Folk Religion in Kashmir
Though the Islamic influences had started being felt in Kashmir as early as the beginning of the eighth century, but it did not make much headway until the first quarter of the 14th century. It took Islam almost six centuries to secure a strong foot-hold in Kashmir. The latest investigations in the field reveal that Brahminism continued to be the religion of the masses even after the establishment of the Muslim Sultante in Kashmir.

No doubt, the mountain bound valley of Kashmir remained unexposed to the military exploits of the Muslim conquerors, but nothing such could deter the zealous Muslim saints, scholars and missionaries from Persia and central Asia to penetrate into the 'paradise of east' to acquaint the locals with new religeo-cultural influences and ideas. It was in fact, the role played by these foreign Muslim missionaries which helped in creating a situation-conducive for the propagation of teachings of Sufi oriented the new religion the valley. Since the majority of the Muslim missionaries who poured into the valley in the fourteenth and fifteenth century belonged to Persia, Bukhara and other parts of Central Asia, their religious outlook was predominantly fashioned by humanistic approach. This was indeed, as for more than two hundred years Islam had, in Central Asia and Persia, been similarly influenced by the dogmas of Mahayana Buddhism and Upanishadic philosophy, resulting in the cult of Islamic
mystics. Fortunately the new religion entered the valley in the form, being carried there by enlightened Sufis like Bul Bul Shah. With their humanistic approach to religion, they found a ready and sympathetic response from the Kashmiris, already permeated with the teachings of mystic saints and 'seers'.

The celebrated safis who had come with a mission, after observing deep commitment of the people towards their age old social traditions and cultural traits did not offend them by suggesting drastic changes in their socio-religio-cultural fabric; instead, they allowed the new converts to retain some of the old Traditions and customs of their erstwhile religions which in the course of time were assimilated in the religious life of the Muslims. This, indeed, resulted in the development of somewhat, unique features in the socio-religious history of the Muslims in a geographically isolated region, thus drawing a striking contrasts with the Muslims of the other parts of the world.

It was during this period of historical transition that the need was felt to retain the religio-cultural identity of the valley. Thanks to its rich religious and philosophic traditions, Kashmiris rose to the occasion and produced a roll of distinguished mystics and saints who by dint of their personal merit and noble deeds proved to be the living embodiments of Kashmiri culture and religion.

Prominent among them were Lal Ded and Sheikh Nur-ud-din. If on the one hand, Lal Dad reaffirmed her faith in the teachings of Kashmiri Savism, Sheikh Nur-din revived the indigenous mystic cult 'Rishyut' and expressed his firm faith in the relevance of the rishi order. Though with different approaches, both were
united in their fight against the priviledged religious elite, and their support for the under priviledged. So deep was their influence on the mind of the people and of the age that major portion of Kashmiri folk poetry is dedicated to their exemplary contribution towards the development of religion and culture. To quote Ishaq Khan, “Lalla’s verses against the social and spiritual pretensions of the Brahmans set in motion new forces rejecting the latter’s cherished idea that social statics was determined by caste. With equal velocity, Shiekh Nur-ud-din denounced the Muslim ulema, proud of their rich pedigree and descent”. Nur-ud-dins condemnation of Mulhas and Lal Ded’s ihatred towards of Pandit Brahmans (both priviledged sections of the society) was in fact the exposition of their intense urge to see that the unpriviledged or common folk come forward to shape their destinies themselves. It is this association of the two eminent religious personalities of the medieval Kashmir with the common masses which played vital role in fashioning the distinctive collective religious behaviour of the people of Kashmir.

The Muslim ‘Rishis’ of Kashmir adopt certain practices, which if analysed in the light of Sharia seemed as completely unislamic, But the serious study of the ‘Rishi’ practices reveal that these practices echo Kashmiri’s deep commitment to his distinctive social cultural milieu, which even the great tradition could not eradicate. to quote Mohib-ul-Hassan, “popular Islam in Kashmir thus became diluted with foreign elements, and their character it has retained until today. Commenting on the religious synthesis, R.K. Parimoo holds, “History has perhaps very few examples of a people, numerically so small, who have in the course of long succession of
centuries suffering and struggle, so paid so high a price in order to preserve their ancient traditions and culture.

The assertion of an European Traveller seems quite plausible that “the traveller finds himself face to face with three cultures and religious systems of Asia living side by side. These are Hindu, Buddhist and Muslim. The distinctive characteristic of Kashmir is that these three stages are not merely stages in its past history but are living as co-extant forces.” A scholar finds all these traits and characteristics in the popular religion practised by the majority of the common folk.

**What is Folk Religion?**

The primary Justification for the discipline known as folk religion is that it raises the important question of what religion is? Whether or in what ways the religious dimension is important? what place and function religion has in human life generally and what justification there is, if any, in the claim that religion discloses to us something essential about the human condition.

Apart from all these controversial shades resulting out of the different propositions of religion, one thing is certain that the knowledge which is the subject matter of elite religion or great tradition is not somewhat that is demanded with accuracy in common religion or in folk religion. The folk religion takes into account the social, cultural and physical environment. It is based on the observed phenomenon of religion. The fact for example, that men do believe and believe sometimes most tenaciously and nobly and that their beliefs have social approval and consequence. In
that sense religion exists as an observable fact of human life for which there is plenty of folk and popular evidence.

In folk religion people associate immediate goals with any particular activity. After all, a large part of human society consists on a satisfaction of material needs. If a rice farmer believes that he will increase the yield of his land by visiting any shrine or a sacred place at the time of ploughing and sowing, he will do that. There is every evidence to show that the people visit different religious places likely to prey for the curing of disease or to fulfill other material ends. This and hundred of activities of a similar kind and motive and at comparable level are what religion has meant to many, if not the majority of the people.

If all these kinds of activities and the beliefs which are associated with them are excluded from the domain of religion but then what name are they to be known with? If we are to reserve religion to mean only fundamental, orthodox and conservative concerning with the eternal unchanging and approved by elite and literate, than we have to find another word we can use in order to refer to all other much more temporal and mundane beliefs, desires, activities which form the basis of folk religion. Let us for a moment allow that all these, too can be called religion we now have two reference when ever we use the word religion. At one level, religion means concern with a distinct idea or eternal good. At another level it means concern with ever present mundane needs. The only justification for using the same word for both is that there is some connection between the two. Let us suppose that the word religion can be used for both, it is still evident that we shall have to put some kind of adjective in front of the word religion in each case. The second obviously will be folk
religion Suffice to say that there are two levels of religion, the upper level, which expresses itself in terms of what is generally regarded as orthodoxy which include orthodox beliefs and orthodox practices. This is the kind of religion which orthodox religious authorities prescribe to be followed and then there is the lower level which expresses itself spontaneously in folk beliefs and practices of all kinds. The existence of these two levels has been observed in almost all religions.

In short, folk religion in a simple version may be termed that shade of popular religion which is generally characterised by folk practices and customs socially approved and which over dominates reason faith and conviction. In case of Muslims, the latter type of religion is governed by the Quranic injections and the sayings of Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H). The sunna and shariat governs the life system and the mental make-up of the faithful. Here a person enjoys no liberty to deviate from the fundamental principles. Any deviation from the sunna' is described as ‘kufr’ ‘shirk’ and ‘bida’ and subject to severe punishment in accordance with the injections of the Quran.

Contrary to this, in folk religion there exists a variety of cherished local cultural beliefs and practices, originating from different religious sources and social systems dully approved and recognised by the society.

**Chief Characteristics of Folk Religion in Kashmir**

One of the striking characteristics of popular Islam in Kashmir is the loud group recitation of an *Aurad-i-Fatthiyya* by the majority of the Kashmiri Muslims in mosques immediately after the morning prayers. The pioneers in the formative
phase of the history of Islam in Kashmir in the fourteenth century as mentioned
earlier, reconciled itself to and without disturbing the socio-religio cultural fabric of
the society, a legacy of the Hindu Buddhist religious systems. As a result of the
compromising attitude especially demonstrated by scholarly saint Syed Mir Ali
Hamadani, the neo-converts were allowed to retain some of the traditions of their
former religions which in the course of time were assimilated in the religious culture
of the Muslims.

It had been the age old practice of Hindus in the valley to recite mantras
loudly in the temples especially in the early morning hours. Mir Syed Ali Hamadani,
who had a keen anthropological sense understood the efficacy of the popular mode of
social behaviour, drafted a unique prayer under the title of Aurad-i-Fatthiya. He
allowed the new converts to recite it in chorus loudly to lessen the captivating effect
of the Hindu mantras Ishaq Khan while appreciating the wisdom of Mir Hamadani
writes, “It goes to his (Mir Ali Hamadani) credit that instead of taking a narrow view
of the religious situation in Kashmir, he showed an acute discernment and a keen
practical sense in grasping the essential elements of popular Kashmiri religious
culture and ethos, and gave creative expression to these in enjoining his followers in
the valley to recite ‘Aurad-i-Fatthiya’ aloud in a chorus in mosques.”

Such a simple practice of invoking God’s help did not call for either animal
sacrifice or the beating of drums as it was in the case of Kashmiri Pandits. The lud
recitation of ‘Aurad’ produced such an appealing effect in the minds of Hindus that
they willingly came forward to embrace Islam. While showing regard for the local
religious ethos in allowing neo-Muslims to read Aurd-i-Fatthiyya aloud in chorus,
the Sayyid according to Khan, “demonstrated a keen sense of practical wisdom and judgement in laying a firm foundation for the gradual assimilation of the folk in Islam." A conservative chronicler like Srivara seeing to have been so impressed by the novelty of God being praised in collectively by the rich and the poor together that he could not conceal his feelings about the loud prayers of faithful in the Jam’a mosque of Srinagar. Thus he writes, “It was here that the Yavanas (Muslims) chanted Mantras and looked graceful like thousand lotuses with humming bees.”

Right from the time, the prayer was drafted by the exalted scholar saint, the tradition of reciting the prayer loudly in Kashmir mosques continued with same vigour and zeal. Its continuance, no doubt, provide an index of the commitment of the people to the deep rooted popular tradition and their cultural psyche. By providing a folk orientation, to the new message of Islam in Kashmir, Mir Ali Hamadani not only made Islam intelligible to the majority of the common folk, but it provided a tremendous psycho-religious comfort to the neo-Muslims seemed to be unwilling to dissociate themselves completely from their ancestral religious behaviour.

No doubt, during the concluding phase of our period of study, the practice of reciting the ‘Aurad’ came under sharp criticism by the leaders and followers of Ahl-i-Hadith movement who dubbed it as an activity with no cemented religious foundation. But the majority of the Muslims in the valley could not succumb to their pressure and the practice continued and remained in tradition. The popular love and the people’s attachment to this folk religious practice can be well ascertained from these lines of Kashmiri folk song.
(Let us flock to the shrine of Mir Sayyid Ali Hamadani situated at khanqah-i-Moula, Let us recite 'Aurad' loudly but in an impressive tune. It is of course, the gifted spot. It abounds in saintly blessing. The shrine of Khanqah-i-Moula is a place of unimaginable veneration).

**Saint Worship**

Since Islam in Kashmir was introduced and popularised by Sufi saints belonging to different Sufi orders, as a natural response, people of the land developed an intimate love and reverence for these exalted saints\(^{34}\). True to the tradition, Kashmiri in a new scheme of religious frame work sought to find new parallels to their age old traditional gods and deities which once governed their religion behaviour. These parallels they found in the form of venerated saints, who not only acquainted them with the new religious order but provided them certain degree of liberty to remain attached with their traditional religious behavioural pattern. The love of the masses towards their spiritual preceptors did not remain applicable as long as they were alive but it continued even after their death. The same is evident from the fact that hardly in the valley one could find a village town or a city without a ‘sufi’ or ‘reshi’ shrine\(^{35}\).

To my understanding, a close net work of shrine and tombs and their veneration by the common masses was not only prompted by the traditional religious behaviour of the people but the study of the folk material tend us to suggest that the institution was more necessitated by a unique political situation which robbed the
masses of their right of self expression and the dignity of the soul. From the content of
the variety of the Kashmiri folk songs, the researcher could easily deduce that the
people flocked to these shrines to give vent to their suppressed feelings and emotions,
a situation which could hardly be availed outside the shrine premises. A close
network of official secret agencies, had sealed every chance for poor Kashmiris to
present their grievances before their authorities, regarding the fleecing devices of the
corrupt officialdom; hence, they found no other way to revenge the misdeeds of
these rapacious officials and the ruling elite, but to present themselves in a shrine and
invoke the help of the dead saint with the hope of being relieved from the recurring
pain and distress. To quote M.Y. Teing ‘In a state of utter confusion, insecurity and
mass alienation, these shrines and tombs were acknowledged as the befitting spots by
the commoners to address their gravest problems. Though, Lawrence, in his
monumental work “The valley of Kashmir” has given an elaborate detail of the
institution, but the celebrate, but the celebrated writer has not kept in sight the psycho
political necessities, which gave an additional importance to these shrines to serve as
the sanctuaries of public grievance and protest. The argument is further substantiated
by the following folk verses much in circulation among the rural masses even today:

Dam phuty gêmety sene chi seni
Ya Nabi zëri seni bëz
Dëdy kas bëvav ger chim sëri
Ya Nabi zëri seni boz. 38

Dastgïr Sôbs Shahi Bhagdadás
Ash chem seri gam kasyum
Halam heth darasm'naz khaneyeri
Ya Nabi zëri sëni bëz.
Shāhī Hamadānos bōni Islamsn
Sar bō Trāvas dedey tal
Vedy tas seni hal chā seri
Ya Nabi zeri seni boz
Makhdom Sēbs Śahi Sultāns,
Thazres shūban ches dargah
Dowak ma kanh asi zulman meri
Ya Nabi zeri seni boz

Sheikh Sēb Alamdār Tchrār chu sōnei
Mōyen hal chus sorei sōn,
Mēle chu logmut Tchrar bresverī
Ya Nabi zeri seni bōz.

( We feel soulless in an atmosphere of gloom and disrespect,
Oh, Nabi, (the massager of God) we beg you to give patient hearing to our
sufferings.
Whom shall we express our pains?
The people who possess authority and power are all strangers).

Dastagir, the crown of Bhagadad,
We expect, visit to you shrine
Situated at Khanayar,
Shall bring relief to over distresses.
Glory of Hamadan, (Mir Sayyid Ali Hamdani)
The founder of Islam in Kashmir
We will pay homage at the outer shrine gate
He is aware of our sufferings
Let us remind him the same.

Mukhdoom Sahab, the king of sultans,
His shrine at the Hari parbat hillock
gives a majestic look,
We look friendless—no one is ready
to share our ailments,
We beg for your spiritual help.

Sheikh Nur-ud-din at tchrar,
is our unquestioned religious leader
Who says? he is not aware of our lot.
The annual fair has begun there at tchrar,
Let us flock to the shrine on Thursday
and seek the blessings of the pir.
In Islam, and precisely on the background of monotheism, there always seems to have been a radical conflict between popular customs and the official religious orthodoxy. Such practices on the level of local populations were either considered old superstitions or condemned as 'bida', or unorthodox innovations. To quote Goldziher, "In no other field has the original doctrine of Islam subordinated itself to such a degree to the needs of its confessors as in the fields of veneration of saints." In fact, the saint worship constituted the major feature of popular Islam not only outside the Arab peninsula but inside the Arab lands also. It remained the major concern of the champions of the orthodox Islam. The religious humanism, exhibited by the venerated saints through their deeds and teachings helped tremendously in creating a religious atmosphere guaranteed maximum degree of liberty not only to the neo Muslims but even to the people who clung to their ancestral religion. This new proposition, in context of Kashmir proved very fruitful in strengthening the basis of folk religion in Kashmir. This is further evidenced by the fact that the shrines of Mir Sayyid Ali Hamdani, Sheikh Nur-ud-din, Baba Payam-ad-din, Baba Zain-ud-din and other sufi and Rishi saints are equally kept in high esteem and veneration by both Muslim and Hindu devotees.

As the dominant characteristic of folk religion has always been to seek the fulfillment of the immediate material wishes, the people in the valley too visited different Sufi and Rishi shrines for fulfilling their material gains: An attentive examination of the folk material particularly, the folk literature, tend us to hold that a peasant here too, like his fellow brethren in the rest of the world, visited the shrine with the hope that he might receive good harvest; a barren lady flocked to the tomb
with the purpose that she might be blessed with a child; a sick went with the hope that he might regain health and so on. In addition to this, Kashmiri folk songs reveal that women folk, during the period of our study visited the tombs of the dead saints to invoke their help for the safe arrival of their dear ones who had either been driven away from their fields to undertake the forced labour (beggar) or had proceeded voluntarily to the plains of Punjab at the outset of the winter season to earn the necessary livelihood for their family members and other dependents. In the following lines of a Kashmiri folk song, a forlorn Kashmiri women expresses her heartfelt concerns for the safe arrival of her dear one. See for example.

Sane gomei sir kas bavei,\(^47\)
Yene gomei tane nei amei,
Sane gomei bavei kas.
Lole astane tchengy bozalei,
Sane gomei bavei kas
Dur balan harde goyomei,
Sante ma veni dilbar āv,
Ashi Muqāme phro bo zalei,
Sane gomei bavei kas

(I am grief stricken, with whom shall I share my pain!
Long time had lapsed, since he had left us.
I will kindle the earthen lamps at the shrine of the local pir,
I am grief stricken whom shall I convey my concerns.
At the very outset of the winter, he had gone across the high snow laden summits,
The spring has come—Not he!
I shall go to the shrine at Muqam,
There I will take part in the phrov,
I am grief stricken, with whom
Shall I share my pain).

The assertion of Dr. Dieter Sturm holds enough weight, particularly, against the enough weight particularly against the folk religious environ of the valley. He
Shrine of Shah Hamadan, Srinagar.
Shrine of Sheikh Noor-u-din at Tsrar
writes “the great tradition of the normative Islam has never recognised the existence of saints and has no procedure of canonizing them yet saints (awliya) literally (Gods prolege) fill the world of popular Islam, where even living saints possess supernatural powers and ability to perform miracles ..... the saints supernatural powers (baraka) does not cease with his death, hence his tomb is considered as repository of saints baraka."

While evaluating the deep rooted attachment of an average Muslim with the shrines Lawrence remarks, “It was customary for almost all to visit a particular shrine on different occasions of historical importance for the fulfillment of wishes and cherished goals”49. Not only on the occasions of historical importance, the visit to the shrine was considered obligatory on the social occasions like marriage and other related pursuits. During the period under survey the bridegroom would not rise above the age old practice of going to pay respect to some neighbouring shrine before leaving for brides house. See how in this below cited ‘Wavnun ‘song, bridegroom is advised by his parents not to show a slightest degree of lapse not in the traditional practice of showing reverence by visiting the shrine before leaving for his bredes home.

Astân atchevun sejde keryzium,51
Kelymei Muhammad perizium.
Astân gathevun hirase keryzeiun
Dechineidari tal dua mengyzeim
Astân hə chui nözük jaye,
Ati ho aye qadam tulyze

(Before you enter the shrine gate
Give a slight bend to your head as token of respect to the saint,
You should first recite ‘Kalima’,
Be attentive and exercise every caution infront of
the grave of the saint.
You first straight way go to the window on the right,
To visit the shrine demands seriousness,
and sensitivity from the devotee.
Take your steps with utmost care)

Ernest. F. Neve gives a pen picture of the same, when a marriage party once inadvertently missed to salute the grave of a saint, situated on the way to the brides house. The quote him, "I once saw a striking example of the danger of neglecting this rule. A marriage party was crossing a stream, above which stood the shrine of a saint. All of them dismounted and passed over the bridge, but the father of the bridegroom, with the bridegroom in his arms, rode boldly over. The bridge broke, and the horse, father and son were precipitated into the stream, where they lay struggling. I ran up and rebuked the crowd for not assisting the sufferers, but they looked on gloomily and said, the man richly deserved his fate. After some trouble I induced some of my own people to disentangle the men from the horse, and then one of the attendents of the shrine explained to me that within the last ten years, four men who had despised the saint and had ridden over the bridge had been killed".

On their visit to the shrines, village folk (both men and women) could gaze on the corner of the shrine where the saint was said to have spend some period in seclusion. They bowed their heads and with the hands often inter-locked prey in a standing position to enjoin the blessing of the saint.

Not only the saints of the foreign origin were kept in high esteem but the shrines of the Rishis were equally kept in high admiration. The rural masses attached more significance to the shrines of the local "Rishis" than that of the saints of foreign
origin. According to the folk belief which is even now in circulation in the vernacular, village folk believe that whosoever visits three venerated shrines of Rishis at Bumzo, Tsrar and Muqam, he would be saved from the disastrous fire of the hell.

Yus getchi Bhumezu Tsrār Muqām,
Tas peth chu dozkhuṇ nār harām.54

A close association of the general folk with the Rishi saints seems to be governed more by the historical forces according to which these saints exclusively identified themselves with the common folk as against the foreign saints who for greater part remained associated with the ruling aristocracy55. For commoners they symbolised as a bridge between the temporal religion and its folk orientation, rooted firmly in history and the traditions. This is also attested by the fact that the major portion of our folk poetry eulogises the merits of the local Rishi saints as compared to the saints who had come from different parts of Persia and Central Asia56.

Without entering into further debate the fact remains that Kashmiris developed a religious psyche, which while accommodating the foreign influences remained rooted in the ethos and the aesthetic sensibilities of the society and the same is expressed in different folk melodies like “Rov” and “Watchun”.

Deshi Gandeni (Tying of Rags)

A remarkable feature in almost every sanctuary has been the practice of tying or attaching ribbons or pieces of cloth to the windows, iron gates and the decorated walls of the shrine structures. To quote Michael Winter, “In this way the saint according to the believer was literally bound to the obligation to help the pilgrim in
want. If the wish is fulfilled, the pilgrim in want accompanied by other family members and neighbour pay a special visit to the shrine, to offer the special prayers and gifts as a matter of gratitude. The pilgrim often promised such a present to the saint before hand on the condition of course that the latter helps him out.\(^{57}\)

The remarks expressed by Winter regarding the tying of rags applies truly to the religious behaviour of Kashmiris, who believe that by tying cords, it becomes obligatory for a saint to fulfill the cherished desires of the devotee. The tying of cords had become so symbolic and archetypal that it not only became a subject of folk literature but it even found expression in the contemporary creative literature of the period under reference. For instance Maqbool Kralwari, the nineteenth century Kashmiri poet says.

Me Tchonduk baghu bustānan.\(^{58}\)
Genjim deshe eshqe astānan.

(I made a mad search to find you,
in the beautiful gardens but in vain.
I flocked to the shrine of 'Love' to tie
the cords so that my desires get fulfilled).

The desh or white rags which are tied to the shrine are placed there by the supplicants for off-spring and till a child is born rag is left undisturbed.

**Nazr-U-Niyaz**

It constitutes as one of the major elements of saint worship not only in Kashmir but in other parts of the world as well. ‘Nazr’ as commonly practised is a self imposed practice which a person makes with the supernatural. The supplicant, for example a barren woman pledges to offer some thing valuable, if her wish is granted.
Her gift to the shrine is conditioned on the ground that if her wish is not granted, she had no obligation to fulfill her ‘nazr’. In other words, it is an exercise whereby hope is linked with action. The critics of the practice hold that the exercise acts as a challenge to the doctrine of divine will and predestiny. Contrary to this, ‘Niyaz’ is not determined by any self imposed condition but depends upon the goodwill of the supplicant. It may either be a follow up action, or a welcome gesture to foresee the successful culmination of the proposed desire or wise.

**Wasila**

Another common, though not essential element of ‘Nazr’ is the use of an intercassor (wasila) who is generally believed to have attained highest spiritual excellence through his exposition of character and merit. In Kashmir context, particularly during the period under discussion people were caught in such a situation of psycho-social crises, where no body could come forward to console the suffering masses. Hence, disillusioned at the discourteous behaviour of both official and religious classes, people flocked to the tombs of dead saints with the intention of receiving their help and aid in addressing their grievances before the supreme power i.e God. A careful study of ‘Manqabat’ belonging to the domain of folk literature, recited by the folk at the shrine and the mosques on Friday congregations and Urs days also reveal that in addition to gain a religious merit, people rushed to the shrines with the hope of being relieved of distresses and suffering caused by the unfriendly socio-political atmosphere. The same feeling is expressed in the following lines of a folk ‘Manqabat’.
We wait eagerly for your spiritual help,
O, Sultan, (Sheikh Makhdoom Hamza)
You are the true friend aid of unprivileged and oppressed.
We are reduced to the lowest depths of penury due to disease, poverty and oppression, Who will listen our woes?
Our hearts are broken by unending gloom and grief, Would you like to bring joy to our ailing souls.

The veneration of the saints often led the ignorant masses to resort to the practices which attracted the wrath of religious orthodoxy at the latter stage of our period of study. But the practices like moving repeatedly around the grave of a dead saint, smearing body and face with the dust at the shrine, making a bend of the body at the shrine entry point and keeping a face towards the grave of the saint at the departing time still continuous, though with little intensity even today. The adherence of the commoners to this practice may also be gleaned from this verse of a Kashmiri ‘Rov’ song.

Darwāze atchewun ser nemerevyzem
Zēny zem ati chei bed dargah.
(While you (devotee) enter the shrine gate bend your head in the direction of the saints grave, Be cautious that the celebrated saint is buried here).

As already stated that there exists a quite good number of shrines throughout the length and the breadth of the valley but there are some major shrines, of course, which due to their spiritual-religious and historical importance assumed very significant position in the annals of the history of Muslims and as such attract a large number of devotees. These include Hazratbal shrine, shrine of Sheikh Nur-ud-din, Shrine of
Mukhdoom Sahib, Shrine of Pir Dastager Sahib, Shrine of Baba Payam-ud-din, Shrine of Baja-Zain-ud-din, Shrine of Mir Sayyid Ali Hamadani at Khanqah and so on.

**Pir-Muridi**

Although sufi and Rishi saints owing to their strict adherence to Shariah, moral rectitude and lofty code of personal conduct had set an example for the immediate disciples and followers to emulate but this message of theirs with the passage of time was permeated by the wicked and ridiculous activities of a newly born class of mujawirs, Pir, bahaz, khadims etc, who happened to be more concerned with the material pursuits of this world of 'vanity fair'. With the passage of time, owing to their proximity to the shrine and the active participation in the management of these shrines, they succeeded in cultivating a spiritual connection with the devotees of the saints. These parasites would often undertake extensive field tours to the distant villages particularly at the time of harvest to collect the share of the produce in the name of the saint. The common masses, therefore, more at the behest of these religious heads, were conspicuously marked by the performance of a number of rites, rituals and ceremonies at various shrines and Khanqahs. During the first phase of our period of study, as revealed by the literary evidences, the religious class of 'Pirs' wielded a considerable clout in the religious environ of Kashmiri society. Any religious and social function was treated as incomplete in the absence of the family Pir. The names for the new offsprings in the family were suggested by the pir. Any smallest deviation on the part of the 'Murid' would invite the displeasure of the Pir. There are number of songs which suggest that the pir was considered a person gifted
with religious and spiritual merit. People, particularly in villages eagerly looked forward for the periodical visit of the 'Pir'. The same situation is penned down in the following lines of a Kashmiri folk song.

Pīre vele sōn, pīre vele sōn,
Chani yine, me pheliyum ha deketōn
Pīre vele sōn, pīre vele sōn.
Nike chum gamut kiya nundebōn,
Pīre vele sōn, pīre vele sōn.

(We eagerly wait for your arrival,
Your visit in the house will bring good fortune
for the family members.
A new baby had taken birth in our family,
Your visit in the house is most auspicious).

The belief in the relevance of 'Pirs' spiritual merit could well be ascertained gleaned from this Kashmiri proverb.

Pir ne bod yekeen bod

(The pir is not great. It is credulity which is great).

In the yet another Kashmiri proverb the acclaimed position of the Pir is recognised beyond doubt. The proverb goes as under.

"Pīr gō Mir"

(Pir deserves the first attention or pir is undoubtedly gifted with religious leadership qualities).

The proverb referred to above shows that in spite of the respect which was paid to the pirs, it was nevertheless fully recognised that they made great demands on the credulity of their followers. This is further substantiated by a long poem in Kashmiri under the title "pir nama" written by the nineteenth century Kashmiri poet, Maqbool Shah Kralwari. The poem portrays an illustrious picture of the devices and
the mechanations of these “pirs”, which exclusively aimed at fleecing the people even of their meagre possessions. Few lines of the poem 'Pir Nama' are given as under:

Wechan kuni jayi yud pyomut bemārā,
Karan shukra zi log zalas shikārā

Ne chus garmi hundei sard baduk
Yemis chui dekhī gomut nagaraduk.
Deri ches thaef gethi ne sahal bozun
Yemis yeti phok dines yelekal rozun
Qadam rety thei karan chuk zara para
Yemis balenuk karun gethi pire chara.
Yi hediye shubi dyon esy teth chi dindar,
Karb tameth ada vothi yam bemar.

(If a pir by chance comes to know about a sick man in the village,
He thanks to God, that a prey had been caught in the net.
The patient does not suffer from any physical ailment, he holds,
It is the result of an evil spirit.
It will take a long time to wade off the evil spirit,
Pir has to stay here for a long time to cure him.
The parents of the ailing person request the pir humbly to stay with them in the hour of distress,
Which ever amount we have to pay, we will readily pay,
But the patient should regain health).

Irrational as they were, people generally attributed disease, like small pox, malaria, epidemics, plague and other infectious dreaded diseases to the displeasure of saints and pirs. The pirs were the most demanded lot in the village during the troublesome days. They were invited by the rural folk to lead the special religious prayers. Incase of any infectious disease, there help was sought as the ailment was attributed to the evil spirits rather than the unhygienic rural surroundings. According to S.N.,Dhar, “The intenirant pirs, Faqirs and other so called holy mn put on spiritual
airs and sell charms to the believing villagers to protect their children, women and
cattle from the evil eye”76.

The presence of ‘Pir’ in the village was considered as the most blissful event.

Maqbool Kralwari graphically describes this situation. See for example.

Chi wātān ēqibat yeli jayi malum77,
Khushi khēdim karan az av makhdoom.
Semith nīky bedy yiwan sērī zano mared
Diwan edy moth khowaran wathrān chis garad
Qadam temy sendy buthis byon byon mathenī
Garibs kun keriv kath mehrbenī
Khata asi yat kormut os kuta
Meshith go bikulei asi eyvenez zanh
Saman seri peneny Pirsh chi endy endy
Tchoperi chis lagon Qowarban vendy vendy.

(When Pir steps in the dwelling of his Murid,
The latter expresses pleasure, as if the Makhdoom himself visited his house.
All young and old assemble and sit around the pir in civility,
Some press his feet, while some remove the dirt from his face.
People present touch the feet of the Pir,
and rub their faces with Pirsh clothes.
What wrong we had committed, which delayed your auspicious visit,
Then all the family members sit around the pir.
People present reaffirm their faith in the spiritual powers of the pir).

To quote Ishaq Khan,

“When small pox attacked children, Muslims would usually call their pirs and
pandits would perform some regular ceremonies”,78.

Khatm-Khwani

In complete uniformity with the Hindu tradition of reciting mantras or
‘Shaluks’ to avoid any unforeseen damage or disaster, the Muslims adopted a
practice according to which the Imam of the local mosque, family Pir and family
elders conversant with the Quran were invited to recite Naat, Mangabat and Sufi
treatises for the safety and the security of the family members from the disastrous effects of the natural calamities and other troubles. This unique practice was known as Khatm-i-Sharief.

The evidences suggest that the childless parents also held special sittings, where in the verses of the Quran and other sufi treatises were recited to invoke the aid of the sanctified souls. It is said that during the time of Maharaja Hari Singh (1926-1947) the Maharaja arranged for Khatm-khwani under the supervision of Hassan Shah Bandey (mutwali of the Ziarat of Dargah) for the birth of a son. the participants in the Khatm-khwani were served with wazwan and were paid one to two rupees each.

Some times the practice of arranging Khatam-i-Sharief was done with the purpose of making offering to the dead. The practice looked more akin to the Hindu practice of Sharad, which the Hindus practised with the intention of making offerings to the dead souls of their deceased family members.

Relic Worship

Grounded in tradition, people, inspite of entering into the fold of Islam, carried some of their ancestral religious traits. (no doubt with new Islamic orientation). We find expression of one such predominant trait in the form of relic worship in Kashmir. Kashmir, which once had served as one of the important centres of Buddhist learning upheld the tradition of preserving the relics, which immediately started after the death of Buddha among his followers. In India, and the neighbouring countries many stupas were raised where the relics of Lord Buddha were enshrined for the devotees to adore. The relic worship does not fall in line with the normative Islam. It constitutes as one of the major elements of folk religion in Kashmir. Hardly there be
any shrine in Kashmir which do not house either a relic of the saint buried there or the relic of some other celebrated Sufi saint. The relic worship in new Islamic colour started in Kashmir when Mir Sayyid Ali Hamadani, who is known in Kashmir as Bani-e-Islam (founder of Islam in Kashmir) brought with him two relics of Holy prophet (P.B.U.H). These were, 'Tent-pole' and 'Standard'. These relics are housed in Shah Hamdan mosque and during the period of our study, these relics were exhibited secretly during the night hours to ward off the evil effects of the natural calamities. In an acute situation of crises caused by recurring floods, famines, earthquakes, these relics were carried in a procession to the shrine of Shaikh Nur-ud-din at Tsrar, where these were exhibited before the general public.

In complete divorce to the Arab tradition, where the relics of the prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) were considered to be some sort of amulets collected and kept for private use, in Kashmir these relics are housed in shrines or in mosques. These relics mostly in the form of Khirqa (cloth) dastar (Turban) a aas-i-sharief (cane) khrav (cloak) alam (tent pole) moe-mubarak (holy hair) were and still are displayed mostly on the occasions of 'Urs' for the spiritual-religious nourishment of the devotees, who thronged into shrines in a large number. The public exhibition of these relics would also speak of the assimilation of the local Hindu-Buddhist practices in the popular Islam of Kashmir. It is not also to be wondered at, therefore, that a mere sight of the relics at congregations especially on the eve of Urs, cause the devotees to recite litanies and munagat in chorus. A special characteristic of the Kashmiri Muslim social behaviour at such gatherings is the focus on the object of veneration with folded hands, which undoubtedly suggests local influences on their
Pilgrims at the shrine of Nuruddin in Chrar-i-Shariff looking reverentially at the relics of the Rishia being exhibited on the eve of his anniversary. See Figs. 2(b c) also.

Borrowed from Kashmir's Transition to Islam
Folk dancers at the shrine of Baba Nasibuddin Ghazi.

Pilgrims with their offerings at the shrine of Baba Rishi.

Borrowed from Kashmir's Transition to Islam
mode of prayer. The following folk song shows the eagerness of the folk to have the
glimpse of the relics enshrined in different shrines of the valley.

Nabi sund tarvei dedār karevei dedār karevei
Darūd parevi darūd perveie dedār karevei
Dastgīr sebun tarevei dedār kaveei dedār karevei
Qurān tevi parvei Quran tevi Perevei dedār karīvea
Khāṇqah gethvei dedār kaveei, dedār karvei
Aurād parvei Aurād perevie, dedār karvei
Tsar kun kethvei dedār karvei dedār karvei
Dashi tevi gandevei dedār karvi dedār karvei
Zēn shah seben kethvei dedār karevi dedār karvei
Gowaphi tevi ethvei gowaphi tevi ethvei
Dedār karvei dedar karvei

(Let us throng to the shrine of Hazratbal
We will have the glimpse of the holy hair of the prophet there, while
seeing the relic, we will sing songs in praise of Prophet
Muhammad (P.B.U.H).
Let us visit to the shrine of Dastagīr Sahab
We will have the glimpse of saints relic
While seeing the relic, we will recite the verses of the holy Quran.
Let us rush to the shrine of Khanqah-i-Moula
we will have the glimpse of the saints relics there
While looking at the relic, we will recite ‘aurad’ there.
Let us flock to the shrine of Shrine of Sheikh Nur-ud-din at tsrar.
We will have the glimpse of saints relics there, we will use the
occasion for untying the rags, tied their earlier.
Let us move to the shrine of Zaina-ud-din we will have the glimpse
of the saints relic there
Let us avail the opportunity of entering into the cave of the saint).

**Naful And Animal Sacrifice**

The persistence of ancient beliefs in folk religion is well exemplified by the
collective exhibition of ‘Naful’ custom, which attained highest application during our
period of study- mainly due to the devastating natural calamities that occurred quite
frequently in Kashmir. According to the practice, people in the valley, in times of
natural calamities like famine, drought, flood, earthquake, fire, and plague organised special prayer processions and gatherings most particularly at Idgah, Srinagar, Tsurli-Sharief, Khanqah-i-Moula and at the Ziarat of Pir-Makhdoom sahab. In these Special semi-religious gatherings, people would confer their sins and invoke the aid of all saintly souls to convey their genuine sufferings in the realm of Almighty “Allah” People believed that these catastrophes were the products of their own sins, hence, unless the aid of the cultivated saint was not sought, there seemed no end in sight from the disastrous effects of these calamities. As per the literary records, people moved in big processions, carrying with them in most auspicious way the relics enshrined in different shrines, to the spot selected for mass prayers. After offering special prayers, relics were generally exhibited before the faithful. This immediately followed by loud weeping and Sobbing of the folk.

In a state where there was no provision to redress the distress of the masses, people had no other option in sight, but to initiate a devise which according to the tradition, provided them a chance to express their helplessness before the supreme creator. If we judge the practice in the light of then prevailing socio-political scenario, a researcher had no hesitation in holding that it was the highest type of mass protest against the inability and the callous attitude of the authorities, who inspite of being witness to the appealing heights of misery and pain, could do nothing concrete to relieve the Sufferings of the people. With no scheme of public Welfare in sight, people developed this scheme of socio-religions pathology which to them involved less degree of official warth and oppression. History bear ample evidence to the fact that who so ever during the period under review cultivated the courage to convey the
grievances to the authorities met with a severe fate. According to the records available, people demonstrated great interest in these exercises and same could be gleaned from these lines of a folk song.

İdgah terevei nofla pervei
Aāgas mangevei nofla pervei.
Chṛuthi shrani gethvei nofla pervei
Imdād mangavei nofla pervei
yeti pethi tervei, Alama tulevei
Tāpah teti Mangevei nofla parvei
Rut teti mangavei, dādyen mangvei
İdgah terevei nofla pervei.

(Let us proceed to İdgah to offer ‘Naful’ prayer,
We will present the petition of our woes there before the Almighty God. Maintaining full sanctity, we will press our heads down on the ground in the audience of Allah.
Let us carry the sacred relic in procession to the İdgah ground, while offering ‘nafal’ we will seek end to the torrential rains and clouds, It is there, that we prey for the health of the sick and ailing, Let us move to the İdgah for offering Naful prayer).

From the content of the song referred to above, it looks plausible to hold that amid extreme state of misery and helplessness and disillusioned at the rapacious and inhuman behaviour of the authorities and their official subordinates, people often sought refuge in the sanctuaries of the saints or in the open audience of God for seeking redresse to their sufferings and sorrows.

In addition to this Kashmiris had belief in offering animal sacrifice for keeping away evil eyes and to ward off any unforeseen ugly occurrence.

Not only in the distant past but the tradition continues, though with less intensity that when ever an average Kashmiri finds himself or any other family member in trouble, the folk expression “Amis theviv Zavas Żū ” out rightly comes on
his lips. At this hour of family trouble either a goat or a ram is sacrificed and the meat of the sacrificial is distributed raw among the people near by. In order to gain fertility, women folk hurriedly rush to the shrine of Baba Payam-ud-din at Baba Rish near picturesque Gulmarg and besides offering the animal gift, the childless ladies plaster the mud *dan* (stove) there with the hope that they become mothers in the near future. There is yet another folk saying in circulation "*Thepi thepi Kath karon*". This also stands for the instant sacrifice of a sheep in an hour of trouble for avoiding any bad occurrence to happen.

**Superstitions And Folk Beliefs**

Another folk trait observable in the collective religious behaviour of Kashmiris was their belief in the so-called mystic merit of the *shodas* (charas consumers). The elderly *shodas* were kept in high profile by the common folk for their sincerity, straightforwardness and unstained expositions. It was a popular belief that the prayers of shodas never go unheard and resultless in the realm of God. Therefore, in order to please them, it had become customary to send a portion of Kashmiri *wazwan* at the *shoda taki* for the use of shodas. Unlike "*Bhande doikher, shode doikher*" was considered more effective and result oriented. But the institution degenerated with the passage of time and the faqirs, mendicants and social parasites sought admission in these centres which made them the focus of public indignation. The eminent poet of 19th century Maqbool Kralwari ridicules the degradation of the institution in this verse.

*Charas tei bhange cheth yus nange pheri*
*Karan tas petch depen yi gei fekiri*
A person who resorts to aimless wandering after taking a smoke of charas is believed to be the true mediator to God.

Average Kashmiris' strict adherence to variety of superstitions dates back to the earliest time. Rooted in the collective folk psyche, it stood firmly against any religious changeover that Kashmir experienced at various intervals of its history. No doubt, at the dawn of the present century, efforts were made to eradicate an average Kashmiri's belief in superstitions as these were dubbed as irrational, irreligious and Unscientific. But its deep imprints on the canvas of Kashmiri psyche could not be erased altogether. Its continuance in the new scheme of religious orientation, was further necessitated by the selfish Muslim religious class known as 'Pirs' who found in this un-Islamic practice a ready made source for their sustenance. Commenting on identical traits of popular Islam and Hindu Brahminism, Ishaq Khan remarks, "It would be very difficult in certain cases to make a difference between a Hindu and the Muslim. One such striking similarity is observed in the practice according to which both Hindus and the Muslims keep the natural springs in high veneration. During my field survey I had an occasion to observe some elderly Muslim women pouring milk and unhusked rice in the spring at Zewan Khrew. While replying to my series of questions, these ladies expressed that we had heard from the elders that the seed of the saffron was first traced out in the spring, hence we believe it our moral duty to keep the spring in high veneration. By pouring milk and unhusked rice, we expect rich harvest in the future.

A related theme addressed as earlier, has been quoted by Gh.Nabi Khanyari in his Wajeez-ul-Tawarikh. According to lore in Devsar paragana there was a spring
called 'Pahhu' who soever was willing to know the prospects of his future, filled an earthen vessel with boiled rice and closed its mouth having written his name on its top and threw it into the spring. After lapse of one year, on the specific day if the rice was found fragrant and warm, far, the year was considered to be prosperous, but if it was filled with clay or mud, it was considered as a sign of bad omen.

Living in the environ of ignorance and illiteracy, Kashmiris generally attributed the out break of epidemics to the displeasure of supernatural objects than seeking its origin in the uncongenial and unhygienic physical surrounding. Therefore, different diseases were associated with different deities and folk characters, like Shutely Bed, Howlhej Bed, Musil Bed, etc. In order to be relieved of the fatal ailments like cholera, small pox and other water born disease, special meals were prepared as an offerings for these supernatural characters referred to above.

In the similar manner, when people developed certain kinds of dermetological diseases they, instead, of seeking advice from Hakims would go to certain selected spots, and rubbed the affected organs of their bodies, with mud.

Our Kashmiri folk literature is replete with the references which indicate that not to talk of the celebrated saints, ignorant people even sought the services of beggars, mendicants, Hindu yogi and Faqirs for the redressel of their material losses. A Kashmiri proverb:

Mety sund dop gō balayān thop

(An utterance of an insane is enough to lessen the affects of God's wrath)
Like Kashmiri Pandits, Muslims of Kashmir also recognised some signs for supposed good and some signs for supposed bad. For example both Muslims and Hindus even today treat the continuous barking of dog as a bad omen. In a similar fashion an owl sitting during day at the roof edge was considered as a bad omen. Both solar and lunar eclipses were taken as a sign of any unforeseen trouble or misfortune. A Kashmiri proverb

"Brer phengeny" (purring of cat) stands for unforeseen trouble or discomfort.

During the chilly winter nights, when abundance of snowfall parlayed the entire village life in Kashmir, people living near dense forests with variety of wild animals developed a kind of fear – psychosis, which forced the people to believe in the existence of ghastly super natural characters like, veivoph, Bram Bram Chowak, Rants, Dens, Yetch, and others of like nature. We very frequently come across such characters in scores of our folk storys.

In the footsteps of their Pandit brethre, Kashmiri Muslims treated certain numerals like 3,13,23 as inauspicious. Untill very recently no social function was conducted on these dates of Christian or Muslim calender. Muslims also did not effect their marriage contracts during the months of ‘safar’ and ‘Muharam’.

Kashmiri Pandits whose socio-religious behaviour is generally regulated and governed by the text of the ‘Nilmat Puran’ were and still continue to be the firm believers of superstition, witchcraft and other supernatural beliefs. For example the sneezing in the beginning of the work was and is considered inauspicious. Against this proposition, sneezing at the time of going to bed, the chance sight of cow, seeing a
child or a curd while leaving for work were considered auspicious. The vision of transparent water, cooked rice, breads and grapes were believed to augment good luck. Dreaming of copper coins, eating of walnuts were considered signs of sad event in future.

In spite of different popular traits, seen in the collective religious behaviour of Kashmiri Muslims, one can not altogether ignore an average Kashmiri Muslim’s faith in the fundamentals of Islam as revealed in the Holy Quran. They firmly believe in the concept of unity of God, The Quran, final book of revelation, the finality of Prophethood and the day of the Judgement.

The impressions we come across in the day today religious behaviour of Kashmiri Muslims in fact, constitute the popular cultural traits, which the neo-Muslims retained in a broader Islamic framework in the beginning of the 14th century. The leaders of Alh-i-Hadith movement, in spite of their vehement criticism, failed to convince the Muslims about the futility of the popular practices. The followers of the movement failed to understand that these popular shade of the religion is always fashioned by the cultural heritage of the people and the their emotional attachment to some of the customs should be judged more from a socio-cultural prism rather than the principles of the elite religion.

A careful study of Kashmiri folk poetry reveal that Kashmiri Muslims strictly believe in the fundamentals of Islam and the same is expressed in the number of folk songs. Not to talk of religious exercises even recreational pursuits like Wanvun and Rov are initiated with the words in praise of God.
Bismillah kerith hemevei venevuneye,
Sahiban anjam onuyey.
Az hei cham Hazrati Haq senz yerî,

Peri chenis iqbales.
Khanemej kyazi chak harenî,
Sag di haqi subheniyे,

(We start the wânvun with the name of God-the most merciful and beneficent)
Let God guide us to the enlightened destiny)
I can not express my thanks for the bounties of God
with the help of God, I am destined to good luck.
Why are you weeping my sole daughter?
Have a courage, God is at your back.

The Hindus of the valley generally known as Kashmiri Pandits are the strict followers of ritualistic Brahminism. Their religious behaviour is regulated by ceremonial prepositions embodied in the earliest extant socio-religious document popularly known as 'Nilmat Puran'.

Groomed in the mystic surrounding of Kashmir, the Pandits of Kashmir had always been bewitched by every fascinating natural object. Hence, they cultivated a religious behaviour, according to which every national object including the entire land of Kashmir possessed religious merit. This belief of Kashmiri Pandits has been recognised by Muslim scholars and historians who had a chance to visit Kashmir. According to the author of 'Ayeen-i-Akbari': “The Hindus regard all Kashmir as holy land. Forty five places are dedicated to "Mahadev" and sixty four to 'Bishu', three to "Brahma" and twenty two to "Durga". In seven hundred places there are carved figures of snakes, which they worship107. Vigne is of the opinion that there were five principal deities which were worshipped by the Hindus, these were 'Shiva', "Surya", 
“Ganapati”, ‘Bhawani’ and ‘Vishnu’. The votaries of Shiva were more numerous than those of the rest put together. The votaries or Bhagats of Shiv were distinguished by the horizontal mark of Kessar on their forehead whereas the votaries of Vishnu marked their forehead vertically.

Kashmiri Pandits, as is evident from their religious application, may be termed mostly as Shiv devotees. Whatever might have been the origin of Shivism in Kashmir, there is no doubt that Shiva as a popular deity was widely worshipped (as it is even at present) from a remote period. There were number of Shiv temples, where the image of the Shiv was adored by the devotees and the ‘Lingam’ worshipped.

The cult of Vishnu also existed in the valley from a very early period. With the accession of Karkotas to the throne of Kashmir in 7th century A.D., Vishnu, the adorned deity of the family, came to occupy a prominent position in the Kashmir pantheon.

In addition to Shiva and Vishnu, there are many other minor Hindu gods and goddesses whom the Kashmiri Pandits worshipped. These include Ganisha, Surya, Agni, Lakshmi, Durga etc. Ganisha was, one of the popular gods of the valley of Kashmir worship of ‘Shakti’, was also widely prevalent. In the worship of goddess Durga, who is considered to be an embodiment of Shakti, animal sacrifice played an important part. Goddess ‘Sharda’ was one of the most celebrated dities of the valley. She was nothing but Shakti embodying three manifestations. All these gods and
goddesses mentioned above are still worshipped by the Hindus of Kashmir with complete faith and devotion.

The goddess 'Ragniya'\^{112} whose temple is situated at Tulmul, Ganderbal, is held in high veneration by the Kashmiri Pandits. They abstain from taking meat on the day of their visit to the temple. To appease the goddess ‘Ragnia’ milk, sugar and rice is thrown into the spring as offerings\^{113}.

The goddess ‘Shitla Mata’ was invoked when some one was attacked by small-pox. The offering of sheep, goats silver and gold was made to get rid of this deadly disease. Sharika Devi, another local deity was also regard as very sacred by the Hindus of Kashmir. Untill very recently Kashmiri Pandits flocked every morning to the temple to have the blessings of the goddess.

Hindu worship was not confined to the propitiation of gods and demigods only; great and holy men were also reverenced both during their lives and long after their death. Some Muslim saints like Nur-ud-Din, Dastagir Sahab, Baba Payam-ud-Din, Baba Zaina-ud-Din, Batmalloo Sahib were not only held in high esteem but their shrines were visited on certain days by Kashmiri Pandits.

The Mahatmya literature embodied in various Hindu Puranas bear evidence to the fact that Hindus from the remotest times attached great importance to the pilgrimage of the religious sites. In Kashmir, there are number of places, which are attended by pilgrims not only from Kashmir but from the different parts of India. The prominent among them are Amarnath Cave\^{114}, Gangabal Lake\^{115}, Mattan\^{116} and others.
In order to possess the religious merit, Kashmiri Pandits selected certain spots in the valley as substitutes for Ganga and other sacred places situated in different parts of northern India. On these selected spots, Kashmiri Pandits performed certain death ceremonies of their deceased family members\textsuperscript{117}. 
REFERENCES


5. Ibid.


7. Bulbul Shah was the first Sufi saint who arrived in Kashmir and took his abode at Aali Kadal on the right bank of the river vitasta. His original name was Syed Sharaf-ud-Din. He was a Musavi Sayyid from Turkistan. He came to Kashmir in the reign of King Suhedeva (1301-20). He is said to have played his role in the conversion of Rinchana to Islam. For his oratory skill, he was given the title of Bulbul Shah Baba Daud Miskati, *Asrar-ul-Abrar*, f.45(a), Muhammad Azam Diddamari, *Waqiat-i-Kashmiri*, p.30.

8. Ishaq Khan, *Kashmirs Transition to Islam*, p.24. "Islam did not cause abysmal destruction to ancient Kashmiri culture, but guided the course of its development in such a manner that it eventually emerged out of the narrow waters of Brahminism into the broad sea of Islamic humanism".


11. A celebrated Kashmiri poetess of fourteenth century Kashmir. She fought vehemently against Brahminical orthodoxy and is acknowledged as one of the distinguished champions of Kashmiris Religio-cultural identity. For details see - J. L. Koul *Lai Ded*. Cultural Academy.

12. Famous Kashmiri Saint and poet who was born towards the close of 14th century near village Qaimoh of Tehsil Kulgam. He was a founder of indigenous 'Rishi' mystic order of Kashmir. *Kuliyat-i-Sheikh-ul-alam*, (Ed.) M.L. Saqi,
Within the fold of Islam, it was a movement of local mystics. Sheikh Nur-ud-Din was the founder of this indigenous order of Muslim mystics. (Rishi Silsila) Kashmir is said to have been the abode of 'Rishis' long before the advent of Islam and this won for Kashmir the title of 'Reshy Wer' or 'Rishi Vatika'. For full details see unpublished Ph.D. thesis of Rashid Nazki, The Historical Background of Rishi Movement. Ishaq Khan, Op.Cit., pp.37-53; Shik-ul-Alam, Ek. Mutla, As. M. Asad-ullah. pp.27-28


17. Parimoo, *A History of Muslim Rule in Kashmir*, p.34.


21. Ibid., 158.


24. Ibid., p.217.


27. It is an invocatory prayer compiled by Mir Sayyid Ali Hamdani. It is recited aloud in chorus by the faithful immediately after the morning prayers.

29. Ibid., p.68.
30. Ibid., p.4.
32. Farooq Fayaz, *Cultural Perspective of Kashmir Identity*.
33. This folk song was revealed to me by a lady from Zaina Kadal locality of Srinagar. Her name was Moghli. She was introduced to me by Nissar Ahmad, a cloth merchant in Gada Kocha, Zaina Kadal, Srinagar.
37. M. Y. Teng; Introduction to ‘Sheeraza’ Sheikh-ul-Alam Number, Culture Academy, p.3.
38. Unpublished folk song, Collected from Raja Banoo of Awantipora village some twenty nine kilometers from Srinagar on the Jammu Srinagar National Highway.
40. Ibid., p.280.
41. Mir Sayyid Ali Hamadani, Popularly known as Amir-i-Kabir or Shah-i-Hamdan was one of the most remarkable personalities of the 14th century Muslim World. He hailed from Hamadan and played a significant role in bringing the Kashmiri Hindus under the fold of Islam. For details see Mir Sayyid Ali Hamadani - Life and Works, Mufti Maqbool.
42. The shrine of the saint is at Tsrar. For upholding the cause of the down trodden, the saint has been given the title of ‘Alamdar’. See also, *Kashmiri Zuban Aur Shairi*, Ab. Ahad Azad, p.199. *Keshiri Adbuk Twarikh*, A. K. Rehber, p.170.
43. Baba Rishi is the popular name of Baba Payam-ud-Din. He was one of the disciples of Sheikh Zain-ul-Din. He is reported to have belonged to a rich family and is said to have severed all worldly relations and turned a faqir. The saint died in 1475 A.D. at Ranbuah *Tarikh-i-Hassan*, Vol.III, p.112.
44. Zia Singh, after his conversion to Islam came to be known as Zain-ud-Din. He held an important position among the disciples of Nur-ud-Din. His shrine at Aishamuqam on the road to Pahalgam is held in high veneration by the rural folk. According to Lawrence, the shrine is much respected by the boatmen of Kashmir, who take their children (there) and cut off their first lock of hair. If this
was done else where, the child would die or became blind.” Walter Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p.288.


47. Unpublished folk song, I collected it from Abdul Khaliq Thukroo of Ramnagar Shupian - a village near famous Ahrabal Fall.


54. Three Shrines of prominent Rishi Saints namely Sheikh Nur-ud-Din, Baba Payam-ud-Din and Baba Bam-ud-Din.


61. Such manqabats are recited by devotees in groups on annual ‘Urs’ days at the shrine of Makhdoom Sahib. Since the song does not bear the name of its poet, I included it in the domain of folk literature. The literary piece is not published in any of the Kashmiri literary history.

63. The shrine of Hazratbal excells all shrines in merit. The ‘Dargah’ houses the sacred hair of Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H). Kashmiris refer to it by various titles such as Aasar-i-Sahrief, Madinat-ul-Sani, Dargah Sharief etc. The shrine is some ten kilometers away from Lal Chowk on the Western shore of famous Dal Lake. For details see *Keshur Encyclopedia*, p.13. *Tariekh-i-Hasan*, pp.91-92. *Muslim Shrines of Kashmir*, G. H. Mir.


65. The Shrine of *Pir Dastagir*, which stands at Khanyar Srinagar contains the holy relic (hair) of Hazrat Abdul Qadir Jeelani, the founder and the great saint of Qadir! order. Pir means mentor and ‘dastagir’ means the person who holds the hands or supports the supplicant. The saint never visited Kashmir but his scholarly and spiritual merit brought him so much of reputation that people of all countries and communities came to hold him in high esteem. For details see *Tarikh-i-Kabir*, Miskeen Mohi-ud-Din. *Khilasat-ul-Tawerikh*, (Urdu), Mirza Saif-ud-Din Keshur Encyclopedia, p.169.


67. Custodians of the shrines who were entitled to the part of the shrine offerings.


76. S. N. Dhar, Folk Tales of Kashmir, Introduction, Also see Page No’s. 21, 75, 89.


79. A special religious gathering in which the services of the pirs, Mujawirs and the local imam are sought to recite the ayats of the Holy Quran, Naats, Manaqabats and the extracts of the mystic texts. After the completion of the exercise the participants are fed with sumptuous feat and are also pleased with some cash payments. The audience is generally organised to prey for the everlasting peace of a deceased family member. The exercise is also conducted to ward of the evil effects of any bad occurrence.


81. Sir, M. Monier Williams, Bhuddism in its connexion with Brahminism and Hinduism, p.173.


85. G. Nabi Khanyari, Wajeez-ul-Tawarikh, f.66(b).


89(a) Since the period under reference experienced a recurring roll of natural calamities in the form of earthquakes, floods, famines and epidemics like cholera, small-pox etc. etc. the people of the valley instead of seeking solutions
approached the shrines for riddance from natural calamities. The practice of visiting the religious place on such occasions led Lawrence to state that “religion of Islam is too abstract to satisfy their superstitious cravings and they turn from the mean priest and the mean mosque to the pretty shrine of carved wood”. Whenever there was a failure of rain, people visited Makhdoom Sahib’s shrine in processions from all parts of the valley. The main feature of the practice was for the people to carry earthen pitches and pails filled with water which they poured into the pond near the shrine. For details see, Khanyari, *Wajeez-ut-Tawarikh*, f.66(b), f.616. Lawrence, Op.Cit., *Kashmiri Handbook*, p.288. Duke, p.123.


91. On one such occasion, when people of Bandipora attempted to place their grievances before the authorities, it is said that the leaders of the procession were drowned alive in the Wulur Lake. See P. N. Bazaz, *Inside Kashmir, Kashmiris Struggle for Freedom*, p.202.

92. Unpublished folk song sung for me by Khateeja of Tujr village from the Baramullah district of Kashmir.

93. A close review of the institution suggest that it was more an escapist occupation than a daring trail to protest against the oppressive practices of the sikh and Dogra officialdom. By resorting to *charas* or opium consuming exercises these people thought themselves as relieved and freed from the strains and the stresses caused by the tyrannous treatment of the officials and the clutches of extreme poverty.

94. In Srinagar city during the period of our study, there existed number of *Shoda Takias*. Few prominent among these were the ‘Takia’ at Shora Khan Gaw Kadal, Fethkadal and Nowhatta. People addicted to ‘Bhang’ and ‘Charas’ would sit there idly for hours together and shared the smoke in a systematic way. This information was given to me by one Khazir Muhammad of Bagwanpora Sathu, who himself happened to be the regular visitor to the Shoda Takia of Gaw Kadal.

95. The collective prayers of these shodas was considered more effective than the prayers of folk actors like ‘Bhands’. During the course of their folk performances, ‘Bhands’ often stretched their hands up and sought the blessings of God for the audience around. This gesture of ‘Bhands’ was taken as a trade trick by the spectators to grab money from the people. Unlike this, *Shoda*
*doikter* (prayers made by shodas) was accepted pure and thus people believed that these prayers of shodas would not go unheard in the realm of God.


98. Fish cultured in natural springs are not taken both by the Hindus and the Muslims. This is also conveyed through this Kashmiri proverb:

\begin{quote}
Nage gade chi wetchi halal te kheni haram.
\end{quote}

(A fish from the spring is only an object to see at. It is sinful to taste them).

In vernacular the spring is known as ‘Nag’ and Kashmiris veneration of the springs had been attributed to the Naga worship, which once formed the major religious belief in Kashmir. See for detail W. crook, *popular Religion in Northern India. Rajtarangni*, (Stein) Tr. Introduction. *Nitmat Purana* (Tr.) Ved Kumari Ghai, vol.I, (Religious beliefs).


100. People believed that the epidemics were caused due to the displeasure of some deities or folk characters. In order to please them and to avoid the fatal consequences of the epidemics like cholera, small-pox, and others of like nature, people observed number of ceremonies.


103. These are some of the supernatural characters found in Kashmiri folk lore. For details see Margoob Banihali’s article “Some supernatural Characters in Kashmiri Folk Lore; Published in Kashmir folklore studies, (Ed.) Gulshan Majeed.


105. M. I. Khan, *Experiencing Islam*, pp.93, 47.

106. The dawn of twentieth century ushered a new era in the history of Kashmir due to the modern means of communication and transport which facilitated contacts of people with the outside world. Those nurtured in religious milieu in the literary centres in India brought with them new tenants and doctrines hither to unknown to Kashmiri Muslim. One Hussain Shah Batku, who latter on became the founder of ‘*Ahl-i-Hadith*’ movement in Kashmir appeared on the socio-

107. Quoted by Ferguson. Also see P. N. Tickoo, *Story of Kashmir*, p.255.


110. Ibid., p.157.

111. Saqi, *Keshir Luke Beth* (Kashmiri Folk songs), Vol.4, p.216. Aatish, Keshir Luke Beth (Kashmiri Folk songs), Vol.7, p.27. There are dozen of local deities whom Kashmiri Pandits held in high veneration. In the valley number of temples have been dedicated to these deities. For full details see, "*Kashmiri Pandits*", Anand Koul Bamzai.

112. It is one of the most venerated temples of Kashmiri Pandits. Kashmiri Pandits flock to this place in great numbers. People abstain from taking meat before going to visit the temple.


114. It is one of the most famous pilgrimage sites in Kashmir, situated on the height of 13000 ft., pilgrimages all over the country flock to the cave to have the glimpse of Shiv image of ice formation. The cave is said to have been discovered by a Muslim shepherd of Malik family of Anantnag. The holy cave is visited every year on 28th of July. For details, The Beautiful Vale, Samsar Chand, Ganesh Lal, Op.Cit., p.20. Vigne, Op.Cit., Vol.n, pp.8-10.

115. It is the beautiful spot in the Sindh Valley. According to the Hindu belief the sacred river Ganges originated from this place, so it is held sacred like the Ganges. The water of this lake is considered very holy and is carried by the pilgrims for use as an equivalent of the Ganges water. After cremating their relatives, Kashmiri Hindus took the ashes for immersion in the water of the Gangabal. Vague, Op.Cit., pp.151-152.

116. In the village of Mattan, in district Anantnag, there is deep reservoir fed by holy fountains. To the Hindus of Kashmir it is as sacred as Gaya or Kurkshetra. People used to assemble here for purpose of ablutions, the first hair cut of their children and for other religious rites. The votaries visiting the shrine were made to sign the register after paying some cash to the priests. Ganesh Lal, Op.Cit., p.26.