ISSN:0971-1260
Vol-22-Issue-4-October-December-2019

Kashmiriyat: The Forgotten Identity of Kashmir

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Abstract

The unique culture of Kashmir comprises of communal harmony, literary heights, spirituality and symbiotic relationship among different communities called Kashmiriyat, but it has been challenged through on-going political turmoil, militancy, bigotry and ideological differences for the last few decades. The present paper is aimed at tracing out the evolution of Kashmiriyat in historical context. The study will focus upon a symbiotic culture free of bigotry, prejudice and religious extremism, the synthesized culture based on mutual understanding, tolerance, and religious coexistence.

Keywords: Kashmiriyat; Syncretism; Spirituality; Religious harmony.

Methodology and objectives

Combo of primary data (direct interviews with participants)[3] and secondary data (based on books, research articles, newspapers, magazines etc) has been considered as methodology in the present piece of work. This study is based on the analysis of previous writings on Kashmir and its culture. Apart from this, the analysis of narratives obtained through in-

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[3] The analysis of Interviews mentioned in this paper is based on the independent conversations of Researcher, who conducted randomly some conversations with young research scholars of central university of Uttarakhand, every participant is a permanent resident of J&K state. The participants in the interviews have personal experience of Kashmiri culture and traditions.

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depth interviews has been correlated with the young researchers and experienced people of Jammu & Kashmir.

This write-up is divided into six parts according to the requirements of the theme of the topic. The first part deals with the general introduction of the Kashmir history and Kashmiriyat.

Second part deals with the 'genesis and definitions' of the term Kashmiriyat. Third part deals with the interviews of researcher of people related to Kashmiriyat.

Fourth part is an attempt to elaborate the historical context, and background of Kashmiriyat. Fifth part deals with major contributors to the Kashmiriyat, their role and influence is discussed in this part. The last part deals with the political instability in Kashmir and the efforts of people in retaining of Kashmiriyat in those tough periods of Kashmir.

The main objective of the present study is to bring out the thesis on the perspectives to make better understanding of the term "Kashmiriyat". What Kashmiriyat means for people living in Kashmir and for those non Kashmiris who have attempted to write on the topic.

Introduction:

In parallel to the bright history, Kashmir has also witnessed the darker periods and most dull times in the past. It has experienced a period of oppression, brutality, and subjugation. It witnessed the periods when desperadoes ravaged this land of its tranquility. Kashmir has histories of the periods when cruel marauders swept the earthly paradise destroying humanity and property of native people. The eulogized earthly paradise has witnessed the periods of harassment of daughters of Kashmir, the history of incidents of plunging daughters of Kashmir in the river Jhelum[4] and other water bodies in order to save their honor and purity. There are numerous histories about the painful and agonizing incidents of brutality and suppressions against the humankind. This painful history was shaped

[4] Jhelum is a main river of Kashmir. It is known as Vitasta in Rigveda.

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sometimes by indigenous cruel powers like Sikandar[5] and sometimes by invaders from outside.

This paper provides a thesis for discussion on Kashmiriyat especially the communal harmony that existed before the militancy period. Since the 1990s, the valley has witnessed massive bloodshed, and has caused a distrust between the Kashmiri Muslims and the Pandits that has traumatized the whole territory of Kashmir. It has wiped out the unique culture that was founded and nourished by the two great saints Lal Ded[6] and Sheikh Noor-ud-din Wali.[7] While studying the genesis and erosion of Kashmiriyat, it has to be construed that the factors responsible for the decline of traditional values and culture in the ancient civilizations of the world, vitiated the whole atmosphere and the contemporary generations. Unfortunately, it left researchers stunned to see the similar elements prevailing in Kashmir. The factors that were solely responsible for the downfall of the great civilizations of the world are also prevailing in Kashmir. The history of the great civilizations, those rose and eventually disappeared, reminds us about their (civilizations') downfall. The ruins and the remains of the Holy Roman Empire[8] and the collapse of Constantinople[9] are sufficient evidences to remind us that in spite of the natural factors and the military oppression, the potent and often overlooked reasons like religious extremism, cultural decay and disrespect for traditional values led to their downfall. Contrary to it, both the civilizations of India and China did not fail to manage the nectar and therefore they are surviving as the long lasting

[5] Sultan Sikandar was the sixth sultan of the Shah Mir dynasty of Kahmir. He ruled the kingdom of Kashmir from 1389 to 1413 AD. He is also known as Sikandar Butshikan for his strenuous efforts to covert the Hindus of Kashmir to Islam.

[6] Her original name was Lalleshwari and was born in 1320 AD. She died in 1392 AD. People called her Lal Ded as an affectionate name. She was a Kashmiri rebel saint and a revolutionary mystic of 14th century AD. Her immense contributions in the shaivism and Kashmiriyat led her to gain a great respect, name and fame in Kashmir. She is called a great poetess of Kashmir and her poetry is called lala vakhs. her poetry is used as a proverbs in Kashmir.

[7] Sheikh Noor ud din wali, the great sufi-rishi of Kashmir is famously known as Nund Rishi. He was born in 1377 AD and died in 1440 AD during the rule of sultan Zain-ul-abidin. He is also known as Sheikh-ul-Alam among the Muslims and Sahajanand among Hindus of Kashmir. A founder of indigenous Sufi order called as Rishism of Kashmir, sheikh is called as spiritual successor of Lal ded. His contributions in Kashmiriyat and indigenous Sufism of Kashmir led him to gain the status of icon of Kashmiri culture.

[8] The holy Roman empire was a multi-ethnic complex of states in western and central Europe that developed during the early middle ages and continued until the Napoleonic wars.

[9] Constantinople was the ancient name of the modern Istanbul city. It was founded by roman emperor Constantine 1. It was a capital city of Byzantine empire. After a long history of wars, defeats, victories and internal collapse of cultural integrity, Byzantine empire came to an end in 1453 AD, after the attack of Ottoman Turks on Constantinople.

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civilizations of the world. The history of India and China lies in the choice of peace, harmony, toleration, respect for their traditional values, and the spirit of reformation within the philosophical traits, which serve a backbone for bonding in traditional societies.

The lost serenity and multi-cultural, multi-religious identity of Kashmir, which are at present under threat due to the insecure environment in general and unsuitable fundamentalist[10] Islamic purification in particular, have made the intellectuals passionate to unearth the forgotten, soothing golden experience of Kashmir. Indeed the unbeatable but probably neglected intellect, cultural amalgamation, spirituality and unique example of religious co-existence through the ages, have shaped the contemporary Kashmir, but very untowardly. The stereotyped perspectives that are being portrayed or floated regarding Kashmiriyat are far from the reality.

The land of cultural and intellectual traditions has been nourished by the great scholars right from the beginning down to Kshemendra[11], Kalhana[12], Abhinavgupta[13] and many others. Thus, Kashmir has led Bharatvarsha across the world in civilization front. The intellectual as well as cultural fertility of the land could have been possible due to the harmonious relationship fostered by the inhabitants towards their native land, atmosphere and ultimately to all people living over there. This very sense of harmony has prepared the land for the germination of a fine tradition called Kashmiriyat. The term Kashmiriyat has been continuously subjected to an issue of debate, in order to ignite the spark of Kashmiri-ness, aimed at reminding the cultural roots, toleration, the period of peace, prosperity and humanity professed by the ancestors and the great icons of Kashmir. In fact, the term is coined after 1947 AD, which is initially used by the outsiders for Kashmir. The idea behind coining the term was to draw the attention of the Kashmiris towards the secular identity of their own, which they had lost due to different unfortunate reasons. However, the recent scholars on Kashmiriyat are bent on using the term either for political, religious or nationalist issues, but the historical context of Kashmiriyat has actually been ignored by

[10] Islamic fundamentalism is a movement of Muslims seeking return to fundamentals of the Islam. It rejects everything, every customs and every act of daily life which are not proven through the teachings of Quran and Hadis like shrine worship, grave worships and every superstitious tales that are out of context in Islam.

[11] A Kashmiri prominent Sanskrit poet of 11th century.

[12] Author of Rajatarangini, the one and only historical work of ancient Kashmir as well as of India.

[13] A Sanskrit philosopher, mystic, dramatist, theologian, poet and musician of Kashmir.

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majority of them. Undoubtedly, the term has interpreted the limited meanings at initial level, but later on frequent debates among the scholars on the scope and vastness of the subject revolving around the socio-cultural, religious and secular identity of the Kashmiris have been incorporated in it. The evolution of composite culture through socio-cultural assimilation and the amalgamation of different religious ideologies in the valley have laid the foundations of Kashmiriyat. The socio-cultural assimilation started from the Nagas and the Pishasas[14] (the ancient inhabitants of Kashmir) with later Vedic people who hailed from other parts of India followed by the co-existence of Brahmanism and Buddhism at the latter stage. Consequently, the amalgamation of Islam with Hindu-Buddhist philosophy virtually evolved a culture of coexistence, which in turn is defined as Kashmiriyat. A Kashmiri historian Wani has summed-up it, as:

> Kashmiriyat should be understood within the broader framework of not only the rich and unique culture of Kashmir, but also unique social and political experiences of the people. Kashmiriyat is a sense of belonging to the past. It is Janus-faced: one face looking to the future, the other in the past. It is an appeal to link one's mind with one's roots (Tak, 2013).

While defining the folk traditions of the valley, the term Kashmiriyat is often used to determine the optimistic response towards the tolerant teachings of Sufi-Rishi movement[15], Shaivite philosophy, and the tolerance that existed in ancient Kashmir, which Brahmanism had towards the Buddhism. The forbearance, that Sufi-Rishi movement and Muslim ruler Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin[16] has equally patronized the non-Muslims in medieval Kashmir in political, socio-cultural, and religious context.

Genesis of Kashmiriyat

[14] The Nilamata puran of seventh century has mentioned the two tribes of Kashmir and they are Nagas and Pisachas. These two tribes are the ancient tribes of Kashmir.

[15] Sufi-rishi movement in Kashmir has been defined as a combined movement of sufis from outside Kashmir and indigenous sufi order called rishi order of Kashmir, aimed at experiencing and spreading the message of Islam in Kashmir during medieval period.

[16] Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin commonly known as Budshah was the 7th ruler of Shah Miri dynasty of Kashmir. He is known through his secular, tolerant and humane policies.

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Undoubtedly, the compilation of word Kashmiriyat seems quite recent, but the inclusive characteristics of term Kashmiriyat are centuries old. From the ancient times in Kashmir, the tolerant and compromising nature of the people in order to develop a harmonious and co-existing atmosphere has resulted in a socio-cultural assimilation. Their centuries-old traditions, culture, harmonious relationship by accepting and respecting each other's customs, and values have sought the attention of 20th century scholars of Kashmir and outside. T.N. Madan opines, "Kashmiriyat is not a Kashmiri word, and it is a recent coinage, not earlier than the 1980s" (Gull, 2011). Seconding Madan, a renowned Kashmiri historian Ishaq Khan has also traced the genesis of Kashmiriyat as, "the term Kashmiriyat emerged during Indra Gandhi-Sheikh Abdullah accord of 1975[17]. It was coined to discover the roots of Kashmir's ideological ties with the secular Indian nationalism based on religious co-existence and pluralism"(Khan, 2004). Both agreed that the word Kashmiriyat is coined during the period 1970-80. Some incidents of above-mentioned period also guide us that the term has gained prevalence during 1975 owing to two main reasons. During 1975 AD, the intellectuals of Kashmir were in a dilemma about the future political vision. During pre-1975, Kashmir was having certain optimism particularly after the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971, and after the Shimla agreement[18]. The people were hoping under the leadership of Sheikh Abdullah, that Pakistani army will liberate Kashmir from the clutches of India. However, Sheikh Abdullah shattered these hopes and possibilities in the year 1975 after denouncing the separatist policy, and decided to hold the chair of chief minister of Jammu & Kashmir. The separatists declared him a traitor. Intellectuals in those days used to engage themselves in conversations on current issues. Khan was also one of the scholars engaged in such discussions, and has summed-up as: In those days, while discussion was going, he heard Ibn Mehjoor incidentally (the son of Kashmir's National poet, Ghulam Ahmed Mehjoor) saying, 'now we cannot go to Pakistan. We cannot become independent,

[17] An accord was signed between Indra Ghandhi (Prime minister of India) and Sheikh Abdullah of Kashmir in 1975 in order to settle down the problem of Kashmir. After 22 years of imprisonment, Sheikh Abdullah was again allowed by Indra Ghandhi to sit on the chair of Chief Minister of Kashmir.

[18] An agreement aimed at bilateral relations between the government of India and government of Pakistan was signed on July 2, 1972 in the capital city of Himachal Pradesh is called Shimla agreement. It was signed by Indra Ghandi (Indian Prime Minister) and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (President of Pakistan). It was much more than a peace treaty seeking to withdrawal of troops from both sides and reverse the consequences of 1971 war. It was aimed at establishing good relations between India and Pakistan. Both countries agreed at establishment of durable peace, war-free atmosphere, friendship and cooperation in future.

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as Sheikh Abdullah has already sold us. There is only one option now; we must support a regional party, the party that is rooted in Kashmir and is retaining the culture of Kashmir. That would be Kashmiriyat (Tak, 2013).

Khan has clearly argued that there was no choice for intellectuals except commencing a concept based on secularism, and religious co-existence suitable to be the part of Indian federal State. The term served the foundation of Kashmiri culture/tradition by re-discovering its secular cultural history. On the other hand, Sheikh Abdullah also tried his best to prove himself not a traitor by struggling on the basis that Kashmir has a history of secularism, conciliation and unique identity. He promoted the term Kashmiriyat through diverse means emphasizing on the indigenous traditions, customs, fraternity and its culture. Thus, the term enormously gained its popularity after 1980s in Kashmir as well as outside it.

Certainly, the 20th century was discernibly a hallmark of the revolutionary century in Asia, and marked the growth of nationalist historiography in India. During the 20th century, national historiography has re-discovered its ancient past, which was ignored or left behind by the imperialist historians. Instead of religious frictions in Kashmir raised by the imperialist historians, the nationalist historiography aimed at elaboration and emphasizing the centuries-old secularism professed by the Kashmiris, which is characterized by religious and cultural harmony, brotherhood, patriotism, love for their language ‘Koshur’ and immortal philosophical heights. Kashmiriyat signifies the uniqueness of Kashmiris in the formation of composite culture, their survival in any circumstances, the real spirit of secularism, tolerance, and their association with other religious ideologies without losing their individuality and identity.

Definitions of Kashmiriyat

While defining the term Kashmiriyat it is not possible to rely on the particular definition because of the fact that there is not a common/universal definition of it. There is a divergence in opinions of the scholars while defining the term. Prof. Gull Wane defined the term, “Kashmiriyat is constitutive of universalism, humanism and brotherhood”(Gull, 2011), while M. I. Khan defined the term as “a vibrant experience of living together of

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Pandits and Muslims in a symbiotic relationship"(Bamotra, K. 2012). According to T.N. Madan,

> Kashmiriyat refers to: Kashmiri identity, cutting across the religious divide and defined by, above all, the key elements of the love for the homeland (Kasheer) and of common speech (Koshur). Besides, similar customs and practices for example distribution of cooked or uncooked food as a token of goodwill, visit to Sufi shrines, common folklore and folk music, the sense of mutual recognition and togetherness that was both physical and cultural (Hassan, 2010).

Young generation of Kashmir is well aware about the concept of Kashmiriyat. While discussing the concept of Kashmiriyat, Jaffer[19] told me that

> "Kashmiriyat can be interpreted as a sum-total of Kashmiri culture, the culture that was nourished by Lal ded and Nund Rishi. The secular nature and whatever society of Kashmir has experienced from centuries is Kashmiriyat"[20].

Thus, he describes Kashmiriyat as a 'culture' that is Kashmiri way of life. According to him Lal Ded and Sheikh Noor-ud-Din nourished Kashmiriyat through a secular approach. His description of Kashmiriyat mainly lies in the culture of Kashmir, where people belong to different religious faiths but their physical appearance and secular nature is same.

Imtiyaz,[21] narrated his personal experience of Kashmiriyat with me as,

> Once I was in district hospital of Udhampur with my sister. She was under medical care in the hospital. Adjacent to our bed, another pure Kashmiri speaking patient was also admitted there. The voice of 'wait, wait, wait..., I will bring Namkeen chai (a special tea in Kashmir) for you' and the emotional conversation of that patient with his care-taker made me confused about there reality. I thought that they are Kashmiri Muslims but their statement about their identity made me surprised. I went to his bed and asked about his health. After a short conversation

[19] He is a Research scholar in dept. of English literature, H.N.B.G.U Uttarakhand. Pursuing research on the poetics and politics in Kashmir history.
[20] Personal interview conducted by researcher during research work.
[21] He is working as an Assistant professor of Zoology, in Government Degree College, Doda.

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about his health, he asked about my hometown and some questions about me. I replied him and questioned him the same. His name was Pardeep Raina, and his care-taker was a Muslim. They both were Kashmiries. After my little silence, Pardeep questioned me about my shocking face. I replied nothing, but he himself narrated the story of his friendship with his Kashmiri Muslim. "He told me that we are childhood friends but after 1989-90 we Kashmiri pandits were forced to leave Kashmir by Pakistani militants, I am living in Udhampur district of Jammu. When I fell ill and my wife called my friend and he is here since five days. Militancy separated us but we are even today not only best friends but like brothers.'[22]

According to Imtiyaz, "the love, affection and care that bounds Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri pandits is Kashmiriyat".

It therefore can be determined that Kashmiriyat has been evolved through a continuous process bearing anthropological, sociological, cultural and religious developments abstaining from any friction in society. These developments have occurred and evolved through the long journey of the socio-cultural and religious past of the valley. This refined cultural saga in the valley has shaped the philosophy of humanism, fraternity, and toleration that refrained Kashmiris from committing any divide based on religion, social set-up or folk traditions.

Historical context of Kashmiriyat

Apart from literary height and a rich culture, Kashmir has also a rich history right from the ancient times. Although, the collective term for its history is quite latest, but its inclusive characteristics were prevalent from the ancient times. Kashmiriyat was born when the ancient communities Nagas (original inhabitants of Kashmir) and Vedic people made compromises to accept and respect each other's traditions, customs and beliefs. It laid foundations of Kashmiriyat by the process of fusion and assimilation in society. Riyaz Punjabi has observed about the evolution of Kashmiriyat as "The conflict between Aryans and Nagas in Kashmir led the emergence of Kashmiriyat. Initially, the Aryans attempted to absorb the Nagas and Pichashas culturally; but having failed to do so, they started making

[22] Personal interview conducted by researcher during research work.

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compromises with latter by making adjustments with their culture, beliefs, traditions and customs. This laid down the foundations of tradition, of fusion and assimilation in Kashmiri society"(Punjabi, 2011).

Although, the early history of Kashmir is shrouded in mystery, but, the events of fusion and assimilation of Nagas, Pichacas and Vedic people, are mentioned in the Nilamata Purana[23] (the earliest extant source of Kashmir history).The original inhabitants of Kashmir were the Nagas, who were half snake and half human. When a branch of Vedic people came to Kashmir they were allowed to live in the valley by Naga chief named Neela Naga. Initially, Neela Naga allowed the settlement of the Vedic people only if they will accept the social, cultural and religious practices of the Nagas. After the settlement of both the communities in the valley, the process of assimilation and fusion resulted in the formation of a new cultural, social and religious cult, which can be viewed as semi-Vedic and semi-Nagas. The fact that the Nagas were the worshipers of snakes (Nags) the influence of Nagas on the religious life of Vedic people is reflected in the inclusion of snake Gods by Vedic people in their scriptures and granted them the status of deities. Thus, in addition to the scriptures the snake around the neck of Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu sleeping over Anant Naga can be noticed.

The history of Kashmir underwent two major cultural transformations through which a composite culture based on the principles of co-existence, tolerance and mutually dependent relationship was born out. The unique culture transcends the boundaries of religion and culture of living together without losing personal identity and individuality. Here are the things pertinent to note; whether the composite culture of Kashmir includes the transcendence of religious boundaries, but it does not necessarily mean a unification of the religions. T.N. Madan observed about the composite culture of Kashmir as a

> "lived reality" and further states that: It is non-conflictual, integrally shared and integrally harmonized culture. . . it is a heritage rather than a construction, and that it is based on an acknowledgement of the legitimacy of difference . . . Kashmiris had strategies for not converting difference into conflict . . . strategies

[23] An ancient text on Kashmir that contains the history, geography, traditions and religion of Kashmir was written in 6th to 8th century AD. It is the only text that was used by Kalhana while writing Rajatarangini.

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> of living together differently, of living together without losing our individuality, of living together without turning hostile to each other" (Hassan 2010).

This kind of cultural formation has gained impetus during the 3rd century BC, when Buddhism encountered with Brahmanism. Further, during the 14th century AD, when Islam made its sway over the Kashmir valley these two historical, religious, social and cultural changes have made a deep impact on cultural transformation of Kashmir. Before the advent of Buddhism, the rituals and social institutions were governed by Vedic teachings. Unfortunately, various social inequalities crept-up in prevalent social set-up. As far the human tendency and history are concerned, the principle of continuity and change has played an effective role in civilizations. Sixth century B.C. was a period of great religious upheaval. Probably, due to awareness about environment and reforming zeal within the existing socio-religious order, reformers all over the world protested against the existing social and religious evils, which have gained dominance due to numerous unfortunate reasons. These reformers attempted to reconstruct a new socio-religious order. Like Confucius in China, Zoroaster in Iran attempted about socio-religious awakening. Two luminaries of India, Mahavir[24] and Gautam Buddha[25] also started a movement to infuse a new life into the old and shattered society. However, different writers have written that, they rejected the Vedas, but in reality, both these movements were only a new reformed form of Vedic religion. They had a common background of Vedic culture and were motivated by the philosophy of the Upanishads. Their ideas about karma, soul, rebirth, moksha, etc. had been derived from the philosophy of the Upanishads. They protested against the tyranny of the priests, the ritualistic form of Vedic religion and eventually, their movement assumed separate identities. The advent of Buddhism, according to some scholars, made its way to Kashmir during 3rd century BC, when Ashoka, the Great ruled over Kashmir. At that time Buddhism was enjoying the royal patronage. But its acceptance in Kashmir on ground level has a different history. The social inequalities mainly based on caste system made Nagas, Pichacas and Dards unhappy. Therefore, they must be keenly interested in Buddhism. This particular interest appears to have proved, if not, but

[24] 24th tirthankara who revived Jainism also know as Vardhamana.
[25] Founder of Buddhism.

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established a culture based on equality in social and religious aspects. A culture that transcends the social and religious boundaries.

Riyaz Punjabi has written about the advent of Buddhism and its fusion with Brahmanism, as "it is no wonder that the free thinkers among Buddhists during the reign of Emperor Ashoka, led by Mahantika settled down in Kashmir. He believed that, this group of scholars laid the foundations of the Mahayana school of Buddhism (Punjabi 2011).10Moreover, the important element for the formation of Kashmiriyat during that period reflected in 'Malindhapanho'[26], a dialogue between King Minander and Nagasena. Nagasena defeated King Minander, not through fighting with weapons, but by logical discussion based on knowledge and philosophy. This historic debate had laid the foundation of a tradition of dialogue instead of war to resolve any issue. Hence, every Kashmiri should feel proud being the decedent of such ancestors.

Evolution of Kashmiriyat in Medieval period; major contributors, their values and principles.

Medieval period of Kashmir is considered as a hallmark for the development of Kashmiriyat due to affluent contributions of three luminary icons LalDed, Sheikh Noor-ud-din and Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin. These legendary personalities contributed a lot in establishing a unique identity of Kashmir, expected free from social evils, orthodoxy and intolerance. They tried their best to set an example of revolt against the evils of society and religion. They became torch bearers for Kashmiris irrespective of their caste, creed and religion.

The contributions of LalDed, Sheikh Noor-ud-din and Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin in Kashmiriyat were dual facets. One was having tolerance towards the good deeds of other communities and another was to become a severe critique and intolerant towards the evils of society and religion. The notion of tolerance in Kashmiriyat has been used by writers vigorously, but the part of intolerant attitudes of contributors to Kashmiriyat have been

[26] A Buddhist text which was written between 100 BCE to 200 CE. It is a record of dialogue between the Ngasena (the Buddhist sage of Kashmir) and the Indo-Greek king named Menander about religion.

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ignored so far. There are numerous references to prove that, those icons of Kashmiriyat were intolerant towards every obstacle coming in the way of peace and prosperity.

LalDed, the wondering Shaviate woman, mystic of the fourteenth century was born and married in a Brahmin family of Kashmir. Legends speak that her mother-in-law was a tyrant and her husband ill-treated her. She suffered silently and tolerated for some time, and at last decided to renounce her home (Jaishree 2016) instead to tolerate the ill-treatment of her in-laws. Secondly, in social and religious institutions of her time, "she denounced the caste system, idol worship and irrelevant rituals[27]" (Khan 2012). She revolted against the ill-treatment, caste system, idol worship because these were the evils of society and religious bigotry. Another perspective of Kashmiriyat contributed by Lal Ded was tolerance towards the beliefs of other communities. She supported Muslims by respecting their beliefs, customs and traditions.

The main contributor to the Kashmiriyat is Sheikh Noor-ud-din, also known as the real founder of Kashmiriyat. Kalhana had written about Kashmir as a land of Tirthas, in fact it is completely true. Kashmir has produced a number of Saints and sages from the times immemorial. Most of them have gained fame and immortal respect and honor. However, Sheikh Noor-ud-din topped the list among them. There were many reasons, but one among them was that he had differentiated himself from other saints by undertaking social work instead of completely renouncing the world affairs and wandering in the forests. In the history of Kashmir no other saint commands that much respect, which he commands. The coins were issued in his name by Afghan governor Ata Mohammad Khan in 1808-10 AD (Khan 2012). It conforms the respect, popularity and acceptability of Sheikh Noor-ud-din in Kashmir. Sheikh Noor-ud-din, the real founder of Kashmiriyat and Rishi order in Kashmir is credited as a devout social worker and pioneer of Kashmiri literature. Lawrence had rightly and perceptively described Sheikh as a 'National saint' (Lawrence 1967) of Kashmir for his respect and popularity among the Kashmiris irrespective of their caste, creed and religion.

[27] Lal ded denounced the idol worship by saying as,
The idol is made of stone,
The temple is made of stone,
From bottom to top all is of stone.

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Sheikh Noor-ud-din being a pious Muslim tried very much to transform his faith into a vehicle for the Hindu-Muslim cultural space for interaction. He used the local institutions and methods to teach and preach Islam, which made Islam more intelligible for the Kashmiris. His teachings of unorthodox Islam and philosophy of religious harmony among different communities made him Rishi for Hindus and Sufi for Muslims. He became very popular among all sects, classes and communities of people in the valley. Hindus believed that he was nominally a Muslim and in reality a saint (Sanyasi) of high order, so they called him Sahazanand and preserved his sayings in Kashmiri Sharda script in the book called Rishinama. His spirituality, philosophy of humanism, tolerant attitude towards other beliefs, and intolerant towards the orthodox religion, caste system, hypocrisy and every reason that would harm Universalism lead him to gain immortal respect, and raised him to the status of Sheikh-ul-Alam and Alamdar-i-Kashmir[28]. He used poetry in common Kashmiri language to spread his message. One of the verses of Sheikh confirmed his concept of humanism is worth to mention here that reads as "among the brothers of the same parents, why did you create a barrier? Muslims and Hindus are one, when will God be kind to his servants?" (Khan 2012).

Sheikh Noor-ud-Din preached the doctrine of humanism in Kashmir, when the missionaries from Turkistan and Iran were busy in preaching the doctrine of the Quran in their orthodox form. He tried to link the indigenous culture of Kashmir with the great tradition of Islam. He started a Sufi-Rishi movement by allowing his belief to intermingle with the great traditions of Hinduism to popularize cult of religious Humanism, so that, he is revered by the people of Kashmir even today, irrespective of their caste, creed and religion. His sayings are in their heart and his verses are commonly known as Koshur Quran[29].

Sheikh and Lal Ded were staunch opponents of those who were the votaries of communalism, and try to divide people on religious grounds. Even Mullahs and Brahmins

[28] Sheikh-ul-Alam and Alamdar-i-Kashmir are the tittles bestowed on sheikh Noor-ud-din wali. Literally, Sheikh-ul-Alam means "Spiritual leader of the world" and Alamdar-i-Kashmir means "upholder of the banner of Kashmir."

[29] Koshur Quran is communly used in Kashmir for the teachings and poetry of Sheikh Noor-ud-din wali. Koshur means Kashmiri and Quran is the sacred book of the Muslims, but here Koshur Quran means sacred sayings and teachings of Sheikh based on Islamic tenets in local language (Kashmiri).

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were not spared by them. One of the verses of Sheikh being critical about the fake religious leaders reflects his theology in which he lashes out at both Mullahs[30], pronouncing them as merchants of mosques as well as Pandits, alleging them of looting idols from the temples. However, Sheikh has some respect for very few of them who may attain salvation while he calls rest of them to be followers of Satan. (Firdous 2014)

Sheikh Noor-ud-din acted as a crusader for social justice and peace on the recognition of equality of all human beings in the eyes of God. He was a bitter critique of fake Hindu priests and Mullahs, their malicious mind, arrogance, hypocrisy, their pursuits of material gains, their unrealistic rituals and practices, the champion of the cause of women equal status, and a critique of caste system. These realistic teachings won him to become a role model of common masses and thorn in the flesh of self-stayed religious heads and those who were trying to create hindrance in the path of humanism in Kashmir.

Another well-known contributor in Kashmiriyat was Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin (1420-70 AD). He was influenced by the teachings of Sheikh Noor-ud-Din (1377-1420 AD). It is a well-known fact that during the rule of Sultan Sikander, the father of famous king Zain-ul-Abidin, popularly known as Budshah[31], the Hindus were persecuted. Idols and temples were demolished. Sikander also is "known as 'Butshikan' idol breaker"(Kapoor 1992) continued torture of the Hindu priests under the influence of his Prime Minister 'Suhabhatta' a Brahmin who was converted to Islam, Due to the forced conversions, a large number of Kashmiri Hindus migrated from Kashmir. After a long period of unsettlement and internal troubles, the valley witnessed a revolutionary change in the religious, social and political scene immediately after the Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin assumed powers of the state. The influence of Sheikh on the ideology of Budshah resulted in revolutionary changes in the socio-religious atmosphere of the valley. The "Sultan was aware of the atrocities committed on Hindus as a result of which their population was reduced to only eleven families" (Shali 1993) Budshah sent messengers to expelled Hindus with the invitations to return back to their homeland. They accepted the offer with pleasure. Hinduism once again flourished in the valley. They were free to celebrate their festivals, which were banned by

[30] Mullah means a Muslim learned in Islamic theology and sacred laws.
[31] Title bestowed on sultan Zain-ul-Abidin, means a great king in Kashmiri language.

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Sikandar. "In some festivals of Hindus like the 'advent of spring' in the month of March-April commonly called 'Chaitra festival' and Durga Puja or the 'Vitasta festival[32], the Sultan himself participated"(Shali 1993). Many demolished temples were renovated and reconstructed. Both Hindus and Muslims were equally patronized. A separate Langar (charity house) was setup for Yogis and this place is still known as 'Jogilankar' in Rainawari. Havans were performed by him and he studied Hindu religious books (sastras) some of which like Mahabharata and Dasavatar were translated into Persian. Jizya was abolished and even the cow-slaughters were banned. The Hindus called Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin the incarnation of Vishnu 'Narayanavtar'. The generous and revolutionary steps taken by Sultan had great impact on the communities and reshaped the outlook of the ruling Muslims. He taught the lesson that cultural identity based on human values, diversity and tolerance are not inconsistent with their own faith and religious beliefs. Thus a true believer and follower of Islam; a Muslim could simultaneously express respect for all the religions of the world.

The glorious example of Kashmiriyat displayed by Kashmiri Muslims and Pandits in modern times is exemplary communal harmony during 1947-48 AD, When millions of people were killed in different parts of undivided India under communal riots; they did not react due to the fact that they were believers of a Kashmiriyat as per their rich religious and cultural collectiveness. It was something unique kind of tolerance exhibited by Kashmiri Muslims towards Pandits and from pundits towards Muslims that is Kashmiriyat.

It was not only 1947 AD, when Kashmir has set an example of communal harmony and brotherhood. The brotherhood that transcended the boundaries of religion, caste and individuality. In 1963 AD, after a long time once again Kashmir has rejunivated the spirit of Kashmiriyat. In 26th of December 1963 AD, the holy relic (the hair of prophet Mohammed^{saw}) was found stolen from the famous shrine of Hazaratbal shrine[33]. Every Kashmiri irrespective of their religion came on the roads and streets for a complete week to experience a complete shut-down and demonstrations against this heinous crime. Kashmir

[32] Vitasta festival, one of the Kashmiri pandits festivals that is observed in the month of September annually. It is dedicated to vitasta (Jhelum river) and is believed that on this date Goddess Parvati appeared as vitasta devi. People celebrate it promptly by assembling on the banks of Jhelum and perform puja there.

[33] Hazratbal shrine is a famous Sufi shrine of Kashmir located on the left bank of the Dal lake in Srinagar. It is believed that hazratbal shrine contains a relic (hair of prophet Muhammad)$^{peace\ be\ upon\ him.}$

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witnessed once again the communal amity and entire valley reverberated with the slogans of 'Har-Har Mahadev; Allah-o-Akbar and Sat Shri Akal'(Behera 2000).

In October, 1987 Sheikh M Abdullah, known as 'Sheer-i-Kashmir' while writing a message to be published in Journal Alamdar-i-Kashmir has beautifully revealed the role and influence of Sheikh Noor-ud-Din wali on him and society of Kashmir during the 20th century.

> I have myself seen the response of Kashmiris to the terrible strain which the division of the sub-continent put on the traditional way of life of Kashmir. When the blizzards of hatred were invading this beautiful land from every side; the lamp of love, which Sheikh Noor-ud-din wali had lighted, it refused to succumb (Abdullah S. Abdullah 1997).

Last four decades witnessed the sharp contradicting experience in Kashmir. Now-a-days the so-called 'paradise on earth' has become the 'hell on earth' (Bhattia 2004) due to cross border terrorism sponsored by Pakistan. Every inhuman tendency that affects the existence of humanity and development is increasingly strengthening its roots in the valley. Since the late 1980s, Kashmir is one of the contemporary world's most troubled and dangerous places, in a nuclear flash point in a grip of what India calls 'terrorist insurgency' and Pakistan a 'freedom movement'. Kashmir dispute is one of the biggest disputes of the past century, and one of the longest existing conflicts. Officially, it began in 1947 and continued till date. It is a territorial conflict primarily between India and Pakistan, having started just after the partition of India in 1947 AD. The rivalry between India and Pakistan mainly based on land of Kashmir for which both fought three wars in the year 1947 AD, 1965AD and 1999AD respectively. It has evolved into multi-faceted issues over the years.

One of the drastic effects on Kashmir by the rivalry of India and Pakistan resulted in the threat to communal harmony. The rivalry between India and Pakistan benefited some selfish and communal person/associations to propagate their seditious interests. Unfortunately, they succeeded in their vested interests and led Kashmir to experience the massacre of about five lakh Muslims in Jammu region in 1947. The mass exodus of Kashmiri Pandits from Kashmir, uncountable deaths and destruction in 1990 AD. Mass

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rape of about 150 Muslim Women in twin villages Kunan and Poshpora, district Kupwara during search and interrogation operation on 23rd February 1991 (Zahir-ud-Din 2013).These incidents along with terrorism and its bad effects, operations, brutality, insecurity and illiteracy have busted out in a violent form of revolt against both nations.

Conclusion

Currently Kashmir is boiling in distrust due to insecurity and intolerance, and has adopted the violent reactions based on the separatist ideologies. They (Kashmiris) have chosen the way to overcome or to get rid of these miserable conditions by either taking up arms or pelting stones at the security forces. It seems they have lost every hope in the constitutional solutions. These practices prove more harmful for the development of the state, peace and prosperity, and the security of the public in general and Kashmiriyat in particular.

Acknowledgment

Foremost, I would like to express my sense of gratitude to my supervisor Prof. D.P. Saklani who encouraged and assisted me in this study. I wish to thank him for his corrections of numerous errors that my laboriously learnt English could not altogether avoid. I record my sincere thanks to research colleagues who always keep me positive and patient towards my academic goals. I especially feel grateful to Mr. Yogesh Negi pursuing doctoral research in literature, who assisted me a lot during this write-up of research paper.

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