



Role Of Socio- Religious Reform Movements Among Muslims In Kashmir

Showkat Ahmad Dar

Teacher, Sociology At Govt.College For Women,M.A.Road,Srinagar,J&K, India

Abstract:

The study of religious phenomena has been the prime focus of sociology right from its emergence ,The Elementary Forms of Religious Life by Emile Durkheim or The Protestant Ethic and The Sprit of Capitalism by Max Weber, for example, have been the great source of inspiration for the latter sociologists and students of sociology to further such researches on religion from sociological perspective. Subsequent to this trend,this paper also tries to identify and analyse critically the various socio-religious movements among the muslims of Kashmir.The process of Islamization in Kashmir has not been ,as it is generally believed,fully successful at its first instance, because the strong Hindu greater tradition has been influential and impactful on little tradition (common masses converted to Islam) therefore the various types of religious movements have emerged among the Muslims at different stages of post Islamic period in order to educate the common masses converted to Islam and subsequently remove the Hinduistic traits from the social fabric of Kashmir. These movements have remained successful to greater extent insofar their role in weakening the hegemony of Muslim priestly elite class is concerned, in this backdrop the movements have been quite successful in linking the great chunk of muslim youth to the Islamic literature(Quran,Hadith & Fiqh) ,however these movements have virtually failed to completely wipeout the roots of religio-cultural impact of other groups especially that of Hinduism from the common masses.

Key words: *Ahl-i-Hadith, Anjuman, Islam, Jama 'at, musalmans,sufi*

1.Introduction

The valley of Kashmir has been acclaimed as the paradise on earth. From earlier times, Kashmir has been a meeting ground of many a cultures. It became the originator of the Mahayana Buddhism in the first century A.D. Buddhist culture was replaced by the Shiva culture in about 5th century A.D. The philosophy propounded by the Kashmiri Hindus is known as the Kashmiri Shiva philosophy or Kashmiri Shivaism. However, with the arrival of Muslim saints especially from Central Asia, major portion of Kashmiri society embraced Islam and Kashmir became the Muslim Majority Society. Thus, the influence of Islamic culture remained ever greater. The first name associated with the propagation of Islam is that of Bulbul Shah who is said to have visited Kashmir first in the time of King Shahdeva, the predecessor of Rinchan. He was Syed from Turkistan and succeeded in the efforts in converting Rinchan- renamed as Sdur-ud-Din in the early 14th century. It was only with the arrival of Mir Syed Ali Hamadani (R.A) and his associates that Islam spread throughout length and breadth of Kashmir. In this way, the Kashmiris are the creators of a composite culture, which has elements of Semitic, Shiavist, and Buddhist within a predominant Islamic paradigm.¹

Out of all the three regions, Kashmir region has 97% muslim majority population, Jammu and Ladakh have Hindu and Budhist majority respectively². This remarkable change in the religious demography of Kashmir occurred especially during the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries following mass conversion to Islam. It should be mentioned that except for a few immigrants the predominant majority of Kashmiri Muslims are converts from Buddhism and Hinduism.² What is, however, remarkable about the spread of Islam in Kashmir is that conversions did not follow any military occupation of the valley by the Muslims.³ Despite mass conversion of Kashmiri to Islam so many practices remained associated with them making Lawrence to make following statement:

The Sunni Musalmans do not strike me as zealous or earnest in the profession of their faith.....I do not base my ideas as to the laxness of Kashmiris in religious duties merely on my own observations. Holy men from Arabia have spoken to me with contempt of the feeble flame of Islam which burns in Kashmir, and the local Mullahs talk with indignation of the apathy of the people in times of earthquake and cholera the Kashmiris falls to his prayers and display a wonderful activity in repairing shrines and Mosque fall into ruins and pays very little attention to the

Mullah.....the indifference shown in the matter of Mosque and Mullah may be accounted for by the fact that the Kashmiri Sunnis are only Musalmans in name.⁴

Although Islam is a religion with a complete scheme for the temporal and spiritual worlds, but the pioneers in the formative phase of the history of Islam in Kashmir in the 14th century reconciled itself to and without disturbing the socio-cultural fabric of the society, a legacy of the Hindu-Buddhist religions. As a result of the compromising attitude especially demonstrated by highly spiritual founder Syed Mir Ali Hamdani,^{R.A} the neo-converts were allowed to retain some of the traditions and customs of their erstwhile culture which in due course of time were assimilated in the religious life of the Kashmiri Muslims. 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. However, the social dynamics of the saints' role was lost in the latter-day development of the shrines as centers of charlatanism, ignorance, superstition and fatalism. Such a development was bound provoke long and bitter controversy over the beliefs of the people who held the Sufis in high esteem even to the point of worshipping them. But this message of their with the passage of time was permeated by the wicked and ridiculous activities of a newly born class of Mujjawirs, Pirs, Babaz, Khadimsetcthis was a global phenomena with Tasawuf everywhere it seems to be an instrument of purification but degenerated into superstition etc. who were more concerned with the material pursuits of this world of 'vanity fair' hence could be placed in the category of Ulama-i-Su.⁵ (those Ulema who try to tamper with Quran and Sunnah as they are influenced by materialistic lust and hence dubbed as Ulema-i-Su)

Every society which is highly religious in character, seeks to recover itself from the morass of ignorance, degradation and decadence has by taking resort to reform itself through the socio-religious reform movements. Ever since the advent of man in the world, he has been making efforts to improve the standard of his life socially and economically. Change in the social pattern of the community is absolutely essential because social condition do not remain static for ever those who do not change with the changing circumstances loose life battles.

The life conditions of the Kashmiri's were as bad and as harsh in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as in other parts of Sub-Continent. The Kashmiri's suffered from social ills which had neither sanction of any religion nor could those be allowed to exist by any

norms of humanity. The most horrible social evils and practices were the enormous waste of money on marriage ceremonies,⁶ death ceremonies outside the religious circle, corruption, drugs, moral degradation and similar other evils. Superstition was an integral part of the social life. God men and astrologers had acquired an important position in the society and they were exerting great influence on the personal and corporate life of the masses. Moreover, religion was under the complete domination of an ignorant and corrupt priestly class. To maintain their power and domination over the people, the priestly classes were interested in keeping the people ignorant and fed them on superstitions and fears.

2.Prominent Muslim Reform Movements In Kashmiri Society

The wave of change and reform had been sweeping over, most parts of sub-continent for quite some time before it reached Jammu & Kashmir. Here it is very relevant to note that one factor that stood between the state and the reform was the peculiar geographical position of Kashmir. However, the establishment of the Dogra rule⁷ brought Kashmir close to Jammu and subsequently to the Punjab. All these efforts resulted in bringing Kashmir close to the other parts of India. The net result was Kashmiri society got influenced by the Socio-Religious reform movements like Ahl-i-Hadith, Aligarh, and Deoband etc. Social condition in Kashmir too called for a change and by the end of 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries the urge for change began to become irresistible. Since the beginning of the 20th century there was a phenomenal rise in the number of reform movements which aimed at socio-religious transformation of Kashmir society. It was these movements which brought Kashmir on the anvil of modern age more especially exposed the muslim community to modern education.

The Anjuman-i-Nusrat-ul-Islam Srinagar was the first response of Kashmiri Muslims to simultaneously challenge the three hundred year old foreign domination, religious degradation, social evils and come to terms with the emerging socio-political world order dictated by modern scientific principles and technological achievements. The leaders of the Anjuman realized that social reforms were badly needed in order to achieve all round improvements in the life of the Muslims of Kashmir. The leaders of the Anjuman thought that social reform and economic progress go together. Various social evils had crept into Kashmiri Muslims which had to be eliminated.

The earliest and most important name who realized the need for social reform is that of MirzaGhulamMustafa, he was a Kashmiri aristocrat. He took upon this task as early as 1911.⁸ During a meeting held on 5th October 1922, the Anjuman decided to identify and prepare a list of all evil customs prevalent in various sections of Muslim community. The task was assigned to MunshiAsadullah. Subsequently a social reform committee was formed. At a meeting held in December 1925 at the residence of MirzaGhulam Mustafa, the following reforms were recommended.

- “Thefaitha ceremony (memorial service for dead) held on Friday’s be abolished.”
- Only two dishes of meat and two dishes of vegetables be served to guests on weddings.
- The parents of the bride and the bridegroom should give a dower worth 50 to 400 rupees only.
- Only the relatives of the concerned should be invited to a feast on the occasion of the circumcision ceremony. The barber’s fee for performing the circumcision operation should be met by the parents alone and no invite should be allowed to contribute it.
- Evil customs concerned with marriage such as sending Khabars (paying a courtesy call to the bride and taking gift in cash or kind) to the in-laws of a daughter be stopped.⁹

In this way, Anjuman tried to prevent Kashmiri Muslims from incurring extravagant expenditure on marriage and death ceremonies. People at that time were deeply involved in extravagant expenditure and poor had to borrow money on interest to meet out such expenses. The Mirwaiz and members of the Anjuman were required to vigorously preach against these social evils and customs. A pamphlet entitled Datur-ul-Amal,¹⁰ was published by Anjuman in which main points of the reform programme were made transparently clear. The Movement for a quite long time got success in achieving its goal, but at the end of the day, Kashmiri society once gain fell in the same evils, against whichAnjuman has raised its voice.

3.JAMIAT-E-AHL-I-HADITH

The next reformative movement among the Kashmiri Muslims was Ahl-i-Hadith movement in Kashmir raised a strong voice against tomb-worship, grave worship and over glorification and veneration of Sufi's and Saints.¹¹The Ahl-i-Hadith attacked the un-Islamic practices associated with the visiting of shrines in Kashmir, yet their movement brought to the surface certain vital issues of crucial importance. For them great majority of the people in the valley, though Muslims by faith, needed to be converted afresh in view of the dichotomy existing between the normative Islam and Islam as practiced by Kashmir, or for that matter by various other groups of the sub-continent. In their crusading zeal against the shirk associated with the veneration of saints and shrines, the Ahl-i-Hadith, however, failed to understand that almost all standards of thought and conduct of the great mass of the unlettered Muslims had been influenced by their ancestral ties with shrines because of their social and economic importance apart from the aura of holiness created around the premises of the shrines.¹²However, this fundamentalist trend, and its direct attack towards shrines and Sufis touch the emotions of common masses of Kashmiri society, who had strong faith over them, hence could not attract more masses, secondly the Ahl-i-Hadith's started constructing separate Mosques, which kept them away from common masses. The result was that it could not work on social front at a large scale.

4.Ajuman-i-Tabligh

The Anjuman-i-Tabligh-ul-Islam or what may be designated as the traditionalist trend is a non political organization in the state of Jammu & Kashmir and is committed to the dissemination of Islamic theology, Hanfia jurisprudence and Sufi way of life.¹³The Anjuman was established with a view to counter the doctrinal fundamentalism of Ahl-i-Hadith. The Anjuman has been fighting on two fronts in its more than 70 years old struggle.¹⁴It has vigorously opposed the doctrinal persuasion of Ahl-i-Hadith and also argued against political programme of Ahl-i-Hadith .It is a general perception of common masses that Anjuman has been used by ruling political parties which controlled most of the Shrines through Muslim Auqaf Trust (now Waqf Board) and made those associated with Shrines dependent upon the remuneration of the trust.

5.Jamaat-i-Islami

The Jamaat-i-Islami started out as movement of cultural and religious rejuvenation based on the spirit that the world belongs to Allah ,hence only rule of Allah is the valid rule. The movement was founded by Syed Abu-ul-AalaMaudadi ,one of the most influential and prominent Islamic Scholar of Indian sub-continent during 20th century. The target of this movement was the individual as well as the state. But, it was through the individual that society at large would be Islamized, setting the stage for the establishing of a true Islamic socio-political order. The roots of an ethics as a transformative force lie in the nature of Islam itself, a religion that is permeated with moral examples, especially from the lives of the final Prophet (P.B.U.H) of Islam and his four caliphs. The religious law of Islam is the codification of the injections of Holy Quran and the practice of the Prophet who realized his life more perfectly than other humans ever could the revealed truth of the Quran.¹⁵

Maudadiheld to the belief that societies are built structured and controlled from the top down by conscious manipulation of those in power.¹⁶ He was of the opinion that in Islam the religious, the political, the economic, and the social are not separate systems; they are different departments and parts of the same system.¹⁷

The Jama'at-i-Islami is a principled movement whose chief purpose is to pave the way for the unity of man. This movement is not for the Muslims alone but it is for the entire humanity. Evidently this noble aim can only be achieved through tolerance and goodwill and humanitarian approach. There is no gainsaying the fact that for the achievement of this sublime goal, peaceful and democratic atmosphere, fortitude and persuasion, and not compulsion and coercion, is needed. The Jama'at-i-Islami is endeavoring for the welfare of not only the Muslims but of all human beings in this world and in the hereafter.¹⁸

The Jama'at-i-Islami Jammu & Kashmir is convinced that no reform is possible in a society which is under corrupt political regime. Under such a situation, Jama'at is of the opinion, that it is impossible to actuate either reform in individual lives or bring about social justice until and unless a just political system is established.¹⁹A corrupt Government not only hinders the reformation of society, but encourages anti-social elements who work for the disruption of the social fabric. Thus reads a publication of the Jama'at.

“The people interested in the application of Islamic system may try all political strategies and mechanisms to bring about social reformation. But they can never succeed in their drive for Islamization if the political, administrative, economic and legal systems are supervised and manipulated by secular socialist capitalist forces, which are determined in using these systems for the non-Islamic purposes.²⁰

In view of these indisputable consideration, and in order to bring a social revolution for establishing a society based on the principles of equality and justices. The Jama'at.declares to establish such a state and social setup in Jammu & Kashmir:

- ‘Which is committed to follow Quran and Sunah and model of Khalifat-i-Rashidah and where the principles and directives of Islam are fully implemented?’
- ‘Which works for the elimination of vices, propagation of virtues as well as establishment of Kalimaof Allah?’
- ‘Which eliminates very form of cruelty, illegitimacy, exploitation and immorality, reconstructs society on the basis of Islamic values and establish justices in every aspect of life?’
- ‘Which is a welfare state, guarantees to every one of its citizens the basic necessities viz, food, clothing, shelter, education and Medicare, opens up legitimate cutlets of substance, bans up illegitimate outlets thereof, enhances the wealth of the country through all proper means and establishes an equitable system of distribution.’
- ‘Which really caters to the welfare of the people irrespective of race, caste, creed and religion and where the fundamental rights of the people are completely safe?’
- ‘Which understands the problem of people before they cry-out their redressed and help them before they ask for the same?’
- ‘Which is actually a democratic government established by the free and fair general elections and people have the right to easily demolish that government through the exercise of free election.’
- ‘Which protects all the genuine rights of the people, their life, property, possessions and honor and dignity?’²¹

Jamaat-i-Islami believed that the present social structure is without any ethical foundations. What is needed is a religious consciousness of the people. Such a revolution can be brought about by the righteous Muslims who constitute the Khair-e-Ummat.....the chosen virtuous among people. They are a symbol of goodness and are blessed with Divine light. The Muslim therefore, are not, a community or a minority or a geographical entity but they constitute a party-the party of God, Hizbullah.²²

It is according to its constitution that the Jamaat's system of working has been based purely on moral and democratic principles the Jamaat, being a reformative and educative movement, is neither destructive nor clandestine. Its activities are quite open. To explain its mission and to spread it, literature comprising tens of thousands of page has so far been prepared in several regional and international languages and the same is readily available in the market.²³ Jamaat regularly holds religious congregations across the length and breadth of the state in order to preach and spread its mission and to reform society. To these congregations, which lasted for several days, the non-Muslims are also be invited. In these congregations include symposia with participants, including local political and religious personalities, scientists and intellectuals.²⁴ They are allowed to frankly express their view point to the participants.

The Jamaat is also in the forefront of social work. In the event of natural calamities like floods and earthquakes the organization mobilizes on emergency basis whatever resources it could to provide succor to the victims irrespective of caste or creed. The record of the Jamaat's social service is creditable. Just a few examples given below will give a fair idea of the humanitarian services of the organization.

In the year 1963 a vast area of the central District of the Kashmir valley, Budgam was rocked by a series of earthquakes. The Jamaat moved forward to provide relief in cash and kind, collected through donation raising campaign, to the victims without any discrimination whatsoever. The volunteers of the organization erected make shift shelters for those whose houses had been badly damaged.

During the year 1978 mysterious fires which continually broke out for months together destroyed hundreds of residential houses thus rendering thousands homeless. In that situation also the Jamaat rose to the occasion and, collecting considerable relief in cash and kind, distributed it among the sufferers to help them rehabilitate. The relief in kind included cloths, bedding, building material, household commodities and medicines. The

recipients of Jamaat's relief as usual included the non-Muslim residents of Sangrampora Sopore.²⁵

In the same way, in 1973, the Jamaat through its volunteers distributed relief among the victims of the destructive floods that year. This relief was, a matter of social and religious obligation, also provides to the non Muslim brothers of Kaloosa Bandipora whose houses had been washed away.²⁶

To carry out the work of such nature the organization is having a permanent department of public services through which in normal conditions financial help, possible within limits, are provided to the needy orphans, widows and other poor classes without any discrimination whatsoever. The 55-year long history of Jamaat is a dependable witness to these facts and every impartial and unbiased person of the state is full of appreciation of the humanitarian work performed by the Jamaat-i-Islami.

Jamaat believes that, a society based on materialism produces a civilization which forcibly separates religion from the state and society. In the non-western world it has created a slavish mentality. The west and west culture have created the false gods of Nationalism and Secular Democracy. It treats man not a part of humanity but as a part of particular country set against the other countries.²⁷ This approach of Jamaat shows that its aim is to provide an Islamic orientation to the problem of Muslim community. Jamaat wants to establish a society based on moral ethics and religious values. For the same reason the Jamaat establishes a number of Islamic model localities in Kashmir valley at Ratnipora, Zalora, Hangroet etc during the time of Sad-ud-Din.²⁸

Jamaat believes that the solidarity based on Islam alone can be permanent and stable. It shall make community strong enough to fight the enemies of God from within and from outside. It shall constitute a force against the present system which denies the existence of God and life after death. It also means that Muslims should not join any other organization and parties because it spells disorganization and disaster (constitution). Every person who joins the party must remember that the task of the party is not light and easy. It has to change the present prevailing system which is against the spirit of Quran and Sunnah.²⁹

6. Conclusion

Though these reform movements have faced many challenges in attaining their objectives that they have set, yet their contribution remained comparatively greater. Kashmir being underdeveloped society in all respects witnessed a dawn of awareness through these reform movements. Today we can observe the common muslim masses especially the muslim youth of Kashmir talking about the Quran and Hadith and even Fiqh ,it became possible only through the efforts of these religious movements. They not only worked in urban areas- city and major towns but also in remote and far-off places. To achieve their devised objectives, education (both religious as well as Modern) is thought to be most effective instrument to change the mental setup of the people particularly youth. The role of these movements is taken in positive sense as it led to the awareness of common Kashmir's especially about the original sources of Islam(Quran & Hadith) by exposing them to the Islamic literature, which in earlier times was impossible because of the hegemony of strong priestly class. However ,there are certain threats, that these movements have given rise to ,which in turn have disturbed the bonds of cohesiveness and solidarity among the muslim community in the valley of Kashmir, viz; firstly ,all these movements themselves have got deviated from their common and general objective that is to turn Kashmiri society into a Ummah society. Secondly they have confined themselves to the particular school of thought and the literature thereof. Thirdly ,these movements have led the Kashmiri Muslims to get divided into various groups and sub-groups and in this way the bond of social solidarity among kashmiri muslims is weakening day by day .Even besides Sunni and Shia muslims ,today we can see Aitqadi (influenced by Sufism) and Bad- Aitqadimuslims(anti-sufism sects like Jamatis and Al-hadith) among Sunnis. There is every likelihood that this division besides hostility within ,will have its serious impact on major social patterns ,for example, the Aitqadi and Bad- Aitqadi will cease to inter-marry,inter-dine and even to offer prayers in the same mosques etc with each other as is being followed among Sunnis and Shias.

7. Refferences

1. Hassnain, Fida Mohammad Khan; Historic Kashmir; Gulshan Publisher; Srinagar; p.312.
2. Dabla, B.A.; Muslim Societies in South-West Asia :Jay Kay Books 2001; p.267-268
3. Wani, Mohammad Ashraf; Islam in Kashmir (14th to 16th century); Oriented Publishing House; Srinagar, 2004; p.5.
4. Ibid.
5. Lawrence, Walter; The Valley Of Kashmir; Ali Mohammad and Sons, Srinagar, 2006; PP.285-286.
6. Word of Lawrence may not be the final word, may be the result of his misunderstanding.
7. Khan Bashir Ahamad; 'Ahl-i-Hadith Attitude vis-à-vis Shrine worship in Kashmir,' 'Studies in History and Culture' Vol-6, number I and 2 Mar-Sep, 1998; Berhampur University, Orrisa; p.61.
8. Narsingh, Das; Terikh-e-DograDesh; Jammu, 1967; p.862.
9. In the year 1846, after the battle of Sabraon the Sikhs in the Punjab lost their independence and British Marched on Lahore and captured it on March, 9, 1846. Treaty of Lahore was signed which was followed by what is known as treaty of Amritsar on March 15th, 1846. It was by the treaty Gulab Singh came to occupy Kashmir and laid the foundation of Jammu and Kashmir State. Gazette of Kashmir and Ladakh. Pp. 132-136. See also Bazaz, P. N; The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir; Kashmir Publishing Company, 1954, p. 126.
10. Wani, Mushtaq Ahmad; Muslim Religious Trends in Kashmir in Modern Times; KhudaBakhsh, Oriental Public Library, Patna 1997, p.31.
11. Ibid; p.p.31-32.
12. Khan, G.H; Freedom Movement in Kashmir (1931-401); Light and Life Publication House, New Delhi, 1980, p.64.
13. Ibid; p.65.
14. Khan, Mohammad Ishaq; History of Srinagar; Cosmos Publications, 1999; p.107.
15. Ibid; p.p.29-30.
16. Anjuman-i-TabliqulIslam Jammu and Kashmir KaA'inNasbula'inAurAgraz-wa-Maqasid; 1972; p.5.
17. Wani; n-9; p.75.

18. Bhat, Wasim Yousuf; Muslim Politics and The Nation State. An inquiry into Muslim Political articulation in the Indian Sub-Continent (unpublished M.Phil dissertation); Department of Sociology, Delhi School of Economics; University of Delhi; February 2003; p.19.
 19. Nasr Syed Vali Reza; Maududi and making of Islami Revivalism; Oxford University Press (New York); 1996; p.77.
 20. Maududi, Syed Abu Ala; Islamic Economic System; (Lahore) p.p.20-21.
 21. Jama'at-i-Islami Jammu and Kashmir At A Glance by S.M. Hassan Assistant Secretary General JIJK (n, p, n.d); p..1-2.
 22. Riyasti Jammu-wa-Kashmir Tarikh Islami aek Nazar Mein, a pamphlet published by Jamaat-i-Islami Jammu, Srinagar (nd), p.3.
 23. Ibid; p.5.
 24. Ibid; p.6.
 25. Mein Shakir; Islam in Indian Politics; Ajanta Publications, Delhi, 1983, p.62.
 26. Hassan; N-20; p.p.2-3.
 27. Ibid; n-20; p.3.
 28. Ibid; p.p.3-4.
 29. Ibid; p.4.
 30. Mein; N-24; p.62.
 31. Mein; N-24; p.67.
-