

## Religio- Spiritual Ethos of Kashmir: An Assessment of the Links from Central Asia and Iran, its Impact and Competence

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**Abstract:** The Valley of Kashmir shares its immaculate religio-cultural ethos with Central Asia and Iran since beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> Century A.D. With The expansion of Islam beyond Arabia in 712 A.D. it was the territory of *Mawara al-Nahr* (Transoxiana) including *Faras* (Persia or Iran) that came in contact with Islam immediately during the Umayyad rule in Arabia (661-750 A.D). From Central Asia and Iran, Islam entered Kashmir in around 1320 A.D. although some evidences of Muslim entrance are being traced earlier before. Hence, Islam's contact with Kashmir has been possible through the links maintained through Central Asia and Persia. The efforts of the eminent Sufis and Scholars, whose mission of introducing Islam has been through love and with the message of peaceful-coexistence, played a significant role for the cultivation of the religio-spiritual ethos in this land. The scholarly treatises on Quranic '*Ulum*', *Hadith* and *Fiqh* compiled by Central Asian and Persian scholars, *Aurad-o-Wazaif* transmitted by eminent mystics like Sheikh'Abd al-Rehman Bulbul (d.1326 A.D), Mir Syed 'Ali Hamadhani (1314-84 A.D) and galaxy of Sufis and scholars along with the poetic expressions of Jalal-u-din Rumi (1207-73 A.D), 'Abd al-Rahman Jama'i (1414-92A.D), Sheikh Sa'adi Shirazi (1210-91 A.D) have deep penetration into both Kashmir's soil as well as in to the Souls. The Central Asian and Persian influence could be seen even today in various aspects of social, cultural and religious aspects. As a matter of fact, Central Asia and Iran, that way, have enormously contributed to establish a much wider and secure base for the cultivation of the Islamic Sufic cum Mystic tradition in Kashmir. The efforts and Sufi expressions of Sheikh Nur Din Wali (1377-1440 A.D) as well as of local renowned Sufis, Rishis and Scholars since 14<sup>th</sup> century A.D had been undoubtedly significant. This chain of pious souls from and within paved the way for the academic and mystic relationship of Kashmir worldwide. These links and unrelenting impact from Central Asia and Iran is a tremendous academic debate that needs fresh research and concentration. The present paper, as such, will highlight the significance of these scholarly and mystic links and explore the possibilities of further advanced research in this direction.

**Keywords:** Mystic expressions, *Aurad*, Transoxiana, Influx, Interwoven culture, *Wazaif*, Ethos, Treatises

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### I. TASAWUF (MYSTICISM): ETYMOLOGY

The term mysticism is often taken up in accord with the term *Tasawuf*. '*Tasawuf*' is an Arabic term and, as it is affirmed, has its origin in the 'wearing of the rough wool' (*suf*).<sup>1</sup> It is also narrated to be a derivative from '*Safa*' which means piety. In the given context, The Sufis are also known as '*Faqirs*' and '*Dervishes*' in the Indo-Pak subcontinent, Afghanistan, Iran, Turkey and Central Asia.<sup>2</sup> Both the words, '*Suf*' and '*Safa*' originally denote the concept of divinely ordained people who gave up the worldly material tastes to attain the salvation. The Prophet Muhammad's (S.A.W) Companions who are known as the *Ashab-i-Suffa* (The people of Veranda) are also believed to be the first Sufis who took a particular sitting in Masjid al-Nabawi at Medina for offering the service towards the righteous path (*Sirat al-Mustaqim*). All the above references denote character of a God fearing group of people who lived a simple virtuous life for attainment of the eternal salvation (*Najah*). These people believed in being pure (*Mutaqi*), patient (*Sabir*) and poor (*Faqir*), having less involvement in the matters of worldly importance and having a passion for collective good in this life and hereafter (*Falah-i-Daren*). They always considered this world as the prison (*Sijn*) and tried to set together all the possible efforts to move towards the eternal solace (*Na'iem*). Sufis do not constitute a separate sect in Islam, but can be found within both the *Sunni* and *Shi'a* sects throughout the Islamic history. The following Quranic verse, therefore, facilitates the evolution of the Sufi concept: "The day on which property will not avail, nor sons; except him who comes to Allah with a sound heart (*Qalb-i-Saliem*)".<sup>3</sup> Making this and other relevant Quranic verses and