CHAPTER - II

HISTORY OF KASHMIRI PANDIT RELIGION : AN OVERVIEW
INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we will provide outline of the changes that have taken place in the religious life of Kashmiri Pandits from the earliest times and trace their historical links with the prevalent situation. Because of the long period covered and the paucity of surviving information the account will inevitably be tentative and simplified. However the purpose is more to highlight the broad features of each period, rather than to fill in the finer historical details.

SECTION - I

THE HINDU AND BUDDHIST RULE (300 B.C. - 1339 AD)

The origin of Kashmir and its earlier history is shrouded in mythology. References to it are found in the earliest extant work of Sanskrit literature the Nilamatapurana, which gives a legendary account of the creation of the valley of Kashmir, by the sage Kashyapa.

1. According to Buhler (1877) the Nilamatapurana was written in the 6th and 7th century AD

2. According to the legend, Kashmir valley was once a vast lake, Satisar in which Goddess Parvati sailed in a pleasure boat. In her honour the lake was known as Satisar, the tarn of a chaste woman. But there dwelt in the lake a cruel demon Jaldeo who destroyed all life in the lake and rendered the country waste. When the inhabitants of the valley, the Nagas appealed to Lord Vishnu for help, he sent Kashyapa to help the Nagas get
It lists the mode of worship and rites to be performed by the dwellers of the valley. According to the *Nilamatapurana*, the original inhabitants of Kashmir were the Nagas, who were half snakes and half human. Later, in 3076 B.C. \(^3\), one branch of the Aryans came to Kashmir who were allowed to live in the valley by the Naga chief Neela Naga, on the condition that the Aryans accept the social and religious practices of the Nagas. These Nagas worshipped snakes, a primitive form of Shaivism. *Nilamatapurana* says that Shaivism was prevalent in the valley before the advent of the Aryans. Nagas influence on the religious life of the Aryan settlers became a part of the tradition and even today many rituals and festivals observed in Kashmir, belong to the Nagas. Throughout the history, the people of Kashmir observed these festivals and visited the sacred sites of water springs (called nagas) on pilgrimage although there is no separate sect of these followers.

2. rid of Jaldeo. For thousand years Kashyapa undertook religious exercises and then braced himself up for a struggle with Jaldeo, but the demon eluded him and hid under the water. Then Vishnu came for Kashyapa's help and struck the mountains at Baramulah and the water gushed out. As Jaldeo entrenched himself in low ground, Goddess Parvati, took form of myna and dropped a pebble on him which grew as large as a mountain and crushed Jaldeo to death. The mountain is now known as Hari Parbat, Mountain of Goddess Sharika or Parvati. The valley came to be known as Kashafmar, home of Kashyapa and is now corrupted to Kashmir.

3. The Pandits follow the Saptrishi calendar which begins from 3076 B.C. and is believed to have come into being when Aryans came to Kashmir.
Kashmir remained under the yoke of Hindu and Buddhist rulers till the 14th century AD. Under these Kings the various sects of Hinduism (Shaivism, Vishnuism and Tantracism) and various forms of Buddhism (Mahayana and Vajrayana) got impetus to rise and flourish together and peacefully. The Kings gave patronage by donating temples in honour of particular deity or by building stupas (Buddhist monuments generally of a dome like form) as well as by granting agraharas (land revenue) for the maintenance of the Buddhist viharas (monasteries) and the mathas (Shaiva learning centres). Donation of temples and stupas were also made by the Queens and the ministers of the King.

There are at least forty-five Kings, beginning with Gonada I, who ruled over Kashmir before the 3rd century B.C., but all of them were weak and insignificant to such an extent that writing in 1895 AD, Lawrence says, "Gonada's name is no longer remembered in the valley". (Lawrence 1992, 185.) Of the early Kings, Emperor Ashoka extended his control over Kashmir in 273 B.C. and introduced Buddhism to the people of the valley. Ashoka was succeeded by his son Jaluka, who was a Shaiva by faith. The Kushans who ruled over Kashmir in 2nd century AD. were Buddhist by faith. In the 7th century AD Kashmir came under the rule of Karakotas followed by the Utpala rule in the 9th century AD. In the 10th century AD Kashmir came under the rule of the Guptas (after a brief sojourn of ten years when the Brahmins ruled
over Kashmir), followed by the two dynasties of the Loharas who ruled in the 11th and 12th century AD.

All the kings from the Karakotas onwards were followers of Vishnu under whom Vaishnavism flourished in Kashmir, though they gave enough scope to the other faiths, to develop. Buddhism gained popularity in the 3rd century B.C. and remained popular (co-existing peacefully with Hinduism) till the 8th century AD, when it seems to have merged with the rising Vaishnava faith and the Tantra practices. Shaivism, which was prevalent in Kashmir since pre-Aryan times, had continued to flourish, till the 8th century AD, when it became widespread by preaching Idealistic Monism known as Trika Shastra, from the Shaiva mathas, the important seats of learning during this period.

The introduction of Buddhism to Kashmir by the Indian Emperor Ashok marks the watershed in the religious history of Kashmir. With the advent of Buddhism, Kashmir became a part of the wider Buddhist world and this enabled a steady exchange of ideas and influences between Kashmir and the rest of Buddhist India. Buddhism entered its golden age in the time of Kushan rulers in the 2nd Century AD, who built a large number of viharas and stupas in Kashmir. Under King Kanishka the third synod was held in Kashmir where Mahayana form of Buddhism came into being. In a short time, Kashmir became one of the major centre of Buddhist learning and
several scholars came to stay and study here. According to the Chinese evidence these include Asvaghosha, Vasuvadha, Vasumitra and Nagarjuna.

Hieun Tsang came to Kashmir in 631 AD during the rule of the founder of the Karakota dynasty, Durlabha Vardhana. He saw at the time of his stay in Kashmir, one hundred Buddhist monasteries with five thousand Buddhist priests. On-Kong who came about a century later during the rule of Lalitaditya (724 - 761 AD) saw as many as three hundred monasteries. Although Lalitaditya is famous in history for the Sun Temple which he built at Martand (modern Mattan), he gave immense boost to the various faiths prevalent in those days. As far as Buddhism is concerned Lalitaditya built a number of Buddhist viharas. On a single vihara - the Raja Vihara he is believed to have spent about eighty four thousand tolas of gold. He also got made eighty four thousand Buddha images of bronze alloy which were installed in an equal number of beautiful stupas which he specially built for the purpose.

The Karakotas being followers of Vishnu gave impetus to Vaishnavism to gain prominence for the first time in Kashmir, during their rule. Among the Vaishnava temples,

4. The first reference to Vishnu appears in Rajatarangini where it is said that the image of Vishnu was consecrated by Parvararsena II who ruled in the beginning of 7th century AD.
that were built by them, the temple of Keshwa Vishnu was made by their famous King Lalitaditya in the early years of his rule. He also founded the town of Parihaspura in honour of Vishnu and installed the glorious silver image of Vishnu Parihasakesva. At Huskapura he established the statue of Muktasvamin and consecrated the Mukta Kesha statue which was made of gold. Vaishnavism received further impetus under the reign of Avantivarman (855 - 883 AD) who built the Vishnu temple of Avantisvamin while his three ministers consecrated the temples of Suravarmasva, Prabhakarasvanm and Hrikesa made in the honour of Lord Vishnu. During this period, it was the worship of Vaikunth or Chaturvyuh form (i.e., image of Vishnu with multi arms and multi heads) of Vishnu which became popular. The popularity of Vaishnavism began to rise further under the Guptas in the 9th century AD, when the different forms (avtaras) of Vishnu came to be worshipped. Of all the incarnations, Varaha (boar), Krishna (cowherd boy) and Narasimha (Man Lion) were made popular.

During this time, the worship of Mother Goddess or Shakti also rose, primarily in the form of Tantric worship. Earlier during the rule of King Jaluka there are references of the creation of Matrichakras which are presumably objects of Tantric worship. (Stein, 1900 I, 122). Influences of tantricism were seen in Buddhism too, as in the 10th century AD. Queen Didda dedicated temples to Buddhist goddesses Tara
and Brikuti. (Kapur 1992, 55) Buddhism, however began to suffer a decline at the mass level, during the rule of Utpalas in the 9th century AD, although the Kings did not altogether cease to patronise Buddhism. We have instances till the 11th century AD of land donations to the old viharas and also building new ones by the various Queens and Kings. Kalhana gives several examples of the individuals who donated with equal zeal to the Buddhist Viharas and stupas as well as to the Hindu shrines.

This harmonious relationship characterised both the interaction between the two religions as much as that between their respective followers. As far as the laity were concerned, the two religions had amalgamated to a great extent. "Buddha had .... been received into the orthodox pantheon as one of Vishnu's avatars and Buddhist had not failed to reap the practical benefits of such recognition. Hence we find that the Nilamatapurana, the canonical authority for brahminical cult in Kashmir, directly prescribes the celebration of Buddha's birthday as a great festival. His statue is then to be worshipped according to the rites of the Sakayas or Buddhist ascetics: the latter themselves are to be honoured with presents and the chaityas to be decorated". (Stein 1900 I, 8-9). As Hindu concepts gradually began to creep into Buddhism, it was merged into the various sects of Hinduism. On the disappearance of Buddhism, Kapur says, "A recent study shows that it was the
Tantric form of Buddhism which became popular in Kashmir. As the adherents of brahminism also indulged in Tantric practices, the followers of the two faiths did not develop animosity towards each other and ultimately the older religion absorbed the new one" (Kapur 1992, 117).

SHAIVISM IN KASHMIR

Shaivism was popular in Kashmir since pre-historic times. Even when Buddhism was at its peak, Shiva temples remained prominent places of worship. Emperor Ashok is said to have repaired the pre-Mauryan old Shiva temple of Vijayesvara as well as build two new temples of Shiva Asokeswara. The Emperor is believed to have worshipped the sacred shrine of Bhutesha. Ashoka’s son Jaluka, who was a Shaiva by faith, would daily worship the two shrines at Vijeswara and Jyestha, between which there was a distance of thirty miles. Many Kings who followed Jaluka were also the worshipers of Shiva. King Avantivarman founded at Avantipura, the temple of Avantisvara in the honour of Lord Shiva and also fitted pedestals with silver conduits at the Shiva shrine of Tripuveswara, Bhutesh and Vijayesa. Prince Suravarman built a matha and Avantivarman’s minister, Sura, built the Suravara Shiva temple and a Sura Matha for the practice of Shiva Yoga by ascetics at the village Ishber, on the eastern banks of Dal lake. Sura’s wife, children and nephews who were all devotees of Shiva also founded many mathas and temples in honour of the Shiva and consecrated a
Plate I

Lord Amriteshwar Bhairav
large number of lingas. Great Shaiva masters who lived in Kashmir developed from time to time various systems or schools of Shaiva philosophy. The karma system of Shaivism was started by Erakanath during the 3rd century AD, to develop the strength of awareness that transcends time, space and form. In the 4th century AD, Sumatinatha taught the Kula system of Shaivism in which the method to discard individual energy to enter into blissful energy of the totality was prescribed. Although Buddhism and Vaishnavism were prevalent in Kashmir during these times, Shaivism always remained very popular with the masses. Lawrence says that Hieun Tsang found that although Buddhism had a strong foothold in Kashmir, the mass of the population was addicted to the Devas (Shiva). "There is a very good historical reason to believe that the Kashmirians were from the earliest period accessible to us chiefly Saivas, what their Brahmin caste remained to this day". (Lawrence 1992, 183-184, fn.)

King Lalitaditya is said to have invited a learned Shaiva teacher, Attribupta of Doab region, to come and live in Kashmir. Attribupta and his family was given the old royal palace to live in, near the main city. Here Attribupta began to spread his knowledge through his sons and disciples. During the same century, another Shaiva teacher Sangamaditya, came to settle in Kashmir, from the Trans-Himalyan area. Sangamaditya was a teacher in the Shaiva
philosophy of Tryambaka school which propagates Monism. Later this philosophy became the most valuable contribution of Kashmir to Indian culture. Sangamaditya passed on the knowledge to his son Varsaditya, grandson Arunaditya, and great grandson Ananda and so on.

Through these great masters, the divine scriptures of this school - the Rudrayamala Tantra, Malini Vijaya Tantra, Netra Tantra etc., were taught to the scholars, and the guru-shishya tradition established in Kashmir. These centres for Shaiva learning, were called the mathas, which soon developed into important institutions for learning.

"Shaivite philosophy necessitated the study of all religious systems that had preceded Shaivism and hence the student had to be familiar with Buddhist as well as other Hindu philosophies. Subjects such as, mathematics, astrology, astronomy, medicine, surgery, politics, history, grammar, poetics and drama were included in the curriculum. These mathas or institutions of higher learning were maintained by grants given by the King, the nobles and other individuals.

5. Divine scriptures belonging to the school of Kashmir Shaivism and the great exponents of this philosophy believe that Shaivism existed in the hoary past and that it was only being reoriented by them in the Kali age. There were three main schools which restarted during this age based on monistic, dualistic and monistic-cum-dualistic points of view respectively. These were started by Tryambaka, Amardaka and Srinatha, all of whom were siddhas (perfect beings) Nothing is known about the two schools of Amardaka and Srinatha, but teachers of these three schools have been referred to by authors of the Tryambaka School which is known as the school of Kashmir Shaivism in these days.
Lands and villages were often endowed to these institutions for their maintenance and it was not unusual for rich families to patronise men of letters, build hostels for students and donate to libraries. But it was above all the role played by the state that helped further the cause of education. (Wazir 1983, 39-40). It is important to note here that rise of these mathas and the massive land grants for their maintenance was due to the generation of an agricultural surplus as a result of irrigation works in the valley, which led to prosperity during the 8th to 11th century AD. According to Kosambi this was the period of the development of feudalism in Kashmir, whose short-term benefits were taken by the Brahmins, as new temples were built, lands were granted to Brahmins (agraharas), Kings and nobles patronised learned men and poets (Kosambi, 1956-57). Their expansion lasted for a couple of centuries only. During this period, we see that Brahmins became very powerful. Kalhana gives many instances where certain sections of Brahmins would hold hunger strikes against the King and make him agree to their demands. In one instance, the Brahmins of Tulmula, brought King Jayapida to death in 782 AD. (Lawrence 1992, 188).

Meanwhile, during the 9th century AD, the philosophy of Kashmir Shaivism received further impetus when two great Shaiva masters added two more systems to the thought.
Somananda, the fourth descendant of Sangamaditya, churned out, as if it were the ocean of scriptures, and extracted from it the principles of the monistic Shaiva philosophy which he expressed in a logic style in *Shiv Drishti*. This was the beginning of the *Pratyabhijna* system of Shaivism. Another Shaiva saint - scholar, Vasugupta, who too lived in Kashmir during the 9th century AD had a divine revelation in which he discovered the sacred verses from Lord Shiva. These he taught to his disciples as *Shiv Sutras*. One of his brilliant students, Bhatta Kallata composed these teachings as *Spanda Karika*, which explained the principles of the *Spanda* system of Shaivism.

These philosophical treatises were further developed in the subsequent century by Shaiva scholars like Utpala Deva, Mokul Raj, Indu Raj and Rama Kant, who wrote extensive commentaries on the subject. The philosophy reached the climax under the scholarship of saint Abhinav Gupta, who lived in Kashmir, during the end of 10th and the beginning of 11th century AD. To him goes the credit of giving the proper shape to the Shaiva philosophy spread in different works. He wrote commentaries on the theoretical works of *Karma, Kula, Spanda* and *Pratibhigyan* systems of Shaivism and compiled them in an orderly fashion in his monumental work, *Tantralok* of which he wrote fourteen volumes. *Tantralok* throws sufficient light on the practical Yoga as well as the fundamental tenets of monistic Shaiva philosophy and
expands the whole system of Kashmir Shaivism, popularly called the Trika Shastra.

Abhinavagupta lived in a matha at Gupta Ganga near the present day Srinagar city. According to the description of Krishna Yojaman Gornath, a traveler from Madurai, who visited Kashmir in 11th century AD., Abhinav Gupta would sit under a Shamiana, a tent-like structure, with a large gathering of disciples - both men and women who would listen to his lectures and take down notes of whatever he spoke (Shastri 1976-1977, 54).

Shaivism developed in Kashmir at the time when most of India was experiencing a decline in creative activity. Wazir says that as the Vedas which were canonized in 600 B.C., were held to be of divine authorship, all the subsequent intellectual contributions had to be in conformity with these earlier works. This did not leave much room for original intellectual activity in those subjects on which opinions were expressed in the sacred texts, and this gradually led to the decline of creative thinking in India.

6. A concrete example has been given by Wazir to illustrate this point. In the puranas eclipses were explained by the story about the planets Rahu and Ketu attacking and temporarily overpowering the Sun and the Moon. Hindu astronomers like Aryabhatta, Brahmagupta and Varahamitra knew the true cause of eclipses, but were powerless to contradict the mythological versions. Aryabhatta was perhaps the only one to stand by his intellectual convictions, but even he did not dare to attack the popular version openly. (Wazir 1983, 38. fn.)
(Wazir 1983, 38). As Kashmir Shaivism did not recognise the Vedas as the final authority, its influence freed the Kashmiri intellectuals from an uncritical acceptance of past works and provided the stimulus for fresh enquiry. This coupled with another important factor: that unlike other Vedic systems Shaivism does not believe in any caste restrictions, it facilitated entry into the field of learning and education and thus made it more broad based. "Shaivism is meant for all in whom desire for knowledge and liberation has arisen ... Anyone with a firm determination can follow the teachings". (Pandey 1935, 171). Education was open to all during this period. The story of Suyya, a candala (outcast) who rose to become a famous engineer in the 9th century AD, illustrates this point. Similarly, there is enough evidence to indicate that learning and literacy was widespread among women as well. Bilhana the famous Kashmiri

7. For similar reasons, Kashmir was the first place in India, where Vedas were committed to writing. Since, Mahabharat condemns a man to hell for the sin of writing, the oral tradition continued elsewhere.

8. Kalhana writes, "Once a candala woman Suyya, by name, found when sweeping up a dust heap on the road, a fresh earthen vessel fitted with a cover. Raising the cover, she saw lying a babe which had eyes like lotus and was sucking its fingers. 'Some unfortunate mother must have exposed this lovely (boy)'. Thus, she thought in her mind and then from tenderness her breast gave milk...... Taking the name of Suyya, he grew into an intelligent (youth) and having learned his letters became a teacher of small boys in the house of some householder". (Stein 1900, I, V: 196).
poet writing in the 11th century in praise of Pravarpura, the ancient capital of Kashmir, "extols women for their beauty, for their learning which allows them to speak Sanskrit and Prakrit like their native tongue and for their .. cleverness in acting". (Buhler 1875, 6) Krishna Yojaman Gornath, mentions that Abhinav Gupta has two women disciples, Madrika and Kayurika who would be with him in all the intellectual gatherings that he held. (Shastri 1976-1977, 55).

From the late 11th century AD, the political situation in Kashmir began to be marked by internal dissensions as a result of which "warring princes, busy with petty political and economic feuds, led to the degeneration of society and its institutions. (Kaul 1951, 30). As already noted, with the increase in agricultural surplus, feudalism began in the 9th century AD. This resulted in the formation of a feudal class - Damaras, who rose for a share in the surplus. By the 11th century, the Damaras had acquired enough wealth to be independent of the King's authority. They owned villages, lived in fortified castles, maintained large armies and were in constant conflict with the central authority as well as with each other. In order to survive the King had to either subdue the Damaras or form an alliance with them. The Damaras also clashed with the Brahmins, who had initially been the important beneficiaries of the feudalism. At the
centre, the tension between the Damaras and the Brahmin must have been mediated with varying degrees of success by the King, but no such protection was available to the Brahmins at the periphery. (Wazir 1984, 46). Kalhana's anecdote in the Rajatarangini about the fierce Dhanava illustrates the arbitrary power that the Damaras could wield. "On one occasion when the King came to worship Bhuteswara (Shiva) he noticed the temple priest had placed on the base of the god's (image), as an offering, a wild growing vegetable of bitter taste ... when thereupon the King asked the local (priests) the reason for such an offering, they threw themselves on the ground and spoke with hands folded. "In the Lahara district, 0 King, there lives a powerful Damara, Dhanva by name ... This (Damara), whose power is unascertained, has taken away the villages (belonging to the shrine) and thus we (can) offer to Bhutesh only this oblation". (Stein 1900, I, V : 193).

Despite the fact that there was only one seat of royal power, a succession of weak rulers after the Loharas left the central authority, after 11th century AD, in control only of the capital and the areas in the immediate vicinity which were occupied by royal troops.

The rest of the area was in the hands of Damaras who were like Kings and the King's authority held no sway there. To become rivals to the King's power, maintaining large armies became imperative. In such a situation, the
agricultural surplus went into maintaining large armies rather than patronising learning in their areas. Similarly, the Kings were never rich enough to afford the upkeep of armies, needed to curb the power of the Damaras. We have example in the Rajatarangini of Kings who sacked temples and broke images in order to finance their struggle against the local chief. "King Samkaravarman (883-902 AD) plundered straight away sixty four temples", while King Harsha (1089-1101 AD) "plundered from all temples the wonderful treasures which former King had bestowed there". (Kapur 1992 ; 78, 81).

These centuries saw the learning activities as well as religious creativity withdrawn. Towards the end of 13th century, Shaivist learning in the Mathas had come to be restricted to a small group, who had either the means or leisure for it and was shrunk more towards the centre. The tradition did not however wipe off totally as we have scholars like Ksemraja, Bhaskara, Yogaraja and Jairath whose commentaries on the Shaiva philosophy and practice kept the literary tradition of Kashmir Shaivism alive.

SECTION - II

THE MUSLIM RULE (1320 AD - 1819 AD)

From 1320 to 1819 AD., the political reign passed into the hands of Muslim rulers. Muslim rule was imposed on the valley not as a result of foreign invasion but by way of an
internal power struggle. The rise of Lohara dynasty to power in the first half of the 11th century A.D., marked the end of Hindu rule in Kashmir. For the most part the Lohara Kings were weak and degenerate and the valley was in a state of turmoil. There was dissension between the Damaras and the central authority and the constant feuding and intrigue had made the political situation very insecure. Trade had come to a standstill and agriculture was declining. The masses were oppressed by the weight of harsh taxes and by the system of begar or forced labour. Sahadev, the last king of the Lohara dynasty was weak and unpopular. It was during his reign that Kashmir was invaded by Mongol horsemen headed by Dulcha. The king fled, leaving the people an easy prey to the invaders. Dulcha and his men stayed in the valley for eight months during which they plundered and looted, consumed what gain they could and burnt the rest. Jonaraja describes the condition in which the people found themselves. "When Dulcha left the place, these people of Kashmir who had escaped capture, issued out of their strongholds, as mice do out of their holes. When the violence caused by the Rakshasa Dulcha ceased, the son found not his father nor the father his son, nor did brother meet his brother. Kashmir became almost like a region before the creation, a vast field with men without food and full of grass. (Dutt 1898, 152-55) Dulcha left the valley in a state of chaos and without anyone at the helm of affairs. It was
at this time that Rinchin, a Ladakhi prince who had taken refuge in Kashmir and had acquired considerable influence and power took over the throne. Rinchin’s attempts to embrace Hinduism were thwarted by the Brahmins and this prompted him to turn to Islam and become a disciple of Sufi Saint Sayyid Bulbulshah.

After Rinchin’s death the throne went into the hands of Hindu rulers again for a period of sixteen years until Shah Mir, a mercenary who had been given shelter by Sahadeva seized the throne with the help of local chiefs. Shah Mir ascended the throne in 1339 A.D. under the title of Sultan Shasmuddin, thus establishing Muslim rule firmly in the valley. The Muslim rule in the valley can be divided into three periods. From 1339 to 1586 AD., Kashmir was ruled by the Sultanate dynasty founded by Shah Mir. The Sultans of this dynasty tried to restore law and order, promote agriculture and trade and spare the peasant of the burden of heavy taxation. However the later Sultans were involved in a bloody civil war as a result of which the Mughals were successful in adding Kashmir to their vast empire in 1586. With the coming of the Mughals into power, Kashmir for the first time in its history ceased to be an independent territory and was run by governors appointed by the central Mughal authority. The Mughals ruled over Kashmir for forty six years, in which fifty seven governors and deputy governors came to administer Kashmir. During this time,
Kashmir had more than its share of natural disasters in the shape of floods, famines, fires, plagues and earthquakes. Eventually the decay that set into the Mughal empire at Delhi, after the death of Aurangzeb, had its consequences on the valley. The Afghans invaded Kashmir and took over its administration from 1753 till 1820 A.D. The Afghan rule proved to be most extortionist that Kashmir had ever witnessed especially for the Brahmins and the Shias who were tortured and oppressed by the cruel Afghans.

Islam was introduced to the valley in the beginning of the 14th century AD., by the efforts of Sufi Saints like Bulbul Shah of Suhrwadi Sect and Sayyid Ali Hamdani of Naqshbandi Sect. Bulbul Shah came to Kashmir during the rule of the Hindu king Sahadev (1286 to 1320 AD). He appears to have deeply impressed the people by his personal example, his method of preaching and persuasion, at a time when people were passing through a period of political instability, heavy taxation and burdens of feudalism. Above all, he was responsible for initiating the new ruler, Rinchin, into the fold of Islam and thus elevate it to the status of state religion. (Bamzai 1994 II, 535-536) Although the Sultan and the masses embraced a new religion, Islam, in the beginning these new converts could not make a complete break with the past, continuing to follow earlier religious practices. The Sultans for instance, held on to their faith in the efficacy of hawan or fire ceremonies of the Brahmins,
allowing them to officiate at several functions. These Muslim converts continued to have reverence for their old places of worship and pilgrimage. In Alaudinpura, for instance, there was a temple which was visited every morning both by the Sultan and his Muslim subjects. Hindu festivals such as Gana Chakra, Vyath truwah and Sri Panchami continued to be celebrated by them. (Bamzai 1994 II, 538) Apart from the fact that some people had accepted a new religion, Islam, there was nothing that distinguished them in dress, manners and customs from their compatriots.

As the Muslim Sultans established themselves as rulers in Kashmir, Islam began to consolidate itself as a distinct religion. Through the efforts of Sayyid Ali Hamdani, who visited Kashmir thrice in the years 1372, 1379 and 1387, along with seven hundred Sayyid followers, thirty seven thousand people were converted to Islam. The Sultan and his subjects were asked to adopt practices in contravention with the Islamic teachings.

The process of voluntary conversion underwent a drastic change when Sultan Sikinder came to power from 1389 to 1413 AD. Known in the history as Butshikan or an iconoclast, the Sultan was fired with religious zeal and resolved to run the state on purely Islamic law, propagating the faith by force. With the active assistance of his prime minister, who was himself a recent convent to Islam, Sikinder let loose a reign of terror on the Brahmins of
Kashmir. Sikinder gave three options to them - conversion, death or exile. Many Brahmins converted to Islam under the threat of sword, thousands were put to death and some succeeded in escaping to the neighbouring states. All the artifacts of Hindu religion and culture were systematically destroyed. Lawrence says, "For one year a large establishment was maintained for the demolition of the grand Martand temples. The massive masonry resisted all efforts and finally fire was applied and the noble buildings were cruelly defaced". (Lawrence 1992, 192). Sultan Sikinder wanted to root out Hinduism from the valley. He subjected the Brahmins to Jazia and forbade the use of tyok, the sacred mark put on the forehead by them. According to the popular tradition only eleven families of Brahmins survived this holocaust. It is believed that everyday seven maunds of sacred thread of the murdered Brahmins was burnt by Sultan's chief minister. All the sacred books of the Hindus were thrown into the Dal Lake during this reign of terror unleashed by Sultan Sikinder. During his reign, a large number of Islamic scholars came to Kashmir from Persia and Central Asia. Through them the influence of Islam spread further and from this period the predominance of Muslims in the population of the valley began.

It was in the reign of Sultan Zain ul abdin (1420 - 1470 AD) that peace returned into the lives of handful of the Brahmins who were surviving in the valley. It is said
that the Sultan turned benevolent towards the Brahmins after he was cured of a dreadful disease by a Brahmin physician Shriya Bhat. On being totally cured, the Sultan offered Shriya Bhat a lot of wealth, which the latter refused to accept. Instead Shriya Bhat asked for a favour from the Sultan, to show no discrimination against the Brahmins. The Sultan removed all the restrictions against the Brahmins and gave orders to treat them with kindness. The Sultan invited all these Brahmins, who had left the valley during the rule of Sultan Sikinder, to return to the valley. He also allowed rebuilding of the demolished temples and he himself got a few of them reconstructed. The Sultan removed the discriminating tax, jazia, which was imposed on the Brahmins, killing of fishes in the springs (nagas) considered sacred by the Hindus, too, was prohibited by Zain-ul-abdin. He encouraged the Brahmins to celebrate their festivals and himself participated in some of these.

The Sultan also got the holy texts, which had previously been destroyed, re-written and translated into Persian. Persian was made the new court language replacing Sanskrit. Moreover the Sultan encouraged the Brahmins to study the new court language, Persian, and take up service in the various departments of the state. This had far reaching consequences on the religious and cultural life of the Brahmins. As the Sultan encouraged the Brahmins to take up employment with the state, it became compulsory for them
to learn Persian, thereby neglecting their religious language, Sanskrit. As a result, some of the members among them were encouraged to study Sanskrit and perform the traditional functions of priesthood. Those who studied Persian and entered the official life came to be known as karkuns while those who learnt Sanskrit and were involved in religious functions were called the bachabhattas or gors. To begin with there were no differences between the two groups; they observed the same customs and rites and there were no restrictions on commensuality. The division was merely to facilitate smooth functioning of social and religious life of the Brahmins. It was decided that a person should make his daughter's son his bachabhatta, so that the latter could administer the religious needs of his maternal grandfather's family. However with the passage of time, these groups emerged as different since status differences began to appear and restrictions were placed on intermarriage. The bachabhattas were considered to be lower in status because they accepted charity (dan) in return for their religious duty. Kilam writes, "In the beginning the bhashabhatts prided (sic) at having been given the exalted position of the custodian of the religion and learning of the country and may be that they were looked at with great esteem and regard by the karkuns. But for his maintenance the bhashabhatta was dependant upon the karkuns... Gradually the bhashabhatta's became like the parts of a soul-less
machine destined to perform ceremonies in a mechanical manner in lieu of a pittance... socially because of their economic dependence upon them, they in course of time came to be looked down by the karkuns (Kilam 1955, 53-54).

The bachabhattas on the other hand began to exploit the situation by becoming extremely ritualistic. As they had exclusive access to the religious texts and the language, they began to interpret these to their own advantage. By the end of the 15th century AD, Sanskrit was no longer widely understood and this restricted the language to a small educated elite. However the direct consequence of this was that the local Kashmiri language gained in popularity while Sanskrit degenerated because it was no longer a language of the masses. On the other hand, the karkuns emerged as a mandarin group; facilitated by the proficiency they acquired in Persian, it enabled them to maintain their position as government officials, a function that became crucial for their survival as a community. Under the Mughals (1586 - 1753 AD), the karkuns got the opportunity to serve in the Imperial governing structure. With the long tradition as administrative servants, they had turned to acquiring mastery of Persian over a century prior to Todar Mal's decision to make Persian the court language. As the Kashmiri society and culture was passing through a transition, the religious thoughts and processes too underwent a change. As already noted from the 8th century AD onwards, Kashmir
witnessed the growth of Kashmir Shaivism, a philosophy which emphasized religious equality, non-belief in idol worship, love for god and self-discipline. Although after the 11th century AD, the learning of Kashmir Shaivism was restricted to a small group, their ideas had already become a part of Kashmiri culture. When the Sufis arrived in the 13th century AD, they propagated ideas with which the people were already familiar. As a result, they got mass acceptance.

The coming together of two different religions, the Islamic Sufism and Shaivist Hinduism, saw the rise of a new religious tradition in the 14th century Kashmir, that of Mysticism. Mysticism is a spiritual discipline aiming at union of the divine through deep meditation or trance like contemplation. Mysticism in Kashmir which was a direct outcome of the inevitable contact of Shaiva philosophy with Sufism, was preached both by the Muslim Saints as well as the Hindu seers and became an important part of Kashmiri religious life from the 14th century onwards. These Mystics transcended the boundaries of religion, caste, creed and preached unity with God. Most of them were renunciates who lived as wanderers. They expressed themselves through words (poetry) and actions (miracles), communicating with the masses who were usually poor and suffering.

Foremost among these mystics was a great woman saint Lalleshwari (1320 - 1380 AD) popularly known as Lal Ded (Mother Lalla). Little is known of Lal Ded’s life and what
little is known like the life of saints elsewhere, is
shrouded in myth, miracle and legend. However, it is Lalla's
sayings, (vakhas) through which she influenced the thoughts
and life of her contemporaries as well as the Kashmiri
people through the centuries. The vakhas which have become
an important part of Kashmiri language and literature today,
are the narration of her own spiritual experiences. These
vakhas are an aggregate of Kashmir Shaivism and expressive
of high thoughts and spiritual truth, precise and apt. Lalla
was born and married into a Brahmin family at Pandrenthan
(near Srinagar), but was cruelly treated by her in-laws. Due
to these anomalies and cruelties of worldly life, Lalla
renounced her home and family life and began to wander from
one village to another. She found a preceptor, Sidha
Srikantha, a Shaiva Saint scholar of 14th century, who
initiated her into Shaiva Yoga. It is believed that with
time Lalla even excelled her guru in spiritual knowledge.
She led a life of an ascetic, wandering and preaching to the
people through her verses, vakhas, recited in the local
Kashmiri language. Through these vakhas, Lalla emphasised
detachment, self-realisation, meaninglessness of idolatry
and rituals and brotherhood of mankind.

Apart from the consideration that these vakhas explain
the Shaiva philosophy of Kashmir, through the Kashmiri
dialect, these exemplify the synthesis of cultures for which
Kashmir has always been noted. (Bamzai 1994 II 552).
Plate II

Goddess Sharika: Presiding Deity of Kashmir in traditional dress
The tradition set by Lalla was furthered by a number of other mystic saints, both Hindus and Muslims, in the centuries following her death. The important Kashmiri Pandit mystics of this period are as follows:

Reshi Pir (1637 - 1697 AD), was born in a Brahmin family and his mother was a religious woman who worshipped the sacred pond (naga) at Handwara. From early childhood, Reshi became indifferent to the worldly affairs as he began to worship Goddess Sharika at Hari Parbat. Reshi is believed to have had the divine vision (darshan) of the Goddess who directed him to a mystic saint Krishna Kar from whom Reshi received his initiation and underwent practice of Shaiv Yoga for fourteen years. Reshi Pir is famous for the miracles he performed especially to help the poor and helpless people.

9. Among the Muslims, foremost is Sheikh Nuruddin or Nund Ryosh, who was born in 1377 AD at Kaimu a village near Srinagar. From his childhood Nund Ryosh showed inclination towards spirituality. He practiced penances for twelve years in a cave and attained fame as a saint thereafter. Though unable to read and write, Nund Ryosh uttered sayings (shrukh) in which he propagated the mystic thought. During his lifetime, he founded an order of Rishis which had members from Hindus and Muslims and commanded the respect and homage of all Kashmiris. These Rishis lived among the common people, shared their troubles and pains and taught the ideals of love and toleration. In every village and district these Rishis lived in their abodes (asthan), they abstained from eating meat and lived as celibates, meditating and performing community services such as planting fruit bearing trees to furnish the travelers with refreshments. During the time of Abdul Fazal, there were two thousand Rishis in Kashmir. Their graves (ziarat) and relics are objects of veneration to this day.
Famous among these is the story of how he humbled the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, who tried to take away Reshi Pir's Jagir. Reshi Pir fixed 14 pies as niaz, offering to him, a practice which continues among the Pandits even today.

Rupa Bhawani (1677 - 1777 AD), the incarnation of Goddess Sharika was born in the house of Pandit Madho Joo Dhar of Safa Kadal. Although married into a family of learned family, Rupa Bhawani did not have a happy married life, and returned to her father's house shortly after marriage. Here her father initiated her into Shaivism and she began to practice Shaiv Yoga. Finding it difficult to meditate in her father's home, Rupa Bhawani shifted to places like Wasun, Manigam, Waskura and Chashmai Sahibi where she created ashrams. Rupa Bhawani held spiritual discourses where she attracted devotees (both Hindus and Muslims) and performed miracles. She attained mahanirvana (death) on the 7th day of the dark fortnight in the month of Magh. This day is celebrated amongst the Pandits even today as Sahib Satam.

There were other important mystic saints such as Sahib Kaul who was born a sidha (realised soul), Zenan Zui, Jeewan Shah (1783 AD), Krishna Taplu (1774 AD) who rediscovered the Khrirbhawani naga and Jaman Ded (1774 AD), a mystic woman saint etc.
The religious life during these five centuries underwent a definite change. In the beginning of these centuries, Islam was established in Kashmir and became popular with the general masses. Although the conversion to Islam was by and large peaceful in Kashmir but religious fanaticism of certain rulers resulted in the severe persecution of the non converts, i.e the Kashmiri Brahmins. By the beginning of 15th century most of the people in Kashmir had converted to Islam. Those who did not were from the Brahmins caste only. These Brahmins came to be known as the Pandits or bhatta and are the Kashmiri Pandits of today. The Pandits emerged as the worshipers of Shiva and Shakti i.e goddess Durga, who followed the philosophy of Kashmir Shaivism that had developed in the valley before the advent of Islam. During these centuries, Buddhism practically disappeared from the valley as the Buddhist theologians and saints left for Ladakh and Tibet. Vaishnavism could not emerge as a strong element in the religious fabric of the valley despite the attempt of Ramanuja who travelled from Madras to Kashmir in the 11th century to fight Shaivism at its fountain head. Although the learning of Shaivism was restricted to a small group after the 11th century, yet with the rise of Mysticism, the philosophy continued to spread especially in the local language, Kashmiri. With the destruction of the temples and idols by the Hindu kings and Muslim zealots, the Pandits were driven to worship in the seclusion of the home or of 'natural' (svayambu) images -
rocks, ice formations or springs. These were worshipped as Shiva and Shakti, which became the prevalent mode of worship among the Pandits from this period onwards.

SECTION - III

RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF HINDU RULE (1820 AD - 1947 AD)

This period from 1820 A.D. to 1947 A.D. is of re-introduction of Hindu rule in Kashmir after a gap of five hundred years. Sikh control was established in Kashmir after an envoy of the people requested Maharaja Ranjit Singh to invade Kashmir and free it from the tyrannical rule of the Afghans. Sikh rule lasted in Kashmir for only twenty seven years, providing little respite for the people, as for the most part the Sikhs were occupied with warfare and had no time to change the system they had inherited from the Afghans.

This brief interlude came to an end with the establishment of Dogra rule in 1846, soon after the death of Ranjit Singh. Raja Gulab Singh, the Hindu ruler of the adjoining state of Jammu, acquired Kashmir from the British for a payment of Rs. 7.5 million. Henceforth, Kashmir became a part of the Jammu and Kashmir State. As a result of a treaty signed by Gulab Singh with the Britishers, Jammu and Kashmir was linked to the imperial power, represented in the state by the British representative. This meant that the ruler of Kashmir was now accountable for his actions and in
some respect under the control of the British. Kashmir came out of its long standing isolation and the traffic of men and ideas into the valley increased. The Dogras inherited a society that was extremely impoverished and polarised. Though some of the Kashmiri Pandits in the valley were wealthy landowners, most of them were either officials employed in various state departments or small traders and shopkeepers.

On the whole, the Kashmiri Pandits as a group could be classified as the middle class. Writing about this group, Bamzai says, "The standard of life among the middle class people like the Kashmiri Pandits was very low.... They rarely had a second change of clothing and it was not unusual for a Pandit to apply for and be given, leave for a day or two to wash his clothes". (Bamzai 1994 III, 652) The Dogra rule further impinged upon the position of Kashmiri Pandits by changing the official language from Persian to Urdu. As the Kashmiris were not yet familiar with Urdu, they were replaced in the government by Punjabis, who were brought from Punjab and Jammu to fill in the places of Kashmiris. This influx of outsiders and their monopoly over government jobs threatened the status and function of the Kashmiri Pandit and led to frustration and bitterness for being deprived of their customary occupation. It is important to remember that the Dogra rule was imposed on Kashmir from outside and as such they were not sympathetic
or interested in making investment or improvements beyond a point. Wazir says that in one instance when the Dogra Maharaja was asked to improve sanitation and hygiene in the city of Srinagar he replied that there was no need as the Kashmiris were used to this condition (Wazir 1993.58 fn.) Not only were the Kashmiris discriminated against in the matters of Government services, they were also not allowed into military services and were prohibited to keep arms.

Nevertheless the Dogra rule was essentially Hindu rule and all the rulers were devout worshippers of the Vaishnaiva god, Lord Rama. In the valley, while the majority of the people were Muslims, the Kashmiri Pandits, who were in a minority, followed the religious faith and practice which were distinct from their new rulers. Generally they followed the tenets of Sanatana Dharma and worshipped the Supreme Being in its five aspects of Ganesha, Shiva, Shakti, Surya and Vishnu, though more emphasis was laid on the worship of Shiv-Shakti. Each family was dedicated to a particular goddess, known as the Isht Devi. The Isht Devi was the goddess Ragnya at Tula Mula or goddess Sharika at Hari Parbat or goddess Zwala at Khrew. Even today all the Kashmiri Pandit families owe allegiance to one of these goddesses and worship them along with their respective Shiva, known as the Bhairav. From this polytheistic religious practice, inclined more towards the worship of Shiv-Shakti, some persons who aspired for greater heights in spiritualism got initiated
into the Trika Shastra or Kashmir Shaivism. As already noted Kashmir Shaivism was propounded and developed from 8th century AD onwards, continuing to flourish under the mystic saints and Shaiva scholars of the subsequent centuries.

From the point of view of religious development of Kashmiri Pandits, there was a significant growth and change under the Dogras. Maharaja Gulab Singh (1846-1857 A.D.) for the first time put a ban on cow slaughter in the state. He also did his utmost to stop the practice among the Pandits of drinking water fetched by a Muslim and severely interdicted the consumption of cheese which was prepared by the Muslims. The significant development was the introduction of the tradition of worship of Lord Rama among the Pandits. The Dogra rulers are believed to share their line of descendence with the deity. With their coming, many temples, dedicated to this deity, were erected in the Valley. With this Rama Kavya or literature on the life of Rama took birth in the Valley. Infact till the 19th century there was no Ramacharitar in Kashmir, but since then seven Ramayans, besides several miscellaneous songs of this nature have been written. For this religious-cum-literary

10. The milkmen in Kashmir, during those days were Muslims, (a practice which continues even today by and large) since the Pandit, did not traditionally get into this profession.

11. The most popular is "Ramavtar Charita" written by Parkash Ram in 1850 AD which is composed in the Kashmiri language.
revivalism, Gulab Singh laid the foundation of a religious trust—the Dharmarth Trust, which looked after the religious interests of Hindus, both in the Valley as well as in Jammu province of the Dogra rulers. The Trust was headed by the Maharaja himself and employed only Hindu officials, many of them Kashmiri Pandits. The Trust was given 3115 Jagirs, for its functioning. The Trust took over, all the existing major temples in the valley under its control and was responsible for their smooth functioning and proper maintenance. The need for this arose, as, in the past, under the Muslim rule, especially the Afghans, due to lack of maintenance and timely repairs, some important temples had crumbled. There were also instances where temples had been put to disuse as mosques were built over them. To avoid such occurrences in the future, the Trust gained control over the remaining sacred sites. Among the temples that were renovated and reconstructed under the supervision of Dharmarth Trust, the chief ones are the Khir Bhawani temple at Tula Mula, the abode of goddess Ragnya, the Chakreshwar temple at Hari Parbat, the abode of goddess Sharika, the Zeethyar temple at Gupkar, the abode of goddess Zyeshta, the Shardapeeth temple near Keren (now under Pakistan) — the abode of goddess Saraswati etc.

12. The Kali Temple at Khanka-e-moula, near Zaina Kadal, for instance, had to be closed to public as the Shah Hamdan mosque-ziarat was built over it.
The Trust received further impetus under Maharaja Ranbir Singh (1857-1885 A.D.). During his time several new temples were built. Most of them were dedicated to Lord Rama. These were the Raghunath Mandir near Habbakadal, the Ramchandra Mandir at Sathu Barbarshah, the Hanuman Mandir near Amirakadal and the Ram Mandir at Ram Bagh in Srinagar.

In Jammu the Raghunath temple became the famous centre for religious learning and research. A Sanskrit College, a magnificent library and a translation bureau were set up here. The library contained over 5000 manuscript which were collected from far and wide. Most of the old Sanskrit texts, written in the ancient Sarda script, were translated into Devnagri script, while a large number of Sanskrit and Persian books and manuscripts were translated into Dogri, Hindi and Urdu. The first printing press in the state—the Vidhya Vilas Press, was set up by the Maharaja to publish these books. The Maharaja also set up Sanskrit schools called pathshalas which while imparting religious knowledge also taught poetics, grammar, philosophy and mathematics. Maharaja Ranbir Singh gave a liberal patronage to the learning of Sanskrit. The learning of Sanskrit was revived in the Valley due to the Maharaja’s zeal for religion and letters. During his rule George Buhler, the famous German Indologist, visited Kashmir in search of Sanskrit manuscripts. In Kashmir he met some Kashmiri Pandits who
were deeply learned in Sanskrit and found twenty two libraries of Sanskrit manuscripts, still extant in Srinagar, (Bamzai 1994, III, 865).

As the rulers were devoted to Lord Rama in the valley, festivals such as Ram Navmi, Dussera and Diwali began to be celebrated publicly with pomp and show. The ruler also participated in the festivals of the masses (both Muslims and Pandits). They encouraged the Pandit community to hold public celebrations on their festivals.

In the past under the Muslim rule, the Pandits had been forced to hold celebrations within the confines of their houses so as to avoid the attention of the tyrannical rulers. Religion among the Pandits in those days had been reduced to the performance of meaningless rituals under the exploitative priests—a practice against which all the mystic saints preached. The Dogra rulers helped revive the religious culture of the Pandits by encouraging them to come out and visit their ancient places of worship. During the Dogra rule, daily visits to Hari Parbat to circumbulate the hillock, where the Chakreshwar temple is situated, became a part of every day life for the Pandits as was done before the Muslim rule. Visits to the goddess Zyesta at Zeetyar on Thursdays and to the Shiva temple at Shankracharya on Mondays were resumed. On the eighth day of the bright fortnight in each month the Pandits would go to Khirbhawani
Plate III

Shrine of Goddess Ragyana at Tula Mullar in Kashmir
temple at Tula Mula; while on the ninth day of the bright fortnight in certain months visits to the goddess Sharika at Hari Parbat and goddess Zwala at Khrew were made.

Yet another significant religious development which took place during the period was the rise in the popularity of the mystic saints. The Dogra rulers, specially Maharaja Ranbir Singh and Maharaja Pratap Singh (1885-1926 A.D.) gave royal patronage to some of these saints. Among them are the prominent saint-poet Krishnajoo Razdan of Wanpoh and Shaiva sidha Ramji of Fateh Kdal who set up the famous ‘'Shaiva-Trika-Ashram'’ to teach Kashmir Shaivism. These saints were approached by Maharaja Pratap Singh from time of time for receiving their blessings. The others include prominent saint-scholars such as Swami Vidhya Dhar of Malyar, Mahtab Kak of Magam and Lakshmanji of Ishber as well as the Saint-Poets like Parmanand of Mattan, Master Zinda Kaul of Zaindar Mohalla, Govind Kaul of Wanpoh and the Mystic saints.

13. Khir Bhawani is perhaps the most sacred place in Kashmir where the goddess Ragnya is worshipped in the form of a spring (naga). There are other nagas sacred to this goddess (such as the one at Manzgom) whose cult is said to have been introduced from Ceylon. At each of these nagas there is a belief that the water of the naga changes colour. The peculiarity of Khir Bhawani is that worshippers must abstain from non-vegetarian food on the days they visit the shrine. The offerings to the goddess comprise milk, rice, sugar and flowers. On the other hand, at Hari Parbat and Khrew, offerings of the liver and heart of the sheep cooked with yellow rice is made.
like Shankar Razdan of Kanikadal, Kashkak of Manigam and Gopinath of Bana Mohalla to name a few. These saints received tremendous reverence from the common people as well, irrespective of the religion followed by them. The interesting feature of this period is the increased growth of saint-worship. Writing in 1892, Lawrence says, "Every Kashmiri believes that the saints will aid if men will call and they think that a dead saint is more efficacious than a living priest. The Kashmiris are called by foreigners as Pir Parast, that is, Saint-Worshippers and the epithet is well deserved." (Lawrence 1992, 286).

Under the last Dogra ruler, Maharaja Hari Singh (1926-1947 A.D.) the political events, both inside and outside

14. It is worth noting here that in the Muslim community too popular saints such as Nund Rishi, Shams Faqir, Habibulla Nowsheri, Lassa Sahib, Rahim Sahib etc. were equally revered by the masses of both religions. Their contribution in the formation of popular culture of Kashmir, however, is beyond the scope of this thesis.

15. In 1931, for the first time the entire Muslim majority in the Valley began agitation against the Dogra Maharaja, exposing their hardships and demanding government jobs. The agitation culminated in a communal riot, shaking the traditional amity and goodwill between the Pandits and the Muslims. However under the leadership of Sheikh Abdulla in 1938-39 AD, the movement was reorganised as National Conference to allow people of all castes, creeds and religions to become its members. The National Conference received support and encouragement from the Indian National Congress and Jawahar Lal Nehru, which, while fighting for Indian Independence, was opposed to the Maharaja’s rule. In 1944 the National Conference adopted the Naya Kashmir programme, advocating socialistic pattern of society, as its goal. In 1946, by giving the call for Quit Kashmir Movement against the Maharaja, it gave meaning to the common man’s struggle for freedom by demanding the transfer of power to the people.
The state of Jammu & Kashmir led to the end of Vaishnav Hindu Dogra rule in Kashmir. In 1947 the state acceded to the Indian Dominion after signing the Instrument of Accession.

SECTION - IV
THE POST INDEPENDENCE ERA

The first elections that were held in Kashmir in 1951, after Indian Independence (1947), brought to power the leaders of the Muslim majority community who had been agitating for better conditions for their supporters. The new government began to implement programmes which in effect ameliorated the condition of the Muslims, as a result of which there was a progressive erosion of the elite status of the Kashmiri Pandit community and its continual replacement by new elements drawn from the Muslims. Wazir identifies four factors which led to the altering of the composition of the elite in the post Independence Kashmir. These are the processes of educational expansion, the political democratization, the land reforms and the expansion of state economic expenditure. (Wazir 1983,63). The process of educational expansion had important implications for the changing composition of the Kashmiri elite. Education, says Wazir, "was considered a key element in bringing about prosperity and was one of the platforms on which the election was fought and won by the National Conference
party.... Education was considered sufficiently important for Sheikh Abdullah, the first elected Prime Minister of the state, to keep the portfolio of education in his own hands." (ibid., 60-61). There was a sharp increase in the expenditure on education. This was reflected in a rise in the number of schools and other educational institutions, including an autonomous university in Srinagar. Seats were specially reserved in these institutions for the Muslims and provisions were made for economic assistance to make education accessible to them.

Through the political democratization, the political power went to the majority Muslim community with its obvious implications for a corresponding change in the use of political patronage. This factor has to be seen in the context of an enormous expansion in the expenditure and in the size of the bureaucratic machine. The new democratic policies of regulating access through community quotas to educational institutions as well as to government jobs facilitated the entry of Muslims into the bureaucracy, thus challenging the traditional domination of the Kashmiri Pandits in this quarter.

In the early 50's, land reforms were implemented in Kashmir, according to which no landlord was allowed to own more than twenty acres of agricultural land. The expropriated land was to be passed on first to the tenants, with the remainder to be distributed among the landless
labourers. The successful implementation of land reforms resulted in breaking the power of Kashmiri Pandit landed class since the majority of the large estates that were affected belonged to them. The net effect of the land reforms, therefore, was to replace a predominantly urban based Pandit landed class by a rural Muslim petty elite. Under the new dispensation, many direct and indirect opportunities were provided by the spectacular expansion of the state economic expenditure, buttressed by munificent grants from the central government. The state spent a total of Rs. 115.2 million in the first five year plan; the approved outlay of the fifth plan was Rs. 3620 million (ibid., 64). Development projects like road construction, lumbering and forestry, transport, irrigation and flood control led to the generation of economic opportunities. Moreover there was an expansion in tourism industry and a significant boom in the handicraft export industry. This contributed to the rise of a new prosperous business class in Kashmir. The majority among them came from the Muslim community 16.

These four factors had a direct impact on the socio-economic condition of the Pandits. The loss of landed property, the near-total blockage of employment

16. One of the reasons that can be attributed to the small number of Kashmiri Pandits in the business profession is that traditionally they eschewed trade and commerce.
opportunities, restrictive admissions in educational institutions and insignificant share in trade or commerce caused economic deprivation and impoverishment of Kashmiri Pandits. Socially the rise of Muslim community as the newly empowered elite led to the lowering of the prestige enjoyed by the Pandits earlier. Social practices like inter-dining, which were hitherto never practiced, became prevalent to curry favour with the new elite. At another level, the priests (gors) as a class were most hard hit, as by and large, the karkun jajmans, impoverished by the loss of land and employment, found it difficult to patronise them by adequate compensation in cash and kind as hitherto. This made the gors opt out of their traditional occupations, to seek sustenance in other secular fields. This resulted in a decline in the observance of rituals and rites in the life of Kashmiri Pandits. Together these factors led to the degeneration of religious orthodoxy among the Pandits. There was a steady decline in the public gatherings at the sacred sites. On the one hand, the Pandits were deprived of an ancient sacred site, the temple of Sharda Peeth in the Kishen Ganga Valley, which was occupied by Pakistan in 1947. The annual pilgrimages, fairs and visits to this place of worship stopped as it was no longer a part of their sacred geography. On the other hand congregations and public gatherings at holy sites, near which Muslim mosques had been built, was avoided, for the fear of confrontation. Public
celebrations of certain festivals (like Vyeth Truvah) were altogether abandoned. All this led to the slowing down of the religious fervour among the Pandits.

As the religious boundaries were being created between the communities, the mystic saints continued to provide spiritual sustenance at the individual level, while serving as a link between the two communities at the group level. Partly due to the revival of Sanskrit learning and Kashmir Shaivism under the Dogras and partly due to the decline of orthodox religion, there was a recrudescence of spiritual, devotional (bhakti) and learning religious tradition. A number of institutes, where the tenets of Kashmir Shaivism were studied and discussed, sprung in Srinagar city. Prominent among them were the "Rama Trika Ashram", now under a trust at Fateh Kadal, "Institute of Kashmir Shaivism", under the Dharmarth Trust at Ishber, "Ishwar Ashram", under Swami Lakshmanji at Ishber and "Sharda Peeth Research Centre", under R.C. Kaw at Karan Nagar. Under the influence of the "Rama Krishna Mission" of Calcutta an ashram complex was set up at Shivalya, Karan Nagar. There were a number of mystic saints 17 to whom people flocked in numbers. However,

17. There was another category of exceptional people among Pandits as well as Muslims, who were to all intents and purposes, mad or deranged but were considered to be clairvoyant and gifted with the capacity to bless or curse. They were held in awe and reverence by Kashmiris. Better known among them were Sona Bub, Nanda Bub, Hara Bub, Radha Ded, Lassa Bub, Fatah Ded etc.
Plate IV

Shrine of Goddess Ragyana replicated at Jammu after 1990
the first formal ashram to be established after a saint, was the "Bhagwan Gopinath Ashram" at Kharyar, Srinagar.

As the state was embroiled in the political controversy and the external aggression; the Pandits were resentful of the economic deprivation, social degradation, and religious discrimination, they faced in everyday life. Their pent-up resentment exploded into a massive agitation in September 1967 by what is known as 'Parmeshwari Conversion case'. Though apparently a small incident, it clearly suggested that religious and social chasms were growing between the two communities.

**RISE OF FUNDAMENTALISM AND MIGRATION OF KASHMIRI PANDITS**

From the middle of 1970's growth of Islamic fundamentalism began in Kashmir. No single reason can be given for this. Several factors, such as the geo-political situation of the valley, Sheikh Abdullah's personal

18. A young Pandit girl, Parmeshwari, working in Co-operative store was alleged to have been induced by a Muslim colleague to marry him after conversion to Islam. The Pandit community was infuriated at the way the police handled the case. A protest meeting was held by the Pandits where they were attacked by some members of the Muslim community. This resulted in a bloody communal riot in which many lives were lost. The agitation, however, ended after the representatives of the state and central governments assured the Pandits that their grievances would be sympathetically looked into and redressed.
political ambition, the problematic accession to India with its aftermath and the inability of the Indian government to integrate the state with the rest of the country, combined to lead to such a situation. Translated into the religious idiom, the fundamentalists aimed to establish the "Nizam-i-Mustafa" or the ideal state of Islam, at the point of the gun, if need be. The beginning of its manifestation was the communal riots in the year 1986 at Anantnag, near Srinagar. The entire socio-political scenario thereafter assumed a ferocious look. Hundreds of Kashmiri Muslim youth trained in the use of sophisticated weapons and guerrilla warfare infiltrated the valley and started to indulge in bomb and grenade attacks on the security forces and government buildings.

The years 1988 and 1989 were worse, when over five thousand Kashmiri Muslim youth received arms training in Pakistan. Endless processions of anti-India demonstrators were taken out. Simultaneously there were bomb blasts, grenade attacks and AK-47 rifle encounters. There was torching of sensitive targets such as the bridges, government offices, schools building and communication centres.

By the year 1989, the militancy assumed a communal complexion. The Kashmiri Pandits, who had been non-partisan, were dubbed as "Indian agents" and "informers" and as such made special targets. Prominent Pandits, such as
Tikalal Tapiloo, a lawyer and Nilkanth Ganjoo, a retired Sessions Judge, were gunned down in broad daylight in full public view, by a militant organization. This was followed by the brutal killing of several Kashmiri Pandits, rape and abduction of their womenfolk and loot and arson of their properties. Important Hindu shrines were burnt down at some places in the city while small temples were desecrated, especially in the villages. The situation was grim throughout the valley. No Kashmiri Pandit dared to come out of his house. Government Offices, educational institutions and banks would remain closed either in response to bandh calls given by the militants or due to the curfew imposed by the government. By the year end normal life in Kashmir had come to a standstill.

By the beginning of January 1990 the situation had deteriorated rapidly and become extremely serious, in the valley. The terror and turmoil reached its climax in the events that took place on 21st January 1990. Late in the evening on this day the loudspeakers fitted in all the mosques in Srinagar city suddenly burst forth with the cries of 'Allah-O-Akbar'. Pre-recorded cassettes, with cries of Jihad and threatening slogans against the non-believers were simultaneously played from hundreds of loudspeakers, all over the valley. At the same time almost the entire Muslim population, especially in the downtown areas of the city, came out on the streets shouting in unison with the
loudspeakers. Threatenings were given and deadlines were set for them to either convert, flee or face extinction (Raliv, Chaliv, Galiv). The resultant atmosphere of terror and fear of imminent death lead to the mass exodus of the Kashmiri Pandit community at the earliest opportunity. Often, in the beginning, those fleeing in the broad daylight were killed and their belongings looted. As a result the flight was undertaken in secrecy, lest they were betrayed, people left furtively without informing their neighbours, friends or even relatives. They left behind their property, movable and immovable, their lands and orchards, business establishments, government and private services, and made a beeline to Jammu. By the middle of 1990 around three lakh Kashmiri Pandits had fled the valley.

Having sketched the historical background of the religious life of Kashmiri Pandits we will examine its functioning in the social context of diaspora.