

Harbinger of Qadriya Sufi Silsila in Kashmir Valley: Syed Nimatullah Shah Qadri

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Abstract: Man is the most intellectual being among the creations. Certainly man is blessed by the Allah to gain knowledge, to think, to act, to imagine and to learn from past for better future. Through the ages knowledge has been handed down from one generation to the next with the help of masters. In this hierarchy of education the Qadriya Sufi masters left no stone unturned to spread education to all corners of the Valley without accepting anything from people. Education was considered by them as a tool of change and highest service to humanity.

Keywords: Qadriya, Sufi Silsila, Syed Nimatullah Shah Qadri, Kashmir Valley

INTRODUCTION

Simple living and high thinking of Syed Nimatullah Shah Qadri was instrumental in the process of social transformation. He was primarily and meticulously interested in the mass welfare of people. By and large remained kind and sober while approaching the people in the Valley of Kashmir. His social appeal was based on humanism and large numbers of people were drawn and influenced by his teachings. With the result love engulfed the whole Valley because love was the center of his teachings.

DISCUSSION

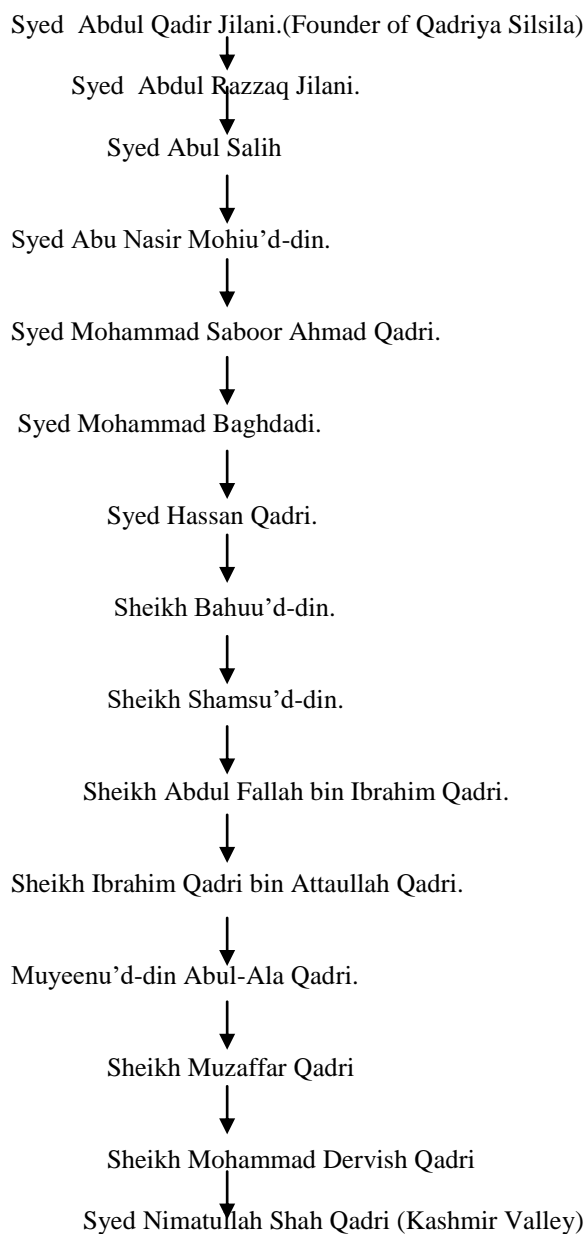
Syed Nimatullah Shah Qadri (d.1582.A.D) [1], disciple of Sheikh Mohammad Dervish and direct descendant of Syed Abdul Qadir Jilani migrated to Kashmir from Hisar in Punjab during the rule of Chaks, 1561-86.A.D, and introduced the Qadriya [2] Sufi order in the Valley of Kashmir on a firm basis. First settled at Chattabal [3] Srinagar where he initiated large number of people into Qadriya order. He did not keep the company of elite and rich. His most of the time was spent in meditation and Sama [4]. Syed Nimatullah Qadri [5] being the Sufi of eminence attracted the attention of Kashmiri people in and outside the areas of Srinagar. Within a short period he had succeeded in inculcating the sentiments of fraternity and equity, coupled with sense of service to humanity, in the followers, irrespective of race, community, cast and color. Stressed on the need of the development of man with the purification of heart and mind, through prayer and meditation. In Kashmir Valley his teachings helped in eradicating several social evils by advocating the concept of religious tolerance and Tawhid. The traditional culture of Kashmir underwent great changes

by his arrival in the Valley [6]; especially the language underwent tremendous changes, because he used to deliver the sermons in Persian language. Since the language was already the court language during the Sultanate period [7] and the literature was available in this language. The said language acted as medium of intellectual traffic to attract people. As such not only conversion process was started by using the Persian, but it also acted as a vehicle of communication for motivation towards Islam. He not only pulled down the language barriers, but also made 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 universe. He [8] disseminated the message of oneness. Because all powers are rested with the Allah. The real essence is above human knowledge. From the point of view of its attributes, it is a substance with two incidents one is creator and another is creature, one is visible and another is invisible. One has to obey Allah and those who obey the command, are the real Muslims. During his lifetime he attained highest degree of Marifat [9] (divine cognizance). One should inculcate noble qualities to enjoy the nearness of Almighty. Among the various qualities, the first and foremost thing is that one should have high respect for wise and sagacious men. Rather he should remain in the company of the virtuous; he should render best possible services to his spiritual master sincerely and selflessly and should remain under the guidance of spiritual master for spiritual attainments.

The Sufi traveler must bear all hardships with patience and more importantly he should always try to

benefit others and remove their sufferings without expecting anything in return, he should try his best to extinguish the flames of fire by keeping distance from the bad elements. He should never waste even a single movement in negligence, but always remain engaged in worship and remembrance of Almighty. He should remain generous and liberal according to his means and without giving himself preference over others. He should be possessor of good qualities of endurance and not be impatient when confronted with oppressive people. He should wipe out the rust and black spots of heart by the continuous remembrance of Almighty. He should constantly strive to get very closer to Almighty by all kinds and modes of worship and meditation. He should look down upon himself as the inferior and meanest of the all creatures and think others as superiors.

Because of his assiduous work he moderated the intricate social structure of Valley by inculcating the teachings of Qadriya [10] Sufi Silsila. The inhabitants of Valley are full of praise for the founder of this order, because it is based on Quran and Sunnah and attaches great significance to the teachings of Holy Prophet (SAW) and upholding the sanctity of Shariah and Tariqat. The said order has engulfed the whole Valley, which had its impact in doing away with the hazards of Bidat (innovation) and making the ways and modes of Ahli-Sunnat all the more popular. The spiritual lineage of Syed Nimatullah Shah Qadri with Sheikh Syed Abdul Qadir Jilani founder of Qadriya Sufi Silsila based on Persian source Fathuhati Qadriya by Mohammad Hussain Qadri (Manuscript preserved in research library University of Kashmir) is given below:



All sermons were on the issues of Tariqat [11] and Haqeeqat. Haqeeqat [12] is the journey towards the ultimate reality which comprise the following stations: Humility, Humbleness, Modesty, Self Effacement and Self-Negation. These are the main attributes of the Salik (traveller on Sufi Path) who is accustomed to concealing not displaying his physical and spiritual strength. He prefers to keep it hidden from the public eyes. Only the one having this belief and conviction will succeed in getting near Almighty (Allah). He should eat and drink of whatever is offered to him and not hanker after delicious palatable and spicy dishes. He was always contented with the food served to him. He should always exert and strive along the right path, without ever deviating from that under any circumstance. To extend help and assistance to every one among the creatures of Allah without trying to harm anybody. His heart should harbour malice, animosity against none, but rather he should return good for evil and try his outmost to restore terms and links with whom his relations have been served or broken off in the past. It is the more advisable that he should forgo claim of any compensation from the person who has done him wrong and damaged him financially. One should never deal harshly or inhumanely with dervish viz, indigent and poor people but on the contrary his attitude towards them should be characterized with love affection, kindness and sympathy. His every step along the path of righteousness and trust must be taken to win the divine pleasure, rather than trying to win the good will of all and sundry. The secrets of heart should be concealed by and large. If some confidential information about others is passed on to him, should not divulge it to anyone. More than if he is witness to some body's sinful acts, he should take care that they are not disclosed. One should always engage his self in prayer and supplication in praise of Allah, scrupulously avoiding the mention of worldly matters into divine remembrance, except that their mention may be for furthering the cause of religion and providing felicity to those, afflicted with hardship. Knowledge should be acquired, to benefit others and to edify them. Significantly not only teachings of the Silsila, were made popular among the Kashmiris, but also maintained amicable relations with all other contemporary Sufis like Sheikh Hamza Makhdum [13] (d.1576.A.D) and Sheikh Baba Dawud Khaki (d.1586.A.D) of Suhrawardi Sufi Silsila. However he did not stay long in Kashmir [14] and soon left the Valley after making large number of followers. After his return from Valley large number of Qadriya [15] Sufis migrated to Valley and settled down permanently at remotest corners of the Valley.

Qadriya Sufis encouraged and boosted the educational system in the Valley. More and more emphasis was laid by them upon the education of every one especially the females. By virtue of Qadriya Sufis the position of women was completely changed in the

Valley. They founded number of Madrasas, Maktabas and Khanqahs in different parts of Valley. The Madrasas and Khanqahs became the centers for learning of the two dimensions of orthodox Islam, the exoteric and the esoteric. Learning has been defined by them as the highest attainment of humanity, a way leading to right conduct and cultivation of virtue. But learning without putting it into practical use would be meaningless. Teaching and imparting knowledge is considered to be the noblest occupation.

In people's day to day life and religious practices the influence of Qadriya Sufis is very dominant. To remember the valuable and untiring contribution of Syed Abdul Qadir Jilani (founder of Qadriya Sufi Silsila) his followers in the Valley started the ritual of saying "Ya Pir Dastgir" [16] and more importantly the daily recitation of "Ya Sheikh Syed Abdul Qadir Shaiann-Allah", after every prayer in all mosques of the Valley especially in the rural areas. This is strongly witnessed by the noticeable fact that the two hundred year old Khanqah of "Pir Dastgir" at Khanyar (Srinagar) alone does not reverberate to the group chanting of the, "Ya Sheikh Syed Abdul Qadir Shaiann-Allah. Hence the collective intonation of the, "Ya Sheikh Syed Abdul Qadir Shaiann-Allah", in the mosques and Shrines of Valley represents two historical realities in the objective terms. While one relates to the historical role played by Qadriya Sufis in the Valley by giving a belief structure to the Kashmiris in the form of the, "Ya Sheikh Syed Abdul Qadir Shaiann-Allah", the other is the gradual response of Kashmiris to it at the societal level through a process of spiritual and social awareness. This practice has continued in the Khanqah unabated from the day of its inception. Yet another important feature of Khanqahi Pir Dastgir is the visit of large number of men and women. At every hour of the day one can find number of people both men and women performing free service in cleaning and maintaining the Khanqahi Pir Dastgir. It is done out of reverence for the Saint and has always ensured a clean environment in the premises of the Khanqah. An important feature of the life of Khanqah is the spirit of equality among the devotees. The devotees, irrespective of their economic status bring food particularly Tahar (cooked food) and Qahwa (tea without milk) to the Shrine daily. One may watch the beggars the poor and the rich men and women share the same food.

The efforts of the Sufi Saints have influenced the society. In spite of having an elaborate code of rituals and ceremonies with regard to birth, marriage and other day to day engagements Qadriya Pirs are consulted by the common masses on important occasions irrespective of religion. Their consent and blessings are sought before any work, like marriage, building a house, giving names to children etc. This is obvious and clear that the age old tradition of having a Pir and trust in Shrines played a larger part in the social life of people and

continues even at present. Their attitude was based on sympathy and consideration. Their standard of moral values became an example to all Kashmiris in the diverse aspects of the social life.

The social outlook of the Kashmiri society was completely changed by the Qadriya Sufis especially the concept of fairs and festivals where the celebration around the Shrines through the Urs was one such occasion. The Urs on Qadriya Shrines across the Valley served as an occasion through which people belonging to different sections interacted with each other. The Urs is still observed for which the people especially women and children keenly look forward for such occasions. These festivals attracted merchants and artisans and good business was done during these days. In concluding remarks the overall impact of

Qadriya Sufis can be realized:

1. Qadriya Sufis acted as advisors of people and even they were the first to reach the interiors of the Valley.
2. They remained in the company of common masses.
3. Number of novel methods were introduced by them to boost the economy of people.
4. Large number of Khanqahs and mosques were constructed by them.
5. The concept of donation was further strengthened, what they earned they redistributed the same among them people.
6. Their mission was mass welfare of people irrespective of religion.

REFERENCES

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2. This order was originally founded by the renowned Sufi of Baghdad Syed Abdul Qadir Jilani (1078-1165. A.D). His works became the main source of Qadriya doctrines and practices. He strongly advocated that three things are must for a believer. He should keep the commandments of Allah. He should abstain from the forbidden things and he should be pleased with the decrees of providence. Qadriya order was introduced in the Valley of Kashmir during the second half of 16th century during the rule of Chaks.
3. Chattabal is located towards North of City Center (Lal Chowk) almost at a distance of seven kilometers from main city
4. The Sama means listening to the Sufi poetry for the enlightenment of soul. For Sufis Sama is an act of devotion, devised to draw the attention of their God. A Sufi must train his mind to appreciate beauty and by some means to stir his inner spiritual feeling and music is considered to be beauty and harmony in sound. Some Sufi orders permit the Sama in which music is played songs are sung. But none of his followers (Qadriya Sufis) continued the practice of Sama in Valley after his return from the Valley. Even the influence of Qadriya Sufis is too much in the Valley during the present era.
5. Qadri Ahmad Shafi, Kashmiri Sufism, Srinagar, 2002,pp. 247-248.
6. Qasim Mohammad, Al-Tawhid, Srinagar, 2003, p.33.
7. Rafiqi A.Q, Sufism in Kashmir, Srinagar, 2003,p. 154.
8. Khan Ishaq, Biographical Dictionary of Sufism in South Asia, Delhi, 2009, p. 353.
9. Marifat in Sufi terminology means the mystical knowledge of God. In this stage it is believed that the Sufi has realized the truth and his heart is full of wisdom. The Marifat leads to the ultimate love of God and the highest degree of gnosis leads to the perfect love of God. The love of God is the ultimate end of the life and those who do not believe in this are imperfect. Is recognized as the next higher stage for the attainment of truth and knowledge.
10. Athar A Rizvi, A History of Sufism in India, vol, ii, Delhi, p.72
11. The Quran says obey God and obey the Prophet in letter and spirit and obey those amongst you who hold the command. Therefore it is very essential that Sufi must first discipline his mind by living according to prescribed law and must observe and fulfill all religious obligations, such as prayer, fasting, pilgrimage to Mecca and charity. When his mind and body is fully trained to obey, serve and to respect, he then passes to the second stage named as Tariqat, the path in addition to religious observances, he is supposed to seek spiritual guide and totally remain under his care.
12. T.C.Rastogi, Sufism: A Dictionary with Profiles of Saints and Poets, New Delhi, 1990, p.18.
13. Azam Deeda Mar, Waqati Kashmir, Urdu Trans by Prof Shamsud'din Ahmad, Srinagar, 2009, p.208.
14. Mohiud'dim Miskin, Tazkirah Auliya, vol, iii, Srinagar, 1989, pp.61-62.
15. Shafi A Qadri, Kashmiri Sufism, Srinagar, pp. 246-47.
16. The collective recitation of "Ya Pir Dastgir and Ya Sheikh Syed Abdul Qadir Shaiann-Allah" was started by his followers in the Valley to get spiritually attached and benefited from the founder of Qadriya Sufi Silsila. Hence the "Ya Pir Dastgir and Ya Sheikh Syed Abdul Qadir Shaiann-Allah" became a Wazifa particularly for the followers of Qadriya Silsila. Although there is no such evidence that the Wazifa was in practice during the life time of Syed Abdul Qadir Jilani (founder of Qadriya Silsila).