in late 90's. Moulavi Rasool Shah is given credit for having started a school in Srinagar as a safeguard against Muslims being taken towards Christianity as Mr. Bisco had already started the school at Srinagar. Thus Muslims of Kashmir also began to receive education on western lines and became politically conscious. This helped their society in its transition from medieval to modern age, which is the key factor of Kashmir history.