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ABSTRACT

(Findings)

Although work had been done about *Islam in Kashmir* prior to this Study, but the approach and thrust had been thoroughly different in so far as the scholars had staked the significance either of the Sufis who entered Kashmir mainly from Persia and Central Asia or of the Rishis, the native mystics who were Islamized by the former, as the important channel of conversion and transformation of Kashmiris. So this Study researches and analyses the Subject with a broader perspective in which both types of Sufis performed a commendable job. Actually, in no region of the world have the Sufis wrought such a great transformation of the socio-religious outlook of a people as they have done in case of Kashmir. Generally, the Sufis, from the very outset of Sufism, have tried to exhibit their loyalty to the main trunk of Islam notwithstanding their criticism, and at time condemnation, by the '*ulama*'. That is why they found *ihsan* as the root from which the 'tree of Sufism' gushed forth. By doing so, the term *ihsan*, was robbed off its vastness which it had in the Qur'an and the Hadith, because the sequel of *iman*, *islam* and *ihsan*, as elaborated by the Prophet, represented Islam as an organic whole in which these terms complemented each other. Nevertheless, the Sufis, as the selfless servants of the Lord, performed a commendable job in the field of the propagation of Islam. The Qadiriyyas' role in the Sahara and that of the Chishtiyyas in India, in this regard is worth mentioning. However, the Sufis that poured into Kashmir were mainly Kubrawiyyas with a thin slice of Suhrawadiyyas. There was a great challenge before them because the Kashmir of the period was a polytheistic hub backed by a sophisticated philosophy with ritualism, superstition, witchcraft and sorcery as its main constituents produced by both its ancient faiths –Buddhism and Shaivism. However, the Sufis entering Kashmir had something common with the Shaivites of Kashmir as well. It was monism. Although the monism of the

Sufis and that of the Shaivites differed in everything except the idea, but the idea was strong enough which the Sufis banked upon. Therefore, while embracing the new religion, Islam, Kashmiris were not too much carried away from their ancestral ethos because they were taken to monotheism through the gate of monism. Indeed, the early Muslim settlers, who were employed as war technicians and battlefield experts by the Hindu rajas of Kashmir, and the individual adventurers had deeply influenced the usages and traditions of Kashmir, but it was the Sufis who effected the much needed transformation. In this connection, Mir Sayyid Ali Hamadani, influenced as he was by Ibn al-Arabi in Sufism and by Alau al-Daulah Simnani in the missionary enthusiasm, succeeded not only in founding a firm basis for proselytisation by targeting the important hubs of Hinduism and the Royal Court but he also introduced and popularised those arts and crafts which provided economic sustenance to the enfeebled Kashmiris. His son, Mir Sayyid Muhammad Hamadani, institutionalized Islam in Kashmir by establishing *madrassahs*, libraries, hospitals, *khanaqahs* and *'idgahs*. Then followed the native mystic, Nuruddin Rishi who, after being recognised by Mir Sayyid Muhammad Hamadani, became an active propagandist of Islam in Kashmir. He became a reliever for those who thought as being overpowered by an alien religion. He was intelligent enough not to break with the Kashmiri mystics of yore, such as Zalka Rishi, Pilas Rishi, Rumi Rishi and Miran Rishi, not to speak of Lalla. But, interestingly enough, to exhibit his being one among the Sufis, he drew inspiration from the Prophet through Owais al-Qani, thereby becoming an Owaisi Rishi or Sufi. Thus was he able to Islamize not only the masses but also the important Shaivite ascetics, such as Bhum Sadh, Zia Sing, Ladi Raini, etc. Also important from the proselytising point of view was the Shi'ah Sufi, Mir Shamsuddin Iraqi who was influential in converting a large chunk of Kashmiris besides emphasising the importance of education and instruction. His endeavour, however, although indirectly, resulted in Kashmir's subjugation by the Mughals. Such a change was effected by these Sufis that not only was Kashmir changed into a majority (more than 90%) Muslim land but the socio-cultural ethos of Kashmir got a total change as well. Thus were the Pandit chroniclers of the period puzzled to see the Muslims chanting together different *aurad* and *adhkar* and perplexed by seeing those boys getting education whose fathers could have never thought of their even touching the books, lest they should pollute them!