

Sheikh Nuru'd-din Rishi: Propagator of Universal Brotherhood.

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Abstract

The last quarter of fourteenth and the early days of fifteenth century emerged as the beginning of new era in the socio-religious and cultural history of Kashmir valley. An indigenous Rishi order revolutionized the society, Sheikh Nuru'd-din Rishi founder of the local based mystic order preached for universal brotherhood. His message was not confined to one sect but to all. People were insisted to acquire the knowledge of Islamic Shariah. The acquaintance of law will solve the day today problem concerned with life. Concept of charity was boosted through his positive efforts. He preached for unity, peace and prosperity of people in and outside the valley. Worked restlessly for the welfare of exploited ones. People were insisted to earn their means of living through honest ways. Agricultural activities were considered as service to humanity. People were encouraged to plant the trees as much as one could. Self denial and attachments to poverty were preferred. Fasting as a way to control the temptations of self.

Keywords: Education: Sincerity: Peace: Unity: Poverty: Fasting.

Introduction:

The philosophy of the Sufi Saint has opened new ways and solution towards the present unrest in society. Rishi order was an ingenious order founded by the popular Saint of Kashmir Sheikh Nuru'd-din Rishi . He was a great mystic who had risen above the courts and the socio-religious belief institutions of the time. Sheikh Nuru'd-din believed that God is both immanent and transcendent. God is everywhere not confined to one place only. One who is able to recognize himself can recognize God, then only loss and gain become identical to him in the true sense. One is supposed to have complete trust in God and realize that no human endeavour can succeed without the due cognizance of God. Self-denial non attachment and purity of life are the hallmarks of the new Sufi mystic order of local origin. He lived in isolation, seclusion and the company of rich people was always avoided by him. The company of rulers was not liked and has never received any sort of favour for them.

Methods adopted attract the people: As such no original, well connected and detailed research paper has been written so far on the particular subject .For the completion of paper both primary and secondary sources were consulted. Besides this other necessary

tools like field survey and interaction with people linked with the Shrine of Sufi Saint helped a lot to know about the Sufi Saint how problems of common people were got addressed to a greater extent.

Understanding of Earthly life: Sheikh Nuru'd-din Rishi was born on, 10 Zul-Hijja 790A.H./ 9 April 1378.A.D,at village Kaimuh Kulgam. His father Sheikh Salaru'd-din had earlier changed faith before his birth at the hands of a Kubriya Sufi Syed Hussain Simnani(d.1390.A.D). From the very beginning of childhood he was not interested in the worldly affairs. The only aim was the reformation of civil society from the evils and odds, so that a new social order would emerge in which all people could feel free from the obligations of exploiters. People were always insisted to cultivate the land and plant as many as fruit bearing trees as one could. Land should be cultivated not to fulfill the personal needs but to distribute its produce among the destitutes.Great deal of importance was given to the cultivation of inward piety in contrast to maintaining a semi balance of reverence for God by wearing the garments of Saints. But what is of too much immense significance is that at every opportunity one should advocate the cause of exploited section of the society. His asceticism needs to be understood not merely in terms of aversion for the worldly comforts, but also more as a protest against the tyrannies of an iniquitous social structure of Kashmiri society. As per his view if all are created by one God, how one can be superior. Superiority should be based on morals and individual actions not on the basis of caste and birth. All people irrespective of faith should have complete trust on God and should remain pleased with the decrees of providence. Like bread is provided by God and the professions of people are only one of the means of getting it. One should think only of worshipping in real sense, caring nothing for food and other needs of day today life. Suppression of all the preoccupations and the abandonment of worldly cares was advocated by him. True follower according to him is one who cares neither for spiritual power nor for pleasure, but only for the contemplation of God. One who avoids publicity is a real Sufi Saint. If one will ask for blessing while worshipping, he believes is a sign of greed towards material desires. The spiritual practices of Sheikh Nuru'd-din Rishi were aimed at transforming the compulsiveness of the self and attaining submission to higher degree of reality. One is supposed to maintain distance from the phenomenal world of corruption, arrogance, revenge and inequality.Long hours of prayer, physical mortification and sacrifice has remained as an example to thousands of ardent and sincere followers of God. More and more thrust was laid by him on tenacious attachment to poverty, profound sense of sacrifice, renunciation and absence of self obtrusion and personal violation. Like our earthly life is transition, we are pilgrims on the earth and only God is eternal. The world is like snow exposed to sun which continues to melt until it disappears altogether, while the next world is like a precious stone which never melts away. People were enlightened to realize this very fact of life and showed the real path to live accordingly. For him the true and real follower of God is one who covets nothing of this world, nothing of the next but only devotes himself exclusively to God. The poverty and celibacy was advocated by him as the pre-requisites of the asceticism.

Although Sheikh Nuru'd-din Rishi has not received any formal education, but still he managed to influence the society. He gave himself to the hardships and penances for purification of heart and soul. No doubt his approach differs from other Sufi Saints of Kashmir valley. Cave meditation and self-denial was preferred by him. Company of rich and ruling class was avoided that their life is full of comforts whereas life of a Sufi Saint is full of hardships. He was complete vegetarian and has never taken meat. Wild vegetables especially Upalhak which grows in Kashmir and is bitter in taste was repeatedly taken by him. Even he urged upon his followers to abstain themselves from the fleshy of meat. The simplicity and purity of Sheikh Nuru'd-din's life has really impressed the people of valley. During the later phase of Kashmir history the purity and greatness of Sheikh Nuru'd-din Rishi was acknowledged by the Afghan Governor Atta Mohammad Khan , 1808-10.A.D, who struck coins in the name of Sheikh Nuru'd-din Rishi .

Result:

The purity in thought and simple approach towards the life attracted the people towards his message of unity and equality. With the result there was complete change in the day today life of people.

Philosophical Discussion of Message:

The philosophy of Sheikh Nuru'd-din Rishi is the best and real solution to the problems faced by people. In real sense the society got reformed by his message of non-attachment to materialistic desires. The principle of justice also strengthened the very base of society for universal brotherhood.

The importance of Ilm (knowledge) was emphasized by Sheikh Nuru'd-din Rishi as the source of universal good and a panacea for diseases of every kind respectively. The Ilm is the gateway towards peace and prosperity of human society. Illiteracy is the social evil. Obligatory prayer, recitation of the Quran and teachings of religious subjects are essential for everyone. He urged upon his followers not to criticize anyone without having the proper understanding of the matter. Sama (Sufi music) was not approved by him necessary for spiritual attainments. Being an Alim, he distinguished between spirit and flesh. As an Arif he was able to discriminate between the desires of spirit and flesh. According to him true Abid is one who bends himself, before he is bent down and a true Zahid is one who shuts his eyes to everything other than God. His divine spiritual message radiated like wheel. All sects of people gladly and with open heart accepted his message. His kind and compassionated approach left deep imprints on the socio-cultural and religious history of Kashmir.

Principle of Tawakul (complete trust in God) was preferred by Sheikh Nuru'd-din Rishi, be it moral principle as enunciated in the holy Quran, which does not exclude earning one's livelihood by one's own efforts. A good reputation was earned by him as a, Abid, Zahid, God-fearing and above all a real servant of God. His sermons were mainly concerned with the Hadis and Shariah. According to him Shariah should act as a moral force for building up a stable social order. The progressive development of the social

order was integrally bound with the actions of each individual like, as you sow, so shall you reap and it is good to sow the seeds of good. The traveller on the path of Shariah is the knower, the traveller on the path of Tariqat is the perceiver and traveller on the path of Haqiqat is the taster. Thus Shariah is the learning, the Tariqat is burning and Haqiqat is the illumination. The devotee should firstly acquire the knowledge of Shariah and then burn himself on the path of Tariqat and ultimately kindle the lamp of Haqiqat. His faith about concept of wadhat-al-wujud was too much strong. It is by the grace of Almighty that human beings were created and were bestowed with supreme authority over all creatures on the earth. Several examples were quoted by him regarding the wadhat-al-wujud like, Tuwhidi Afal (unity of being), Tuwhidi Zat Sifat (unity of attributes) and Tuwhidi Zat (unity of essence).

The philosophy of Sheikh Nuru'd-din Rishi resembles with the Lalla's saying. Sheikh Nuru'd-din Rishi was the junior contemporary of Lalla a Shivate Saint of Pompora Pulwama Kashmir. She is famous in Kashmir through her sayings or Lal Wakh. Her philosophy too appealed the Muslim population also. The similarity of their sayings and teachings is a clear indication of their association. She has described as Avatara of Kashmiri people was Sheikh Nuru'd-din Noorani (Rishi). Some of the verses of Sheikh Nuru'd-din Rishi are quoted by Mohd Ishaq Khan, in the Biographical Dictionary of Sufism in South Asia,

"The universe is the objective manifestation of the essence of Siva
If you realize it through annihilation of self, you will get merged into him,
What you will find after death, if you do not recognize him in this world,
Search him in yourself and give me keen hearing"

Sheikh Nuru'd-din Rishi believes that God has bestowed upon mankind every kind of facility. But they are in different and unmindful towards his worship. It is God who provides us food, protects us from diseases. As per his view all creatures used to worship in their own ways, because remembrance is the key of success. Men are supposed to worship God from the very beginning, not in old age. If one will not move towards God in young age, how one can move in old age. Later phase of age is always followed by number of problems. While moving towards God the biggest enemy of man is his nafs (lower soul). Foremost duty of a man is to control the temptations of nafs. The desires and temptations of nafs should be crushed at all costs. Some of his sayings are quoted by A. Q. Rafiqi in Sufism of Kashmir,

"The nafs disturbed me greatly
The nafs has ruined me greatly
It is the nafs which makes us destroy others
The nafs is the slave of the devil
To serve the nafs is to thrust ashes into one's own eyes
How then can one expect to see?
The nafs is just like a rebellious self which should be tied up
It should be threatened with the stick of fasting "
One can realize how he was dedicated to control all the desires of greed related with the nafs. Selfish desires are also responsible for anger, pride and greed. All these are the

negative signs, because they will lead the man towards problems. People were repeatedly warned by him that impurities of heart cannot be washed away with until and unless nafs is purified. Let nafs sit on the threshold of his pleasure. Unless this very practice becomes a lifestyle purity cannot be generated in the heart. When this will become a tangible reality, God addresses the nafs with revealed words. Sheikh Nuru'd-din Rishi gave word of advice to the people how to gain control on the sensual desires and abandon all that their nafs craves for in their earthly existence. They should entrust everything with God and remain vigilant to guard their heart to make sure that he allows admittance to whom he approves. It will be better and appropriate to obey God and to do whatever he commands and to restrain himself from what he forbids, entrusting all the affairs with him and not believing in any one as his partner. Since human desires, longings and aspirations are of transitory nature, they need to be abandoned at all costs. One should be mindful of the fact that Shirk (disbelief) is rooted in human heart. Through the intention by satisfying sensual desires in this world is a way towards disbelief and gets fully established when anything alien to him is acknowledged as his partner. It is possible only when one will gain control on all the categories of nafs like, Nafs-e-Ammarah, Nafs-e-Lawwamah, Nafs-e-Mulhimma, Nafs-e-Mutmainnah, Nafs-e-Mardia and Nafs-e-Kamilah. The only way to get rid of desires is the intense remembrance of God, worshipping and recitation of Quran with deep meditation. Sheikh Nuru'd-din regards strict adherence to the Shariah (Islamic law) as a necessary condition for gaining the divine cognizance. Followers of God were urged to create self-confidence by way of purifying their soul and heart. In his estimation according equal treatment to the high as well the low is humility and doing well to friend and enemy alike is sincerity.

The message of universal brotherhood and equality attracted all people towards Rishi philosophy. He communicated the message of God and Prophet among the people with kind and soft approach. His principle of non-injury made him too much famous among the non-Muslims. He was not interested in the construction of mosques and Khanqahs rather one should have quest for real knowledge. Sheikh Nuru'd-din Rishi departed on, 26th of Ramzan, 842.A H. /12 March 1439. A. D. at the age of sixty three. He is entombed at the village of Charar Sharief. His Urs is annually celebrated by the people on, 26th of Muharram of Islamic calendar. One can also see at present the huge gatherings on every thursday. People of all faiths are visiting the Shrine of Sufi Saint for blessings.

Conclusion:

Sheikh Nuru'd-din Rishi preached for a society based on moral values and believed in complete harmony among the people of various faiths. His message was not confined to one section, but was universal in nature. He worked altruistically for the betterment of people. The whole society got influenced through the teachings. With the result people began to follow the path of peace and prosperity. He is like an amarant for everyone in and outside the valley of Kashmir.

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