



Shi'ism in Kashmir, 1477-1885

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Abstract

The present study aims to trace the genesis of shia faith in Kashmir; formation of shia philosophy and propagation of shia doctrine among the people of Kashmir; growing contradictions and clashes between shia-sunni followers; and implications of the political and religious policies of various rulers of later medieval period on Kashmiri society. Shia'ism didn't enter in the region of Kashmir as a distinct sect but an extension of the Islamic ideology propagated by Sayyid Sharaf-ud-din Bulbul Shah which got further impetus by missionary zeal of Mir Sayyid Ali Hamdani who converted Kashmir in a Muslim majority state by the end of 13th century. The shi'ite doctrine was established in Kashmir by Shams-ud-din Iraqi who earlier propagated it as mere extension of Sunni orientation of Islam brought in the valley by the Sayyids but later on, took it on the path of twelver Islam and motivated certain major state dignitaries to adopt the upcoming shia ideology. The conversion of ruling family of Chaks resulted in the emergence of shi'ism as the state religion which continued to exist till the subjugation of Kashmir by the Mughal armies. Later on, the continuous targeting of shia community during the Afghan rule, widened the gulf between these two sects which had started opposing each other right from the Chak times. Sometimes triggered by political interests of the governing authorities, the frequent shia-sunni clashes certainly had their long term impact on the internal politics of the region. Though, confrontation between the people of these two sects occurred very frequently but some of the disastrous events of shia-sunni riots which will be discussed in the paper, occurred in the years 1719-20, 1741, 1762, 1801, 1803 and 1872.

Keywords: Shia'ism in Kashmir, Shams-ud-din Iraqi, Shia-sunni clashes, religious policies of rulers belonging to various dynasties in Kashmir.

Introduction

The frequent clashes between the Shia and Sunni population of the valley from the later half of Mughal rule which quite often resulted in the killing of people, plunder and loot of wealth and property, and destruction of *khanaqahs* and other symbolic buildings depicts the picture of Kashmiri society where peaceful co-existence of different religions and sects had become challenging. The contradictions between these two Islamic ideologies existed in pre-Mughal Kashmir but the frequency and magnitude of such fierce conflicts kept on increasing in medieval times because of the growing antagonism between the two sects. In order to understand the reasons for the frequent outburst of people towards the other sect, one has to look at the history of Shi'ite philosophy in Kashmir and various stages of developments through which it ultimately became a discernible part of Kashmiri culture. The genesis of Shia-Sunni conflict lies in the emergence of Chak rule in Kashmir and yet in mild form, this dissension continued in society till the first half of twentieth century. A proper introduction of Shi'ite orientation of Islam came in the declining years of Sultan Fateh Shah (1496-1505) but the first confrontation between Shias and Sunnis as two distinct sectarian identities happened in the rule of Mirza Haider Dughlat, the representative of Mughal Emperor, Humayun in the year 1548 ACE. The first spark was ignited by Mirza Haider Daughlat who showed contempt towards Shia communities of

Kashmir, especially Chaks. He not only stopped the propagation of Shia ideology in Askardo but also tried to expose its shortcomings in a treatise, *Fiqah Ahwat*, written by Sayyid Mohammad Nurbaksh¹.

In order to understand the causes and consequences of Shia-Sunni conflicts in Kashmiri society, one has to introspect into the very introduction of Shia philosophy in early period of medieval Kashmir. In the beginning of sixteenth century, there was no Islamic land which was spared from the vicious division of Shia-Sunni discord and the region of Kashmir proved no exception to it. The political incompatibility justified in the light of religious discourses between groups became wide enough to create two distinct sects within Islam. To the surprise of many, Shi'ism didn't enter into Kashmir as a separate Islamic sect but an extension of sufi philosophy of *Kubarvi* thought which was propagated by early sufis right from the time of Sayyid Sharaf-ud-din, commonly recognised in Kashmir by the name of Bulbul Shah and later on, reached its zenith through the missionary efforts of Mir Sayyid Ali Hamdani. Then it took shape of a religious discourse from the precepts of *Nurbakshia* school of sufi thought and ultimately emerged as a full-fledged sect in which thousands of *Pandits* (Kashmiri Hindus are generally addressed as Pandits) and Muslims were converted to adopt this distinct identity of Islam.

Before coming to the introduction of Shi'ite philosophy in Kashmir, one has to have enough knowledge of *Nurbakshai* School of thought which proved fountain head of Shi'ism in Kashmir and its adjoining regions. *Nurbakshia silsilla* is believed to be a distinguished sufi order because of being highly influenced by the shi'ite twelver philosophy in Islam. This sufi order was introduced by Mir Sayyid Mohammad Nurbaksh Qahistani in Iran during 15th century. He was a great sufi theologian who wrote famous Islamic works like *Fiqh-i-Ahwat* and *Kitab-ul-Auliqada*. Mir Sayyid Mohammad Nurbaksh happened to be the great follower of Kubravi Sufi School which was introduced by his uncle and spiritual guide, Mir Sayyid Ali Hamdani. As far as the conversion of Kashmiris to Islam is concerned, it is an accepted notion that Mir Sayyid Ali Hamdani played an ultimate role in spreading Islam not only in Kashmir but also in the adjoining regions of Tibet, Ladakh, Baltistan, etc². Prior to that, if one considers the initial conversion of Rinchana Shah (the first converted Muslim king of Kashmir) along with numerous other people, the credit goes to Sayyid Shihab-ud-din (locally famous by the name of Bulbul Shah) who belonged to *Suharwardi* sufi order. Sayyid Sharaf-us-din was a disciple of Shah Ni'amat Allah Farsi who had come from Turkistan for the propagation of suharwardi school of Sufi philosophy in Kashmir during the reign of King Suhadeva³. Both the above mentioned schools spread sufi philosophy which hailed precisely from what is now called the Sunni orientation of Islam. Thus, the conversions which happened till the coming of Sayyid Shams-ud-din Iraqi occurred mainly in sunni orientation of Islam. This order of *Nurbakshia* made prominence in the places like Kashmir and Baltistan under the leadership of Shaikh Shams-ud-din Mohammad Al-Isfahani in the 16th century. Shams-ud-din Iraqi was disciple of Mir Sayyid Mohammad Nurbaksh's son and spiritual heir, Shah Qasim Faizbaksh. *Nurbakshia* order had left marks of Shi'ite philosophy in all the regions wherever it entered because of its major emphasis on the role and contribution of *Imams* in Islamic history. It is very important to mention here that *Nurbakshia* order is majorly followed in the regions of Baltistan and its adherents follow doctrines which lie somewhere between Shia and Sunni doctrines of Islam. Their belief is to follow the actual teachings of Mir Sayyid Mohammad Nurbaksh who mentioned the role of *Imams* in his teachings but never recommended the Shia'ite orientation of Islam which became prominent in 16th century. They further believe that Mir Sayyid Mohammad Nurbaksh followed the footsteps of Mir Sayyid Ali Hamdani who tried to propagate the actual *sharia* in the regions he visited in his life time. It is because of the later influences from other religious ideologies existing in Iraq and Iran which directed this sufi order, *Nurbakshia* on the path of complete present day Shi'ite philosophy.

Objectives of the Study

The present paper aims to study an emergence of shia faith in three major stages which correlate to the three visits of Shams-ud-din Iraqi in the valley. The history of shia-sunni differences

from the ideological clashes between the politico-religious elite groups to the frequent riots among the followers of these two faiths will be dealt in this paper at length. It will further investigate the changes or reasons which increased the frequency of clashes between shia-sunni sects witnessed majorly in post-Mughal period in Kashmir. The religious and political policies of various medieval rulers towards the sectarian discord, forms an important section in the paper. It will bring forth the implication of Imperial policies in shaping the shia-sunni relationship which inturn influenced the social fabric of the region. Thus, in addition to historical background of shi'ism and socio-political factors responsible for its dispersion, another major objective of present study will be the changing policies of the rulers towards the sectarian discord in post-Mughal period.

Emergence of Shams-ud-din Iraqi and the Commencement of Shi'ism in Kashmir

Shi'ism which transmitted through the sufi doctrines of *Nurbakshia* order, was introduced by Shams-ud-din Iraqi in the 16th century. His full name was Shaikh Shams-ud-din Mohammad Al-Isfahani who originally belonged to Iraq and had travelled to many places from Iran to Kashmir in order to propagate the teaching of *Nurbakshia* school of Sufism. He entered Kashmir for the first time in the regnal years of Hasan Shah (1477-1484), as an ambassador from the court of Sultan Husain Mirza who was the then governor of Khurasan. As already mentioned that the commencement of Shi'ite philosophy occurred in three phases which to a greater extent were connected with the three major visits of Iraqi to the valley. The three phases are marked by the following developments in Shi'ite philosophy in Kashmir:

Shams-ud-din's early teaching as an extension of sufi philosophy which was already propagated by the *sayyids* like Bulbul Shah, Mir Sayyid Ali Hamdani and his followers who settled at different regions in Kashmir.

Preaching of an Islamic orientation which hailed from the doctrines of *Nurbakshia* order.

The creation of a full-fledged sect with the conversion of huge number of *Pandits* and Muslims who were made to adopt the distinct identity of Shi'ite Islam.

First Phase

When Shams-ud-din Iraqi entered into the valley, the state of Kashmir was politically in ruins and the administration was torn between high-handedness of *Sayyid* clan and the indigenous chieftain groups. Though these local chieftains had managed to occupy the higher administrative positions, the high-handedness in state affairs continued to be enjoyed by a group of *Sayyids* who were considered influential social elites because of their superior religious positions and had often proclaimed

themselves superior to other classes and communities of Kashmiri society. During Hasan Shah's rule, it was Sayyid Mohammad Hasan Baihaqi who acted as a virtual head of the state and continued to enjoy the same position in the initial years of Sultan Mohammad Shah's reign⁴. After making his first visit in Kashmir in 1477 CE, Shams Iraqi was detained from the country for eight years because of the disturbed political conditions. Though, initially, Shams-ud-din didn't preach directly the Shia doctrine but tried to propagate his teachings as an extension of the philosophy (sufi or Islamic) whose basis were already laid by the former Sufi saints. But there must have been certainly some fundamental differences visible in his preaching that made Sayyid Mohammad Baihaqi expel him from the valley. This clearly shows that existing state ruled particularly by the *Sayyid* clan was against the Shi'ite orientation of Islam which was in its embryonic stage in Kashmir. At this point of time, the *Baihaqi Sayyids* who besides enjoying religious superiority in society, were also affluent in the politics of the state. During the early years of Mohammad Shah's reign, the state of Kashmir was virtually governed by Sayyid Hasan Baihaqi. The author of *Baharistan-i-Shahi* emphasizes the moral character of Mirza Sayyid Mohammad Baihaqi but unhesitatingly suggests an unending discord between him and those local chieftain classes who majorly constituted the administrative machinery of the state. This *Sayyid* class seldom encouraged the teachings of Shams-ud-din Iraqi in Kashmir who was preparing ground to challenge the orientation of Islam which this class was following and preaching which would have, in turn, adversely affected the political and social position they were enjoying from the very beginning of Muslim establishment in Kashmir. Consequently, they resisted Shams-ud-din Iraqi's missionary moves of preaching the Shi'ite philosophy among masses. They didn't let Iraqi to stay longer in the valley but he still managed to lay the foundation of Shi'ism, though, in a very crude form by attracting the disciples and converting some of them to his faith. Baba Ismail and Baba Abdul Najjar were among first few Kashmiris to adhere to the philosophy of Shi'ism. It was again during this visit, Shams Iraqi influenced Musa Raina who happened to be one of the prominent figures in state administration and belonged to the indigenous group of *Dangars*. It is believed that Musa Raina was highly impressed by the missionary zeal and teachings of Shams-ud-din Iraqi. The differences between Musa Raina and Sayyid Hasan Baihaqi further widened with the efforts of latter in expelling Shams Iraqi from the valley.

The animosity between Baihaqi Sayyids and local chieftains who majorly constituted of Magrays, Rainas, Chaks, Dars, etc took worst turn with the killing of Shaikh Mohammad Hasan Baihaqi, conspired by some of these local chiefs. He was attacked in his office and murdered along with fourteen of his kinmates by some armed people already installed by the chieftains. The incident started from political disagreement between *Sayyids* and local chieftains which later on turned into a fierce feeling of hatred and continued even upto the period of Mughals and Afghans in Kashmir and played decisive role in

changing the rulers at the centre for hundreds of years. After hearing the brutal killing of Sayyid Hasan Baihaqi, his son Sayyid Mohammad Baihaqi took up arms and decided to annihilate the accused local chiefs. A ruthless battle was fought between two groups in which *Sayyids* came out victorious and Sayyid Mohammad Baihaqi and his other *Sayyid* companions restored their religious and political positions in the state for some time. Later on, the deteriorating political conditions of the state forced these two groups for temporary reconciliation but they were always waiting for an opportunity to uproot the political authority of their opponent and to monopolise the politics of the state.

The worsening political equations between different shareholders of power suggests the possibilities of local chieftains getting attracted towards an orientation of Islam propounded by Shams-ud-din Iraqi who was antagonistic towards the socio-religious group of *Sayyids*.

Second Phase

During Mohammad Shah's third term on the throne of Kashmir, Sayyid Mohammad Baihaqi who was acting as a judicial head of the state, aligned with Musa Raina and Ibrahim Magray (both the chiefs had enjoyed the supreme administrative positions in the later Sultanate period) and other *sirdars* to destroy the growing power of Chak dynasty. This confederacy resulted in curbing the anti-state activities of Chaks by expelling their leader Malik Shams Chak from Trehgram to Drav and destroying their major property and resources. The growing power of Musa Raina in the administrative machinery prompted Shams-ud-din Iraqi to enter the valley for the second time. It was during this visit that Musa Raina became an ardent follower of Shi'ite philosophy and confronted Sayyid Mohammad Baihaqi for drawing Shams-ud-din Iraqi again out from the valley of Kashmir to some place at Tibet. This very incident made Musa Raina shed the companionship of Sayyid Mohammad and King Mohammad Shah and join the camp of Sultan Fatah Shah which included *Chaks* and *Magray*. An inevitable combat resulted in the replacement of Mohammad Shah by Fatah Shah and political domination of *Sayyids* by the chieftains of the region. In this battle, Mohammad Shah and most of his kin mates and associates were killed and Musa Raina managed to acquire the office of *Wazir* (Prime Minister) in 1501. Coincidentally, it was the year when Safavid rulers declared Twelver Islam as state religion of Iran and forced majority of its subjects to embrace Shia faith⁵. Musa Raina continued to administer the state for the next nine years which made the period congenial for Shams-ud-din Iraqi to propagate the Shia faith among the people of Kashmir. Musa Raina ordered the construction of *khanaqah* for Shams Iraqi at Zadibal in the vicinity of Srinagar. With the constant support from indigenous chieftains, Shams Iraqi acquired a prominent position of a Sufi saint in Kashmir and widened his mission of converting the people into his orientation of Islam. Under the guidance of Shams-ud-din, Musa Raina discarded all secular

policies which were once adopted and installed by great ruler Sultan Zain-ul-Abideen. Musa Raina patronized Iraqi and bestowed him with jagir, orchards, gardens, ornaments, costumes, horses, jewelry, gold, etc which were utilised by Shams Iraqi for the construction of a *khanqah* at zadibal. He indulged in forceful conversion of *Pandit* population, destruction of temples and other institutions of Hindus. Musa Raina acquired the reigns of government for nine years in which he took stern measures to convert the people to his faith. He destroyed all the idol-houses which almost included eighteen big temples of Hindus in the city of Srinagar and the adjoining rural areas. Musa Raina resorted to coercive measures and later, changed his policy to appeasement by rewarding those converts who came into the Shi'ite fold of Islam. It is believed that twenty four thousand Hindu families were converted to the Islamic faith mostly by the coercive measures undertaken by state authorities⁶. It is substantiated by the fact that as soon as Musa Raina died, these Hindus reverted to their original faith and customs.

Third Phase

Till the second phase one can't find any group of Shia, as a sect trying to oppose or reject the faith of Sunni Islam. Furthermore, the indifferences between the groups belonging to different orientations of Islam was confined to the ruling gentry as one seldom witnesses any confrontation between the general public on sectarian issues in earlier two phases. There were certainly ideological clashes between Shams-ud-din Iraqi and *Baihaqi Sayyids*, at individual levels, yet there is no incident recorded in the sources which could confirm any sort of confrontation between two sects on the basis of religious differences. However, it was actually in the third phase that the seeds of sectarian discord between the sub-faiths of Islam were laid by converting the entire dynasty of Chaks to the Shia faith. By converting Musa Raina to Shia faith didn't necessarily confirm that the entire clan of *Rainas* got influenced by the teachings of Shams Iraqi. Meantime, Shams Iraqi shifted his attention towards another Chak chiefs who were aspirants to the throne of Kashmir and actively participated in enthroning and dethroning of earlier kings. After the death of Musa Raina, *Margrays, Rainas, Dars*, etc continued to dominate the political and administrative scene of Kashmir but urge for power resulted in constant opposition between these groups. In this constant tussle for power, Chaks ultimately came out victorious against *Rainas* and *Magrays*. Gradually, Chaks emerged as the most powerful group who were patronised by Shams-ud-din Iraqi. Shams Chak who was acting as a *wazir* of the then Sultan Mohammad Shah, undertook many religious works as per the orders of his patron and spiritual guide, Shams-ud-din Iraqi. During his regime, Shams Chak was guided by Iraqi to perform his religious as well as political obligations. The reign of terror which occurred during the regime of Musa Raina was repeated by Shams Chak. Mir Shams-ud-din Iraqi ordered the massacre of *Pandits* and polytheists. In 1518, there happened an open massacre of Hindus, infact a full-fledged state policy was executed in which

the most influential leaders and other prominent Hindu personalities were killed who actually used to exercise greater influence on people belonging to their community. The year 1518 witnessed the killing of around 700-800 *Pandits* who formed an intellectual class of their community which gave crippling blow to the entire Pandit population along with their age old beliefs and customs (the incident is recorded in *Baharistan Shahi*). By the time Shams-ud-din Iraqi died in 1526, Shi'ism had taken already deep roots in the religious life as well as the politics of Kashmir; not all Chaks (Chaks from Kupwara belonged to Sunni faith) but prominent among them who had acquired huge political eminence and managed to transfer the throne of Kashmir from Shahmir dynasty to their own community, had joined the Shi'ite faith openly by reading *Khutba* on the name of twelve *Imams* of Islam.

Shia-Sunni and the Beginning of Sectarian Discord in Kashmir

Before any Chak chiefs ascended the throne of Kashmir as a legitimate rulers, the growing animosity and factions between the local chiefs made an opportunity for Mughal forces to attack and intervene in the sovereignty of the state. Mirza Haider Daughat who occupied the state of Kashmir in 1540 for 10 years, made every possible attempt to eliminate Shia'ite philosophy in the valley. Being a follower of *Hanafi* School of Islamic jurisprudence, he crushed all the activities which could have given any flip to further development of Shia'ite philosophy in the region. He ordered the burning of *khanqah* of Shaikh Shams-ud-din Iraqi and tried to uproot the entire Shi'ite discourse by enforcing *Hanafi* School of Jurisprudence in the state. Such was his contempt towards Shia ideology that nobody in Kashmir dared to recite the names of *Imams* or *Nurbakshia* saints during his entire regime.

The seeds of discord were already sown by Shams-ud-din Iraqi by designating his ideology, the purest form of Islam which indirectly questioned the faith of Muslims who were practicing Islam from hundreds of years in the valley. This ideological conflict intensified by harsh treatment which Shia followers met under the orders of Mirza Haider Daughat. These indifferences and disagreements forced the followers to adopt sectarian identities each professing themselves better than the opposing ideology. The harsh discrimination which Haider Daughat inflicted on Shias started never ending clashes between Shias and Sunnis of the valley. He murdered Shaikh Daniyal who was one of the prominent Shia figures which deeply moved his followers. In 1550, Malik Haider was murdered by the aggravated nobles and the state once again came into the hands of Chak dynasty. It was Daulat Chak who revived Shi'ism in the region by declaring it as state religion and read *khutba* in the names of twelve *Imams*. He also forced Sunni Muslim to adopt this Shia faith⁷.

The Chak rule, as an independent dynasty to govern the state, was established with the coming of Ghazi Chak on the throne of

Kashmir in 1554. By then, the religious differences had crept into the society and the followers of *Nurbakshia silsilla* were well aware of the differences which their orientation offered from the one followed by their Sunni counterparts. With the intervention of state policies under changing dynasties (to patronise Shi'ism at one point and repelling at the other), a feeling of alienation started emerging between the two religious groups. The first incident which gave us an impression that sectarian denominations had been successfully hatched by the discriminatory policies of the state authorities and these groups were ready to emerge as two opposing socio-religious sects, was the public killing of Yusuf Inder Mandav who attempted to kill one Sunni *mulla*. During the reign of Husain Shah Chak, in the year 1568, Yusuf Mandav, a Shia fanatic seriously wounded *Qazi-ul-Qazzat*, Sayyid Habibullah Khwarizmi. An immediate arrest of the culprit was issued by the ruler and the jury summoned Yusuf Mandav stoned to death. As the *Qazi* survived his wounds, the Shia community demanded death sentence for the jurists responsible for Yusuf Mandav's killing. On the orders of Mirza Muqim (Shia follower) who had come to visit Sultan Husain Shah's court along with Mir Yaqub as an envoy from Mughal emperor, Akbar, the execution of Sunni jurists, Qazi Musa and Mulla Yusuf was undertaken and their dead bodies were dragged around the city and caused dissension among the Sunni community. The representatives of Sunni population approached Akbar to intervene in the issue. Though, there were certainly many underlying cause for the Mughal conquest of Kashmir, this first Shia-Sunni conflict made Kashmir apparently, a soft target of Mughal subjugation.

Throughout the later medieval period in Kashmir, one finds that the policies of different administrators had a clear impact on the relationship between these two sects. The greatest tool for Akbar or any other foreign ruler to strengthen their power in Kashmir, was the disunity among the local chieftains or ruling elites; as long as they were divided and busy fighting each other, one could not have expected any organised opposition to overthrow any imperial rule. One non-native dynasty was replaced by another but the estranged sects were pre-occupied with their socio-religious differences and allegations; they sustained their political subjugation to the outside rulers for hundreds of years but never accepted to be ruled by each other. This is substantiated by a fact that last Chak ruler, Sultan Yaqub Shah executed Mulla Musa for not reciting the name of 'Ali', the first *Iman* in the prayers which made the Sunni community under the leadership of Shaikh Yaqub Sarfi, prompt Akbar to take over the reins of the country.

In the initial years of Mughal rule, one can't find any aggressive encounter between the two sects, as the political representatives of both the sects had lost their prominence in the administrative functions of the state; both *Sayyids* and local chieftains were deprived of their political prerogative. In later medieval period, the Shia-Sunni conflict got institutionalised and was deeply embedded in Kashmiri society, and popped up as soon one sect started enjoying political privileges on the other which kept on

shifting from one ruler to another. Under Jahangir, a family of *Maliks* of Chadura who happened to be Shia, dominated the political scene of Kashmir for some period of time. Haider Malik who was given the titles and of '*Rais-ul-Mulk*' and '*chughtai*' and his brother Malik Ali became the most prominent political figure during Jahangir's reign⁸. They reconstructed the *khanaqah* of Shams-ud-din Iraqi at Zadibal and Hasanabad which increased the contempt of Sunni officials for shia creed. In the same period, a section of Srinagar along with Jamia Masjid caught fire and *Maliks* were given the responsibility to extinguish it but failed to save the Jamia Masjid. The Sunnis held *Maliks* responsible for the destruction of masjid for which Emperor Jahangir ordered them to reconstruct the mosque at their own expenses. This episode further intensified enmity between the two sects. The relationship between these two groups had become so vulnerable that a minor argument between people belonging to two opposite sects turned into ugly clashes. For instance, the sectarian riots of the year 1636 got clicked by a fight between a few persons who started an argument about Shia-Sunni differences. The fight started with a mere argument and engulfed the entire population of Srinagar which resulted in targeting of the *khanaqahs* of Zadibal and Hasanabad. Besides, many Shias were victimized and some among them lost their lives and properties. The imperial authority failed to come up with any effective policy which would have checked if not eliminated the growing antagonism between the two groups.

On another occasion, Malik Haider's son, Malik Husain disrespected Shaikh Rashid who appealed to Saif Khan, the then Mughal governor for justice. The intervention of Imperial authority resulted in the execution of Malik Hasan and his servants⁹. If there could be riots led by a minor argument, one can imagine the disturbance caused by the killing of some prominent religious personality which and its adverse impact on already vulnerable relationship between these sects. For instance, again in the year 1685-86, Kashmir witnessed fierce riots which began with a quarrel between a businessman and Abdul Shakoore, a resident of Hasanabad and involved not only local public in the combat but *mullas* and administrative agencies got involved in it. The mob became uncontrollable and the state authorities restored to oppressive measures which resulted in the killing of forty people¹⁰. There are certain incidents of such conflicts in the villages of adjoining regions, in the sources but the major confrontations occurred in the capital city of Srinagar which suggests the political orientation of these riots stronger than the religious designs. Though, a highly secular state of its times, Mughal administration failed to diminish the ever growing animosity between the two groups which got heightened under the sectarian rule of later dynasties.

In later and post-Mughal period, the Shias became one of the most vulnerable communities which were quite often oppressed and humiliated by the state authorities and attacked by the mob, Sunni community during any clashes between the two. There are a good number of incidents recorded in the sources where

the opposing sects encountered each other but some of the incidents which occurred in the years like 1719-20, 1741, 1762, 1801, 1830 and 1872 proved deadly and disastrous for Shia inhabitants of the valley. These riots resulted in large destruction of human and material resources of the region in the form of killing of large number of Kashmiri people, mostly Shias, burning down of *khanaqahs* of saints associated with these faiths which most of the times ruined the entire locality surrounding those shrines and loot and plunder of public property. In 1719, Mohammad Shah ascended the throne of Delhi which was followed by violent conflict between the Shias and Sunnis under the *subadari* of Innaytullah Khan in Kashmir. In the meantime, Mulla Abdul Nabi alias Muhtavi Khan, the then *Shaikh-ul-Islam* of Kashmir got murdered. The Sunnis suspected Shias in prompting the authorities to order the killing of Muhtavi Khan who had emerged as a politico-religious leader of masses against corrupt government officials, Hindu and Shia population. After his death, his son, Sharaf-ud-Din mobilized the masses and continued the agitation initiated by Muhtavi Khan. With the coming of Mohammad Shah on the throne of Hindustan, Muhtavi Khan was deprived of his possessions in the form of *mansab* and *jagirs* granted by earlier ruler, Bahadur Shah which motivated him to organise demonstrations against the state authorities. As he was a religious fanatic, thus ordered crusades against the non-Muslims; besides Hindus, Shia also were targeted and tortured. Some of the *mansabdars* like Sayyid Athar Khan who had ideological clashes with Muhtavi Khan conspired for his death which resulted in his killing on 12 September, 1720 in the house of Abdullah Khan, the then *mirbakshi* of Kashmir. The death of *Shaikh-ul-Islam* was followed by mass uprising organised by the Sunnis under the leadership of his third son, Sharaf-ud-Din mainly against the Hindus and Shias. The religious-cum-political uprising was subdued by arresting of Sharaf-ud-din and hanging of his fifty associates¹¹. The clashes between these communities again erupted in the year 1741 when Abu Barkat Khan forcibly seized the authority of Kashmir by uprooting the armies of Bab-rul-Lah Beig (the then *thanedar* of *kamraj*). He took the reins of government in his own hands for short period of time in which he inflicted atrocities towards the Shia people. They were treated harshly by his officials who forced them to pay discriminatory fines and taxes. These sectarian clashes gained momentum in the times of political instability and disorder under the later Mughals. In the absence of any strong state because of political and administrative crisis in the provincial government, these sectarian encounters accelerated in society.

The greatest of riots under the Afghans occurred during the governorship of Buland Khan Bamzai (1762-1764) who terrorised the entire Shia community throughout his *subadari*. The Shias were looted, plundered and the houses in their locality were burnt down. Those Shias who were accused of initiating and sustaining the riots were arrested and punished by the Afghan officials. The brutality of Afghan administration gets depicted in their brutal orders of cutting off the noses and ears of accused. The rift between the two sects got further

widened during the *subadari* of Amir Khan Jawan Sher who persecuted Sunnis and patronised the Shia community. He constructed a splendid palace at Nandpora (present Hazratbal) and laid a beautiful garden there, where Shias used to commemorate *Muharram*. An attempt which further estranged the people against the governor and Shias was Amir Khan's order to include the term *Ali-wali-ullah* in the *Azaan*. It all happened when some Shia people teased the *Mullas* of *Khanaqah-i-Naqashbandi* and used some foul words regarding the famous Sufi saint, Habibullah Nowsheri. The Sunni crowd who had already gathered in huge numbers for performing *nimaz* in *Idgah*, reciprocated by setting entire *mohalla* of Zadibal (Shia dominated area) on fire and looted houses and property. Buland Khan Bamzai ordered a committee to enquire about the clashes which held Shias responsible for instigating the deadly riots. Those who were held directly responsible were terribly tortured and humiliated by cutting off their nose, ears, limbs, etc and imposed fines and penalty were imposed by the government on rest of the community.

Another incident of Shia exploitation in Kashmir occurred in the *subadari* of Haji Karim Dad Khan. He not only persecuted one of the prominent figures and representatives of Shia people, Anwar Malik and suspended his dead body on the gates of *Khanaqah-i-Naqashbandi* but terrorized their entire community and completely ruined Hasanabad (another Shia dominated region in Kashmir). Later under the *subadari* of Juma Khan Akhnoori, Shia people had created *imambaras* to mourn on the occasion of the anniversary of *karbala* in Zadibal and Hasanabad. The very next day after *naib-i-suba*, Mahabat Khan sent his official Islam Khan to enquire about the issues, reached on the spot along with Sunni crowd and started mass killing of Shias and destruction of *imambaras*.

It was almost for four centuries that Pandits remained under consistent subjugation of Muslim rule and with the downfall of Afghans, this community got an opportunity to appeal Ranjit Singh to control the reins of Kashmir. Though, Sikhs didn't prove much advantageous for the Pandit population, it started an era of political and religious exploitation of majority community of Muslims who not only became invisible in political affairs of the state but were deprived of many basic religious rights. Sikhs pronounced their political establishment as 'Dharma Raj' which means rule of religion and the discrimination and humiliation of Muslim became inevitable¹². No improvement was witnessed in the later Dogra rule as they continued with the policies adopted by the Sikhs. One doesn't find any improvement in the Shia-Sunni relationship as the sectarian clashes continued to exist in the later period under Hindu Dynasty. The worst of Shia-Sunni riot recorded in Sikh period occurred during the governorship of Bhim Singh Ardali in 1831. It was the occasion of *Muharam*, again when the fight between two sects erupted into a huge riots in which huge number of people including innocent women and children got massacred. The same unrest between the Shias and Sunnis of valley took brutal shape in 1872 during the Dogra Raja Ranbir Singh.

Conclusion

The rulers of later medieval dynasties privileged either of the sects as per their political and religious preferences. Shia-Sunni conflicts resulted in massive riots throughout our period of study, infact became more frequent and aggressive under the Afghan rulers. The Afghan regime proved very exploitative and sectarian, and the worst hit communities during the Afghan govern-ships were that of Hindus and Shias. The fact could be seldom denied that most of the rulers in post-Mughal period very antagonistic towards the Shia community but this couldn't possibly be the only reason for frequent clashes between the two sects and intensifying their troubled relationships. One can get the very fundamental reason for this ever growing animosity in the very process of Shia development in Kashmiri society. By the time Afghans entered the valley, Shi'ism had emerged as a distinct identity which had developed practically in the form of various symbols exhibited in the form of *khanaqahs* of earlier sufi Shia saints like Shams-u-din Iraqi, in Zadibal and Hasanabad, *Muharram*, *Imambaras* etc. In earlier period, Shia faith thrived on philosophy or interpretations of Islam given by *Nurbakshi* saints but with the course of time, it had successfully developed many symbols associated with it. These symbols tended to appeal more to common masses than mere philosophical thought; the Shia sect imbibed the doctrines of this faith by associating themselves with such symbols. Earlier, the ideological clashes between the discourses were more or less confined to the religious and political elite of both the sects but one witness very often, in post-Mughal period, the ugly combats between the common followers who comprised thousands of people. It is because of reason that the hostility was displayed by attacking those symbols and prompted the entire community to get involved in the communal violence. *Muharram*, *imambaras*, *khanaqahs*, etc formed the epitome of Shia cultural faith and identity; an attack on them, physical or verbal, suggested attack on entire Shia faith. These well-developed set of symbols made the riots more frequent and deadly. The discrimination and disgust which Afghans imposed on the Pandits and Shias and Sikhs and Dogras brought to entire Muslim community didn't result in any reconciliation between the two sects, atleast not upto the first half of Dogra rule.

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