

Hazratbal Shrine: A Symbol of Communal Harmony in Kashmir

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Abstract: *The society of Kashmir from the ancient times lived in a composite culture. Love, peace and communal harmony remained as the key factors of the society and enriched the ethos of Kashmir. The important elements of Kashmir valley are the shrines which are harbouring love and peace in all corners of the valley. The most important shrine of Kashmir is Hazratbal located at Dargah in Srinagar. The shrine is the most favourite place for the people of the valley to visit irrespective of their religion. The location of shrine is panoramic due to famous Dal Lake. The assemblage of people on Eid-i-Milad and other days are the focal point of the shrine. The displaying of Moy-i-Muqadas on special days of the year is the nucleus of congregation. The shrine presents the real picture of Kashmir when all section of the society irrespective of their religion becomes the part of the milieu. The optics of the society of Kashmir has been strengthened by the epitome of Hazratbal shrine.*

Keywords: Hazratbal, Dargah, Dal lake, Eid-i-Milad, Moy-i-Muqadas

1. Introduction

The history of Kashmir is quite elicited regarding the socio-cultural milieu of the valley. The charismatic loftiness of the mountains and the charming beauty of the Kashmir is an important factor for the attractiveness of Kashmir. One of the most components of Kashmir is the elegance of shrines which are spread to all parts and corners. The shrines which are present in Kashmir provide a heterogeneous diaspora look not only to the society of Kashmir but to the world too. The presence of diversity in Kashmir is a fabulous strength of the valley which is enriched by the shrines. The valley of Kashmir is a land of beautiful, multi-cultural, social and religious centres which from the antiquity enriches the cultural ethos of Kashmir. The birth of the shrine culture is an important characteristic of the society of Kashmir prevailing in the valley with deep love and devotion of the people irrespective of the religious parameters. All the shrines of the valley whether the Hindu, the Muslim and the Sikh are centres of coordination, love peace and icons of togetherness. There is not any discomfort among the people of the valley while visiting each other's shrines. This is not a new phenomenon in the society of Kashmir to have harmony regarding the shrines but it is an age old practice. The Muslim shrines of Kashmir are greater in number as compared to other religious shrines. An important Muslim shrine in Kashmir Valley is Hazratbal shrine which is located in the Srinagar district of Kashmir region. The shrine is located on bank of Dal Lake in Srinagar. The shrine is famous for the sacred Moy-i-Muqadas of Prophet Mohammad ^{SAW} (Sacred Hair of Prophet Mohammad ^{SAW}). The unmatched reverence is anchored in the love and respect for the Prophet Mohammad ^{SAW}. The shrine of Hazratbal was built by the famous political leader of Kashmir Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah. The word Hazratbal is composed of two words Hazrat and Bal. Hazratbal is also called Medina Saani (Second Madina). The construction of the Hazratbal shrine took place in 12 November 1969. The foundation stone of the shrine was laid down by the famous Sufi saint of Kashmir Syed Mirak Shah. Abundance of literature has been written on various aspects of the society of Kashmir like Economic, social and cultural but the

information about shrines remained in backdoors. Some literary activities on shrines include: Muslim shrines in India [edited by Christian, W. Troll with an introduction by Marc Gaborieau, 1989], A window on Kashmir [T.N.Dhar, 2003], Aatish-e-China [Sheikh, Mohammad Abdullah].

Hazratbal: Centre for Communal harmony in Kashmir

Hazratbal shrine is the most revered shrine in the valley of Kashmir not only among Muslims but also in the people of other religions. The shrine is situated in Dargah area of Srinagar on the famous Dal Lake. The shrine is famous for the sacred hair of Prophet Mohammad ^{SAW} (Moy-i-Muqadas). Most of the people from the society of Kashmir visit the Hazratbal shrine on daily basis. The shrine displaces the picture of mass mobilization and attracts a good number of people. Especially the shrine of Dargah Hazratbal is famous for the communal harmony among all the sections of the society irrespective of their religious diversity.

An important day in the shrine of Hazratbal is Eid-i-Milad (Birth anniversary of Prophet Mohammad ^{SAW}) during which the glimpses of holy relic of Prophet Mohammad ^{SAW} are displayed five times a day. On this day not only the Muslims visit the shrine but the Hindus and the Sikhs also become the part of the big congregation. During the day various religious sermons are delivered by the clerics and everyone irrespective of his/her religion listens. The Hindus and Sikhs have been seen in large numbers visiting the shrine of Dargah Hazratbal. The people from these religions have complete faith in the shrine Dargah Hazratbal. People from all religions have been seen in a composite atmosphere of love and brotherhood in the shrine. The shrine of Dargah Hazratbal provides a panoramic view of communal harmony on the day of Eid-i-Milad and strengthens the bond of love and peace in the Valley of Kashmir. The cultural ethos of Kashmir where shrines are the key component of the communal harmony can be vivid from the shrine of Dargah Hazratbal. The Hindus and The Sikhs can be seen with their Muslim brothers with strong bond of love and shared sorrows and joys with each other on their visit to the shrines.

On the occasion of festivals Dargah Hazratbal shrine displays the organisation of big markets with different cultural items being sold to the devotees. On this occasion not only the Muslims purchase the items but with deep love the Hindus and the Sikhs also join the Muslims. An important cultural item of Kashmir is Kangdi (fire pot) which attracts all the sections of the society. A usual practice in Kashmir is the donation by the people to the shrines. On the festival occasions huge money is also collected from the devotees. With respect and love the people of other religions also donate good amount of money to shrine of Dargah Hazratbal. On the days of festival occasions the difference among the people on the name of religion is not seen.

An important development in Kashmir valley by the shrines is the emergence of pilgrimage tourism. Dargah Hazratbal shrine is playing an important role in the pilgrimage tourism of Kashmir. The tourists from different parts of India visit the shrine of Dargah Hazratbal. They also become the part of the congregation with the local people and enjoy the love, peace and brotherhood of Kashmir. The shrine of Dargah Hazratbal is providing an atmosphere of spiritual solace for all the people who visit the shrine and removing his/her all complexities of life. An important day for the people of Kashmir is Mehraj-i-Alam (heavenly journey of Prophet Mohammad ^{SAW}). On this day thousands of Muslim devotees flock to the shrine of Hazratbal to mark the anniversary of the prophet Mohammad ^{SAW} on the day of Mehraj-i-Alam. The people of other religions also become the part and parcel of the festive occasion. In the atmosphere of Hazratbal people too enjoy the charismatic scene of the nature were all around there are big Chinar trees and the famous Zabarwan hills. The environment of the shrine is blossoming the hearts of the devotees by its spiritual essence. From the time of annals the Hazratbal shrine have the credence of uniting people of different religions and enriching peace, love and brotherhood among different communities. When the holy relic hair of Prophet Mohammad ^{SAW} was lost on 27 December 1963 it created a big havoc in Kashmir valley. All over Kashmir people were in streets with mass demonstrations. The Hindus of Kashmir at that time joined hands with Muslims in demanding the return of the holy relic hair of Prophet Mohammad ^{SAW}. The time of mass protests was the time of brotherhood for all religious sections of Kashmir and uniting them in a one single knot. Every time the shrine of Dargah Hazratbal became a stage of uniting people and sprouting them with the aspect of communal harmony.

An important aspect in the society of Kashmir is *Milchar* (*brotherhood*). Which have been very much significant from the times antiquity. The shrines of Kashmir are the backbone for the strengthening of bond between different communities irrespective of religion. In the Kashmiri *Milchar* an important development are the folk songs which were usually dedicated to the shrines of Kashmir. The shrine of Dargah Hazratbal is witnessing a number of festive occasions were a good number of singers and musicians took part. The Hindu and the Muslim women also took part in the singing aura. The visitors on the occasion get a chance to make themselves happy out of their busy life. Usually the songs have praises regarding the shrine and he saint. One of

the famous couplets regarding the Dargah Hazratbal shrine is “

*“Hazratbal kis Boni Shahjaras
Prayran Chus Dedarayasi”*

*“Under the groove of Chinar trees at Hazratbal
I keep waiting for the glimpse”*

The above couplet exemplifies multifaceted eagerness's like sitting under the Chinar trees of Hazratbal shrine and showing the eagerness of the devotees to see the prophet. While abstracting the shrine of Dargah Hazratbal, it displays the centre for communal harmony, cultural ethos and centre of mass mobilization.

2. Conclusion

The presence of shrines in Kashmir valley is an important aspect of the society. The shrine of Dargah Hazratbal is the epicentre for the propagation of communal harmony in Kashmir. The celebration on the festivals occasion at the shrine of Dargah Hazratbal is the time of visualization of true picture of Kashmir valley. The people from all the communities of Kashmir visit the shrine without any religious jurisprudence and strengthen the bond of love, peace and harmony in the society of Kashmir. Dargah Hazratbal is the centre for all the communities of Kashmir to share their joys and sorrows with each other and enrich the history of Kashmir where there is only love and love everywhere. Now the shrines of Kashmir need more attention by the government so that they can be used as a place of communal harmony.

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