

Sufism in Kashmir: A Brief Study of Impact of the *Kubrī vīyah* Order¹

Mohammad Iqbal Rather*

ABSTRACT:

Kashmir tasted the sweetness of Sufism at a time when it had reached the pinnacle of its development. Simultaneously with the foundation of Muslim rule in Kashmir (720 A.H /1320 C.E.), Sufism got introduction there. But practically $\eta \perp \text{f}^{\perp}$ activities began to spread in Kashmir only towards the expiry of the fourteenth century. It is in this direction that $\eta \perp \text{f}^{\perp}$ s of outstanding personality and caliber like *Sayyid ‘Alī Hamadī ni*, *Sayyid Muḥammad ḥ isari*, *Mīr Muḥammad Hamadī ni*; *Jamī al-ḥāḍ in Bukhārī* and *Sayyid Ismā‘īl Shī mī* entered Kashmir and played their part.

Among the $\eta \perp \text{f}^{\perp}$ orders introduced in Kashmir, the *Kubrī vīyah* order flourished the most as it gained widespread popularity. *Kubrī vīyah* order was founded by *Aḥmad bn. ‘Umar al-Khayḍ qī* popularly known as *Najm al-dīn Kubrī* who was born in *Khawarizm* in 540A.H./1145C.E. The teachings of *Kubrī vīyah* order spread in various parts of the Muslim world, especially in central Asia and Persia. *Mīr Sayyid ‘Alī Hamadī ni* (popularly known in Kashmir as *Amīr-e-Kabīr*) introduced the order in Kashmir. As a $\eta \perp \text{f}^{\perp}$, *Hamadī ni* gives a subjective and esoteric interpretation of the teachings of Islam which have deep relevance for the seekers of truth. When *Mīr Sayyid ‘Alī Hamadī ni* reached Kashmir, he was accompanied by traders, artisans, $\eta \perp \text{f}^{\perp}$ s, and business men who not only inculcated the doctrines of Sufism in the life of Kashmiri people but also paved the way for their economic advancement.

Key words: Sufism; Kashmir; *Kubrī vīyah* Order; Tariqat; Khanqah; *Mīr Sayyid ‘Alī Hamadī ni*; Central Asia

Sufism: An Introduction

The development of Sufism is a fascinating chapter in the religious history of Islam. In the beginning Sufism was considered as an alien growth brought about by the impact of culture and traditions other than Islamic. This view has, however, undergone a radical change and there is now a wide agreement that Sufism is the animating spirit of Islamic tradition and its origin is in the Quran and *Sunnah*.²

Sufism or *Taḥawwuf* (Arabic: تصوف) is defined by its adherent as the inner mystical dimensions of Islam.³ Classical $\eta \perp \text{f}^{\perp}$ scholars have defined Sufism as “a science whose objective is the reparation of the heart and turning it away from

* Mohammad Iqbal Rather is a PhD Research Scholar in the Department of Islamic Studies, Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), Aligarh, India. He is working on his PhD thesis (from 2012) on “A Study of Islamic Political Thought of *Mīr Sayyid ‘Alī Hamadī ni* (1314-84 CE)”.

all else but God".⁴

Two origins of the word قائل have been suggested. Commonly, the lexical root of the word is traced to قفا (صَفَا), which in Arabic means "purity". Another origin is قوف (صُوف), "wool", referring to the simple cloaks the early Muslim ascetics wore.⁵ The substance of Sufism is the Truth and the meaning of Sufism is the selfless experiencing and actualization of the Truth. The practice of Sufism is the intention to go towards the Truth, by means of love and devotion. This is called the قائل *qat*, the spiritual path or way towards God. The قائل is one who is a lover and seeker of Truth, who by means of love and devotion moves towards the Truth, towards the perfection which all are truly seeking. As necessitated by love's jealousy, the قائل is taken away from all except the Truth. Sufism is a school for the actualization of divine ethics. It involves an enlightened inner being, not intellectual proof; revelation and witnessing, not logic. By divine ethics, we are referring to ethics that transcend mere social convention, a way of being that is the actualization of the attributes of God.

Sufism is a path of spiritual advancement. By a process of purification, قائل practices allow light to enter our hearts and our faculties of perception. This may lead to the development of our innate spiritual and intuitive abilities, in the same way that when you open a window to a dark room light floods in and you can suddenly see more. Thus the practice of Sufism leads to an expansion of consciousness—an increase in our self awareness and awareness of the universe we live in. We become less prone to acting and thinking in conditioned ways. This in turn leads to a self-transformation—a transformation in the way we conduct ourselves and interact with the world. We find peace and contentment and a growing awareness of a Higher Plan. Ultimately, the قائل path brings us closer to the Supreme Reality, which is God.

Advent of Islam in Kashmir: Brief Assessment

In the twelfth century Kashmir was predominantly a Hindu society with "not a space as a grain of sesame without a *Tirtha*,"⁶ However, at the turn of the sixteenth century we see Islam having replaced Hinduism as a mass religion of valley to the extent that according to the contemporary Sanskrit chronicle, *Srivara*, "the Brahman boys are fond of the Muslims and are ashamed to follow the *Shastra* which was followed by their fathers and grand fathers."⁷

Indeed, conversion to Islam in Kashmir is a complex subject, which no single category of causes can help to explain. It did not occur suddenly. It took more than three centuries during which far-reaching changes took place in different spheres of life, marking one phase off from the other.⁸

It is now commonly known to everyone that the history of spread of Islam in Kashmir does not originate with the establishment of Muslim Sultanate in 1339 C.E. but the presence of Muslims in Kashmir dates back to eighth century C.E.⁹ The famous French scholar, Louis Massignon, author of the celebrated book, *The*

Passion of al-ḥallaj (originally in French) provides the revealing information that Mansur al-ḥallaj, the great mystic of Islam visited Kashmir in 895 C.E. and stayed there for one year.¹⁰

Muhammad Ashraf Wani in his famous book, *Islam in Kashmir* writes that, "The Muslim immigrations into Kashmir and the contact of Kashmiris with the Muslims of the neighboring world was disrupted for a brief period towards the beginning of the eleventh century, when the Turkish armies were swooping down on the bordering territories of Kashmir. For fear of Mahmud Ghaznavi's invasions, who made two bids to conquer Kashmir, the rajas of Kashmir fastened their doors and windows and did not allow one to enter the valley".¹¹

The streaming of Muslim into Kashmir continued unabated till the Muslim sultanate was finally established in 1339 C.E.¹² Since the Hindu rulers greatly depended upon the support of the Muslim commanders and the neighboring Muslim rulers, Islam did not encounter a hostile political climate in Kashmir. This naturally encouraged Muslim preachers to enter the beautiful valley of Kashmir. The first preacher of Islam who entered Kashmir was Sayyid Sharaf al-Dīn Abd. Raḥmān (d.1326 C.E.) commonly known in Kashmir as *Bulbul Shah*.¹³ He entered Kashmir during the reign of *Suhadeva*. He was instrumental in converting the reigning Buddhist ruler of Kashmir *Rainchana* (1320-1323 C.E.) to Islam, and was named as *ḥadar al-Dīn*.¹⁴ This conversion of the ruler to Islam marked a turning point in the history of Islam in Kashmir. This is besides the fact that conversion of the ruler would have validated the religious superiority of Islam. This conversion as shown by many biased historians was not a coincidence, but it should be borne in mind that *ḥadar al-Dīn* embraced Islam after having discussions with the Hindus, Buddhists and Muslim religious figures of the period.¹⁵

Emergence of Kubrawiyyah ḥadith order in Kashmir and its Impact

Among the ḥadith orders introduced in Kashmir, the Kubrawiyyah order flourished the most as it gained widespread popularity. Kubrawiyyah order was founded by *ʿUmar al-Khayyām* popularly known as *Najm al-Dīn Kubrawi* who was born in *Khawarizm* in 540A.H./1145C.E. The teachings of Kubrawiyyah order spread in various parts of the Muslim world, especially in central Asia and Persia. *Mir Sayyid ʿAlī Hamadani* (1314-84 C.E.) (Popularly known in Kashmir as *Amir-i-Kabir*) introduced the order in Kashmir. Prof. A. Q. Rafiqi in his famous book *Sufism in Kashmir* writes that, before *Timur* is said to have expelled *ʿAlawi Sayyids* from *Hamadani*, *Sayyid ʿAlī Hamadani* sent two of his cousins, *Sayyid Tāj al-Dīn* and *Sayyid Hussain* to Kashmir to explore the religious atmosphere of country and report must have been encouraging, as *Sayyid ʿAlī Hamadani* arrived in Kashmir during the reign of Sultan *Qutb al-Dīn* (1373-89 C.E.) As a ḥadith, *Hamadani* gives a subjective and esoteric interpretation of the teachings of Islam which have deep relevance for the seekers of truth. When *Mir Sayyid ʿAlī Hamadani* reached Kashmir, he was accompanied by traders, artisans, ḥadiths, and business men who not only

inculcated in them doctrines of Sufism but also paved the way for their economic advancement.¹⁶

The great master of Iran worked like a mason to build the fate of the Kashmiri nation. Great and magnanimous as he was, he gave them education, wisdom, culture and religion. He was a dignified mentor of this beautiful valley. The people of this “Little Iran” learnt arts and crafts through his guidance.

The *ḥakīm*s in general and *Kubrī vīyahs* in particular travelled extensively in the various parts of the Muslim world. When *Mīr Sayyid ‘Alī Hamadī ni* entered Kashmir he was accompanied by a large number of Sayyids. *Sayyid ‘Alī*’s proselytizing activities in Kashmir are highly extolled by the scholars of both the medieval and modern times.¹⁷

There is no doubt, however, that Islam in Kashmir received great impetus because of *Sayyid ‘Alī Hamadī ni* and his followers. *Sayyid ‘Alī Hamadī ni* accompanied by his disciples travelled widely throughout the valley. He left his disciples at a number of places which were great Hindu centers of those days, such as *Pampore*, *Awantipora* and *Bijbihara* of present days. These followers of *Sayyid ‘Alī Hamadī ni* established *Khanqahs* and started preaching Islam.¹⁸

Among the philosophers who played a great role in the history of Muslim world during its period of stress and strife were the *ḥakīm*s. One such great soul who stood against tyranny was *Mīr Sayyid ‘Alī Hamadī ni*, a great *ḥakīm*, held in high esteem by the people of Kashmir. He not only transformed the 14th century Caste-ridden society of Kashmir into enlightened one, but also gave a sound social, economic and spiritual base to people of Kashmir for their well standing in the community of nations.¹⁹ He used Islamic esoterica as a means of human development. He transformed a caste-ridden society into a society where people lived together, worked together and prayed together in the same *Khanqah*. *Fidī Muhammad Khan Hasnain* in his book *Shah Hamadan of Kashmir* writes that,

“He was a builder a new nation, a master of the *Dervishes*, and the guide to the rulers; a teacher and a leader who brought a new civilization, new knowledge, new industries and a new faith for the *kashmiris*.”²⁰

Besides being an *‘Alim* and *ḥakīm*, *Mīr Sayyid ‘Alī Hamadī ni* was an influential political thinker and a reformer of high repute. His impact on all sections of society was primarily due to the integrity of personal life. He laid great emphasis upon earning one’s livelihood and was against the means of patronage and support open to religious men.²¹ *Hamadī ni* himself made his living cap making and encouraged his *Murīd* (disciples) to do the same.²² *Sayyid ‘Alī Hamadī ni* was against the conventionally idle *Khīnqahī* life because he thought that it would isolate him from common man and society.²³ *Sayyid ‘Alī Hamadī ni* was an expert “*Sozan kar*” himself and his dedication and commitment to this Art can be seen when he established the handicraft industry in Kashmir.²⁴ Professor *H. N. Rafī ‘abadī* in his book *Islam and Sufism in Kashmir* writes that,

Mir Sayyid 'Alī Hamadī ni by these fine and captivating industries made Kashmir a minor Persia (Irān-i-saghīr).²⁵ *Shawl Bafi* is known in Kashmir as *Kar-i-Amrīr* perhaps because of its relation with *Amir-i-Kabīr*.²⁶

It was not only shawl industry that was revived by *Hamadī ni*'s efforts, but he also made efforts to intensify other local and Iranian crafts. Even Prof. Rafiq 'abadī in his book *Islam and Sufism in Kashmir* with the reference of *shams al-Dīn, Mushtāq Hamadī ni* and others ascribes emergence of these industries to *Sayyid 'Alī Hamadī ni*.²⁷ Thus apart from bringing new sciences, culture and values from Iran to Kashmir, *Mir Sayyid 'Alī Hamadī ni* created a different environment in Kashmir by promoting various arts and crafts of Iran there.²⁸ *Mohib al-Hassan* in his book *Kashmir under Sultans* writes that, "It is also stated that the shawl industry was founded by *Sayyid 'Alī Hamadī ni* in 1378 C.E.²⁹. Because the shawl industry did not exist before the thirteenth century, for there is no reference to it either in *Kalhanas Rajtarngni* or any other source and it was developed under the patronage of the sultans with the help of weavers who came from Persia and Turkistan".³⁰

Kashmir has been illustrious for its arts and crafts throughout the history. The arts and crafts prevalent in Kashmir from very beginning of the *Hamadī ni*'s arrival there are textiles of fleecy soft texture, delicate embroidery work in silk and wool, hand woven carpets of finest warp and woof, lovely painting in wonderful designs on Papier Mache goods or on wood, fine tracteries in wood carving, deft weaving in willow-wicker, and superb metal work, of the cottage industries the most flourishing is that of wood-carving which is not only beautiful but also of great utility, which finds its market throughout the world.³¹ One more scholar notes that

a large number of ḡīfīs, saints, scholars, and other Muslims came from Persia to Kashmir and majority of these people were not only the missionaries of Islam but also zealous champions of the Persian language and culture.³²

Sayyid 'Alī Hamadī ni prescribed a very high moral code for the Muslims and they have to serve as model to the other members of the society. He encouraged the study of Persian literature, so that the *Kashmiris* could get into contact with the authors of Persia and Central Asia.

Mir Sayyid 'Alī Hamadī ni established the first Manuscript Library of Islamic books at Srinagar in Kashmir.³³ He possessed vast knowledge wisdom and understanding. His disciples were practical men, who worked hard to earn their living and at the same time, they were God fearing people who absorbed themselves in prayers after their daily work. For neo- Muslims, They set examples and taught them to earn their bread with the sweat of their brow. This was a society where everyone was treated equally, where no caste system was prevailing and this economic and social order greatly influenced the Hindus and

they got converted to Islam.³⁴

One of the significant aspect of *Hamadī ni* was despite being a $\eta \perp f \perp$ working for the *Kubrī vīyah* order, did not make any attempt to shun politics or the government from his concerns of reformation. *Hamadī ni*, on the contrary, apart from writing on affairs of state, made personal contacts with the rulers of Kashmir.³⁵ *Sayyid ‘Alī Hamadī ni* provided advises and guidelines derived from *Quran* and *Sunnah* to rulers for the smooth functioning of the state.³⁶ *Hamadī ni* has also written several letters to some rulers of his time giving them advices regarding good polity³⁷.

Thus, *Hamadī ni*'s political thought is a part of his general philosophy, which is based on *Sharī‘ah*. Like *al-Mīwardī* he led a political life and never kept himself aloof from socio-political situations of the time. The question of ultimate end was chief concern for him and it is this thing which made him to write his magnum opus work *Dhakhīrah al-Mulūk*.³⁸

Sayyid ‘Alī Hamadī ni influenced the economic life and its multiple activities in Kashmir, by stressing the need to earn by lawful means, which he considered itself as a form of prayer. He created *Khanqahs*, where he kept his *Murīds* busy in some work during the day time, and this indirectly influenced the people in society and they also started engaging themselves in some work.

Conclusion:

The above discussion makes it clear that the doors for Muslim penetration into the valley were opened by the invasion of the *Maḥmūd Ghaznī* in 1014 and 1016 C.E. long before the establishment of *Shah Mīr* Dynasty (1339-1561 C.E.). With the establishment of *Shah Mīr* Dynasty immigration to Kashmir from Persia and many parts of Central Asia began, but it were *Suharwardīah* and *Kubrī vīyah η ⊥ f ⊥ s* who made the $\eta \perp f \perp$ teachings practical and pervasive in Kashmir.

The chain of *Kubrī vīyah η ⊥ f ⊥ s*, associated with *Mīr Sayyid ‘Alī Hamadī ni* accelerated the process of Islamisation of Kashmir. The traditions of mixing with the rulers and taking part in political affairs was established by the early *Suharwardīah* and *Kubrī vīyah* saints, they believed that by associating themselves with royal courts, they could change the outlook of rulers. In the process of Islamisation of Kashmir, the establishment of *Khīnqahs* helped the dissemination of Islamic spiritual and intellectual values. Their establishment at many Hindu centres suggests that the $\eta \perp f \perp s$ were prepared to face Hindu religions and intellectual challenges. The interest that $\eta \perp f \perp s$ evinced in the welfare of the people in general must have also helped them to attract non-Muslims to their *Khīnqahs*.

On the basis of socio-political views of *Sayyid ‘Alī Hamadī ni*, it may be assumed that he favours the existence of welfare state based on Islamic principles. According to *Hamadī ni*, tyrant has no right to rule a state. He said it is the duty of a ruler to protect

life and property of his subjects both Muslims and non-Muslims. However, though history bears testimony to the fact that the Muslim rulers of Kashmir who promoted different arts and crafts can easily be attributed to *Kubrī vīyah* $\eta \perp f^l$'s in general and *M^l r Sayyid 'Al^l Hamad^l ni* in particular, as they opened the gate of interaction between Iran and Kashmir in a manner which has no precedent. But there is no doubt that *Sayyid 'Al^l Hamad^l ni* left a deep imprint on the religious history of Kashmir, and his teachings and writings were great source of inspiration not only to his disciples but also to the subsequent generations as well. In fact, there is hardly any mosque in the valley where his *Wa^l k^l ḡ 'if*, especially *Aw^l ḡ d-i-Fat^l f iyah*, are not recited day and night even today by the common masses.

NOTES & REFERENCES:

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