

Advent, origin and settlement of andrabi syeds in Kashmir

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Abstract

Among all nations and races who had come in contact with Kashmir none of them had left everlasting influences on the culture and civilization of the valley as Central Asian. Contacts with Central Asia were developed long before the political domination of Muslims. The foundation of Muslim rule opened the flood gates for the infiltration of Persian and Central Asian people in the valley. The Andrabi Syeds were also from Central Asia i.e. from Afghanistan (Andrab). They had influenced both the rulers and commoners equally.

Keywords: Impact on Society, Religious Masters, Propagators of Equality, Opening of Institutions, Economic Change and Encouragement to learning.

INTRODUCTION

With the mass influx of Sufis from different parts of Central Asia and Persia during the last quarter of fourteenth century, a new family of Andrabi Syeds came and settled in serene and tranquil atmosphere of valley. Message of equality was disseminated by them to all corners of valley. Their teachings impressed the people in an impressive way and simultaneously people were benefited by them in a variety of ways. With the result, in addition to religious education common masses were encouraged towards the learning of other necessary disciplines.

Family background

Syed Muslim¹, a great Sufi, migrated from Arab² and settled down in Andrab³ (Afghanistan). Andrab is the name of a large stream in Afghanistan and it empties into the stream which originates in the Hindu Kush near Khawak Pass and flows to the west for about seventy five miles before merging into the Surkhab. Together the two streams form a long narrow valley. The upper part of that valley is also called Andrab, the lower part alternately as Khinjan or Doshi. Both parts of the valley had been united governmentally under a single leader or hakim who resided at Banu. Abdul Habibi, the author of *Tarikhi Afghanistan Baad-Auz Islam* writes about its origin and the occupation of people. He says "according to Hieun-Sangs version, it was best known by the name of Anth polo also". Agriculture⁴ was the main occupation of people. Andrab has remained the main center of Gold and silver. The people were freedom loving, kind and compassionate. The descendants of Syed Muslim spread over to various parts of sub-continent in order to propagate Islamic teachings. The absolute love of God made them to sacrifice their

native land for the purpose of propagation of Islam.

Andrabis in valley of Kashmir

Syed Ahmad⁵ Andrabi, (d.A.H.804/A.D, 1401), and his son Syed Mohammad Andrabi, (d.A.H.850/A.D, 1447), came to Kashmir under the duress of Mir Syed Ali Hamdani during the reign of Sultan Qutabu'd-Din⁶, 775-792.A.H./1373-89.A.D. It was on the spiritual instructions of Mir Syed Ali Hamdani (R.A) that Syed Ahmad Andrabi and his son stayed in Kashmir and played a major role in the propagation of Islam and that accordingly metamorphosed the destiny of people. Besides they guided and impressed upon the people to follow the path of Shariah. With the missionary zeal and zest they imparted spiritual and religious teachings to the people of Kashmir. Because of their tireless efforts, they did succeed in bringing about a significant and perceptible change in the mindset and life of people in Kashmir. They also influenced the Sultan Qutubu'd-din, 775-792.A.H./1373-89.A.D, with their appealing behavior. Acknowledging their role and contribution Sultan built a Khanqah for them at Malaratta Srinagar, popularly known by the name of Khanqahi Andrabia⁷, and also granted the Jagir of Chudran, Weerhar and Auchan in district Pulwama for the maintenance of Khanqah and the followers. The said Khanqah became the centre of Andrabi Syeds, which still occupies its position. Their descendants settled down not only in valley but also at various parts of the world. It was their inner desire to make people understand absolute realities of God. They were not after worldly desires, and it was their selfless love for humanity which equally benefited people here and outside. They succeeded in sowing seeds of fraternity among human beings and under their asylum could understand essence of humanity. These Sufis were simple and kind-hearted and were as impartial as sun, as generous as river and as tolerant as earth. These Sufis had clearly understood philosophy of existentialism and were making people aware at large of this philosophy through their sober and empathetic attitude. The main centers of Andrabi Syeds in and outside valley of Kashmir are Malaratta⁸, Ganderbal⁹, Baramulla¹⁰, Kupwara¹¹, Pulwama¹², Chadoora¹³, Kulgam¹⁴, Anantnag¹⁵.

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Mir Mirak as Propagator of Islamic ideology

Among all the descendants, the noteworthy and prominent was Syed Mir Mirak¹⁶, (d.990.A.H./1582.A.D), Andrabi son of Syed Shamsu'd-din Andrabi, (d.932.A.H./1525.A.D). He was putting up in the Khanqahi Andrabi¹⁷ at Malaratta Srinagar. He was the follower of Qadriya Sufi order and was among the prominent disciple of Syed Nimatullah Shah Qadri (d.990.A.H./1582.A.D), who laid the foundation of Qadriya¹⁸ Sufi order in the valley of Kashmir in the second half of 16th century during the rule of Chaks, 968-994.A.H./1561-86.A.D. Syed Mir Mirak Andrabi traveled various parts of the valley for the purpose of propagation of Islam. The society has accepted him as their guide to religious path and adviser in all their day today matters. He acted as the true mentor of Kashmiri society, and used to move from place to place with his followers. Mir Mirak lived at a crucial period in Kashmir history because there were social tensions in the society. He himself was strong supporter of Sunni sect. From the Malfuzat it appears that the overall mission of Sheikh was to build up the contemporary Muslim society in Kashmir in accordance with principles of Islamic Shariah. Syed Mir Mirak Andrabi felt that for the acquisition of different types of religious knowledge the teacher should be selected with care. As a good teacher he continued to teach the disciples according to their capacity and prescribed the right path for the spiritual attainments. He compared his task with worldly physicians and said that the medicines might be innumerable, but only a particular medicine is prescribed for a particular disease in accordance with the nature of disease, which is known only to the physicians. The same is the case with the Sufi path, although the forms of devotion are innumerable and all of them are true, the particular disease of the heart of a devotee can be cured only through a particular devotion. He emphasized that the remedies of the sickness of heart are known only to the Prophets, Auliyas, pious persons and the physicians of the faith. Like all spiritual teachers Mir Mirak Andrabi, laid great stress on Namaz. He pleads that it should precede all other acts of devotion. But the key to prayer is purification, which is of three kinds, firstly the clothes and body, secondly of the Nafs, (lower soul), and thirdly of the heart. He who does not purify his body and clothes is, Najs (unclean) according to the, Ahli-Shariah. The other two kinds of purification can be achieved only by the followers on the spiritual path. He held purification as a pre-requisite to prayer, and guided the people and taught them the principles to be followed while praying. The real meaning of prayer, he said can be understood only by *arbab-i-qulub*, while going to pray one should banish all desires from their minds and purify their hearts with thoughts of God, if they do it then they face the real, Qibla (Mecca). Mir Mirak said that prayer connects the creature with the creator, and it is a medium through which man can approach God. The real meaning of prayer he says is *Munajat*, Invocation, which is impossible without concentration. He also asserts that fasting is compulsory for every Muslim, whether rich or poor, however the poor are relieved from the obligation of Zakat and Hajj two of the five principles of Islam. All his descendants became the followers of Qadriya Sufi order. They were instrumental in the construction of Mosques, Khanqahs, Bridges, and Sarais for travelers etc at different places of the valley.

Diffusion of Family

Syed Mir Mirak Andrabi had three sons, Syed Mohammad

Andrabi, (d.1022.A.H./A.D,1614.A.D), Syed Mohammad Yousuf Andrabi, (d.1028.A.H./A.D,1620A.D), and Syed Qasim Ahmad Andrabi¹⁹. Syed Mohammad Andrabi played an important role in spreading²⁰ the Quranic to far off areas of valley and was very popular especially in Gurez and Sopore areas of valley. He is buried in the ancestral graveyard at Malaratta. Syed Mohd Yousuf²¹ Andrabi was second son of Syed Mir Mirak²² Andrabi. He spent most of his time in Dalgate and was also buried there. The third son Syed Qasim Ahmad Andrabi, (d.1040A.H./1631.A.D) migrated to the adjacent area namely Puchal²³ (Pulwama), and settled down there. The total Population of village Puchal at present is approximately four thousand only, and the strata of Andrabis is only eight percent of total population.

The Andrabi Syeds of Ratnipora²⁴ (Pulwama) are the descendants of Syed Mir Mirak Andrabi. Syed Shamsu'd-din Gamgeen Ratanpuri a Persian and Kashmiri poet was also one of the descendants of Mir Mirak Andrabi. The total population of a village is ten thousand and twenty five percent of the population is of Andrabi Syeds.

Andrabi Syeds of Zadora²⁵ Pulwama are also the descendants of Syed Mir Mirak Andrabi. Twenty percent of the population is of Andrabi Syeds. Few families of Andrabi Syeds are also at Karimabad²⁶ (Pulwama), Tral²⁷ (Pulwama) and Lajoora²⁸ (Pulwama). The Andrabi Syeds of Nagum²⁹ (Kulgam) popularly known as Damhal Hanjipora are very few in number. There are some families living at Qazigund³⁰ (Anantnag) prominent among them was Syed Hafeez-ullah Andrabi, founder of Arabia College at Qazigund, few families are also at Bahram Sahib (Anantnag). Few families of Andrabi Syeds are at Kralpora³¹ (Chadoora-Budgam), and few families are also found at Wandhama³² (Ganderbal) etc. Baramulla Town and Garoora³³ (Bandipora) are also areas of Andrabi Syeds. Some families of Andrabi Syeds are also at Kanthpora³⁴ and Lolab³⁵ (Kupwara).

There are various living legends of Andrabi dynasty and they are mostly found in rural areas of Pulwama district such as, Puchal, Ratnipora and Zadora, Kralpora (Chadoora) and Kanthpora (Kupwara). They had mainly adopted teaching profession and their basic aim is only to enlighten people about the basic divine message. Their living standard is very simple even though they had access to material gains. Some of the descendants of Syed Mir Mirak³⁶ Andrabi left Kashmir valley and settled down at various parts of the sub-continent. Syed Mir Mohi'u'd-din Andrabi best known by the name of Syed Gh. Rasool settled down at Wazirabad (Amritsar) and was buried there. Syed Saifu'd-din Andrabi and Syed Mohd Shafi³⁷ Andrabi Ratanpuri, left valley and settled down at Damukhee (Lahore) to carry on their ancestral profession³⁸. At present the total population of Andrabi Syeds is approximately twenty-five thousand in the valley. Andrabi Syeds does not believe in caste supremacy. Almost all the Andrabi Syeds of the valley used to assemble at Malaratta on the death anniversary of Syed Mir Mirak Andrabi celebrated on fifth of Safar every year.

Their relation with other Sufis was very amicable especially approach was laconic and suffice in nature and always in a constant try to benefit from the knowledge of others. Most of venerated Sufis of different orders were greatly inclined towards Qadriya Silsila through their teachings. The mention may be made of Suhrawardi Sufi Dawud Khaki³⁹ (d.994.A.H./1586.A.D) disciple of Sheikh Hamza Makhdum⁴⁰, (d.984.A.H./ 23 March 1576.A.D).

Message of oneness through Quranic teachings

The main aim of Andrabis was to make understand people the concept of oneness, and to keep them aware of Quranic philosophy. They not only pulled down the language barriers, but also made the Islamic tradition more comprehensible to common people. Reality is the universal will, the true knowledge, eternal light and supreme beauty, whose nature is self-mortification, reflected in the mirror of the universe. The world in comparison with reality is a mere illusion. The multiplicity indicated a mode of unity; the phenomenal world is an outward manifestation of the one real. The real essence is above human knowledge. From the point of view of its attributes, it is a substance with two accidents one is creator and another is creature. One is visible and another is invisible. In its essence it is attribute less nameless, they propagated this message to all corners of world. They consider love to be the essence of all religions and the cause of creation and its continuation. One has to obey Allah and those who obey the command, are the real Muslims. Therefore the Sufi must discipline his mind first by living according to absolute spiritual vision, which he can attain by being obedient to his guide. They not only acted as religious propagators but also worked as social reformers. For this purpose some novel methods were adopted by them to improve the economic condition of people. Their interest in the welfare of the people helped them a lot to disseminate the teachings purely based on the Quran and the Sunnah. Their teachings were aimed at transforming the compulsiveness of self and attaining submission to a higher degree of reality. To change the whole scenario of any society, educational knowledge is the most important element. The knowledge to be acquired is the knowledge of Shariah and Tareeqat and the acquisition of knowledge other than that is beyond its domain. It is therefore obvious that man unlettered in Shariah and Tareeqat is absolutely ignorant and the man not having access into realm of real knowledge, connected with Shariah is the one who is self seeker, covetous, cunning, treacherous and ensnared in the trap devised and laid by Satan. Their philosophy is indispensable for a deep understanding of the inner dimensions of Islam. Inner desire aims at introducing the salient features of behind the concept of oneness of being and by being they mean God's being. They maintain that everything is in God. Even space and the whole universe is included in God's being (Wujud). As they were consistently advocating the message that acquisition of wealth for its own sake or so that it may increase the worth of its collector is condemned. Mere acquisition of wealth counts nothing in the sight of God. It does not give any merit to man whether here or hereafter. Man should acquire wealth with the intention of spending it on his own needs, and the needs of others. If you have any wealth except that you wear and tear, eat and consume up, give as alms and thus preserve. Wealth should be spent on the needy people and those who ask for owing to poverty, on the freeing of slaves etc.

Encouragement to learning

During the medieval period Madrasa education has a long tradition among the Muslims of Kashmir. These institutions have played an important role in imparting Islamic education, increasing the literacy and strengthening the Islamic consciousness and most importantly providing training to the prospective civil servants. Among the early Madrasa in Kashmir the mention may be made of Madrasa Andrabiya at Malaratta Srinagar. The Madrasa was founded by Syed Ahmad⁴¹ Andrabi, (d.A.H.804/A.D, 1401), later on carried by

descendants especially by Syed Mir Mirak Andrabi, (d.990.A.H./1582.A.D). The medium of instruction was the, Arabic and Persian upto the end of medieval period and after the said period both Persian and Urdu became medium of instruction. Mir Mirak Andrabi Qadriya was the first who encouraged people to study the other subjects too. Later on his descendants were equally responsible for the spread of modern education among the common and helpless masses of valley. They were among the first generation learners in valley. It was only with the help of education that they succeeded in developing the thinking and reasoning, problem solving and creativity of people. They played an important role in national building through education. Because education is an important medium that ensures acculturation, socialization and framing the national identity of the future generations. Most of Andrabi Syeds living in suburbs are Govt. employees. The Andrabi Syeds are mostly literate, and literacy rate among them is almost ninety five percent. As such they encouraged other sections of society, that it is binding upon every person to set out in search of real knowledge, with all sincerity of purpose to get instructions in the essentials of the knowledge of Shariah from competent and well learned scholars and translate that knowledge into practice in letter and spirit. In addition to that it is advisable that they may get down to learning other necessary disciplines like, astronomy, medicine, mathematics and etc, and they may acquire the rudiments of these branches of knowledge to the context required to make them know the timings of prayer, direction of Kaba etc, duration of, Iddat (waiting period of a divorced woman) and issues concerning menstruation, Nikah, inheritance and miscellaneous matters connected with their practical life. The knowledge of a variety of subjects is essential to streamline the procedure aimed at the enforcement of Shariah law. Highlighting the significance of knowledge the holy Prophet Mohammad is reported to have said,

"Seek knowledge though you may have to go to China in quest of that."

Maulana Rumi has also elucidated the nature of this knowledge in his Masnavi with these words,

"The real hidden knowledge is like a curd while the manifest knowledge is linked to milk. Since there can be decidedly no curd without milk, likewise without the spiritual guidance knowledge of reality cannot be sought".

CONCLUSION

Andrabi Syeds have changed the socio-religious and cultural sphere of Kashmiri society. They have dedicated their lives for Islamic teachings that too without any material gains, although they have an access. Economic set up of people was completely changed by them. With the result there was all round peace and prosperity.

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- [8] Malaratta lies on the South west of Srinagar and lies at a distance of Eight Kms. from Capital.
- [9] Ganderbal district lies at the distance of 20kms.from Srinagar, and is situated on the banks of Sindh.
- [10] Baramulla is almost 52 kms.from Srinagar and is surrounded in east by Kupwara.
- [11] Kupwara lies at the distance of 90 kms.from Srinagar and is the name of district headquarters. In the east and south lie Baramulla, in the west and north there is loc which separates it from Muzaffarabad Pakistan.
- [12] Pulwama district came into in the year 1979.The district is situated in the north of Srinagar at the distance of 32 Kms.
- [13] Chadoora is tehsil in district Budgam, and is situated 8 kms.from Budgam.
- [14] Kulgam is the names of a district headquarter, and is 12kms from Anantnag district.
- [15] Anantnag is 55 Kms of the south-east of Srinagar district.
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- [23] Puchal is the name of a village and is situated towards east of Pulwama and is 8kms.away from Pulwama town.
- [24] Ratnipora is located on north east of Pulwama town in Jehlum valley plain.
- [25] Zadora is located on North Western corner of Pulwama town.
- [26] Karimabad is located at North West of Pulwama town in Jehlum Plain.
- [27] Tral town is located in north-east, of Pulwama town in greater sub Himalayan region.
- [28] Lajoora is the name of a village and is situated towards east of Pulwama town.
- [29] Nagum is located at south-e-east of Anantnag town in Pir Panjal Sub-region.
- [30] Qazigund is located in south-west of Pir Panjal sub region.
- [31] Kralpora is located on north east of Budgam town on the outskirts of Srinagar district.
- [32] Wandhama is located on the North West side of Ganderbal town.
- [33] Garoora is located on the east side of Bandipora town.
- [34] Kanthpora is located in north eastern side of Kupwara town.
- [35] Lolab valley a beautiful oval shaped valley stretching to about twenty five Kms, is situated on the extreme of Kashmir valley, at the top of Kupwara district in the lower slopes of greater Himalaya micro region.
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