

AFGHAN RULE IN KASHMIR (1752–1819): A CULTURAL CROSSROADS

^{*1}Shabir Ahmad Lone, ²Kulatunga Mudiyansele Rohitha Dasanayaka

^{*1}Research Scholar of History, Annamalai University, Annamalai Nagar-608002, Tamil Nadu, India

²Department of History, University of Peradeniya, Peradeniya- 20400, Sri Lanka.

Correspondence mail: loneshabir714@gmail.com

Phone no: 7006808798

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Abstract

Kashmir, often referred to as the "Kingdom of Fairies" and "Heaven on Earth," has a rich and diverse history marked by the rule of multiple dynasties, including those of Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist rulers. Each ruling dynasty contributed to the region's distinct cultural heritage, shaping its identity over time. Culture, which encompasses the way of life of a community, reflects the unique characteristics of its people. The Afghan rule in Kashmir (1752–1819) was deeply rooted in Islamic principles and traditions, significantly influencing Kashmiri society. This study aims to examine the cultural values of the Afghans and their impact on Kashmiri society during this period. Historical evidence suggests that Kashmiri society underwent notable cultural and social transformations under Afghan governance. Various aspects of Kashmiri life, including social structure, customs, early marriage traditions, the status of women, language and literature, culinary practices, currency issuance, archaeological artifacts, monuments, architecture, recreational activities, theaters, the flourishing shawl industry, and the taxation system, were either directly or indirectly influenced by Afghan rule. Despite these changes, Kashmir remained a land of peace and cultural openness, embracing diverse influences and developments. This study is based on information gathered from secondary sources to analyze the cultural and social impact of Afghan rule on Kashmir.

Keywords: *Culture, reign, culture, artifacts, architecture*

INTRODUCTION

Each community has an own identity, culture, customs, and traditions that represent the uniqueness of a certain reign. Culture is a way of life Individuals in a society. Kashmiri culture is purely Islamic, and this The study is conducted to highlight the impacts of Afghan culture on the Kashmiri society under Afghan administration. Kashmir is a country that enjoys It is widely praised for its splendour, scenery, and natural beauty. Its picturesque locations, beautiful valleys, tall mountains covered in snow, rivers with chilly water, pastures that are usually green, attractive lakes and springs, lush woodlands, and exquisite health resorts, which augment its glory, are an ironic source Travellers find it really beautiful. (Thomas, 2011)

Origin of Kashmir

Regarding Kashmir, and specifically the valley of Kashmir, there are several Points of view. Different individuals explain the word “Kashmir” differently. 1. The old Kashmiri textbook "Nilmatpurana" explains that the Valley of Kashmir was once a lake known as Satisar. (Mir, 2011) 2. Geographer Major Reonald and Mr. Fredic Andrew have stated that Kashmir was in the shape of a large lake and has been altered as a result of an earthquake at Baramula. (Hashmi, 1993). 3. It is also supposed, that the word Kashmir is a complex of two words, “Kash” and “Mir”. “Kash” means Canals and “Mir” means mountain. So Kashmir is a land with canals and mountains. (Sufi 1948)

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF KASHMIR

Since several tribes began to dominate Kashmir in 3180 BC, Kashmir has had a long-standing historical significance. Numerous Muslim and Hindu dynasties have held power over it. From 3180 BC until 1325 AD, Kashmir was controlled by many Hindu kingdoms. Since Rinchan Shah converted to Islam in 1325 and adopted the name Sultan Saddr-ud-Din, Muslims have ruled Kashmir. In 1343, the Shah Miri dynasty took control of Kashmir. from 1343 to 1554 AD for 211 years. (Fauq, 2003) The Chaks ruled Kashmir from 1554 to 1586 AD, lasting 26 years

(Tishna, 2014). From 1586 to 1752 AD, the Mughals ruled Kashmir for 167 years. After them, Ahmad Shah Abdali's army took over Kashmir. (Balooch, 2012). From 1752 until 1819 AD, Afghanistan ruled Kashmir for over 67 years. (Sufi, 1948)

Cultural Impact and Kingdom of Kashmir:

Culture encompasses a society's beliefs, customs, knowledge, artistic expressions, legal systems, moral values, and abilities. Culture evolves over time and involves multiple processes. We concentrated on cultural values related to human groupings, including notions and symbols. (Kluckhohn 1951). Cultural transformation is a global process that prevents any culture from remaining stationary. Civilizational dynamics are a complex process. Endogenous change refers to factors that are influenced by social structures. Buddhism, Hinduism, and Jainism are examples of how ideas and ideologies evolved naturally. The advent of Islam from outside Kashmir has resulted in continual modifications in Islamic theology (Hussain, 2010). In the 14th century, the Shahmiri dynasty brought Islam to Kashmir with 700 Central Asian preachers led by Shah Hamdan.

The large influx of Muslims from Central Asia not only created cultural connections and had an impact on the community, but also led to significant changes in society. Although foreign influence brought about improvements in society, they were only partially effective due to Kashmiris' reluctance to abandon their traditional practices and beliefs. (Sufi, 1948) During the 14th and 15th centuries, there was tension between those who defended their beliefs and others who embraced Iranian culture. The settlement of the battle led to the development of a new civilization based on a fusion of ideologies in the 16th and 17th centuries. (Mir, 2011) Sociologists define society as a group of people who share a similar environment, lifestyle, and culture. Everyone in a society shares its culture, which includes language, values, beliefs, behaviour, and material assets. Despite limited information, it is possible to study the cultural arrangement of mediaeval Kashmir in connection to Afghans. (Mir, 2011) Kashmir is enveloped in darkness due to its location under Afghan authority. There is limited information known on the Afghans' tenure in Kashmir. During the Hindu era, Kashmiri society was divided into four castes: Brahmans, Vaish, Khustri, and shudder. During that period, Brahmans occupied all major positions in Kashmir. (Stein, 1968). The caste system was abolished in Kashmiri society with the entrance of Islam. Equality, fairness, and peace have taken its place. Without a doubt, Islam acted as a bridge and unifying force. Despite the Sufis' efforts to bridge social gaps, practical and economic difficulties prevented Kashmir from achieving full social equality. (Mahibulla 1967).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aims to define the cultural inheritance of Afghans in Kashmir. This article examines the cultural impact of Afghan rule in Kashmir.

METHODOLOGY

The study used qualitative data from many sources, including journals, indexes, books, directories, conference papers, research reports, annual reports, newspapers, and magazines. This study relies on secondary sources to provide information about Afghan rule in the past.

Afghan rulers and their governors of Kashmir (1752-1819)

From 1752 to 1819, four Afghan monarchs ruled Kashmir: Ahmad Shah Abdali (1752-72), Timur Shah (1772-93), Zaman Shah (1793-1800), and Shah Shuja Mahmud Shah (1801-19). These governments either directly or indirectly governed over Kashmir, as detailed below.

Ahmad Shah Abdali (1752-72)

During Ahmad Shah Abdali's reign, Kashmir was ruled by the following nine governors. (Fauq, 2003)

Ahmad Shah Abdali ruled Kashmir at least 19 year 2 months from (1752-72)			
Sr. #	Name of the Subedhar	Tenure	Year
1	Abdullah Khan	06 month	1752
2	Abdullah Khan	4 months and seven days	1753
3	Sukhjiwan Mal	8 years, 4 months & 8 days	1753-62
4	Buland Khan Bamzai	2 years	1762-64
5	Noor-ud-Din Khan	1 year and ten months	1764-66
6	Mir Faqeerullah Kanth	Ten months & 20 days	1767-67
7	Noor-ud-Din Khan 2nd time	2 year and ten months	1767-70

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8	Khuram Khan 2nd time	6 months	1770-71
9	Ameer Khan JawanSher	1 year and 11 months	1771-72

Timur Shah Durrani (1772-93)

Timur Shah Durrani ruled over Kashmir by the following 08 governors. (Fauq, 2003)

Timur Shah Durrani ruled Kashmir at least 21 Year one month (1772- 93)			
Sr. #	Name of the Subedhar	Tenure	Year
1	Amir Khan Jawan Sher (2nd Time)	4 years & 4 months	1773-76
2	Haji Karimdad Khan	6 years & 10 months	1776-83
3	Azad Khan	2 years and 4 months	1783-85
4	Madad Khan Ishaqzai	2 year and 10 months	1785-86
5	Mir Dad Khan	2 years	1786-88
6	Mullah Gaffar Khan	4 months	1788
7	Juma Khan Alakzai	4 years and 5 months	1788-92
8	Mirza Khan	4 months	1792-93

Zaman Shah Durrani (1793-1802)

Following 05 governors were ruled over Kashmir for Zaman Shah Durrani. (Fauq, 2003)

Zaman Shah ruled Kashmir at least 8 year 10 months from (1793-1802)			
Sr.#	Name of the Subedhar	Tenure	Year
1	Mir Hezar Khan	8 months	1793-94
2	Mir Rahmatullah Khan	4 months	1794
3	Kifayat Khan	1 year	1794-95
4	Arsala Khan	1 year	1795-96
5	Abdullah Khan Alakzai	5 year, 10 months	1796-1802

Muhammad Shah Durrani (1802-1819)

In the period of Muhammad Shah Durrani, the following 04 governors rule over Kashmir for him. (Fauq, 2003)

Muhammad Shah ruled Kashmir at least 17 year 2 months from (1802- 1819)			
Sr.#	Name of the Subedhar	Tenure	Year
1	Abdullah Khan Alakzai	5 years	1802-07
2	Atta Muhammad Khan	5 years, 10 months	1807-13
3	Muhammad Azeem Khan	6 years	1813-19
4	Jabbar Khan	4 months	1819

The sixty-seven years of Afghan rule in Kashmir were marked by severe state-sponsored violence, economic exploitation, mismanagement of public resources, and a decline in agricultural productivity. Additionally, heavy taxation contributed to the depletion of wealth, while political instability, corruption, poor governance, and the extravagant lifestyles of the ruling elite further exacerbated the socio-economic challenges of the time. In alignment with contemporary historical analysis methodologies, the present study seeks to examine and evaluate all remaining historical and semi-historical artifacts to provide an accurate and updated account of Afghan rule in Kashmir. **Mir (2011)** extensively documents the oppressive nature of Afghan governance, highlighting their reputation for cruelty. He further notes that the Pathan rulers are primarily remembered for their brutality and despotic conduct, emphasizing that they regarded the act of beheading as casually as one would pluck a flower (**Mir, 2012**).

Cultural Impact of Afghan Rule over Kashmir

The number of people residing in Kashmir during the Afghan era is difficult to establish due to a lack of census records. Despite being colonized, the valley continues to have a diverse range of communities. According to Mir (2011), "Zafer Nama" suggests that humans once lived on Earth. Saif Khan conducted the Kashmir Valley census under the Mughal reign in 1670 A.D. However, there is no documented record of Kashmir's residents. (Hashain, 1954). The Kashmir valley has undergone significant changes since the arrival of the Afghan regime. Political upheaval and natural disasters led to a large number of people leaving Kashmir. There are no records on how many people lived in Kashmir's valley during this difficult time. The diaries of European travellers who visited Kashmir valley after Afghan rule ended offer insights. (Banzai, 1960) According to "Moorcroft," a European traveller, there

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was a significant reduction in the population of Srinagar, as well as deserted villages and small towns in Kashmir valley. Many people evacuated Kashmir's capital, Srinagar, for safety in India.

Composition of Afghan Society in Kashmir:

The Afghan community in Kashmir was composed of several distinct social and occupational groups, including the ruling elite, administrative officials, landowning aristocracy, farmers, religious and political figures, and the general rural population. The ruling class primarily originated from affluent families and maintained social exclusivity. Below them in the hierarchy were government officials such as Subedhars, Naib Subedhars, and Diwans, along with lower-ranking administrators, including Qanungos, Chowdharis, Tehvildars, Mugdams, Kardars, Amins, and Amils, who played a significant role in governance. During Afghan rule, the landowning elite consisted of Zamindars, Jagirdars, and Ijardars, who served as intermediaries between the common people and the state, holding considerable influence over local affairs (Mir, 2011). The religious class, which included Qazis, Muftis, Sheikhs, Sayyeds, Sufis, and Ulmas, remained largely detached from ordinary society, maintaining their own exclusive status. Farmers played a crucial role in sustaining the Kashmiri economy, yet despite their economic significance, they were often treated with little regard, comparable to livestock in terms of their social status. Skilled laborers within villages, including shepherds, weavers, barbers, potters, and carpenters, were commonly referred to as village professionals, contributing to the socio-economic fabric of rural Kashmir (Mushtaq, 2001).

Status of Women

Women have a crucial role in human society, but have gotten little attention in study and academia. Women in Kashmir were crucial in developing cultural, social, and religious activities. After Afghan control, political instability undermined Kashmir's social structures, leading to the obscurity, ignorance, gloom, illiteracy, and disease of once prominent women. (Bazaz, 1954). Folk songs and other forms of expression were used to address and protest the injustice. (Tang, 1987)

Early Marriages

There is a lack of widely available literature regarding the actual age of marriage during the Afghan era. However, folklore suggests that early marriage practices were prevalent. During Afghan rule, the custom of marrying at a young age and bearing children became a deeply ingrained social norm (Bamzi, 1960). Despite the prevalence of early marriage, Afghan society generally refrained from mistreating married women. Consequently, early marriage was perceived as a means of safeguarding a woman's social integrity and security (Mir, 2011). Women in Afghan society faced considerable hardships, often becoming the primary target of oppressive practices. Kashmiri women, irrespective of their caste or religious background, endured both physical and emotional suffering, leading to their marginalization in all aspects of social life (Bazaz, 1954). Many Afghan tribes continued to uphold these customs until legal reforms were introduced to prohibit them in recent times.

Dresses during Afghan Rule

The fact that appearance is a determining element in society is critical. In society, appearance and clothing play a significant role. Clothing not only represents an event, but also reflects an individual's personality. Clothing appropriateness varies based on individual preferences, societal norms, and job behaviours. Afghan men and women often wear ShalwarQameez, Lungi turban, Karakul topknot, muflar, Chapan coat, and chapel shoes. (Mir, 2011)

Language during Afghan Rule

Although Pashto was the native language of the Afghans, Persian was designated as the official language of Kashmir upon their establishment of rule. The majority of Kashmiris spoke Kashmiri, Pahari, Gojri, and various other regional dialects. At that time, Persian was widely used as the official language across Kashmir and neighboring regions, serving as a convenient medium for both local and international communication. While Persian remained the administrative and official language, the Afghan rulers introduced Pashto within the villages where their communities resided. Today, nearly thirty million people in Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir speak Pashto (Mir, 2011). It is evident that the introduction of Pashto in Kashmir was limited to a regional level, similar to the adoption of other local languages within specific areas. Although Pashto has influenced Kashmiri culture in certain regions, its impact has not extended to the state level.

Literary work

The political upheaval in Kashmir significantly impacted Afghan governance. Most Afghan governors show little interest in promoting and understanding Kashmiri literature. Some individuals are engaged in exploring and promoting Afghan literature, art, and education. In 1753, Sukh Jiwan Mal's authority in Afghanistan provided significant support for literature. During this time, poets were encouraged to promote Kashmiri literature and adapt Persian masterpieces into other languages for wider audience understanding. *Shahnama Ferdowsi*, a well-known literary work, is utilized to illustrate Kashmiri history. Numerous authors and poets actively encouraged the literary arts. (Mir, 2011) During Afghan rule, their efforts helped them achieve distinction. The major writers of that era included Mullah Muhammad Taufiq, Fida Mirza Khan Muhtasham, Ashraf Mulla Dairi, and Shah Abdul Wahab Shaiq. Mullah Muhammad Taufiq was a popular poet at the time. He published the works *Shait*, *Sarufa*, and *Lavil-e-Bahi*. Fida Mirza Khan Muhtasham, the spiritual leader of the time, studied under Miyam Kanggal Gul Muhammad. Ashraf Mulla Dairi *bulbul* delivered the following: *Khamsa Himal Nagrai*, *Hasht Asrar*, *Mihr-o-Mah*, *Hasht Tamhid*, and *Riza-nama*. Abdul Wahab Shaiq composed 60,000 verses of poetry to depict Kashmir's history. (Sufi, 1974)

Food and Drinks

Rice has been a component of Kashmiri cuisine since ancient times. Some rice was stored overnight to be consumed in the morning. (Mir, 2011) Rice can be prepared in various ways before consumption. Afghans are recognized for their welcoming hospitality and delicious cuisine. Afghans primarily ate rice, fish, *Kabli Pilao*, mutton, meat, and various veggies. The menu featured Afghan bread, *Gur*, and *Shaker*, as well as Kashmiri dishes like *Gashtaba*, *Seikh Kabab*, *Bar B. Q.*, and *Roganjosh*. Afghans prefer *Qawa*, which includes green or black tea, dry fruits, and other beverages of their choice. (Sufi, 1979)

Leisure Activities

Polo was a highly regarded game in Kashmir throughout the Middle Ages. Every hamlet or city has a polo field called a *Chawgan*. The plateau near *Kishtwar* is still known as *Chawgan*, and polo is still played in *Gilgit*, Kashmir. At the time, additional games included single strikes and solitary bouts. (Lawrence 1895 Kashmiris under Afghan administration have developed unique leisure activities to alleviate high psychosomatic stress levels. Summer pleasures include canoe racing and music festivals in *Dal Lake*. (Bamzi, 1960).

Coin of Kashmiri Saint

The Afghans made a significant contribution to Kashmir's culture by issuing coins honouring *Shaikh Noor-ud-Din Rishi*, the national poet and saint. Afghan Governor *Atta Mohammad Khan* was accountable for this. (Tishna, 2008.) *Rishi* represents Kashmir's variegated culture. The depiction of *Sheikh Noor-ud-Din Rashi* on Kashmiri coins made the cash shine brightly. (Mir, 2011) This folklore was popularized by a famous leader and reflects societal values of the time. Afghan Governor *Atta Muhammad Khan* released the money to honour *Sheikh Noor-ud-Din Rishi*.

Dance, Music and Theatre

Persian influences had a huge impact on art and achieved great success. During the Mughal era, the entrance of Afghans in Kashmir led to a decline in theatre, dance, and music. Popular Kashmiri folk songs include "*Hafiza Nagma*," "*Sufiana*," and "*Chakri*." Kashmiri traditional music and dance gained popularity as a unique kind of entertainment. (Mir, 2011) During the Afghan regime, the "*Dastaan Goi*" or numbering art plants in Kashmir received new traction. Rural Kashmir residents have organized gatherings to share stories and alleviate the misery caused by Afghan harshness, particularly during cold winter evenings. (Banzai, 1960)

Afghan architecture in Kashmir

During the Mughal era, Kashmir was covered with gardens, while Afghan emperors built fortresses and other infrastructure. *Jewan Sher Khan*, an Afghan subedar, erected the well-known *Sher Gari Palace* in 1772. The Indian-occupied Kashmir government continues to use it, as did their successors in Afghanistan. *Aamir Khan Jawan Sher* built the *Sher Garhi Palace* and the *Aamir Kadal Bridge*. Lawrence, 1985.

Flourishing of Shawl Industry

The shawl industry was well-known throughout the Mughal era prior to the arrival of the Afghans, but it also drew in new traders from Russia, Iran, and Turkestan. By the end of the 18th century, the shawl business had spread

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from Kashmir to Turkey. In 1796, when the Afghans were in power, Napoleon carried a Kashmiri scarf. His wife, Josephine, established a new fashion trend for women in England and Europe. After 1800 AD, there was a thriving shawl trade between Kashmir and the west. In conclusion, the shawl industry in the Kashmir valley grew rapidly with the establishment of Afghan control. **Saraf (1987)**

Taxation structure of Afghan Governance

During the Afghan government, taxes were applied consistently to all goods and classes, regardless of personal preferences. Almost every governor in Kashmir attempted to levy taxes on the people. The unfair taxation caused hardship for the Kashmiri people. They were dissatisfied with their tax system and considered it inappropriate. During the Afghan era, Kashmiri inhabitants constantly complained about the taxation system. **(Mir, 2011)**

CONCLUSION

Culture encompasses ideas, customs, information, arts, laws, morality, and other abilities that individuals learn as members of society. Cultural dynamics refer to the changes in a society's culture. Cultural values were mostly discussed via the lens of human groupings and imagery. Societies are never stationary due to regular cultural change. Cultural processes within a society are complex. Endogenous forces are those that are influenced by social structures. The growth of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism demonstrates endogenous evolution in religious ideology. The introduction of Islam to Kashmiri society has led to continual changes in religious beliefs. In the 14th century, the Shahmiri dynasty brought Islam to Kashmir with 700 Central Asian preachers led by Shah Hamdan. The large inflow of Muslims from Central Asia influenced the community and led to social and cultural changes. Foreign influence had a limited impact on Kashmiri culture due to the people's strong links to the region. They clung to their traditions and refused to abandon them completely.

During the 14th and 15th centuries, there were frequent clashes between those who defended their beliefs and those who embraced Iranian culture. In the 16th and 17th centuries, a new civilization was formed by mixing old and new beliefs. These forces influenced political, social, religious, and cultural developments in Kashmir, resulting in a diverse culture. The Kashmiri culture was influenced by various factors, including social composition, attitudes, customs, early marriages, women's status, language and literature, food and drink, coin issuance, archaeological artifacts, monuments, architecture, recreational activities, theatres, the shawl industry, and taxation. This publication provides insight into the impact of Afghan kings' acts on Kashmiri culture during the 18th and 19th century.

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