12: Everyday Life

The Persian and Central Asian culture did not only inform the intellectual spectrum of Kashmir, it also influenced the minute details of everyday life. This is abundantly clear from the close affinity the dress, ornaments, diet, culinary, cooking pots, amusements and recreations, customs and traditions of Kashmir present with Iran and Central Asia. This fact is delineated in this chapter by piecing together whatever little information we have in this regard in our sources.

Dress and Ornaments

The cultural influence of Central Asia is markedly visible in the cuts and fashions of the dress and ornaments of the people of Kashmir. There is not only similarity in cuts and fashions but they also bear identical names. Pheran, which is the national dress of Kashmir, is actually the Kashmirized version of Persian pairahan. Pairahan is still used by Muslim population, especially women in Tashqand, Samarqand, Bukhara and Tajkistan. There is a particular type of Pharan worn by the upper class women of Kashmir. Its sleeves are designed in a special form known as qurabah in Kashmir. The same type of pharan is common in Central Asia, the only difference being that while in Kashmir it was prevalent mainly among the Sayyids, Ulama and the upper classes, in Central Asia it is a common fashion. Similarly, Persia and Central Asia transmitted to Kashmir chemise(qamis), kurtain (shirt), saravil (trousers), sadri (short vest), choga, qaba(long loose coat), qasaba(women’s head dress), qaraquli (leather cap), dastar (turban), kala posh (lowly cap), pa-azar (Kmr.pa’zar, leather foot wear), pataba(Kmr.potu, legging) and mozah/jarab(socks). It is interesting to note that

1 See Shamas al-Dīn, Shāh Hamadan: Hayat Aur Karnamay, p.287.
2 Ibid., p.288.
Artisan of Bukhara
(Courtesy A.H. Dani)

Kashmiri Dress

Kashmiri Dress
Rural halqaband, Kashmir

(Courtesy Jaity Sahai)
while the women’s head dress qasaba has become extinct in Kashmir, it is still being used in the villages of Samarqand and Bukhara.\(^3\)

Persia and Central Asia did not only influence the cuts and fashions of Kashmiri dress, it also sent new types of cloth namely, makhmal, itlas (Kmr. atlas), zarbaft (Kmr zarbaf)\(^4\) etc. It is also during this period that fancy silken cloth was woven which according to Srivara, “painters saw and remained dumb with wonder.\(^5\)”

Persia and Central Asia transmitted many types of ornaments like roong (nose pin) guluband (neck ornament) goshwar (ear-ring) bazuband (armlet) sarwar (an ornament used in arm) khalkhal (an ornament of legs), tomar, namah, sarwar, khalkhal, etc, to Kashmir and made a significant contribution in adding the existing stock of the women ornaments.\(^6\)

**Food and Drinks**

The culinary art of Kashmir was profoundly influenced by Persia and Central Asia following the influx of Persian and Central Asian immigrants who brought with them, professional cooks, expert in cooking special Iranian and Central Asian dishes. It may appear surprise to many of us to be told that the modern Kashmiri Wazwan, which constitutes such delicious dishes namely, kabab, rogan josh, kurma, yakhni, palav, mutangan, åb-gosht, kufta and rista (Pr. birishta) is actually a contribution of Persia and Central Asia.\(^7\) By virtue of their special tastes these dishes gained so much popularity that inspite of the protests by the orthodox brahmanas, they were adopted by even the non-Muslims, drawing them closer to appreciate the Islamic culture.\(^8\) It is

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3 Ibid.
4 Ibid., 295.
5 Srivara, p.151.
6 Tuhfat al- Ahbab, p.69.
7 Tuhfat al- Ahhab, pp.68,94,283; Tazkirat al- Arifin, f.456b.
8 Suka, p. 380.
not, therefore, wrong to say that the Persian and Central Asian Muslims won
the local population not only by preaching and teaching of Islam but also by
their culinary art. Many kinds of palavs such as zard palav, turush palav,
surukh palav and shoal palav are mentioned to have been cooked during the
period in the khanaqahs of the Sufis.\(^9\) Besides, many kinds of sweet meats
(halwa-hai-ranga-rang) and different kinds of beverages (sharbat) and jams
(marbiha) were introduced by the Persian and Central Asian immigrants.\(^10\)
The same is true of harisa — a special meat preparation which is generally
prepared during the winter and is taken as breakfast with bread. In Iran and
Central Asia cooking of harisa had a long history, not later than 9\(^{th}\) - 10\(^{th}\)
century.\(^11\) This practice continues there even today. As we find in Iran and
Central Asia a group of specialized harisa cooks called harisa puz, similarly
in Kashmir these specialists are called harisa gar.\(^12\)

Iranian and Central Asian breads namely, lawas, girda, baqirkhani,
quicha, qandi quicha and shirmal not only became common in Kashmir but
they are also known by the same names. Like Kashmiri, salt tea is common in
Tajikistan even today. It continues to be the common drink among the people
of Badakhshan, Fargana, Bukhara and Kulab.\(^13\) Kehwah is basically an Iranian
drink.\(^13a\) The kehwah- khana of Iran were very famous and were visited by
the upper classes.\(^13b\) Although in Kashmir there is no mention of kehwah-
khana, nevertheless kehwah is commonly prepared in homes. It is significant

\(^10\) Tuhfat al- Ahbab, pp.124,125,151,161,283.
\(^11\) Abu Bakr Muhammad bin Jaffar al-zashkhi, Tarikh-i- Bukhara, p.131. (quoted by Shamas
\(^12\) Shamas al-Dīn, Shah Hamdan: Hayat Aur Karnamey, p.292.
\(^13\) Ibid., p. 293.
\(^13a\) Ibid. 310
\(^13b\) Ibid.
to mention that there is no substitute word for *kehwa* in Kashmir. It is known by its very Persian term- *kahwa*.  

**Utensils**

Persia and Central Asia did not only contribute to the richness of the stock of Kashmiri usions, but it enriched the kitchen ware of Kashmir too. Utensils like *deg, degcha, qashaq, aftaba, tasht, patila, majma, sarposh* and *kanda krari* pots were brought here by the Persian and Central Asian immigrants. *Samavar* (which is originally a Russian word *somavar*) was most probably introduced by the Muslims.

**Music**

One major sphere where the influence of Persia and Central Asia has been of significant importance is the domain of music- both vocal and instrumental. Barring Sultan Sikandar all the Sultans were great lovers of music on account of which music received great patronage, attracting a large number of great musicians from different parts of Persia and Central Asia. Srivara, the court chronicler and court musician of Sultan Zain al-ʿAbidin, refers to some renowned musicians namely, Mulla Zada, Mulla Jamal, Mulla ʿUdi, Jaʿfar, Abdul Qadir and Shuja among the greatest musicians of Sultan Zain al-ʿAbidin’s court.  

About Shuja Srivara says, “Sujya, the pupil of Abdul Qadir was possessed of all accomplishments and he pleased the heart of the king by his proficiency in music.”  

About Mulla ʿUdi Srivara says that with his extraordinary lute playing he earned inestimable rewards and favours from the Sultan. Mulla Jamal, delighted the Sultan by his bewitching sweetness and finest musical

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14 Ibid., p.310.  
15 Ibid., 289.  
16 Srivara, pp.133,135-36; *Ain-i-Akbari*, ii (text), p.375.  
18 Srivara, p.135.
rendrings of Persian lyrics as much “as Narada pleases Indra”\textsuperscript{19} Similarly, the courts of other Sultans especially those of Sultan Haidar Shah, Sultan Hasan Shah, Mirza Haidar Dughlat and Sultan Yusuf Shah Chak were thronged by Persian and Central Asian musicians.\textsuperscript{20}

These Persian and Central Asian musicians brought with them new meters and modes (\textit{maqamat}) plus musical instruments. All in all therefore, a new music came into existence which is a synthesis of Persian, Central Asian and Indian musical elements. This new music is known as \textit{Sufiana Kalam} which assumed the position of classical music of Kashmir. That during the period of Sultan Zain al-‘Abidin this new music was all in vogue, sung in the courts of the Sultans, and both Muslims and Hindus achieved proficiency in it, it is significant to quote Śrivara:

“\textit{I, who am versed in all kinds of songs and who hold a lute made of gourd, displayed my skill in exhibiting a part of a new song of infinite variety; and Japharana (Ja’far) and others sang with me the difficult Turushka meters before the king. We sang songs in twelve different modes in the court and as the sound arose from the string, the voice is accorded with it harmoniously as if in joy.\textsuperscript{21}}” (emphasis mine)

It may be mentioned that the Iranian music is based on twelve modes namely, \textit{rast, isfahan, ‘iraq, kochak, bazrag, hajaz, buslayk, ‘ishaq, husaini, zangula, nawa, rahu’i}.\textsuperscript{22} Obviously it is these twelve \textit{maqamat} to which Śrivara refers. These twelve \textit{maqamat} are sub-divided into twenty-four categories. The present Kashmiri \textit{Sufiana Kalam} possesses most of these \textit{maqamat} such as \textit{isfahani, chargah, ‘iraq, nowroz’i saba, hussani, ‘ashiran, panjgah, rast-i farsi,}

\textsuperscript{19} Šrivara, p. 135.
\textsuperscript{20} Šrivara, pp. 136,188,197, 230-31; \textit{Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri} (text) p.305; Suka, p.393.
\textsuperscript{21} Šrivara, pp. 135-36.
sehgah etc. However, of the fifty-four maqamat of Kashmiri Sufiana Kalam some are Indian ragas such as bhairavin, lalit and kalyan. 

Sufiana Kalam is basically a spiritual music sung in chorus and in long form. In this music Persian ghazals and ruba‘is of such Persian Sufi poets as Mulana Jami, Hafiz Sherazi, Shaikh Sa‘di etc were sung. Since this type of music cultivated spiritual elements and Islamic values such as control on nafs, love of God and the Prophet, it received the patronage of the Sufis.

Besides the new musical modes, Persia and Central Asia also contributed to augmenting the treasure of the musical instruments of Kashmir. Of the instruments borrowed from Persia and Central Asia mention may be made of rabāb, seh tār, du tār, santūr, sāz, nāy, surnay, chang, tambak, daf, dulah, tumbur and mizmār.

This hurried survey of the impact of Persian and Central Asian culture on the various aspects of everyday life of Kashmir would be incomplete if we do not make a mention of the impact of the popular Iranian festival namely Nau-ruz (New year feast) on Kashmir. Nau-ruz, as we know, was the deeply embedded Zoroastrian festival which persisted into Muslim times. The celebration of Nau-ruz was so profoundly rooted in the psycho-cultural framework of the Iranians that it had to be ultimately appropriated into the Muslim culture and became a part of the Shi‘i belief system with the mass conversion of Iran into Shi‘ism. From the Achaemenid period the date of Nau-ruz was advanced to the Spring equinox, 21 March. Being a popular festival

23 Ibid.
26 Ibid
29 The Legacy of Persia, op.cit., p.65.
of the Iranians, it spread in the whole of Central Asia along with the spread of Islam wherefrom it transmitted to Kashmir as a part of Islamic culture. It suited the Valley well not only because the date of the festival coincided with the advent of spring season in Kashmir, but more so because the spring festival was being already celebrated in Kashmir in the name of Nau-rah.  

Like many other rituals and practices, Nau-ruz, perhaps found its way into Kashmir long back with the establishment of intimate contacts with Iranian culture, especially from Achaemind period onwards; and after observing its wide popularity the festival was appropriated by Brahmanism in response to the demands of congruence and compatibility. The Nau-ruz was celebrated in Kashmir with great gaiety. It was called Nau-ruz as well as Nau-ruz-i bahar. 

In the Saskrit chronicles it was called chitra festival. It was also known by its Kashmirized version as Saunth. It was observed with a great deal of rejoicing, musical performances, dance, drama and fireworks. On this day the Sultans organized Jashans (festivities) and musha‘rahbas’ (meetings of poets) in their palaces. The renowned poets thronged the darbar of the Sultans to present their latest compositions for which they were graciously rewarded. The people in general put on new clothes and cooked special dishes with the belief that “since this is first day of the new year; therefore, whosoever may demonstrate happiness today, by putting on new clothes and enjoying delicious dishes, he shall enjoy in the same vein through the rest of

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30 Tadhkirat al ‘Arifin, f.152a.
31 For the intimate contacts with Iran till the beginning of the Christian Era, see Aman Ashraf Wani, Exogenous Influences in Kashmir From the Neolithic Period to the Beginning of the Christian Era, Unpublished, M.Phil dissertation.
32 Tazkirat al ‘Arifin, 152a; Baba Nasib, Nur Nama, f.349b.
33 Srivara, p.132.
34 Suka, p.393; Nur Nama, f.349b.
35 Ibid; also see Tuhfat al Ahbab, p.181.
36 Tazkirat al ‘Arifin, f.152a.
37 Ibid.

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the year.\textsuperscript{38} It was considered a very auspicious day; and therefore the people preferred to initiate their plans and start different programmes from this day with the belief that they would come to fruition.\textsuperscript{39}