



Title: The Islamization of Kashmir (A Study of Muslim Missionaries)

Author: Dr. Altaf Hussain Yattoo,
Assistant Professor, Islamic Studies,
Department of Higher Education, Govt. of Jammu
and Kashmir (India)

Reviewer: Khursheed Nabi, Researcher, Institute of
Advanced Studies in Education, Srinagar Kashmir

ISBN: 978-81-8339-146-7

Year of Publication: 2012

Price: 895/= (INR)

Publisher: Gulshan Books Srinagar, Kashmir

Islam is the major religion practiced in Kashmir. Islam came to the region with the influx of Muslim sufi preachers from Central Asia and Persia, beginning in the early 14th century. It was mainly during the reign of Sultan Qutubuddin that a wave of sufi preachers headed by Mir Sayyid 'Ali Hamadani arrived in **Kashmir** in 1393. These sufis didn't enter the valley for meditation and contemplation only, but to bring a change in the religious as well as social structure of the region.

This subject has been dealt with by different scholars of history, religion and humanities as per their academic temperaments and scholarly aptitudes. One budding scholar of the Valley, **Dr. Altaf Hussain Yattoo**, who has a liking for mysticism, philosophy and history (especially Kashmir history) has penned down a treatise on this subject which is one among his half a dozen titles on different themes of Islamic Studies and Kashmir history.

This book *The Islamization of Kashmir (A Study of Muslim Missionaries)* is an attempt to provide a comprehensive framework regarding the role of Muslim missionaries in the Islamization of Kashmir. Although the book deals mainly with highlighting the vital role played by Mir Sayyid 'Ali Hamdani (d. 1384) in transforming Kashmir into an Islamic region but the contributions of some other sufis have been highlighted as well.

The book consists of four chapters besides Introduction and Conclusion. In the first chapter the writer has given brief introduction regarding the history of Kashmir and the religious setup of pre-Islamic era. Also the role of some sufis (prior to Mir Sayyid 'Ali Hamdhani) like Sayyid Sharaf al-Din 'Abd al-Rahman, commonly known as Bulbul Shah, has been discussed.

The author has mentioned different dimensions of Islamization by Mir Sayyid 'Ali Hamadani. Various preaching methods as propounded by this great sufi have been thoroughly mentioned in the book. Important among these methods is targeting the main centres or hubs of Hinduism and their prominent and influential heads. The contributions made by him towards the uplift of the economic setup of people by way of transferring arts and crafts from Central Asia and Iran to Kashmir, provides a reader with the thorough understanding of the role of Mir Sayyid 'Ali Hamdani in transforming the whole social setup of the region. As the author hasn't confined himself to a single aspect (i.e., religion alone) while writing about the role of sufis, this makes the book unique from other books written on the same theme.

The narrator initially sticks to early sufis and adventurers, trying to make a connection between early sufis with the later ones so as to give a quick understanding of the process of Islamization through different stages. Personalities like Mir Sayyid 'Ali Hamdhani, Mir Sayyid Mohammad Hamdhani and Shamas al-din Iraqi are wonderfully complimented for the way they contributed towards transforming the land into an Islamic region. However, the meat of the book is far more focused on the work of Mir Sayyid 'Ali Hamadani.

The book is very well written, having black and white photos of different shrines with descriptions of the photos. These photos give us a better idea of what these sufis have contributed and the places they have visited.

Not only has the author exhibited a considerable command on language but the publisher, Gulshan Books Srinagar, Kashmir (backed by a century's publishing expertise) has also taken pains to publish the book. While I definitely recommend the book to other readers, I would recommend it to youth, mainly because it will give them a thorough understanding of how Islam emerged in Kashmir and the personalities responsible for it.