

Hindu-Muslim Relations: General Aspects and Particular Situation of District Kishtwar of Jammu and Kashmir State

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Abstract

The diversity operates at multiple levels in India and also in the state of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). The three major religions of South Asia; Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism have their followers in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Hindus and Muslims constitute a major portion of the population in India and also in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. The diversities produce a complex situation in India, Jammu and Kashmir or Kishtwar for that matter. To begin with, there is no clear cut context of 'majority' and 'minority'. Majority in one context becomes minority in the other. Therefore the relations between these two communities in India in general and in the state of Jammu and Kashmir and district Kishtwar in particular occupy a prominent place. The paper deals with and analyses Hindu-Muslim relation in general patterns as occurred in India or Jammu and Kashmir. It further examines inter-community relations to very local area which is district Kishtwar of J&K state. Various areas of co-operation and conflict between Hindus and Muslims have also been sorted out and dealt with in this paper.

KEYWORDS: Hindu, Muslim, Relations, Community, Religion

Introduction

The paper deduces inter-community relations from general to a very specific situation. The general situation is encountered in the context of India as a whole. The paper then moves to Jammu and Kashmir state and then to District Kishtwar. The term community in this paper refers to the 'religious community' which is just one aspect of the wider concept of community. The religious communities being taken as the unit of study are the two major communities: the Hindus and the Muslims.

Varshney (2002) has categorised inter-communal network into two types of civic engagements; associational and quotidian. Business association, professional organizations, reading clubs, sports clubs, festival organization, trade union and cadre based political parties are some of the examples of the former while simple, routine interaction of life as Hindu and Muslim families visiting each other, eating together often enough, jointly participating in festivals and allowing their children to play together in the neighbourhood are the instances of latter. Both forms of engagement he says if vigorous, encourage peace; inversely, their absence or weakness opens up room for communal hostility. Besides, the associational forms turn out to be sturdier than every day form of engagement, especially when people met with attempts by the politicians and such other elements to polarize the ethnic communities. Strong associational life if inter-communal, acts as a serious restraint on the polarizing strategies of political elites.

The First Contact:

History of inter-community relations dates back to the time when autochthones intermingled with migrant population and the process of diffusion, impact of acculturation for adaptation stressed individuals in society. It has been proved through history that man, animal and nature have compromised, rebelled or rejected external pressure without losing their individual identity. Islam originated in Arabia from where it spread to Spain in the West and to China, Java and Philippines in East with extraordinary haste. The Islamic occupation of India was consummated in the second decade of eighth century (712A.D.) with the fall of Sind and its cultural integration with the Muslim empire. The history of Hindu-Muslim relations hence dates back to this time. After that period large portion of India were controlled by a succession of Muslim dynasties. Ram Manohar Lohia described the spread of Muslim in the 16th to 18th century, as a tide from the northwest (Lohia, 1960):

“....the tide flooded the Sindh and Punjab Plain (50-90 percent), and passed through the eastern Punjab, a strip of land bounded on the North by the Thar (25-50 percent) and flowed with the diminishing force down the Ganga Valley, or turned Southwards towards the Vindhyan hills into the Deccan. The delta region of Bengal stands out with its anomalous preponderance of Muslims at a great distance from the source of the tide. In the Upper Gangetic Plains and the Deccan their proportion nowhere are more than 25 percent.....”

The establishment of Muslim rule brought in its train the conversion of a large segment of the local Hindu population. Desire and the possibility of change in the social status through state employment and patronage was also a motivational factor for conversion. Forcible conversion was an exception rather than a rule (Robinson, 2004).

The present proportion of different religious communities is showing in the Table 2.1. The two major communities; Hindus and Muslims are 79.80 percent and 14.23 percent respectively. The states with maximum percentage of Hindus according to the Census of India 2011 in descending order are Himachal Pradesh 95.17, Chhattisgarh 93.25, Orissa 93.63 and the states with maximum percentages of Muslims in descending order are; J&K 68.31, West Bengal 27.01, Kerala 26.56.

Table 2.1 Religion-wise distribution of different religious communities according to census 2011

Religion	Percentage	Estimated	Total
Hindu	79.80 %	96.62 Crores	966,257,353
Muslim	14.23 %	17.22 Crores	172,245,158
Christian	2.30 %	2.78 Crores	27,819,588
Sikh	1.72 %	2.08 Crores	20,833,116
Buddhist	0.70 %	84.43 Lakhs	8,442,972
Jain	0.37 %	44.52 Lakhs	4,451,753
Other Religion	0.66 %	79.38 Lakhs	7,937,734
Not Stated	0.24 %	28.67 Lakhs	2,867,303
Total	100.00 %	121 Crores	1,210,854,977

Source: The census of India, 2011

To investigate the nature and type of Hindu-Muslim relations in India is one of the toughest jobs. An attempt to understand the historical evolution of composite Hindu-Muslim using various socio-anthropological approaches has been made. Robert Redfield's concepts of 'little' and 'great' traditions is first one in this regard. Redfield has characterised these twin traditions as 'currents of thought and action'. The little tradition consists of folk, unwritten, regional customs and features. The great traditions, on the other hand, consist of philosophical-literary articulation and reflection of the elite groups. There is constant interaction between the two (Redfield).

But there is problem with Redfield's articulation of little and great traditions in Indian context. It is because the tremendous ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity of the country cannot be subsumed under a single, all inclusive little and great tradition. To rectify this S.C. Dube has offered six-fold classification of traditions. They are (1) the classical tradition (2) the regional tradition (3) the local tradition (4) the western tradition (5) the emergent national tradition; and (6) the sub-cultural traditions of special groups. Dube claims that this framework has the merit of being applicable in a comprehensive manner to all sections of Indian population. However, Dube's classification does not take into account the Indo-Islamic tradition which has an all India spread and is a product of the historical interaction between Islam and Hinduism in the Indian subcontinent (Unnithan *et al*, 1965).

The Indo-Islamic great tradition, on the other hand, consists of the religious and philosophical views of the *sufis*, as well as in a certain composite style of art, music, literature and architecture, all of which have a synthetic and syncretic flavour. Besides, the Muslim mystics, the Muslim kings also played a significant role in the evolution of Indo-Islamic tradition (Momin, 2004). The transactions between these two religions can be attributed to the complex phenomena involving the processes established by Redfield, Dube and Singh.

Amongst the Muslim thinkers and intellectuals of medieval period were men like Abu'l-Fadl, Mir Findiriski, Dara Shikoh and Mirza Mazhar Jan-i-Janan who believed in the divinity of the Vedas and we know of several others like Abdu'l-Rahman Khan-i-Khanan (1533-1625) (Mujtabai, 1983) and Adil Shah II of Deccan (The Mughal Empire, 1974) who wrote in praise of Hindu deities. Amir Khusraw the famous poet of the 14th century was never tired of admiring a Hindu for their loyalty and devotion and pays tribute to all that is good and valuable in their customs and their beliefs (Mujtabai, 1983). Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan (1556-1627) popularly known as Rahim lived during the reign of Emperor Akbar and was one of the *Navaratnas* of his court. Though a Muslim, Rahim was known for his excellent Hindi couplets (*Dohe'*), most of which have become immensely popular (*Ibid.*).

That Muslim rule in India was not always characterized by subjugation and religious chauvinism is borne out by numerous remarks and indirect indications of the historian of medieval times. Mohammad Bin Tuglaq (1325-51) for instance had bitterly been criticized by Muslim historians for treating the Hindus with respect and benevolence, and for associating himself with Yogis and pundits (Hussain, 1938). Sultan Zain-al-Abidin (1420-70) of Kashmir was a great patron of Sanskrit studies and had a number of Hindu books translated into both the Persian and the Kashmiri languages. His concern for the feelings of his Hindu subjects was so great that throughout his kingdom

he stopped the custom of slaughtering cows, and he himself refused to take beef (Mujtabai, 1983).

So the legacy of communally infested India of today has not been entirely communal. Further, the preceding description should not be misunderstood. It does not mean that instances of communal conflict and feud were uncommon or even few between the Hindus and Muslims. During the long centuries of their interrelations there were no doubt, many mishaps and encounters resulting in bloodshed and devastation, especially when zealous instigations, political ends or individual interests were at work. But this has been a common phenomenon, sufficiently natural, of which one can cite numerous examples in other societies of the time. In India itself, we may note, the Hindus did not always treat the Buddhists and Jains with sympathy or tolerance. In the writings and the drama of pre-Medieval times there are numerous scenes which clearly represent the scorn and dishonour that the members of these sects were afflicted. Even the sight of a Buddhist *Bhiksu* or a Jaina *Arhat* was regarded as an ill-fated thing (Mujtabai, 1983).

The Second Contact: Formation of Communal Ideologies

Authors like Mujeeb (1967), Mushir-ul- Huq (1970), Ram Gopal (1969), Prabha Dixit(1974), Mathur (1972) and Ishwari Prasad (1974) and many others have written exhaustive account of what happened during ninety years i.e. from 1857-1947 and from the time of inception of Muslim League to the partition of British India into two nations: India and Pakistan. Many of these authors looked for Hindu-Muslim conflicts in the ancient literature. Authors like Ishwari Prasad and Subedar have gone to the extent of saying that since "Islam entered in India at the head of an army, its soldiers had 'the Koran' in one hand and the sword in the other" (Prasad *et al*, 1974) the seed of hatred were sown form the very beginning of Islam in India. Many of these authors record instances of Hindu-Muslim conflicts and riots even during the medieval period, stating that the cause of strife were always religious. Political supremacy of Muslims minimised the occurrence of Hindu-Muslim riots.

Mujeeb on the other hand opines that Indian Muslims are the by-product of Islamic influence on the original inhabitants. Whether Islam was imposed on them or was adopted by them is disputable. But an admixture of both compulsion and conviction worked to spread Islam all over India. These converts carried with them their cultural traditions and socially inherited system of values. Arguments suggesting that Hindu-Muslim antagonism was inherent in the Indian situation are rather difficult to sustain. The fact that Muslims in India today are not only the descendants of Muhammad Ghazni who conquered India but includes also the strong elements of native population converted to Islam. This implies then that Indian Muslims have never been, nor are they today an alienated, isolated monolithic ethnic identity with its exclusive cultural tradition (Mehta, 1992). It is heterogeneous complex comprising of various traditions and local cultures.

Based on the history of Hindu-Muslim relations and after the establishment of British conquerors supplemented by their consequent policy of divide and rule Hindu-Muslim relations started taking a new form. It has been already noticed that the conflict between these two communities started with some familiar and trivial issues. Let us further explore different causes and incidents.

The most disturbing factor in the politics of India had been the issue of cow killing. This question assumed a definite shape under the British rule and constituted a nuisance to the peace of the country. Playing of music before a mosque was also regarded as antireligious because Muslims regard music as thing of amusement and do not allow to be played near mosques. The Muslims also objected to the playing of music before mosques on the ground that it disturbs the devotees in their prayers. Construction and demolitions of mosques had been big reasons in the history for the Hindu-Muslim clashes.

Coincidences of Hindu and Muslim festivals, is another prominent reason for the outbreak of Hindu-Muslim clashes. Obstruction in each other's place of worship and in festivals has been another reason for the discomfort of the relations. For instance serious Hindu-Muslim disturbances broke out in Aligarh in 1809 owing to the impediment at the places of worship. The struggle for government jobs also plays an important part in the surfacing of Hindu-Muslim conflicts. It is because of the apprehension amongst Muslims that Islam and the followers of that faith were suffering at the hands of Hindus.

A distinct wave of awareness among Muslims was started by Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan. Through Aligarh Movement and other reform movements Muslims were able to raise their position but not sufficiently enough. Though they did not make as rapid movement as was expected of them there was in the twentieth century, a distinct sign of general awakening among them and an increasing tendency to assert their legitimate right in the administration of the country.

One of the main causes of Hindu-Muslim discord in 20th century was the question of separate representation granted to the Muslims in 1909 by Morley-Mintoo Reforms. The council reforms of 1909 and subsequent enactments which introduced separate representation and separate electorate undoubtedly embittered relations (Mathur, 1972). Another contributory factor of clashes was proximity of Censuses. This happened over the Hindi-Urdu controversy regarding the language of the schedule for census (*Ibid*).

Before moving ahead the extra territorial sympathies of the Muslims must be taken into consideration, because on this account Hindus often distrust them. But the Muslims countered this criticism they are indissolubly linked in the bonds of a grand religious fraternity. But to suppose that such renders the Muslims alien to patriotism is an error. The Indian Muslims love India as passionately as anybody else.....and strongly denounce the charge of un-patriotism levelled against them. Missionary and proselytizing movements also resulted in the bitterness of the relations.

Hindu-Muslim friction began to show itself in May 1923, when the Anjuman-Raza-i- Mustafa of Bareilly was already collecting funds in the districts to combat the *Shuddhi* movement (*Ibid.*). Muslims started *Tabligh* and *Tanzim* in protest of the *Arya Samaj* activities. In April 1923 the Muslims of Aligarh, under the leadership of Kunwar Abdul Wahhab Khan, a Muslim Rajput, formed a Society known as *Tabligh-ul-Islam* to counteract the *Arya Samaj* influence at Agra. At one of the meetings of this Society, a boycott of Hindus was urged. In July 1923 a central *Jamait-t Tabligh-ul-Islam* was formed with headquarters at Ambala (*Ibid.*).

The anxiety was seized upon by political leaders, both Hindu and Muslim, to arouse the Muslim against British government; the opportunity was favourable in their

eyes to re-appraisal with a view to expel British from India. That the re-appraisal was artificial was recognized by all but the economic stress throughout the country, combined with the world-wide indiscipline based on the cry of self-determination, was sufficient to cement superficially the two communities (*Ibid.*).

The question of religious disturbances always remained under anxious considerations of the British government in the initial periods and it was debated and discussed in the legislative assembly. However the government afterwards followed policy of religious neutrality in such disturbances and felt that the only remedy to avoid them is in the leaders of the two communities. The antipathy of the government towards Hindu-Muslim tension can be established by the following quote of Lord Irwin. He had remarked:

“The government could watch advice and act, but they could do little to change the combustible nature of the mass of material or eradicate its potentialities for generating destructive heat..... the more he pleaded over the problem the more clearly he felt that the first work to be done was by the leaders within their own ranks, and the future of their communities and country alike demanded it. A member of the legislative assembly remarked that these disturbances broke out because government was losing the moral leadership of the country, which she earlier had.” (Mujtabai, 1983; Mathur, 1972)

The foregoing account clearly established that the history of Hindu-Muslim co-existence is marked with cooperation and conflict. ‘Peaceful co-existence’ cannot be a right term to describe this co-existence. As is often understood no peaceful existence can be so lasting, fruitful and constructive. In more than eight centuries of the relationships between Hindus and Muslims, they have frequently suffered from an oscillation of estrangement and approximation, with a slight sledge on estrangement. The consequence has been that their emotional incorporation into a single nation has so far been defeated (Mathur, 1972).

R. M. Lohia claims, “there would be no Hindu-Muslim problem today or when partition was effected, if Hindus and Muslims had been able to interpret their history unitedly and learnt to live in peace....the Hindu and Muslim view of their common history have differed in the past as they do today and that is a main cause of their separation in identity and action” (Lohia, 1960).

How could the two communities appreciate problems in a national perspective, particularly when there were people having sturdy and inflexible views on communal relations? The British forever playing the policy of divide and rule on one hand, on the other hand the religiously indoctrinated and intoxicated masses unable to see the reason and the leadership trying to exploit the situation in their own interest, made the gulf go on widening. It was this estranged relationship between these two communities that made partition of the country became unavoidable. Many scholars are of the view that for the estrange relations it is largely the majority community which is to be blamed. The present opposition of the fanatical Hinduism to partition did not make any sense, for one of the forces that partitioned country was precisely this Hindu-Muslim fanaticism (*Ibid.*: 7-8).

In Kashmir Muslim rule was finally established in 14th century and when this happened it did not occur primarily as a consequence of invasion so much as because of

the internal problems resulting from weak rule and corruption endemic in the Hindu Lohara Dynasty. The conversion to Islamic faith in Kashmir took place by force as well as by consent through the preaching of Sufi saints (Wani, 2004). In 1846, with the passing of 'Treaty of Amritsar', the state of Jammu and Kashmir came into being. The 1947 war between India and Pakistan led to the division of state with Pakistan occupying western Baltistan, and Gilgit region and the western part of Jammu and Kashmir regions between Muzafarabad and Mirpur.

The Situation of Kishtwar

The present research area; Kishtwar nicknamed the land of sapphire and saffron was an independent hill state during the medieval period. Maharaja Gulab Singh, the Dogra ruler of Jammu, usurped it in 1821 A.D. (Sharma, 1995), without shedding a drop of blood on either side and annexed it to his empire. It was one of the eleven states that existed in *Divigrit* (now called Dugger and then Dugger Desh).

Kishtwar is bounded by Zanskar on the North, Himachal Pradesh on the East, Doda and Bhaderwah on the South and Anantnag and Banihal on the west. In ancient Kishtwar Sanskrit was the literary language which was replaced by Pali during the course and spread of Buddhism in this part of the country in about second century B. C. The sages composed Vedic hymns in Sanskrit whereas Nagsena the Buddhist scholar, wrote *Malinda Panho* in Pali Language.

The court language of the rulers of Kishtwar was in the beginning of the historical rule was Sanskrit which was followed by Hindi but the literary language Sanskrit remained undisturbed. During the Mughal rule when Kishtwar came under the direct or indirect domination of the Mughals, Persian became the court language. Since the time Kishtwar came into the contact with Jammu rulers and entered into the matrimonial alliances with the Jammu, Chamba and Jaswan, Dogri became the official language. By and by Urdu became the official language for maintaining land records. During Dogra rule English also came up gradually in use for official correspondence.

Right from the day of its emergence Kishtwar town, the capital of erstwhile Kishtwar state of present Kishtwar district, has seen many vicissitudes. Kahan Pal was the first historic king of Kishtwar who probably rose in the middle of the tenth century (Bringlay *et al*, 1995). Kishtwar was annexed by Mughal forces in 1620 A.D. during the reign of Mughal emperor Jahangir, though its rulers continue to remain in Mughal suzerainty (Singh, 1992). The Islamic influence started from this time and mainly through the preaching of *Sufi* saints. Muslims from Kashmir were allowed to settle in Kishtwar under an agreement with the then prince Jai Singh (1656-1664) and through him with Raja Maha Singh (1650-56). Accordingly Mulla Bhadur and Mulla Hussain, sons of Mulla Mahmud Kashmiri, under orders of the emperor reached Kishtwar. They constructed a mosque '*Masjid Khawaja Garib*' in the heart of town (Dhar, 1881).

It was during the reign of the Raja Jai Singh (1656-64) that the famous Mohammadan Saint, Syed Mohammad Fariduddin Quadri, popularly known as Shah Sahib, came to Kishtwar all along from Baghdad. During the last days of the emperor Shah Jahan he reached Agra and then Delhi. He stayed there for some years and then proceeded towards Kishtwar, in consequence of a dream in which he was told to go and

preach there (Charak, 1983:299). The Islamic influence grew over the centuries, with gradual conversion to the Islamic faith, though the area remained a happy blend of religions. This was reflected even in the names of the rulers of Kishtwar, for instance Raja Inayatullah Singh, Raja Mohd. Teg Singh. These names are a blend of both Hindu and Muslim names (Singh, 1999).

According to the Hashmatullah, Kirat Singh's (1664-1728) was the first ruler to be converted to Islamic faith under the name Sadat Yar Khan (Sharma, 1995). Mohammad Teg Singh son and successor of Raja Inayatullah Singh, was the last independent ruler of Kishtwar. At the time of Teg Singh the empire expanded to Banihal, Pogal Paristan, Dangbattal, Ramban, Kanthi Siraz, Doda, Bownjwah, Saroor and the present Kishtwar. When Ranjit Singh conferred the territory of Kishtwar on the Dogra chief, he started his preparations for the conquest of Kishtwar. He made some conspiracies to breed suspicion in the heart of the ruler against his minister Wazir Lakhpat Rai (Charak, 1983). Under the orders of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the Dogra chief Gulab Singh personally led an expedition against the ruler of Kishtwar in the beginning of 1821 A.D. On the way he reduced Balwalta and compelled Raja Dayal of Chenani to accompany him on the conquest of Kishtwar (Ibid.).

During the rule of Maharaja Hari Singh the state witnessed the scenes of freedom struggle against the British, but it had no direct effect on the people of this erstwhile state of Kishtwar. Perhaps it might be due to remoteness, lack of means of communication and backwardness that the people of Kishtwar could get no opportunity to link them to the movement of the freedom struggle.

According to D.C. Sharma, a few individuals from Kishtwar found an opportunity to participate in the freedom movement against the British. Tej Ram of Thakrai, Moma Joo of Cheerhar, Ram Saran of Mulchhitar and Ghulam Ali Qazi of Dool joined the freedom struggle after leaving their British army. They joined Azad Hind Fauj and some of them had met Netaji Subhash Chander Bose also. Master Amar Chand son of Hira Lal of Simna Kishtwar had also remained an activist during freedom struggle. After graduating from Punjab University he joined Indian National congress in 1940 A.D. He had gone to Vardoli Bimbay to join the Quit India Movement, where after delivering a fiery speech, he was arrested by the British police. Since then his whereabouts have remained untraced (Sharma, 1995:138-39). Rest were largely unconcerned with the Freedom movement.

Following partition of India in 1947 the state of Jammu and Kashmir also witnessed communal riots at many places. There was bloodshed, loot and arsenals around but the region of Kishtwar owing to the foresightedness of the senior citizens by and large remained, undisturbed. However, in Bhaderwah, Bwanjwah and Bhalesa people had to undergo the tribulations of communal frenzy. In Bwanjwah Pargana of Kishtwar tehsil, 37 persons were massacred in village *Misli* alone (Ibid:140). The communal disturbances in the region of Kishtwar cannot be termed as riots because of their lesser intensity and being restricted to a particular place. The present research has described them as communal clashes. The onslaught of trouble makers and communal forces however could not make any headway beyond *kuligad Nallah*. Communal clashes occurred in Padde Pargana also at one or two places only. Barring the arsoning incidents at few places, the situation in the area, by and large remained peaceful.

College agitation started in Kishtwar for the first time in 1969. The region witnessed a strong agitation for the opening of the Government Degree College in Kishtwar. The agitation is of tremendous significance because it witnessed a great Hindu-Muslim unity after a long period of time. Hindu and Muslim together agitated for their demand. In 1974, the students of the local schools of the Kishtwar started agitating again for setting up a Government Degree College at Kishtwar. The schools remained closed for more than a month. On September 13, 1974 during the course of the procession taken out from tehsil office to the bus stand, mob turned violent. The police instead of acting with restraint resorted to indiscriminate firing. Four young people namely, Ravinder Kumar Gupta, Gian Chand Bhagat, Mohammed Iqbal Zargar, Abdul Rashid Zargar and Abdul Kabir fell victim to the bullets. Some people were injured also. The firing incident sent waves of shock and resentment throughout Jammu region. However the demand of the people was filled by the Governor of the state Jagmohan in his public address at Kishtwar in March 1986 (Ibid:164).

By 1988 and 1989 Kashmir valley had already plunged into the militancy. It was natural that this part of the state, Kishtwar, the boundaries of which touch most of the Southern and Eastern part of the Valley, could not remain out of the reach of insurgency. The incidents related to communal clashed and minority killings corresponded with the rise of militancy in Kishtwar. There were a number of such clashes. It has been found that the incidents of communal violence did not follow any pattern. It subsides to only rise at another time. It increased from 1989 towards 1993, 1994, and 1995 then started declining after 2001 but re-emerged again in 2008 to 2013 and declined afterwards.

Only some decades back it was reactionary to suggest that communalism is as basic and enduring as class conflict. But now it has become a hard fact. Islam in India whatever its remote past history may be, is now an integral part of the social and cultural life of the subcontinent. In the course of several centuries of naturalization, it has adapted itself to the Indian environment, has developed its own characteristic quality, and has made immense contribution to the social, political and intellectual solidarity of the nation. Islamic legacy of India is as Indian as everything else that exists in this ancient land. The rich and multifarious culture and civilization of Medieval India, the glorious struggle for freedom, and the great achievements of the Indian nation in the last few decades all is the product of the unified, heartfelt and organized co-operation of the Hindu and the Muslim of the subcontinent.

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