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Socio-Religious Reform Movements of Muslims in J & K from 1900-47

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Abstract:

Socio-religious reform movements among Muslims hold distinct feature within the Muslim community of the state. First seeing the formation of reform movements among Hindu colleagues and secondly modern education, British impression and Muslim backwardness was the main reason and fact behind the formation of these new organizations, association, communities within the Muslim arena. During the colonial period and at the time of the Dogra reign the socio-economic and socio-political condition of the Muslims in the valley was pathetic and they lead a miserable life and this paper gives a quite idea about the condition of the Muslims in the period from 1900-1947 period on how they emerged from marginalized society to a new developed and reformed one despite many hardships of that time.

Keywords: Anjuman, British, Colonialism, Evils, Hanfia, Nusrat-ul-Islam, Muslim, Taraqqi, Reforms, Srinagar, Socio-Religious and Remarriages.

1. Introduction

Muslims subjects of the state and their leaders including religious leaders were worrying about the social and economic condition of the Muslims due to modern education and change in the surrounding areas; they themselves indulged in various socio-religious reform movements and formed new associations and organizations, which they created for the modernization and upliftment of their Muslim community fellows. Hence, the final time came and during the last years of the nineteenth century the Muslim subjects of the state were impressed with the impact of western education and the changes in the social and political set up of the state which was actually a result of British intervention. The birth of the socio-religious reform movements among Muslims was obviously against those social evils and threats, which had downtrodden their society and degraded their moral value. The reforms movements among Muslims were totally puritanic in outlook and were affiliated with these movements which were meant for religious Puritanism and religious loyalty. Dominance of socio-religious reform movements among Muslims was of religion and they totally believed in religious Puritanism and believed in educational advancement for getting a wider role and participation in the state affairs and government management.ⁱ

2. Anjuman-I-Nusrat-ul-Islam, Srinagar

Anjuman-I-Nusrat-ul-Islam, one of the most prominent and leading figure in the circle of socio-religious reform movements of Kashmir valley holds a pivotal importance and significance among the Muslim Diaspora of the state. The association is one of the oldest among Muslims reform movements and was founded by one of the influential and prominent leader and late Mirwaiz Kashmir, Moulvi Rasool Shah in the year 1905, with help of some prominent and influential leaders like, Hasan Shah Naqsbhandi, Aziz-ud-din Kawsoo and Abdul Samad Qaqr.ⁱⁱ From the years 1889-1904 the founders of this association along with other party activists were busy in some sort of socio-religious reform activitiesⁱⁱⁱ and the appellation of founder of this movement had been used for him as early as 1901.^{iv}

Moulvi^v Rasool Shah who was at that time considered highly influential and his influence was almost over majority of Muslims of Srinagar which was nearly three-fourth of the total population of the people in the state^{vi} and finally he expired in the year 1909^{vii} and he was succeeded by his brother Moulvi Ahmadullah Shah and his brother was later succeeded by his nephew Moulvi Mohammad Yousf Shah.^{viii}

The association was in favour of Muslim modernization and eradication of social evils in all its forms and according to the founder of this association the backwardness of the Muslims lies in the lack of modern education^{ix} and for the removal of same evil from society he established a primary school in Srinagar in the year 1899.^x

The membership for joining this association was open to all and basic membership was to be availed by paying a sum of four annas. The association consisted of the President, besides the General Secretary, The Secretary, The Secretary of Scholarships, The Accountant and other members.^{xi}

Moulvi Rasool Shah, who had formed this social reform movement, had some social implications in the Kashmir:^{xii}

1. "The first and immediate implication was the creation of social cleavages and conflict between the votarees of the new trend and the upholders of the conservative tradition. The latter calling themselves, 'Ahle-Aitiqad' the believers in the 'six shrines' were lead by the chief priest of the shrine of Khanqah-i-Maula at Srinagar. They came to be known as 'Khankashis' and 'Cheka' as well, the followers of the Mirwaiz came to be known as 'Kota.'"
2. "The second implication was the creation of a single centre of great mass following and influence under the Mirwaiz, undercutting the influence of many smaller and scattered pirzads and making their position redundant. The latter were faced, as a result, with dire consequences as to their social position and economic prosperity."
3. "The third was to cast away the traditions that were a result of the past 'Contamination' with Kufur, idolatry." And
4. "The fourth was deepening of Muslim communal consciousness in the segment of the population that followed Mirwaiz."

The role of the movement was dynamic in all the sectors of the society and was not confined to any particular side or the movement was not related to religious activities only. The association had started to inculcate in Muslims the good manners of life, improved ways of living and had tried a lot in constructing a sense of mutual cooperation and unity among Muslims.^{xiii} This social reform movement was mainly responsible for spreading modern education among Muslims and soon after its inception school of primary level was upgraded into High School and various branches of this school were established in the Srinagar city and these schools were under the direct control of this social reform movement.^{xiv} The association held continuously its annual celebrations and in its annual meeting, special stresses were being laid on the modern education for Muslims and they tried a lot in persuading their fellows and wished their representation in government affairs and upliftment of all members of the society.^{xv}

3. Anjuman-I- Taraqqi Talim-Wa-Ittihad

As the nineteenth century proceeded the political awakening and the spread of the modern education was on its peak. Now the social setup of the society was something different from the earlier one. Youth in particular became enlightened by dint of this social revolution and modern education. New youth was totally different from earlier one and their outlook got changed and finally it was the year 1918, and a new group of Muslim youth inculcated with modern educational values consisting of very young generation had emerged and formed this popular social reform movement among the Muslim subjects in the popular name of Anjuman-i-Tarriqi Talim-wa-Ittihad. Their thinking was totally different as compared to Anjuman-i-Nusrat-ul-Islam, which was formed before this with a super splendid support and majority. The founders of this association were against the conservative thinking of the Anjuman-i-Nusrat-ul-Islam. The fore founders of this association were in favour of advancement of education, besides their aim and objective of mutual cooperation and understanding between the people of the society and the educated community.^{xvi} Now the time began for this reform movement runners to approach the government in order to get its registration number done and for the same cause a deputation was sent before the home ministry department for the registration of the party. But a problem had occurred in the state at that time, due to student's agitation,^{xvii} and the permission to manage the separate Anjuman was not granted. Later when the deputation met home ministry of the state and they had issued advisory to it for joining the Anjuman-i-Nusrat-ul-Islam.^{xviii} The joining of these two associations was neither successful nor possible, first on grounds of understanding difference and second one by dint of clear denial by the Moulvi Mirwaiz on the grounds that two social reform movements can't work together.^{xix} Slowly and steadily, the reform movement started operations separately and whose members were mostly non-governmental Muslims. When the association started it put all efforts and worked a lot in the upliftment of weaker sections of the society and became too popular, the government finally recognized it. The association started some important works like raising of scholarships for needy and poor Muslim students in various schools and colleges in the city.^{xx}

4. Anjuman-I-Hamdard Islam, Srinagar

Holding a distinct slot among socio-religious reform movements, the Anjuman-i-Hamdard Islam was first of its kind which was not only established by the Kashmiri Muslims only, but it was also a contribution of the some Punjabi Muslims.^{xxi} The association came into being in the year 1914 under the leadership of Babu Mohammad Ibrahim and other party activists.

Aims and objectives of this socio-religious reform movement were:^{xxii}

1. "To pursue the Muslims of Kashmir to take to education."
2. "To develop the habit of self help among the Muslims by urging them to make liberal donations for the purpose of spreading education among Muslims."
3. "To stress the learning of technical and commercial education."
4. "To bear all the expenses for burial of the Muslim villagers thrown into the mortuary after these were declared heirless or unclaimed by the doctors in the government hospitals."^{xxiii}
5. "To grant scholarships worth four rupees per month to those Muslim students who had passed the middle standard but could not continue further studies owing to poverty."
6. "To help parentless Muslim children in their education and vocation by admitting them to the orphanage established and maintained by the Anjuman."

Anjuman-i-Hamdard Islam right from the very beginning was a non political body and was based on the aim to inculcate in Muslim subjects of Kashmir valley the sense of unity, cooperation and mutual understanding. The association remained busy in annual and frequent meeting and religious gatherings, besides processions were being carried out by this social-reform movement. The association used quotes from religious books and also indulged in patriotic and religious songs and poems reflecting the spirit of

brotherhood, patriotism, fellow feeling, self sacrifice. The association mainly focused on the Islamic supremacy and religious knowledge, so that the fellows of the state will learn how to live in peace, harmony and cooperation.^{xxiv}

5. Anjuman-I-Islamia, Jammu

Founded by Raja Farman Ali Kahn and along with the support of Major General Samandar Khan, Syed Asad Ullah Shah, Chowdhary Ghulam Abbas and Mistri Yuqaub Ali, the association holds a special feature in the list of being one of the earliest movements in the history of the socio-religious reform movements of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. The association from the very beginning was engaged in regular and frequent public meetings and from time to time annual findings of the annual resolution that were passed in the meetings were sent to the government regularly for swift considerations.^{xxv} This socio-religious reform movement was mainly focused on improving educational, economical, moral and social conditions of the Muslims and the association was primarily focusing on protecting rights of Muslim subjects.^{xxvi}

This socio religious reform movement from the very beginning was much impressed by the modernization and western ways of modern teaching and learning strategy and for the same the association had in the year proposed for creation of separate committee of ladies, that in turn would monitor and run the girls schools in the Srinagar city of the valley. But the proposal meet with a grave concern, when in the city there were neither Hindu nor Muslim educated women who can take up the proposed work; “otherwise an experiment could be made.”^{xxvii} This alarmed the association internally and externally, because a grave concern in the form of women illiteracy, and getting rid from this social imbalance, the association’s most influential and representative leaders like Khan Sahib, Sheikh Imam-Din, president Anjuman-i-Islamia had said that women education is serious challenge and it be handled with care and caution and both men and women were encouraged to achieve modern education and uplift themselves, otherwise they will remain backward and less developed in all the aspects of the life.^{xxviii}

For the upliftment of all the communities and taking into mind the Muslim subject’s backwardness and economic disability in the society, Anjuman-I-Islamia, Punjab, Lahore had requested the maharaja to remove all the obstacles and challenges that have created hurdles in the Muslim modern education. Later in the year 1913, the causes were disused under the leadership of Sahibzada Aftab Khan and a solution was found.^{xxix}

In the general meeting of the association in the year 1926, a resolution passed by the Anjuman-I-Islamia, Jammu unanimously passed and meant for the reservations of certain stipends meant only for Muslims students came into being and was applicable in each and every department of the state. The passed resolution is as:^{xxx}

1. “The Darbar awarded scholarships to the students of the state to prosecute their further studies in medicine, engineering and forestry every year. But the Muslim students were not benefitted with this opportunity in order to carry on their studies outside the state.”
2. “Muslims were lagging in university education because of their poverty but in secondary education, which was the only education criterion for the selection of the candidates for admission to Sub-assistant surgeons, rangers, sub-overseers and overseers classes, they were up to mark; and the Anjuman was prepared o produce a number of matriculates for such appointments.”
3. “Out of thirty-sub-assistant surgeons in the civil medical department only one was Muslim, who as well was a foreigner. Similarly, there was only one sub-assistant surgeon in the military department out of eighteen sub-assistant surgeons on its cadre.”

Misrepresentation, economic imbalance, illiteracy and backwardness, these were some factors which were responsible for the discouragement of Muslim subjects, the Anjuman had called this by lack of education in Muslims and had from time to time requested the “Maharaja that a definite number of stipends should be set apart exclusively for Muslims in every department and that for these selection should take place absolutely and exclusively from amongst the Muslim members so that claims of Muslim candidates would receive proper consideration at the time of selection.”^{xxxi}

6. Anjuman-I-Tahafuz-I-Namaz-Wa-Satar-I-Masturat

Taking into account the women welfare activities as most preferable and need of hour, various leaders within the community were now too conscious about the upliftment of women subjects of their community and they tried to do this by imparting religious knowledge and wanted to inculcate in them the religious values and for the same a new socio-religious reform movement of Muslims namely ‘Anjuman-i-Tahafuz-i-Namaz-wa-Satar’ came into being in the year 1923 under the joint efforts and leadership of Azad Quaraishi, Hakim Muhammad Quareshi and Ghulam Mohammad Alvi.^{xxxii} The association had nothing to do with the political affairs of the state management and was totally based on the religious ideas and mainly concerned with the women reforms.^{xxxiii} This reform movement was totally separate in all matters of the state management and most beneficial fact of it was that it actually and really a religious reform movement among Muslim community, which was meant only for women subjects.

The main aims and objectives behind this socio-religious reform movement were:^{xxxiv}

1. “The Muslim women should observe prayers and the Muslim women should wear the clothes properly.”
2. “The Muslim should get religious and secular education either through preaching or through schools opened for this purpose.”
3. “All traffic in women should be stopped and the marriage contracts should be duly registered in a court of law.”
4. “The Muslims of kashmir should remain loyal to the Maharaja.”

Hence after studying the aims and objectives of the association, there is no denial in the fact that this reform movement's basic aim was to impart religious teaching and impart in Muslim subject the basic knowledge of Islam. The birth of the association came at right time and at right stage, especially when the women were victims of enough social evils and there was really a need for such an association to be established.^{xxxv}

7. Anjuman-I-Hanfia

Now the time had started and Muslims were being involved in getting modern education and were more secular. A school under the name of Islamia Hanfia School was established in March, 1922. The aim of the school was basically imparting religious and secular education to the children and the school was working under the management of Moulvi Ghulam-Mohi-ud-Din and Mirwaiz. In the year 1924, these men got the formal clearance from the maharaja for the establishment of the committee in the name of Anjuman-I-Hanfia.^{xxxvi}

The association was created for some special cause and the main aims and objectives that lie behind its formation are:^{xxxvii}

1. "To manage the school and devise ways and means to create literary taste among the people."
2. "To impart religious education and to promote the teaching of old culture."
3. "To be faithful and obedient to the Maharaja and the British Government."

8. Anjuman-I-Islat-ul-Muslimin

In the beginning or at initial stages of formation of this association, it was basically concerned with the social reforms among Muslims, but slowly and gradually with the passage of time the association tuned into political organization and was politically more active.

Anjuman-I-Islat-ul-Muslimin during its initial stages was also known as Muslim upliftment association, which was set up in the Srinagar city of the state at Sokalipora under the presidentship of Nurdin. After some years in spending of party expansion and it was December, 1930 and some of its student activists of the Shri Pratap College, Srinagar, had submitted an application before the goodness of governor for granting permission in establishing this association.^{xxxviii} The association demanded for the wider scope of the Muslim subjects and were working for the upliftment of their fellow beings. The party gained benefits because it was indulged also in political affairs and played a significant role in the management of the government affairs. The party through its social activities wanted education for all, whether male or female, improving standard of living, maintaining cleanliness, good dress and diet^{xxxix} were some of the mains areas of focus for this socio-religious reform movement.

9. Conclusion

Now the things were different and totally in new spectrum because due to the rising of these socio-religious reform movement and they performed very well in the society for taking it away from the all ill deeds, which had surrounded and wrapped the society. These reform movements helped a lot in transforming the society and they contributed a lot in changing the mind set up of the common man and now the people were more educated and conscious. These reform movements particularly helped a lot in raising voice against the British colonial rule and the people by dint of these reform movements became fully activated against the dogra rule. It was due to these reform movements among the Muslim subjects of the state that the girl education got momentum and widow remarriage became possible. These reform movements helped people in getting out from poverty along with other difficulties of the life and they were stressing more on the modern ways of education. Poor and needy students were given opportunities and certain scholarships were also raised for coping out their financial melt downs.

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