

Traces of Muslims in Early Medieval Kashmir: A Historical Survey

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Abstract

The Kashmir valley, eulogised as the heaven on earth, has been, throughout its history, a place of great interest for saints, sages, Sufis, travellers, adventurers, and rulers. Unlike its neighbouring regions, the conquest of Kashmir at the hands of (foreign) Muslim rulers was suspended for a considerable period of time (i.e., up to 1586, when Mughal rulers of India annexed it) but could not escape the spiritually elite lot among Muslims (Sufis and Rishis), who conquered but not the land, rather the hearts of the people, receiving from them the unfathomable love and reverence for generations to come; thus, bringing forth the materialization of the prediction about Kashmir made by Kalhānā, the ardent Brahman and classical Sanskrit chronicler of Kashmir, who says, “That country may be conquered by the force of spiritual merits, but not by forces of soldiers. Hence its inhabitants are afraid only of the world beyond.” Muslims were present in Kashmir centuries before the establishment of Muslim rule and large scale propagation of Islam there. This, historical fact substantiated with valid documents, depicts the broad-mindedness, welcoming, peace loving and tolerant nature of medieval society of Kashmir, that eventually sustained a multicultural and all-inclusive environment in Kashmir for a considerable period of time. The current paper endeavours to trace the presence of Muslims in Kashmir in the early medieval period i.e., much before the large-scale propagation of Islam and the establishment of Muslim rule there.

Keywords

Kashmir, Muslims, Cross-cultural intercourse, Hindu society / Buddhist society

Introduction

The magnetic attraction that the lush green valley, Kashmir, possess with an affluence of captivating natural scenery of alluring meadows and flower beds, water-falls, rivers and lakes, coloured saffron fields, fruit orchards, singing cataracts and rivulets has been highly talked about. The beauty and appealing scenery of Kashmir has received the attention of renowned local and foreign poets besides receiving a place in the age-old Geography of Ptolemy and Histories of Herodotus (Sufi, 1975, p.iv). 'Urfī Shīrāzī, the renowned Persian bard, thus eulogizes the valley as:

گر مرغ کباب است که بآبال و پراید بر سوخته جان که به کشمیر در آید

Any burnt creature entering Kashmir; Even if a roasted fowl, it shall grow feathers. (Diddamari, 2011, p.xxix).

In the words of Abū al-Faḍl “the praises of Kashmir cannot be contained within the

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narrows of language” (Abū al-Faḍl, 1939, p.828). Likewise, the Mughal emperor Jahāṅgīr has expressed his feelings about the beauty of Kashmir in a eurhythmic popular Persian couplet:

اگر فردوس بر روئے زمیں است ہمیں استو ہمیں استو ہمیں استو

If the paradise is anywhere on the surface of earth it is here, it is here, it is here (Diddamari, 2011, p.xxix and Blake, 2002, p.44).

In the same vein, Mirzā Ghālīb, Aḥṭāf Ḥusayn Ḥālī, Brij Nārāyan Chakbast, Prof. Āl Aḥmad Surūr, Jagan Nāth Āzād, Ḥafīz Jālandharī, Sir Muḥammad Iqbāl and others have left exquisite poetic expressions about the exhilarating beauty of Kashmir.

Located amidst the lofty mountain ramparts the picturesque valley, Kashmir, offers a sight of “an emerald of verdure enclosed in the amphitheater of virgin snow” (Sufi, 1975, p.1). The valley, which was dominated with the Hindu-Buddhist religious philosophy during the early medieval period, was destined to become a Muslim majority region by the end of 17th century. The emergence and subsequent spread of Islam and Muslims, through peaceful preaching, was a gradual process initiated long before the establishment of Muslim Sultanate (in 1339 C.E.) and the subsequent annexation by Mughal empire (in 1586). This steady arrival of Muslims (traders, fortune seekers, preachers and adventurers) in the valley was greatly catalyzed by the age-old cross cultural interactions or inter-regional trade links that hooked the valley with the adjoining regions, which had already come under the sway of Islamic missionaries and conquerors (Khan, 1974, p.61). Arnold (1864-1930 C.E.) with his synoptic insights argues that “all the evidence” pertaining to the gradual process of emergence and profuse spread of Islam in Kashmir, “leads us to attribute it on the whole to a long-continued missionary movement inaugurated and carried out mainly by *faqīrs and dervishes*” (Arnold, 1913, p.291). The snowy mountain ramparts, beyond any doubt, offered a strong natural protection to the valley, thereby impeding its subjugation by any foreign rule for centuries together. However, this natural impediment could hardly resist the arrival of Muslims who gradually formed a significant section of the medieval society of Kashmir in consequence to the expansion of Islam in the neighboring regions including Syria, Persia and Central Asia within the span of few centuries. The renowned historian, Tārā Chand affirms that:

“The rise of Islam in the beginning of the seventh century and the unification of the Arab tribes under a centralized state gave tremendous impetus to the movement of expansion which was going on since pre-Islamic days. Muslim armies rapidly conquered Syria and Persia and began to hover on the outskirts of India. Muslim merchants immediately entered into the inheritance of Persian maritime trade, and Arab fleets began to scour the Indian seas” (Tara Chand, 1946, p.31).

The whole of the northern India was under the control of Muslim empire (represented by various ruling dynasties) towards the beginning of thirteenth century. Unfortunately, the classical Sanskrit literature of Kashmir remains almost silent, keeping in obscurity the changing religio-political scenario in the adjoining territories of Kashmir (mainly Northern India and Central Asia) and its impact on the valley, which is an essential factor for gaining a proper understanding of the emergence of Islam/Muslims in Kashmir. The only direct source of available information regarding the ancient Kashmir is the

Rājātaringinī of Kalhānā that covers history of Kashmir from the earliest times till 1149-50 C.E. Aurel Stein, the English translator of this historical Sanskrit source also laments on the failure of Kalhānā to provide a lucid and detailed information of the vividly changing political and religious milieu of the adjacent areas of Kashmir and its impact on the Kashmiri society, though isolated politically and geographically, yet closely involved with them, through the longstanding social and commercial relations¹ (Bukhārī, 2013, pp.10-18 and Bamzai, 2009). During 8th century, the Arab Muslims (travellers, traders, preachers) reached Sind and Hind and some historical sources allude to the presence of Muslims in Kashmir in this period² (Nadwī, 1976 and Abdullah, 2009, p.4).

Rise of Islam in Sind / Hind³ and its Impact on Kashmir

Following the establishment of Caliphate/*Khilafah* in the whole of Arabia, a series of Muslim expeditions were dispatched towards Sind and Hind (modern Indo-Pak subcontinent and some parts of Afghanistan) which is evident from the earliest historical sources (Balādhurī, Vol.II, p.209), like the *ChachNāmā*⁴ (Kūfī, 1979, p.ii) and *Kitāb Futūḥ al-Buldān* of al-Balādhurī. In the beginning of 8th Century C.E., Imād al-Dīn Muḥammad bin Qāsim, was sent out by the 'Umayyad governor of Iraq, Ḥajjāj bin Yūsuf, at the bidding of the Umayyad Khalīfah Walīd-I to lead the Muslim army against Rājā Dāhir of Sind⁵ (Kūfī, 1979, p.ii and Abdullah, p.6), who had succeeded his father, Chach Brahman, the ruler of Hindu Sāhasī Kingdom (Kūfī, pp.57-195; Bhattī, 2002 and Elliot and Dowson, 1867, Vol. I, pp.131-207). In the year 93 A.H. or 711 C.E. Rājā Dāhir met his death in a fierce assault with Muslim army lead by Muḥammad bin Qāsim (Kūfī, pp.142-144 and Balādhurī, p.220). “When Dāhir was killed Muḥammad bin Qāsim was in complete control of the country as-Sind” maintains Balādhurī (Balādhurī, p.220).

Muḥammad bin Qāsim annexed a vast territory including Dībal and Nirūn or modern Hyderabad, Multān and Bātiah near Bahāwalpūr, Alor (capital of Dāhir's kingdom), Brahminābād or Maṇṣūrāh, Askalandah or modern Uch, and proceeded to the frontiers of Kashmir called as *PanīNāhiyāt*, present at the upper course of river Jhelum (Kūfī, 1979, pp.193-194; Balādhurī, pp.220-223 and Ibn-i Khaldūn, Vol. II, pp.624-625). However, he could not make further conquests as he was recalled by Khalīfah Sulaymān (who had succeeded Walīd-I) and got him killed, and the danger on Kashmir was precluded⁶ ('Ali, 1916, pp.121-122; Balādhurī, p.224 and Ibn-i Khaldūn, p.633). In the reign of 'Umayyad Khalīfah Hishām, the ambitious governor of Sind, Al-Junayd lead an expedition against the frontiers of Kashmir, but was deterred back successfully by Lalitāditya (724-60 C.E.), the then ruler of Kashmir, thereby making an end of further Muslim expeditions on Kashmir⁷ (Balādhurī, pp.230-231 and Kalhānā, 1900, Vol. I, p.124). Still the regular threat of the advancing Muslim army persisted on Kashmir, as its adjoining territories including the Central Asia had come under the Muslim subjugation by the end of 8th century C.E., (Gibb, 1923) together with firm establishment of Islam in its western and northern territories i.e. the Hindu Sāhasī kingdom⁸ (Bamzai, p.3) respectively, in the beginning of 11th Century C.E. by the Ghaznavids. (*Ghaznawī's*) (Farishta, 1981, p.19; Ibn-i Khaldūn, p.672; Balādhurī, pp.226-238; Kalhānā, Vol.I, pp.106,108; Wani, 2004, p.44 and Bamzai, p.211). In this context in the year 1003 C.E., Abū al-Qāsim Maḥmūd Ghaznī, defeated Rājā Jaipāl, the ruler of Waihind (one of the

principalities of Hindu Sāhī kingdom) and later on, his grandson Anand Pāl felt too fragile to withstand Maḥmūd's strong armed legion, sought Sangrāmārājā's (the then ruler of Kashmir –1003-1028 C.E.) help, who sent a big armed contingent for his support under the command of his prime minister Tungā. But this armed coalition could not hold for long against Sultān Maḥmūd after facing him in a valley near Jhelum and got defeated ultimately in 1014 C.E., (Ibn-i Khaldūn, p.685; Kalhānā, Vol. I, pp.270-71; Farsihta, p.32; Hasan, pp.44,45 and Fawq, 2011, p.256f) as Stein signifies (in his introduction to *Rājātaringinī*) that “Maḥmūd seems to have won his victory in one of the valleys which lead from the region about Jhelum, towards Kashmir... and some chiefs of confines of Kashmir are said to have made their submission to the Sultān in consequence of his victory”⁹ (Kalhanā, 1900, pp.271-73).

Aggravated by Sangrāmārājā's conduct Maḥmūd decided to advance towards Kashmir again in 1016 C.E.¹⁰ via Tosamaidān pass (crossed by most direct path between Pūnch and Srinagar and leads to Lahore) and reached a fort known as LohKote. Some chroniclers like GhulāmNabī Khānyārī (*Wajīz al-Tawārīkh*) have maintained that Sultān Maḥmūd was warmly welcomed by Sangrāmārājā and stayed there for one month and also accounts of the presence of Muslims in Kashmir at that time¹¹ (Farsihta, pp.32-33; Stein, pp.106,108; Hasan, pp.44,45; Fawq, p.256f; Bukhārī, 2013, pp.36-44; Khānyārī, 2006, p.72f).

Apart from the developments of the Muslim rule, the Muslim presence in Hind and Sind had already been expedited by the age-old Indo-Arab trade/business relations especially in the coastal area. Muslim traders, adventurers, preachers and travellers used to visit India and explore the country long before the Muslim rule was established there (Mubārakpūrī, 1965; Nadwī, 1976, p.6; Anjum, 2007, pp.217-240; Tara Chand, p.30. Arnold, pp.254-93 and Nadwī, 1966, pp.30-39). Many Muslims had established permanent settlements especially in the coastal regions and were instrumental in propagating Islam among the Indian masses. Both these developments i.e., the early presence of Muslim preachers, traders/travellers and the establishment of Muslim rule in Hind and Sind, would have plausibly facilitated the entrance of Muslim seers, travellers and traders into the valley. As such, the impact of the presence and influx of Muslims in Hind and Sind cannot be relegated as an insignificant event while dealing with the emergence of Islam and Muslims in Kashmir.

Muslim Diffusion in Kashmir: Locating The Earliest Traces

The natural impediments offered to the (foreign) Muslim army by the snowy mountain ramparts, made Kashmir, by the end of the 13th century C.E., the only contiguous region of Central Asia and Northern India that was spared to carry on with its local non-Muslim political governance for next more than a century. (Ferguson, 2009, p.21 and Wani, 2004, p.44). However, these natural impediments could not intercept the gradual and persistent diffusion of Muslims, which had begun near about 8th century C.E. This early Muslim penetration into the valley resulted (as a necessary outcome) of the longstanding social, cultural and commercial intercourse (Warikoo, 1989, pp.55-121) of the valley with the adjoining areas (particularly from the south), “where Islam had spread [long before its large scale diffusion in Kashmir] irresistibly through the whole of the

Indian plains” (Kalhānā, p.130f; Khānyārī, 2006, p.36).

Hindu-Buddhist Rulers and Muslims Immigrants

Reliable traditional sources lend sufficient evidences supporting, the diffusion of Muslims in Kashmir since 8th century C.E. To quote *ChachNāmah*, a fugitive Arab chief of Banū Asāmah tribe namely Muḥammad Alāfī having entered the service of Rājā Dāhir¹² (Wani, 2004, fn.6, p.45 and Sufi, 2008, p.76) and later on his son Jaysiah, as a reliable adviser, in the beginning of 8th century C.E., sought refuge in Kashmir along with his five hundred men, following Jaysiyāh's defeat from the advancing Muslim warriors lead by Muḥammad bin Qāsim, during his expedition on Sind (Kūfī, 1979, pp.56,110-111,152-55,160). The then ruler of Kashmir, Chandrāpīda, paid due respect and regard to Alāfī (Kalhānā, 1900, p.88.) as, after the death of Dāhir, his son Jaysiyāh had embarked on preparations at Brahminābād for a war against the Muslim army lead by Muḥammad bin Qāsim (Kūfī, 1979, p.156). *ChachNāmah*, the contemporary chronicle of the event, relates that; [After separating from Jaysiyāh and reaching at a particular place named Rawistan, Alāfī]

“... wrote letters to the king of Kashmīr, whose capital was situated further up in the midst of hills, protesting his sincerity, and praying for a refuge. The Rānā of Kashmīr, after reading the letters, ordered one of the towns, in the skirts of Kashmīr, known by the name of Shakalbār to be granted to Alāfī. Later on Alāfī paid a visit to the Rānā, the latter ... sent him back with honor and éclat to the land assigned to him, which was situated in a valley. After some time Alāfī died at Shakalbār and was succeeded by Jehm son of Samah, and his line survives up to this time. He built many mosques and enjoyed great respect and dignity at the Kashmīr court” (Kūfī, 1979, p.160).

The concluding part of this authentic report offers a vivid and decisive statement regarding the presence of Muslims in Kashmir during Chandrāpīda's rule (713 and 720 C.E.), who has been highly eulogized by Kalhānā for his being a just ruler with much for bearance and enough valor and thus calls him “crest-jewel among the kings” (Kalhānā, 1900, pp.124-130). And as such, the religious freedom he vouchsafed on the Muslims, (like building of Mosques, as proved from the contemporary Arab chronicle, the *ChachNāmah*) hamper to conceive any kind of skeptic idea, regarding the Muslim presence in Kashmir, almost six centuries before the establishment of Muslim Sultanate in Kashmir.

Though Kalhānā's silence/reticence regarding the presence of Muslims in the valley before 13th century is apparent throughout his classical chronicle *Rājataranginī*, which is unfortunately, the only extant local source of information (from the earliest times up to 1149 C.E.) about ancient Kashmir (Bukhārī, 2013, p.15f), yet, Kalhānā corroborates this fact while he contemptuously introduces, as per him, the “sinful king and sensuous ruler” named as Vajrādityā or Bappiyākā or Lalitādityā (763-770 C.E.), who “sold many men to *Mlecchās*,¹³ and introduced in the country practices which befitted the *Mlecchās*” (Kalhānā, 1900, p.158). The term *Mlecchās* in all probability refer to none other than “Muslim” traders, adventurers and administrative members of ruling Muslim dynasties, who had already made their settlements in the nearby conquered provinces of Kashmir i.e. Sind¹⁴ (Tara Chand, 1946, pp.29-34,55; Tanvir Anjum, 2007, p.224) and since then, Muslim forces had been continuously involved in maintaining a strain of expeditions via

the borders of Kashmir. Obviously its necessary socio-political implications on Kashmir would have made the flow of Muslims, essentially possible, in the valley, though at a small scale during this period. Vajrādityā, thus, adjusted his foreign policy in accordance with the social, political and religious vicissitudes of the surrounding regions, for the welfare of his country, granted the Muslims with the freedom of practicing and preaching their religion as is evident by his selling of “many men to *Mlecchās*” (means he allowed people to accept Islam) or more closely, introduced such practices, as in the words of Kalhana, “which befitted the *Mlecchās*”. The early presence of these *Mlecchās* (or Muslims) in the valley during 8th century C.E., could be vindicated only on the ground that Muslims from the adjoining areas had immigrated in the valley and by practicing their faith, in all probability had managed to earn the peaceful conversions, though at a small scale to start with.

However, due to the emergence and subsequent high-speed influx of the Muslim forces and immigrants mainly after Ghaznī's expeditions¹⁵ in India (though abortive on Kashmir) in the beginning of 11th century C.E., as related above, the Hindu rulers of Kashmir reinforced the security check at the mountain passes, that were serving as gates or “*dhakkās*” or “*drangās*” for the valley and as per Al-Bīrūnī: “In former times they used to allow one or two foreigners to enter their country [Kashmir], particularly the Jews, but at present they do not allow even a Hindu whom they did not know personally to enter, much less other people” (Al-Bīrūnī, 1910, Vol.I, p.206).

The watch-stations primarily offered the surveillance of the entrances and secondarily served as spots for collecting the customs revenue (provided the continuation of the inter-territorial trade), thereby impeding the movement of immigrants, though temporarily, particularly after the mid of 11th century C.E.¹⁶ Owing to the political vicissitudes of the neighboring territories, the strategy of fastening the gateways for the protection measures of the valley could not hold on for a longer period and turned out to be provisional in action (Kalhānā, 1900, Vol. II, p.64). The aggrandizement of the Muslim population in the surroundings of Kashmir and its immediate impact on the internal affairs of the valley, demanded from the rulers to establish cordial relations with the Muslim rulers of the adjoining territories, to avoid any kind of political calamity. Consequently, the relieving of security check on the border gateways resulted in the rapid streaming of Muslims into the valley which is corroborated by the fact that the Muslim cavalry was employed¹⁷ in the service of both the local rulers and their rivals as in case of Anantā (1028-63 C.E.) who was attacked by, one of his rivals, namely, Acālamangalā (from Dardistān) and his allies “*Mlecchā* princes”. But the king with the help of the Sāhī prince, Rudrāpalā¹⁸ managed to put a setback on this expedition (Kalhānā, 1900, Vol. I, p.281). Stein argues that the term “*Mlecchās*” most probably referred to the Muḥammadan [Muslim] tribesmen who had already made their settlements in the Indus valley (Kalhānā, 1900, Vol. I, p.109).

Following this period, Kalhānā again refers to the “*Mlecchās*” while elucidating king Harshā's (1089-1101 C.E.), persecution of *Dāmarās* or feudal land holders, belonging mostly to the tribal division of the *Lavanyās* (preserved in the modern caste or *Krām* of *Lōn*), of whom many “fled in all directions” and “some of them ate cow's meat in the lands of *Mlecchās*” (Kalhānā, 1900, Vol. I, p.364.). As eating of beef is unlawful in

Hinduism and lawful among Muslims, the eating of beef by the *Lavanyās* can be justified either on the assumption of their conversion to Islam, or, their assimilation of some Muslim traits¹⁹ signifying that the term refers strictly to none other than the Muslims (Kalahānā, 1900, Vol. II and also, See note on Verses 2762-64, p.217). The verity of early Muslim settlements in Kashmir is further substantiated; when Kalhānā disparagingly calls Harshā the “*Turuska king*” following his iconoclastic activities²⁰ and also accounts of the employment of Muslim armies or “... *Turuska* captains of hundreds ...” in his service (Kalahānā, 1900, Vol.I, p.357).

The influence of Islamic culture on Kashmir could be gauged from Harshā's reign (1089-1101 C.E.), when he imitated the Muslim (regimes of the neighboring areas) in maintaining a splendid court, introducing gold coins and employing *Turuskas* or Muslim army (Turks) for training his army (Kalahānā, 1900, Vol. I, pp.326-333). Further, during Jayāsimhā's reign (1128-49 C.E.) Bhōjā, the ambitious son of Harshā, lead an attack from the north²¹ to demand the kingship, he was allied with “the chiefs of *Mlecchas*” and the Dard army (Kalahānā, 1900, p.91). This recruitment of Muslim forces, or *Turūskās* in the army of King Harshā and the subsequent rulers and claimants of the throne, including, Bhojā, Bhiksācārā (1120-21 C.E.) and Jayāsimhā (1128-49 C.E.), to subdue their rivals,²² offers an indisputable validity of the presence of Muslims, (having variable denomination) with significant importance in the state affairs of Kashmir, almost two centuries prior to the establishment of Muslim Sultanate.

To substantiate this fact, one among the modern day Kashmiri historians, M.A.Wānī, deciphering the scattered evidences in the earliest known chronicle of Kashmir i.e. *Rājataranginī*, reveals that the employment of Muslims at “high positions” in the government's “sensitive wing, namely military” alludes the presence of Muslims in the concluding years of eleventh century in an incredible number”²³ (Kalhānā, 1900, note on verses 2762-64, Vol. I, p.281, Vol. II, pp.70, 175; Wani, 2004, p.49f). Wānī maintains that,

“The number [of Muslims] further increased with the passage of time when civil wars became rampant in Kashmir and the Kashmiri rulers and the rival claimants to the throne became more and more dependent upon the support of the Muslims [who were best experts in warfare than the local forces] ... and this is why the rulers as well as the rival factions [*Dāmarās*] constantly sought and received the support of the neighboring Muslim rulers ... it is quit natural to presume that these Muslim captains [employed constantly by the local Hindu rulers and other Muslim settlers] would have either brought their families along with them or married local girls, both pointing to the presence of larger Muslim population in Kashmir than is adumbrated in Kalhana's *Rājataranginī*” (Wani, 2004, p.49f).

Hence, the unremitting involvement of Muslims or *Turūskās* of Kalhānā, in the military affairs of the Kashmir province since 11th century onwards²⁴ demystify the fact that, the Muslims had interspersed profusely with considerable significance in the society of Kashmir and had made permanent settlements there, well before the official establishment of Muslim Sultanate in 14th century. This view further gets substantiated while considering the long-standing socio-commercial relations between Kashmir and its neighboring Muslim provinces mainly the Persia and Central Asia,²⁵ from where both the traders as well as mercenaries enjoyed free access to Kashmir (since 10th/11th century). The

firm establishment of Muslim rule in the frontier regions of Kashmir after 11th century and the simultaneous disturbance in the local administration of Kashmir, would have inevitably expedited the influx and subsequent settlements of the Muslim traders in the valley, (Kalhānā, 1900, Vol. I, p.311; Bamzai, 2009, p.211ff and Warikoo, 1989, p.90) as Kalhānā relates of Sussālā (1112-1120 C.E.) that, “being fond of new works, and of possessing many horses, the artisans and foreign horse-dealers grew rich under him” (Kalhānā, 1900, Vol. II, p.40). Not only he, but his predecessors like Anantā (1028-63 C.E.) and Uccalā (1101-11 C.E.) also had great obsession for horses, such that the horse-trainers enjoyed great munificence and made plentiful riches from them. Interestingly, Central Asia was known for its horse trade, which was counted among first-rate trades during this period and Central Asian Muslims used to visit Kashmir frequently for such trade activities as the “horses were another lucrative item [in addition other items] of import, mostly from Central Asia and Afghanistan” (Kalhānā, 1900, Vol. II, p.7; Kapur, 1922, p.137). Similarly Kashmiri traders also managed to make huge profits via exporting precious items (like Saffron) to these adjoining countries. To make it more explicable, it can be held that the geographical location of Kashmir has been, since ancient times, responsible for its excessive promotion of business and trade ventures with its surroundings as Kashmir “stands on the old Central Asian trade route and ... has, since ancient times, been the halting place of the caravans travelling between the plains of India and the high reaches of Central Asia” (Bamzai, 1994, p.2).

Accounts of Al-Bīrūnī and Marco Polo

Abū Rayḥān Muḥammad bin al-Bīrūnī (973-1048 C.E.), the 11th century Persian polymath, has provided vital information regarding the social, religious, commercial and geographical aspects of Kashmir in his, *Kitāb al-Hind*,²⁶ which is mainly based on his personal investigation and observation, as he maintains that “the people of Kashmir, with whom I have conversed on the subject [of celebration of some particular festival in Kashmir during his times]” (Al Bīrūnī, 1910, Vol. II, p.181) and acknowledges that Kashmir has been a seat of high learning along with Varanasi throughout the then Indo-Pak subcontinent, consequently attracting scholars from farthest places to quench their academic thirst (Al Bīrūnī, 1910, Vol. I, p.173). Further, Al-Bīrūnī confirms the subsistence of commercial links between Muslim traders of nearby territories and the Kashmir before mid-11th century C.E., while delineating the frontiers of India, he gives an account of Rājāwarī or modern Rajaurī in Kashmir, that it is the “farthest place to which our merchants trade” (Al Bīrūnī, 1910, p.208) and accordingly this commercial link would have become more stronger with the expansion of Muslims dominions along the periphery of Kashmir.

Furthermore, the unequivocal evidences offered by the Venetian traveler, Marco Polo, regarding the early Muslim presence in Kashmir, demands the ungrudging appreciation of the fact that by the end of 13th century C.E., a sizeable Muslim population had established permanently in Kashmir and going on with local tune, formed a significant part (denomination) of the society, as the venetian traveler puts it: “The people of the province [Kashmir] do not kill animals, nor spill blood, so if they want to eat meat they get the *Saracens* [Muslims or *Mlecchas* of Kalhānā] who dwell among them to play

the butcher”(Yule,1914, Vol. I, p.167). Thus, by means of the social, economic and political affairs, Kashmir valley, from ancient times, continued to foster, its linkage with its Muslim ruled neighboring countries, especially the Central Asia, consequently imbibing the religio-cultural tint of these areas amidst the inescapable environment of interactions among the populace of these region (Bukhārī, 2013, pp.53-61; Bamzai, 1994, pp.23-43; Kapoor, 1922, p.137 and Kaw, 2010), Vol. 17, No: 2 and 3, p.7).

The above description of the first hand evidences from Al-Bīrūnī, advocates the interlinking of Kashmir via social, commercial, educational and political ties with its adjacent neighbours, where Islam/Muslims had already made a profuse diffusion. Likewise, Marco Polo brings forth that the *Saracens* (of Marco Polo) or *Mlecchās* (of Kalhānā), designated as butchers, living permanently within the Kashmiri society, could have been either the local converts to Islam or the foreign Muslim immigrants and both these plausible inferences corroborate the presence of Muslim settlements, considerably, in Kashmir towards the end of thirteenth century.

Egalitarian Islam and Early Conversions in the Caste-Ridden Hindu-Buddhist Society

Another important dimension of the theme under study is to take into consideration the possibilities of conversions from the medieval Hindu-Buddhist Kashmiri society. It is an undeniable fact that the medieval society of Kashmir highly endorsed caste-system that ensured a sound fortune for upper classes or castes at the cost of the lower castes. Islam with its lofty, universal and egalitarian principles brought to the then Kashmiri society by travellers, adventurers, traders and preachers would have plausibly fascinated and received the attention of people especially the lower castes (who would have accepted it to ensure for them a dignified and respectable status in the society). Herbert Risley pertinently argues:

“Islam ... is in every respect the antithesis of Hinduism. Its ideal is strenuous action rather than hypnotic ... On its social side the religion of [Prophet] Muḥammad [pbuh] is equally opposed to the Hindu scheme of a hierarchy of castes, an elaborate stratification of society based upon subtle distinctions of food, drink, dress, marriage and ceremonial usage. In the sight of God and His Prophet all followers of Islam are equal” (Risley and Crooke, London, 1915, p.121).

Since, Islam believes in egalitarianism/equality of all (in being human) and confers upon every believer an equal status in the society unlike Hinduism, where the caste system, categorizes the people into upper/privileged and lower/underprivileged grades within the society, leading to exploitation of the later class/caste. So, it is quite explicable that people belonging to such lower castes or denominations, including the butcher class, might had come under the sway of the lucid, clear, loft and egalitarian teachings of Islam and having accepted it, enjoyed an elevated social status, which is manifested (even in the current day Kashmiri society) in their subsequent adoption of prestigious *Krāms* or surnames²⁷ (Lawrence, 2011, pp.302-19; Wani, 2004, p.53; Risely, 1915, p.247 f and Fawq, 1934).

Given the uncontested authenticity of above facts, it, therefore, becomes plausible, that by the end of thirteenth century (C.E.), when whole of the Northern India had come under the sway of Islam (Tara Chand, 1946, p.135), Muslims of varied

denominations including mercenaries, traders, adventurers, artisans, proselytizers and the converted sections etc. had established their settlements within the mountainous abode of Kashmir.²⁸ The early Muslim settlements, though small, “formed a core of Muslim settlers in Kashmir” much before the installation of Muslim Sultanate in 1339 C.E. (Rizvi, 1997, p.289).

During 1320s Rinchana, the Buddhist ruler accepted Islam at the hands of Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahmān popularly known as Bulbul Shah and later on, in 1339 Shah Mir, an immigrant from Swat, having installed himself fully in the state-apparatus through his skill of state-craft, ascended the throne as the Sultan of the valley thereby initiating the Muslim Sultanate that ended only with its annexation by the Mughals during the second half of 16th century. Meanwhile, enormous number of Muslim Sufis/preachers (especially from Central Asia/Iran) including the renowned Mir Sayyid 'Ali Hamadani entitled as *Amir Kabir* or *Shah-i Hamadan* reached Kashmir and spread Islam to its every nook and corner, thereby playing an important role in the process of transition of Kashmir from a Hindu-Buddhist dominated to Muslim majority region within a span of few centuries.

Conclusion

The mountain ramparts as natural impediments though barred the Muslim conquerors from establishing their full-fledged command over the valley, yet they failed to check the gradual and peaceful emergence of Muslims into the medieval Kashmiri society. The arrival and peaceful sustenance of Muslims in such an ardent Hindu/Buddhist society of medieval Kashmir signifies towards the persistence of a purposeful inter-religious, commercial and intellectual intercourse among diverse religious and cultural denominations during medieval era. By means of this, the current study amply brings to limelight the tolerant and peaceful environment of the medieval Kashmiri society engrossing diverse cultures, religions and ethnicities. Moreover, the pluralistic and accommodative nature of the medieval Kashmiri state is revealed through its munificence towards Muslim migrants (from Central Asia etc.), through their engagement in mercenaries and as high royal posts along with the liberty of practicing and preaching their religion.

The engagement of not only the religious but state bureaucracy with Muslim (Sufi) scholars in religious and intellectual discussions depicts the persistence of an academically and intellectually serene environment that nurtured inter-faith dialogue for inter-religious understanding.

To sum up, the study amply reveals that Muslims had made their permanent presence in Kashmir during the early medieval period and were living as a significant section of the society engaged in the social, cultural, political and religious milieu of the valley.

Notes

1. See, the introduction to the earliest Sanskrit Chronicle of Kings of Kashmir written in 1149-50 C.E. by Kalhānā Panditā, Known as *Rājataranginī*, which keeps the history of Kashmir from earliest times up to 1150 C.E. This has been translated with introduction, commentary and Appendices by M. Aurel Stein. Also see, Kalhānā, *Rājataranginī*, Eng.tr., M. A. Stein, (Westminster, 1900), Vol.I, pp.107-108; This work of Kalhānā was later on extended after two

centuries by Jōnā Rājā, who added to it the events from 1150-1459 C.E. and himself being an eyewitness to the changing circumstances between 1389-1459 C.E. Notwithstanding his silence regarding the illustrious Sufis like Mīr Sayyid 'Alī Hamadānī, LalDed, and Shaykh Nūr al-Dīn Walī, he has provided an account of his contemporary Sufi Mīr Muḥammad Hamadānī son of Mīr Sayyid 'Alī Hamdānī and his relations with SultānSikandar (1389-1413 C.E.). This work was further carried on by Srivārā, a pupil of Jōnā Rājā, who continued to write the account of the Sultāns of Kashmir and named it *Zaynārājātaringinī*. Being a friend of SultānZayn al-'Ābidīn the author accounts of Sultān's reign between 1459-1470 C.E., besides giving details of Sultan Ḥydar Shāh (1470-72 C.E.) and Ḥasan Shāh (1472-84 C.E.). This way he was able to compile the history of the Sultans from 1472-1486 C.E.

2. Sind included modern day Pakistan, India, Kashmir and a major portion of Afghanistan. To the Arabs the entire area from the Arabian Sea to the mountains of Kashmir constituted Hind and Sind.
3. For the medieval Arab geographers/travellers and historians Hind and Sind were two separate countries including the regions of modern-day Indo-Pak subcontinent .
4. 'Alī bin Muḥammad Kūfī's *ChachNāmā* is the Persian translation of an Arabic Manuscript named as *Tārīkh-i Hind Wa Sindh* written by some unknown person and a contemporary of Muḥammad bin Qāsim, and thus serves as one of the earliest extant historical sources. It was rendered into Persian in 1216 C.E., during the time of 'Amīr Qubācha, the then ruler of Sind. From Persian it has been translated into English by MirzaKalichbegFredunbeg.
5. Before Muḥammad bin Qāsim's arrival, Sind, together with the northern India, was ruled by Rājapūts. The last ruler from this race was Rājā Sahāsī II, whose area of dominance reached up to Kashmir and having professed Buddhism like his father, died in 632 C.E., leaving the kingdom in the hands of a chamberlain namely, Chach, a *Brahman* and a favorite of Sahāsī's wife. Chach Brahman, ruled for 68 years from 632 till 700 C.E. and in his time the Sāhasī Kingdom, extended on the East and West to Kashmir and Makrān. On the South to the shores of Dībal and on the North to the mountains of Kardan to Qayqān or extended between modern Afghanistan and Punjab. His dominion included the great cities like Multan, Sikka, Brahmāpur, Ashahar and Kumba together with the borders of Kashmir. Dāhir was Chach Brahman's son
6. The author of *TheChachNāmā* relates an incident in which the death of Muḥammad IbnQāsim, has been attributed to Al-Walīd.Kūfī, *op.cit.*, pp.193-94. But other sources record that actually, there was hostility between Sulaymān and Al-Ḥajjāj, for long time because of the latter's friendly relations with Walīd I, who wanted his son instead of Sulaymān to be the *Khalīfah*. On his death, Al-Walīd was succeeded by Sulaymān and reversed the policies of Al-Walīd. As a result of this, those who had been the devotees of Al-Walīd, came under persecution after Sulaymān's succession as *Khalīfah*. He not only deposed Muḥammad IbnQāsim, the son in law of Al-Hajjāj, but also ordered his execution.
7. MohibbulHasan, *Kashmir Under the Sultāns*, Hamid Naseem, (ed.), (Srinagar,2002), p.43; As per Balādhurī, in the reign of 'Abbāsī *Khalīfah*, Al-Manṣūr 754-775 C.E., his governor of Sind, HishāmIbn al-'Amr al-Taghlibī made a successful expedition towards Kashmir, yet no other local source validates this, but Stein substantiates the continuity of these ventures of Muslim forces on Kashmir during the 8th Century C.E. on the authority of annals of Tang dynasty, when he writes, that during the 8th Century C.E., Chandrāpida the then ruler of Kashmir, sought help from Chinese ruler against the Arab invasions, that continued from its northern territories.
8. Dardistan included, Swāt, Bunji,Hunza,Punial,Chitral, Hazara, Pakhli, Gilgit, Askardo, Chilas and Astor. The inhabitants of these territories are known as *Dards* and *Gilchās*.
9. See note on verses;47-69. Kalhanā is obscure on SultānMaḥmūd's advancements after this victory over Tunga and the Sanskrit terms *Turūskā* and *Hamṁirā* (Sanskritized form of 'Amīr) refer to the Muslim forces and Maḥmūd Ghaznawī respectively..
10. Historians are at variance regarding the 2nd expedition of Maḥmūd Ghaznawī, some argue its date as, 1016 C.E., while others record it as 1021 C.E.
11. Similarly Abū Sa'īd Gurdīzī in his *Zaynal-Akhyār*, argues of conversions and presence of Muslims in considerable size at the time of SultānMaḥmūd's visit to Kashmir, as cited by Bukhārī.

12. It has been erroneously recorded in *ChachNāmah* that Muḥammad Alāfī had killed one of the *Umayy* commanders namely 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Ash'ath (See Kūfī, *op.cit.*, p.55), which is contradictory with its own report on p.67.cf. p.55, where in the killed person by Alāfī is recorded as Sa'id ibn Aslam, which as per Ibn-i Khaldūn seems correct. See, Ibn-i Khaldūn, *op.cit.*, p.593. As per Ibn-i Khaldūn, 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Ash'ath was sent to take over Ratbayl, who was governing the Turks, and later on Ibn 'Ash'ath revolted against the *Umayy*s and was deceptively killed by Ratbayl. See, IbnKhaldūn, *op.cit.*, pp.592-93,601. On killing Sa'id, who was deposed to Makrān, Alāfī joined Dāhir out of the governor Hajjāj's retribution. However, Alāfī refused to fight against 'Arab army and after Dāhir's death Alāfī was pardoned by Muḥammad ibn Qāsim on behalf of Al-Hajjāj (See, Kūfī, p.128). Among the modern Historians of Kashmir both, M.A. Wani and G. M. D. Sufi, have accepted the same view while referring to *ChachNāmah*, bringing forth the same misconception, which needs a more critical and comparative evaluation.
13. Al Bīrūnī relates that the Hindus used the term *Mlecchā* contemptuously for any foreigner who slaughtered animals and ate cow's meat and usually the Arabs (Muslims) were called as *Mlecchās* (Al Bīrūnī, 1910, Vol.I, p.302, Vol. II, p.136). Throughout his chronicle the orthodox Brahman, Kalhānā has used this term for Muslims in Kashmir, giving vent to his biased feelings with this newly emerging eternal faith (Islam) in Kashmir.
14. Substantiating this proposition, Tara Chand accentuates the establishment of early Muslim settlements in India during 8th century C.E. and relates: [H]enceforth Muslims influence grew rapidly. For over a hundred years, the Muslims had been established on the Malabar Coast. They were welcomed as traders, and, apparently facilities were given to them to settle and acquire lands and openly practice their religion. They must have entered upon missionary efforts soon after settling down, for Islam is essentially a missionary religion and every Musalman is a missionary of his faith." Balādhurī relates of the conversion of even some rulers of Sind during the 2nd decade of 8th century (Balādhurī, 1916, Vol. II, p.209-225 ff; Arnold, 1913, p.254 ff; Ibn-i Khaldūn, 2003, pp.51-74; Wani 2004, p.47. Similarly, Balādhurī mentions of the ruler of 'Usayfān, a country between Kashmir and Multan, who had accepted Islam (Balādhurī, Vol. II, p.225).
15. While highlighting the impact of the ambitious endeavors of Sultān Maḥmūd Ghaznawī, M. L. Kapoor says that "the Islamic influence became much more marked. He gave refuge to a number of Sāhi princes who fled from the Punjab after its occupation by Mahmud of Ghazni" - (Kapur, 1922, p.81).
16. One such watch-station was at Sūrpōrā or modern Hurpōrā, where the ruins of the great wall built in the reign of Avantīvarman—855-883 C.E., had been traced out by Stein in 1891 C.E. (Kalahānā, 1900, Vol. II, Note D III, p.291). During Harshā's reign Kalhānā's father Canpakā was made as in-charge of various important watch-stations (Kalahānā, 1900, Vol.I, p.361).
17. Muslim forces or "Turūskās" from the nearby areas of Kashmir, were highly skilled in warfare than the locals which is corroborated by the statement "Until you have become acquainted with the Turūskā warfare, you should post yourself on the scarp of this hill, [keeping] idle against your desire". This statement was addressed by Trilocanapālā, to the local army chief, Tungā on facing Maḥmūd Ghaznawī's army, See, Kalahānā, *op.cit.*, Vol. I, p.270ff. Kalhānā relates, "in the morning then came in fury and in full battle array the leader of the Turuskā army himself, skilled in stratagem" (Kalahānā, 1900., Vol.I, p.270ff).
18. During Sultān Maḥmūd's expedition on Sāhī kingdom, that extended from modern Afganistan to Punjab, several Sāhī princes including Rudrāpālā, Anangāpālā and Diddāpālā sought refuge in Kashmir and also exercised great influence there. See, Kalahānā, *op.cit.*, Vol. I, p.279ff. Al-Bīrūnī relates of this period that, "the Hindu Shāhiya [Sāhi] dynasty is now extinct, and of the whole house there is no longer the slightest remnant in existence" (Al-Bīrūnī, 1910, Vol. II, p.13).
19. Literally the Sanskrit term *Mlecchā* refers to the foreigners with different religious and cultural identities. However it has been proved earlier that Kalhānā by this term refers to Muslims.
20. Some scholars are of the view that he did so, to meet his fiscal demands out of the costly idols and others suggest his bent towards Islam, on the basis of his employing their army in his service. However, this contention also seems implausible when he is related to have been accustomed of

some immodest habits utterly unbecoming of a Muslim (Kalahānā, 190, Vol.I, p.353).

21. This region was called as Dardistān, a union of small territories bordering the northern frontiers of Kashmir and included Swat, Pakhli, Hazara, Askardo, Chilas and Astor (Wani, 2004, p.45).
22. Harshā's son Bhōjā, who at the support of Dārādā army [inhabiting the North zones of Kashmir like Gilgit, Hazara or shortly called as Dardistān, where Islam had made its considerable presence already] and *Mlecchā* (Muslim) chiefs launched an attack on Kashmir from the North [Dardistān], to claim the crown, during Jayāsimhā's reing-1128-1149 C.E. Kalhānā relates that such was the impact of the army on the locals that, “*The people feared that the territory invaded by the Turuskas (Muslim armies) has fallen [altogether] into their power and thought that the whole country was overrun by the Mlecchas*” (Kalahānā, 1900, Vol. II, p.224). Further Stein maintains that “*if stress can be laid on the term Mleccha, we should have to conclude that the conversion of the Darad tribes on the Indus from Buddhism to Islam had already made great progress in the twelfth century*”, (Kalahānā, 1900, Vol. II. See note on Verses 2762-64, p.217 and Vol. I, p.281. Bhiksācārā (1120-21 C.E.) the grandson of Harshā, also sought the aid of Muslim forces against his rival Sussālā, who had took refuge in Lohārā at that time. See, Kalhānā, *op.cit.*, Vol. II, p.70. The presence of *Yavanās* in the reign of Jayāsimhā, again, as per Stein, refer to Muslims. (Kalahānā, 1900, Vol. II, p.175).
23. In the modern Kashmir, a place named to be as *Malchimār*, situated on the right bank of river Jhelum, has been called as *MlechMār* or place of *Mlecchās*, in the early times. Since the *Mlecchās* were not initially provided with any social recognition and therefore, could have inhabited a separate area for enjoying and sustaining their own social environment (Wani, 2004, p.50).
24. As per the 19th century traveler, Sir Walter Lawrence, during the period 1110 to 1149 C.E., “*when Kalhānā Pandit ends his history, there was little else than civil war; and the Dāmarās [or local feudal lords], 'well-skilled in burning, plundering and fighting,' were a terror to the country. Central authority was at an end, and the kings seemed to grow more helpless and incapable*” (Lawrence, 2011, p.189).
25. Kalhānā depicts various instances of social and economic intercourse with the Muslims or *Turūskās* during Kalāsā's tenure—1063-89 C.E., like, he refers to the service offered by a *Turūskā* or Muslim artisan (probably from Central Asia) to Kalāsā, and the former enjoyed the king's royal hospitality for several days (Kalhānā, 1900, Vol.I, pp.301-311).
26. This book, a unique piece in Arabic literature was edited by E. Sachau and published first in 1887 C.E. and was rendered to English by the same German orientalist in 1888 C.E.
27. Herbert Risely argues of the temptation for a higher social status, among lower castes in Hindus, playing a very important role in conversion of lower castes to Islam in Hindu societies— Guy Wint, sketches a contrasting picture between Islam and Hinduism and says, “*Breathing from infancy the axioms of caste, Hindus accepted human inequality as a permanent and inexpugnable fact; Islam was a leveling religion with a passion for equality by which even its monarchs were periodically humbled.*” The interaction between these two cultures, many a times, turned out to be vice versa i.e ... “*where Islam flourished the caste system weakened*” (Schuster and Wint, 1941, p.54f).
28. The Sanskrit chronicler Kalhānā in his *Rājātaranginī* records that due to the disturbed socio-political order of the state the entrance ways were rarely secured and people were almost free to go in and out of the Valley (Kalhānā, 1900, Vol. I, and Vol. II; Sayyid 'Alī, 2009, Introduction).

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