

Role of Shrines in the Socio-Cultural Development of Kashmir

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ABSTRACT

Culture is the essence of a society where values, customs, morals, and ideology are shared by the people without any discrimination. The society of every nation preserves their cultural legacy and works for its enrichment. The society of Kashmir is also known for its cultural ethos and religious pluralism. From the ancient times different religions were harmonised in the valley of Kashmir which don't diversified the people but the society was living more in generosity and love. The important things about the society of Kashmir are the shrines which strengthened the cultural values and customs of the society. The shrine culture added different things to the society of Kashmir like Pir-Muridi, Dash-I- Gadin, and the famous Takiyas were also added to the culture of Kashmir. The objective of the present work is to evaluate the process of cultural transformation in Kashmir under the shadows of shrines.

Keywords- Asthan, Pir, Murid, Dash-I-Gadin, Khatam- Khawani, Takiyas.

1.INTRODUCTION

The valley of Kashmir is known for its beauty and elegance from the ancient times. The most beautiful thing about Kashmir is its culture. The cultural inheritance of Kashmir is harmonised from time to time by different people, religious identities, and saints and sages. The social transformation of the society from time to time was an important development of the society of Kashmir. In the social transformation the culture of Kashmir progressed in a syncretic manner. The religious pluralism and its adjustment within the prevailing religions without any hateridness was an important identity of Kashmir valley. The emergence of society of Kashmir and its culture in these situations provided strength to the society and culture of Kashmir. There are various elements which were responsible for the transformation of the culture of a society. Among them shrines are also responsible for the transformation.

One of the most important things about the society and the culture of Kashmir are the shrines which are spread in all parts of Kashmir. A shrine is a holy place this was erected on the graves of the dead saints. Kashmir is the land where we do found the shrines of different religions especially Hinduism and Islam. The Sikh shrines too exist in the valley of Kashmir. The emergence of shrine culture was an old age practice in Kashmir valley. Especially during the medieval period of Kashmir (1200-1700) the shrine construction was vague in Kashmir valley. The important Hindu shrines in Kashmir is Amarnath ji Cave shrine located in Pahalgam area of

Ananthnag District which used to be the abode of Lord Shiva. The shrine is popular for lingam worship in the valley of Kashmir. Every year thousand of devotees visit the shrine to show their respect and owner to the shrine. Another important Hindu shrine in Kashmir valley is Mata Kheer Bhawani at Tull Mulla Ganderbal. The shrine is dedicated to Mata Ragnaya a female goddess. The shrine is very much famous among the Hindus of Kashmir. The devotees used to offer milk to goddess on the celebration days. The shrine has an important fact related where the spring which is inside the shrine changes its colour on the occurrence of any calamity. There is also a historical shrine which is called Martand Sun temple. The shrine showed the presence of sun worship in Kashmir valley. Nowadays the temple is in a ruined form but the Hindus still have faith in the shrine. An important shrine of Hindus in Kashmir is Shankaracharya temple which is located in Srinagar on a famous hill named Takht-i-sulaimani. The temple is very much famous because of its belongings are related to the lord Shiva spiritual meeting with the Shankacharya. There are also other Hindus shrines and springs which worshipped in Kashmir with complete zeal and zest.

The society of Kashmir has large number of Muslim shrines in all the corners of the region. The most important Muslim shrine in Kashmir valley is Dargah Hazratbal. The shrine is lived with the memory of the Moyi Muqadas (Sacred Hair) of Prophet Mohammad^{SAW}. The Muslims of Kashmir have esteemed faith in the shrine. On Urs days people throng to the shrine to show respect and honour to the shrine. An another highly reverted shrine in Kashmir valley of Sheikh Nuruddin Reshi^{RA}. The shrine is located at Tsar-I-Sharief in Budgam district. The mass gatherings held during the urs hours of the shrine. An important Muslim shrine in Kashmir is Dastegeer Sahab at Khanyar Srinagar. The shrine is dedicated to the famous saint of Islamic history Abdul Qadir Jeelani^{RA}. The shrine is very much famous among all the communities of Kashmir. There were having also other great Muslim shrine in Kashmir like Muqdam Sahab Shrine at Khanyar Srinagar, and Zain-uDin wali^{RA} at Aishmuqam Anantnag. There were also local shrines present almost in every village of Kashmir who have also a great importance.

II.IMPACT OF SHRINES ON SOCIETY AND CULTURE OF KASHMIR

The society and the culture of Kashmir have given a much importance to religions from the ancient times. The early settlers in Kashmir were Nagas who lived with a syncretic nature with the Aryans who migrated to Kashmir. The society of Kashmir had shown a mutual respect for the Coming of Aryans. The adjustment of the other religions in the valley of Kashmir became an important feature of the society and culture of Kashmir. The other religions too followed in Kashmir among them were Buddhism, Hinduism and finally Islam. The major development which held in Kashmir was birth of the shrines. These shrines were not only associated with one religion but almost all the communities have their shrines in Kashmir. The birth of the shrine culture and its influence on the society and culture of Kashmir was one of the most important developments. The shrines which were erected on the graves of the dead saints became an integral part of the society and culture of Kashmir.

The Hindu shrines of Kashmir showed a much influence on the society and culture of Kashmir. The Hindus which are called Batta in Kashmir are highly respectable towards their shrines. The emergence of the Kashmiri Shavism or Trika Philosophy was an important feature of the Hindu society. Its emergence and amalgamation into the culture of Kashmir was possible due to the presence the shrines which worked for its emergence. The famous saint Lal Ded is highly respected and Honoured in the valley of Kashmir because of its philosophy of Shavism. It is the uniqueness of the society of Kashmir that they follow the famous *Vakhs(four lines couplet)* of Lal Ded with complete faith. The Hindus societies of Kashmir celebrate the festivals which completely revolve around their shrines. The famous Hindu festival in Kashmir is Navreh who's all rituals has been done in the shrines. The other Hindu festivals of Kashmir like Vijaya Saptami, Navratris and Mela Kheer bhawani has all their associations with the Hindu shrines of Kashmir. Even we see that the there is a custom in the Hindu society of Kashmir that they celebrate the Nag festival that was an age old practice in Kashmir. The Hindus of Kashmir has an important faith in the Sharika Devi shrine located on Hariparbat hill at Khanyar Srinagr that they visit the shrine to save themselves from the disease. There is a custom among the Hindus of Kashmir that the newly married couple is treated as Shiva and Parvati and a ritual is associated with that is called Posh Poza. The Hindus shrines of Kashmir have also influenced the art and Architecture of the valley. The architectural designs of the temples and shrines which show Buddhist influence and is preserved up to the modern times through the society and culture of Kashmir.

The emergence of Muslim shrine in Kashmir and phenomena of the shrine culture in the society was one of the most important developments in Kashmir. The Muslim shrines were constructed on the graves of saints and sages. In Kashmir a Muslim shrine is called Asthan (Holy place) were the saints are buried in their graves. Among them most important ones were Sheikh Nuruddin Reshi^{RA}, Dastageer Sahab, Muqdam Sahab, Zain-ud-Din Wali and Khanqahi Mullah of Mir Syed Ali Hamdani^{RA}. After the death of the saints and sages the society of Kashmir was completely influenced by these Shrines. The primary impact on the society of Kashmir by the shrines was the emergence of Sufism and Rishism in Kashmir. These two ways of livelihood became an important aspect in the culture of Kashmir. Rishism concept was the indigenous concept of Sufism in Kashmir which was emerged under the shadows of the famous saint Sheikh Nuruddin Reshi^{RA}. The impact of the Reshi shrines is so deep on the society of Kashmir that people used to like eat such foods which was eaten by their saints like *Wapal Hawakh* , and *Handh (Kashmiri vegetative foods)*. Even we see that the *Noor Nama* which was written by Sheikh Nuruddin Reshi^{RA} was given the status of *Kashur Quran*. People recite the sayings of the saint not only at home but at the religious gatherings too. The shrines of Kashmir became the highest faith in the valley of Kashmir. People visit the shrines on daily basis to get their desires full filled. It has been now a routine activity of the people of Kashmir that they always seen in shrines. One of the famous activities in the society of Kashmir is the celebration of the fairs and festivals of the shrines which are associated with the saints. Every year people visit on shrines to celebrate the festivals of the shrine with complete zeal and zest. On these days large gatherings were held on the famous shrine of the Kashmir. The largest gatherings took place at shrine of Dargah Hazratbal were thousands of the people from all over Kashmir visit the shrine.

The shrines have impacted so much on the society and culture of Kashmir that even the newly born babies used to taken to the shrines to shave their heads after the birth which is called *Zarkasni*. It is an important ritual in the society of Kashmir. The wall and tomb touching of the shrines is also vague in the society of Kashmir. Due to the shrine in the society of Kashmir an important practice developed which is called tying of votive rags on the pillars of shrines. This culture is present in both the Hindu and Muslim community of Kashmir. It has been the culture of Kashmir that who so ever visit the shrines gave *Nazr-u-Niyaz*(consecration) to the shrines so that its desires get full filled. Due to the shrines an important aspect developed in the society of Kashmir that is called *Pir- Muridi* (Mentor-Devotee). It is considered very much important to have relations with the *Pir* (spiritual Mentor) of the shrine so that his wish get full filled. In the society of Kashmir an important culture developed which we called relic worship in the shrines. There are special days on which these relics associated with the saint are shown to the general public to get blessed. *Khtam-Khawani* an important practice developed in Kashmir on Muslim shrines was the recitation of the verses of the Quran is done to get blessed. The musical gatherings (*Takiyas*) held almost on all Muslim shrines of the Kashmir were the sayings of the saint were echoed. In the culture of Kashmir an important ritual is associated with the shrine which is called *Dash-I-Gadin*(votive rags). Through this ritual people usually tied the thread on the walls of the shrine to full fill their wishes.

The shrines have impacted the society of Kashmir on such a large extent that these places are considered best for recreation and amusements. It is a normal way of living in Kashmir that people used to visit the shrines to get peace of mind. The atmosphere of the shrines is so soothing that it attracts the people on a large extent. The Muslim shrines of Kashmir also impact the education. Shrines were also used for development of education in the valley of Kashmir. Normally religious education is given to the students in the shrines. The shrines done a great job in the transformation of the society in terms of educational enhancement. An important contribution of the society and culture of Muslim shrines is the development of Architecture. The Muslim shrines showed the mixture of different arts which came to Kashmir from different parts of the world. Especially the shrine architecture is mostly influenced by Buddhist and Mughal Architecture. Important features of Shrine architecture are *Khatam Bandh*, and *Paper Machi* which are prevalent all most in every shrine of the Kashmir. in the society of Kashmir most of the handicrafts are associated with the job of wood carving of Paper Machi and Khatam Band. They earn a good amount of the money from the job.

The amalgamation of the Hindu society and the Muslim society and Hindu society of Kashmir was all possible due to presence of shrines in the Kashmir valley. The emergence of the shrine culture is the back bone of the society of Kashmir which always empowers its historical legacy.

III.CONCLUSION

The society and culture of Kashmir has been from the earliest times dominated by the saints and sages. In their honour the shrine culture came into existence in the valley of Kashmir. The shrines became an integral part of the culture and society of Kashmir. Various festivals became the part of the culture of Kashmir due to shrines.

The faith of the people in the shrines became an important aspect of society of Kashmir. The shrines in Kashmir are working as a healing institution for the worried people. The architectural advancement in the valley of Kashmir is completely influenced by the shrines. It is now an important part of the society that education too is given in the shrines up to the certain limits. Wholly and solely Kashmir its society and Culture is completely dominated by the shrines.

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