

Shāh – Mīr: The founder of Muslim state in Kashmir

FAZAL SHER AND ABDUR REHMAN

Abstract

The Muslim rule established in Kashmir during a period of turmoil in Kashmīr. Numbers of adventurers are reported to have created anarchy in the valley. The current paper tries to uncover the haze from the emergence of Muslim rule and the personality of Shāh Mīr.

Key words: *Shāh Mīr, Rīñchana, Dulucha, Koṭadevi, Muslim state in Kashmir.*

Introduction

The charming and beautiful valley of Kashmir had always been a target of adventurers and fortune-seekers from the north and the south. Some of them collected spoils and went away; others stayed on and established their own rule in the valley. The story of such exploits, and also of the local dynasties which ruled this valley, would have been forgotten but for the predilection of some of its poets who made history the theme for showing their poetical skill. The extant records make it clear that it was not done for the love of history, which literally means a “researched report” (it is an Indo-European word of which the root is connected with *wit* (English) and *Veda* (Sanskrit) to lay bare

or sift plain historical facts from the confused mass of myths. There were other reasons too, which motivated the poets to take up themes connected with the historical past of Kashmir. The panegyric and eugological aspect of the works of these poets is a common knowledge. Nevertheless the prime importance of these works lies in the fact that without them we shall find ourselves in complete darkness regarding the ancient history of Kashmir.

The chief among these was Kalhaṇa, son of Chaṇapaka, a minister of the king Harsha (AD 1089-1101). The connection explains the exact and graphic account of the later part of his work as compared to the mythical character of the earlier

part. There is no doubt that Kalhaṇa's family was Brahman by caste. The Sanskrit learning of the type displayed in the work entitled the *Rājatarāṅgi* (the stream of kings), was cultivated chiefly by Paṇḍits of Brahman descent. It was written in the form of a long poem in Śāradā characters. The work initiated AD 1148-49 was completed in the following year. Kalhaṇa's example was followed by Jonarāja (AD 1459) who continued the narrative up to the reign of the Sultan Zain al-‘Ābidīn (actual name Shāhi Khān) who ascended the throne in AD 1420 (Kabir 1992:363). Śrīvira, another poet, covers the periods from 1459 to 1486 (Dani 1992:19). In AD1586 Kashmīr was annexed by the Mughal emperor Jalāl ad-Dīn Akbar.

Of the Muslim (Turuṣka) invaders the first was a certain Kajjala who defeated and killed Lakṣmaṇdeva, the king of Kashmīr in about AD 1286 (Ray 1973:176). How long did he stay in Kashmīr is not known but this plundering raid left behind a bleeding Kashmīr in which nothing but complete anarchy prevailed for a while. Out of this chaos emerged the figures of Saṅgrām Chander, the Lahara chief, and Simhadeva who, according to Abū al-

Fazl (n.d.: 1083) was the “Chief of Ledār (misprinted as Labdar) of Dakṣiṇapārā,” the river Ledār joins the Vitastā (Jehlam) between Anantnāg and Vijabror. Simhadeva declared himself king but his jurisdiction was restricted to the Ledar valley and only when his rival Saṅgrām died in about AD 1301, he was able to extend the frontiers of his kingdom. Even then his kingdom was much reduced in size. After a reign of 14 year 5 months and 27 days he died in about AD 1301, and was succeeded by his brothers Sūhadeva who brought the entire valley of Kashmīr under his control. His success owed much to the bravery Shāh Mir, a Muslim adventurer who joined his service in about AD 1313. This is the first time we hear about the name of a person who was destined to change the destiny Kashmīr.

Kashmīr prospered during the reign of Sūhadeva but fortune did not smile on him. The peace and prosperity of his reign was spoiled by two foreign invasions. One of these was led by Dulucha, a commander of the great king Karmasena, as Jonarāja puts it, or a commanders (Bakhshi) of the ruler of Qandahār (probably Gandhāra) as Abū al-Fazl (Ā’in-i Akbari, vol. I: 1093)

writes, through the name recorded by him is Dalīju instead of Dulucha. It is to be noted here that Abū al-Fazl apparently took this information from the Persian translation of the Sanskrit histories of Kashmīr order by Jalāl ad-Din Akbar when he visited that charming valley (see Ā'in-i Akbari, Vol I :1085) Dulucha and Dalīju therefore refer to one and the same person. The formation of this 60,000 strong army included Tajika, Turuṣka and Mleccha troops which suggests that he was a Muslim (Ray 1973: 178). According to Stein (1979: II, 408) he was probably a Turk who early in the fourteenth century entered Kashmīr via the Zōjī-Lā (pass). Jonarāja says that having collected the spoils, for the collection of which the king had to impose a special tax on all castes on account of which the Brahmans began to hold solemn fasts as a protest against the cowardly conduct of the king, and being scared of the excessive cold of Kashmīr, Dulucha retraced his footsteps through a “good military road”. Before that however he had caused great destruction to places of worship and had taken numerous slaves. In this highly exaggerated poetic express Jonarāja writes: “When the Rākṣasa Dulucha went away, the son found not

his father, nor fathers his son, nor did brothers meet their brothers. Kashmīr become almost like a region meet their brothers, Kashmīr become almost like a region before the creation, a vast field with few men, without food and full of grass” (Ray 1973 : 179). In the turbulence, caused by the invader, the king Sūhadeva lost his life.

Kashmīr had not yet taken a sigh of relief when another foreign invader, this time from Tibet, named Riñchana (Tibetan Rin-Chen) invaded the unlucky valley. Dulucha went away but Riñchana had come to stay. A relative of the deceased king offered some resistance but he was treacherously killed by the invader. After this he made a plan to extend his rule to the entire valley. Knowing that only a brave commander such as Shāh Mīr could help him in the realization of his ambition, he employed him, and with his help occupied the whole valley. In order to give legitimacy to his rule, he married Koṭadevi, the daughter of Sūhadeva.

Under Riñchana Kashmīr once again enjoyed a short period of prosperity. Abū al-Fazl says (Ā'in-i Akbari: I, 1093) that he was famous for his munificence, and under the influence of

Shāh Mīr accepted his religion. Jonarāja tells us that he was a both Bhatta and therefore Devaswāmi refused to initiate him into Śaivism. Riñchana was serious by wounded in the head as the result of a conspiracy against him and died in about 1323. He left his queen Koṭadevi and son Haidara in the charge of Shāh Mir.

Haidara being still a minor, Shāh Mīr raised Udayanadeva, a relative of Riñchana to the throne. He married the widowed queen Koṭadevi and conferred important offices on Jyamśara and Ālleśara, the two son of the king-maker. The king proved unworthy of his office and leaving the task of administration in the hands of his wife, Koṭadevi, spent his own time in prayers and penance. The turbulent Lavanyas as usual raised their head while Shāh Mīr who kept on strengthening this position by matrimonial alliances, frightened him by bringing Haidar in his presence. Udayanadeva died in 1338. At the time of his death his rules was virtually confined to his place.

Koṭadevi kept the death secret for four days and, fearful of Shāh Mīr's intentions, searched a compromise with the Lavanayas and with their help assumed the supreme power. Shāh Mīr

at first was in favour of accepting the status quo, but soon after, when the Queen shifted the headquarters to Jayāpīḍapura (near the present Andar Koṭṭ), where she felt secure among the Lavanyas, he changed his mind and took control of the capital and then marched to the headquarter of the Queen. The Lavanyas troops of the Queen were quickly put to the flight while the fort where Queen lived was invested. As the fort was strong and surrounded by water, Shāh Mīr resorted to negotiation and offered to marry the twice widowed Queen. Duped into believing the promises made to her, the Queen agreed to his proposal and thus, unthinkingly, fell into the trap prepared for her. One day after the marriage, she was imprisoned (some say murdered) and Shāh Mīr declared himself king under the title Shams ad-Din in AD 1339.

Thus was founded the Muslim state in Kashmīr. The dynasty of Shams ad-Dīn was succeeded by the Chakk dynasty in AD 1561. In the reign of the fifth Chakk ruler, Yaqūb Shāh, Kashmīr was annexed by the Mughal emperor Akbar in AD 1586.

Who was this Shāh Mīr? There is no doubt that he was a Muslim by faith.

Stein (1979: I, 130) remark that he “was a powerful condottiere who had come to Kashmīr from the south”. According to Kabir (1992: II, 134) “Shah Mirza or Shah Mir, an adventurer who came from Swat to Kashmīr in AD 1313... entered the service of Sūhadeva”, Raverty (1976:278n) records: “Shāh Mīr, afterwards Sulṭān Shams ad-Din, who ruled over Kashmīr and its dependencies from AH 742 to 746 H (AD 1341-42 to 1345-46) – some say from AH 743 to AH 747 – and who introduced the Muhammadan religion into Kashmīr, was a Gibari from Suwāt. According some accounts, however, he is said to have traced his decent from Arjun, the third son of Paṇḍu”. H.C Ray (1973:177-78) writes that Śāhmera (Shāh Mīr), a Muslim adventurer of Rajput origin ... with his relative migrated to Kashmīr and entered the king’s service in about AD 1313”. On page 178, ft.1, he further remarks: “Jonarāja (v.143 and 146) gives the name of his father and grandfather as Kuruśāha and Tāharāja”.

Whether he was a Gibari from Swāt or a Rājput converted to Islam, is hard to decide, for, both the views are equally balanced. Shāh Mīr entered Kashmīr in AD 1313, while the Gibari Sulṭān Pakhal

conquered Swāt shortly afterwards. It is not unlikely that freebooter Gibari horseman already existed there. On the other hand Jonarāja, writing in AD 1459, was a near contemporary whose statement carries equal weight.

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